

PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS: EFFECTIVE WHITE FEMALE TEACHERS OF BLACK
MALE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
School of Education.

Chapel Hill
2010

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ABSTRACT

NAKIA HARDY: Portraits of Success: Effective White female teachers of Black male middle school students

(Under the direction of Dr. Kathleen Brown)

As American classrooms continue to enroll increasingly higher numbers of Black students, culturally relevant teaching practices have become absolutely essential for their academic success. Teachers employing culturally relevant practices understand the critical and important nature of the relationship between the student and the teacher and the role of culture within the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Matsumura, Slater, & Crosson, 2008; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This study investigated the relationships of White female teachers and their Black male students in middle school, Grades 6 through 8. Participants included White teachers from two middle schools in one rural school district.

Methods on qualitative inquiry were used to examine the relationships between White female teachers and Black male middle school students. Data collection included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and member-check interviews. The data were analyzed through the conceptual framework of Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle, along with culturally relevant teaching and practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The Achievement Triangle developed by Gary Howard (2006) integrates *rigor*, *responsiveness*, and *relationship* with the internal beliefs of teachers. Contained within the triangle are the teacher's practices of *knowing myself*, *knowing my students*, and *knowing my practice* (Howard, 2006). These practices refer to the knowledge base of the teacher with respect to students' culture and the instructional strategies that are effective for Black students (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004). The points of the triangle are described as doorways to

relationship, rigor, and responsiveness. Teachers enter through these doorways by reflecting on and understanding their own culture. This reflection allows teachers to develop authentic relationships with Black male students (Howard, 2006 Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002 & 2004).

The research of Delpit (1995, 2006), Howard (2006), Ladson-Billings (1994), Murrell (2002), and Thompson (2002, 2004) has established the characteristics necessary for White teachers to be effective with Black students. The results of this study indicate that White female teachers can be effective with Black male students, and produce positive academic and social results. Teachers consistently used personal connections and relationships, and high expectations and motivation to provide a positive classroom environment for students. Teachers struggled to implement cultural connections within classroom instruction, and participants did not describe themselves as racial beings. Overall, this study reinforces the findings of Delpit (1995, 2006), Howard (2006), Ladson-Billings (1994), Murrell (2002), and Thompson (2002, 2004) and highlights in particular the significance of relationship and motivation for academic and social success of Black male middle school students. The results of this study add to the body of literature regarding White female teachers who are effective in teaching Black male middle school students. Furthermore, information regarding positive relationships and motivation for Black male students has been identified.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I began this journey, I did not realize how much I would learn and grow from the experience. As a child, I wanted to be a medical doctor. But after accepting the Teaching Fellows Scholarship and becoming a high school chemistry teacher, I realized education was my passion. I want every child to experience the success that I have enjoyed thanks to excellent classroom teachers and principals. I hope that I can positively impact the life of children as I continue my journey in education.

I would like to thank those who have supported me during the experience. My mother, Mildred Hardy, has been an inspiration to me. She has motivated me, prayed for me, and helped me in every way possible. Thank you so much for being my mother and being my best friend. Dr. Kathleen Brown, my advisor, has been a wonderful motivator and encourager. Throughout the process she challenged me to think deeper and become more reflective. Dr. English and Dr. Veitch, committee members, have provided feedback that will last a lifetime. Thank you very much.

I also have a host of family and friends that have always been willing to listen, offer advice, and provide encouraging words. To my family, thank you for being patient, uplifting, and motivating. I would not have been able to do this without your support and prayers. Special thanks to favorite Starbucks restaurant; my special coffee and seat helped me write. To my special group of “principal buddies,” our monthly dinners and conversations are priceless.

Thank you to the staff at Broadview Middle School for challenging me to become a better leader. The lessons I learned from the staff and the students are immeasurable. Each day I strive to be a better leader for the children of tomorrow.

Thank you to the teachers who participated in this study. I learned from each of you. I appreciate your candor and willingness to provide high quality instruction to all students.

Finally, I dedicate this to my father, Dempsey Hardy. I hope he is proud of my accomplishments.

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CHAPTER 1

Background

Is it possible for Black male middle school students to form a strong and positive connection with White female teachers? Unfortunately, much research has suggested that many White teachers are not prepared to enter a classroom that contains students from other races (Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002). However, this researcher has direct experience in a school setting where Black students interact daily with White female teachers who have the ability to understand their cultural needs, adolescent development, and unique family backgrounds. The relationships that these teachers have developed with Black students are powerful because they can alter and impact the child's motivation for academic and social success. These White teachers are supportive, caring, nurturing, and culturally aware, and serve as positive role models for students. This experience is contrary to much of the current research and therefore warrants further exploration of the characteristics that certain White female teachers possess that allow this positive phenomenon for Black male students.

Research has suggested that middle school students come to school anxious to see if teachers will care about their academic, behavioral, and, most importantly, social development (Adams, Kuhn, & Rhodes, 2006; Simmons, Black, & Zhou, 1991; Thompson, 2002). In today's schools, many students wonder what they will find and how their teachers will respond to their needs, both academic and social. These uncertainties are further complicated for Black students by the lack of racial balance in the teaching ranks. In 2002, for example, Kunjufu noted that Black students comprised 17% of the United States student population, while Black teachers comprised only 6% of the

teaching force. Data from 2005 indicated that 85% of the teaching force was White and 82% was female (National Center for Education Information, retrieved July 2007 from www.ncei.com/POT05PRESSREL3.htm). Although there has been an increase in the number of Black teachers in the intervening years, the likelihood of a Black male student encountering a White female teacher who may be unprepared for or challenged by the demographics of her classroom remains high (Howard, 2007; Mazzei, 2008; Price, 2006). How White female teachers interact with Black male students in the classroom, then, constitutes a significant area of study.

Research in this field has suggested that “colorblindness” is one of the most prominent elements defining the dynamics of White female teachers in classrooms with Black male students. Examples of colorblind generalizations may include, “I don’t see color; I treat all children the same, I see children as children” (Kunjufu, 2002, p. 17). In addition, Mazzei (2008) indicated that “if White teachers continue to effectively deny or fail to see their Whiteness as raced then they will continue to see students of color as other” (p. 1129). These ideas may lead to questioning whose cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds will dominate the classroom setting (Howard, 2006). If White female teachers simply rely on their backgrounds, White, middle-class dominance may prevail within the classroom. To provide an effective academic setting for Black males, teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to Black students’ social and cultural realities (Howard, 2006; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Review of the literature in this area reiterates the following themes: (a) race matters in relation to how teachers and students perceive each other, (b) a pedagogy that

recognizes cultural differences is necessary, and (c) knowledge of students' historical and social development is critical to providing instruction that is meaningful and relevant to students (Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The pedagogy required for Black male students encompasses the ideas of African-centered pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Significance and Problem

This study focused specifically on Black male students enrolled in middle school, Grades 6 through 8. Information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has suggested that Black students consistently perform below their White counterparts in reading and mathematics, as indicated by National Assessment Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments. These assessments also found that the gap between Black and White students widens as they progress from elementary to middle school. In 2007, the average scores on the NAEP for White students in Grade 4 in reading and math were 228 and 251, respectively (NCES retrieved June 17, 2008). In contrast, the average scores for Black students on the same assessment were 202 and 224, respectively (NCES retrieved June 17, 2008). As this 26-point gap in reading is identified in elementary school, the premise of closing the gap would seem possible with the employment of effective teaching practices. However, according to the Grade 8 data from the same year, the achievement gap continues into middle school. White students in Grade 8 scored 270 and 295, respectively, on reading and math assessments, while Black students only scored 241 and 266. This differential for White and Black students was 29 points in reading, three points higher than the gap identified in Grade 4. These striking

data provide insight as to why there has been such significant research to develop strategies to assist teachers in helping Black students become more academically successful and thereby close the achievement gap (Delpit, 2005; Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Further exploration of research data has revealed an additional achievement gap between male and female students. In the same 2007 assessments, male students scored on average 11 points lower than female students in reading in Grade 8 (NCES, retrieved June 17, 2008). These data make it clear that, as students progress from elementary to middle school, the need for classroom instruction that emphasizes rigor, relationships, and responsiveness is necessary for Black male students to achieve academically and to close the achievement gap between Black and White students (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2004). In addition, there is significant research that indicates the importance of strategies that are culturally responsive to Black students (Delpit, 1995; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Murrell, 2002).

Purpose of the study

As American classrooms continue to enroll increasingly higher numbers of Black students, culturally relevant teaching practices have become absolutely essential for their academic success. Teachers employing culturally relevant practices see their connection to the community as integral to their identities as teachers (Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Simmons, 1996). Teachers employing culturally relevant practices understand the critical and important nature of the relationship between the student and the teacher and the role of culture within the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994;

Matsumura, Slater, & Crosson, 2008; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

As Hyland concluded, “The roles and practices adopted by teachers identified as culturally relevant are not determined by the teacher’s race, but these teachers do actively identify and resist racism in school” (2005, p. 430).

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationships of White female teachers and Black male students in middle school, Grades 6 through 8. White teachers employing culturally relevant practices were identified by the following criteria: (a) their classrooms contain at least five Black male students, (b) they made fewer than two office referrals of Black male students per nine-week period, and (c) class averages were at or above average on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math. In addition, these teachers were identified by their principals as exhibiting teaching practices that lead to positive results with Black male students. Students may be at or above grade level since previous student achievement information was part of the criteria. A minimum of six teachers were sought to participate in the study.

Research Questions

The main thrust of this study was to examine the specific practices of White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students. The research questions that guided this study included the following: (a) What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?; (b) What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance into classroom instruction?; and (c) What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students? Qualitative inquiry methods were used to explore these questions.

Conceptual Framework

The Achievement Triangle developed by Gary Howard (2006) integrates *rigor*, *responsiveness*, and *relationship* with the internal beliefs of teachers. Contained within the triangle are the teacher's practices of *knowing myself*, *knowing my students*, and *knowing my practice* (Howard, 2006, p. 126). These practices refer to the knowledge base of the teacher with respect to students' culture and the instructional strategies that are effective for Black students (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004). The points of the triangle are described as doorways to relationship, rigor, and responsiveness. Teachers enter through these doorways by reflecting on and understanding their own culture. This reflection allows teachers to develop authentic relationships with Black male students (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002 & 2004). These relationships lead to a classroom that may be described as a community of learners where high expectations shape how teachers respond to students' individual needs (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Delimitations and Limitations of Study

Qualitative inquiry research seeks to provide opportunity for discovery and exploration (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The limitations and delimitations are the parameters in which this study was conducted. Due to the nature of this study, there were several limitations and delimitations. The delimitations are that this study was narrowed by the following: one rural school district, middle level schools, White female teachers, and Black male students. In addition to these delimitations, the description of positive relationships, cultural relevance, and student motivation limited the scope of this

research. This study was further limited by there only being one researcher collecting and analyzing the data. Also, the researcher is a Black administrator who has worked in the same school district, which potentially impacted the candor and responses of the participants within the study. Lastly, the students were not interviewed as part of data collection and analysis, although information about students was included in the observations and the teacher interviews. Collectively, these delimitations narrow the scope of this qualitative study. Due to the limitations within the same district and number of participants, the data collection may not be extensive enough to be transferable to other similar situations. While the school district and schools used in this study exhibited characteristics similar to those discussed in the literature review, the conclusions drawn from this study should not necessarily be considered applicable to all middle schools or to all White teachers (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Much of the literature reviewed on this subject has focused on data gleaned from low-wealth urban areas to provide a perspective of challenges facing Black middle school students. In contrast, Starry Sky School District is located in a low-wealth, rural county surrounded by large urban areas. Because rural school districts serve a large number of students living in poverty (Hardre & Sullivan, 2008; McCracken & Barinas, 1991) in percentages larger than non-rural communities, when urban and suburban are combined (Hatfield, 2002), there remains a need to investigate the challenges faced by Black male middle school students in these areas. In addition, rural schools educate more students whose parents are migrant workers or immigrants and who live in poverty (Hardre & Sullivan, 2008; McCracken & Barinas, 1991). This dynamic creates transiency, another potential barrier to student academic achievement which is unique to rural schools

(Beeson, 2001; Hardre & Sullivan, 2008; McCracken & Barcinas, 1991). Overall, the literature does not specifically identify schools and school districts like Starry Sky. However, there is information about low-wealth urban areas and rural schools; Starry Sky is both low-wealth and rural.

Definitions of Terms

- Black: Also referred to as *African American* in some literature, meaning “a person having origins in any of the racial groups of Africa” (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, and Provasnik, 2007, p. 2).
- Culturally Relevant/Culturally Responsive Teaching: This “entails a highly complex set of professional knowledge, including curriculum, pedagogy, instructional design, developmental psychology, history and philosophy of education, legal issues, human relationship cross cultural communication, conflict management, and more” (Howard, 2006, p. 126). Specific behaviors observed by culturally responsive teachers may include the following: (a) involving students in the construction of knowledge, (b) helping students access prior knowledge, (c) reminding students of the big picture, (d) encouraging students to synthesize, and (e) giving students multiple ways to succeed academically (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Effective pedagogical practice that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, & 2004).

- Elementary Schools: Schools with at least one grade lower than Grade 5 and no higher than Grade 8 (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000312.pdf>, retrieved August 5, 2008).
- Emic: The participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest unfolds from the participant's perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).
- Etic: The participant's perspective unfolds as the researcher views the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).
- Instructional Practices (middle school): Hands-on activities with teachers that "address individual developmental difference, establish appropriate challenges, and teach critical thinking skills" (Styron & Nyman, 2008); also, instructional strategies that focus on meaning, inspire student motivation and provide support (Styron & Nyman, 2008). Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) have identified nine effective instructional strategies:
 1. identifying similarities and differences
 2. summarizing information
 3. emphasizing effort and providing recognition
 4. integrating valuable homework and practice
 5. integrating nonlinguistic representations
 6. integrating cooperative learning
 7. setting learning goals and giving specific, timely feedback
 8. generating and testing hypotheses and questions
 9. using cues and advance organizers

- Middle Schools: Schools with no grade lower than Grade 5 or higher than Grade 8. The schools used in this study include only students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000312.pdf>, retrieved August 5, 2008).
- Motivation for Academic Success and Social Success (Motivate): Motivation is the relation of beliefs, values and goals specific to a measurable outcome (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This includes direct intervention, classroom instruction, interpersonal strategies, and environmental elements within the classroom used to produce positive academic and social results (Hardre & Sullivan, 2008). The following strategies are successful for motivating disengaged students: (a) relatedness and establishing a relationship, (b) encouragement and building efficacy, (c) relevance to their interests, and (d) verbal praise (Hardre & Sullivan, 2008). Student motivation is integral to their school success (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). Students' overall motivation reflects both social and academic concerns (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). When students display appropriate social behavior, they are more likely to be more successful in school (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Mucherah & Yoder, 2008; Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998; Wentzel, 2003).
- Pedagogy: "Pedagogy refers to a deliberate attempt to influence what knowledge and identities are produced within and among a particular set of social relationships.... Pedagogy is a concept that draws attention to the processes through which knowledge is produced" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 14).
- Positive Social Results: Reduction in evidence of problem behavior within the school setting; evidence that student is exhibiting behavior of conformity rather than deviance (Simmons, Black, & Zhou, 1991). *Problem behavior* is described

as requiring a referral to the office and/or other disciplinary action by the teacher (time-out, after-school detention). Positive social behavior may also include positive interactions with peers and the teacher. This could include initiating and forming friendships and being cooperative with other peers and adults (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998). Furthermore, interpersonal relationships promote academic and social success for students, ultimately contributing to the motivation for students to be successful in school (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998).

- Responsiveness: This doorway on the conceptual framework combines *knowing my students* and *knowing my practice* (Howard, 2006). This defines the capacity exhibited by teachers when they connect the actual lived experience with the learning modalities of students who are in the classroom.
- Rigor: Defines a behavior that is exhibited when a teachers is relentless in the belief in all students and their capacity to learn. It also means having a passion for equity and social justice (Howard, 2006). This doorway on the conceptual framework combines *knowing myself* and *knowing my practice* (Howard, 2006). Rigor occurs when teachers have the ability to be vigilant in improving their capacity to provide instruction daily to all students.
- Relationship: This doorway on the conceptual framework combines *knowing myself* and *knowing my students* (Howard, 2006, p. 127). An authentic professional relationship occurs when the teacher clearly communicates through words, actions, and attitudes that acknowledge the presence of the student. In addition, this relationship demonstrates cultural competence, respect for the students' life experiences, family background, and intelligence. As Howard notes,

“White teachers who have not seriously engaged in the journey toward cultural competence and authentic White identity cannot teach effectively in racially diverse schools” (2006, p. 130).

- Success/Positive Academic Results: Refers to scoring a level III or IV on state assessments in reading and/or math and to scoring at or higher than the local average and formative assessments; also, maintaining grades of *C* or higher in core classes (English/language arts, math, science, and social studies) and elective classes. Success also is represented in achievement within the current social structures extant in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Academic success can be positively impacted by student motivation, especially in reading (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008).
- White: Also referred to as *Caucasian* in some literature, “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa” (Keweenaw Ramani, et al., 2007, p. 2).

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on teacher race, student academic performance, and White teachers' perceptions about the schooling experience. This review includes a discussion of research on White female teachers, Black students in education, and culturally relevant pedagogy and practice. Specific strategies that have been identified as being successful with Black male middle school students are described. Finally, the conceptual framework of Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle and its relationship to this study are explained.

Problem

What is the appropriate explanation for the achievement gap between Black and White middle school students in both reading and math? Thompson (2002) examines several possible explanations including "deficit-deprivation, tracking, acting white, [and] low teacher expectations" (p. 13); others include stereotype threat and cultural misunderstandings (Irvine, 1990; Ogbu, 1987; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). The historical *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) has led to a radical shift in which Black students are now educated in integrated schools by mostly White female teachers. This study sought to understand how some teachers are able to create an environment where Black male middle school students are achieving as well as their majority counterparts.

Prior to integration, Black students were taught by Black teachers. The landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) affected schooling for Black students as well as Black teachers and principals (Milner & Howard, 2004). In

fact, this decision has resulted in a decline in the number of Blacks in the teaching force and a decline in Black students' academic success (Milner & Howard, 2004). For many Black students and families prior to desegregation, Black teachers were surrogate parent figures and were involved in the community and churches of their students (Milner & Howard, 2004). This unique experience allowed Black teachers to develop meaningful and effective relationships with their students. This type of relationship is one of the tenets of culturally relevant teaching and a characteristic that has the potential to provide academic success for Black students (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

After the *Brown* decision, Black teachers were significantly impacted. They “endured emotional strain and hardship experiences that were degrading and demoralizing” (Milner & Howard, 2004, p. 289). Black teachers were often forced to move to integrated schools where they were treated with disrespect and taunting by White students and parents (Milner & Howard, 2004). This rarely occurred during segregation because Black teachers were viewed in high regard by Black parents and the community at large.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2000 there were over 3 million public school teachers in public schools. More than 2.5 million of these teachers are White, while only 228,000 are Black. These data suggest that Black students in public schools are more likely to have a White teacher than a teacher of color. Additionally, of these 3 million-plus teachers in 2000, more than 2.5 million were female. The most recent information from NCES indicates an increase of females in both groups, White and Black teachers. In 2004, the total number of teachers working in public

schools increased to 3.2 million, with over 2.7 million of them being female (NCES, retrieved June 17, 2008). Based on this information, the likelihood of a Black male student having a White female teacher is quite high. More recently, in 2005, NCES reported that the shift in White female teachers has increased from 69% in 1986 to 71% in 1990, to 74% in 1996, and then to 82% in 2005. However, the number of Black teachers has essentially remained the same, approximately 8%, since 1990 (Foster, 1997; United States Bureau of the Census, 2002). With this evidence that the number of Black teachers is not growing, it seems clear that White female teachers will need to implement strategies to create classrooms where all students, including Black males, can be academically and emotionally successful.

As American classrooms continue to contain growing numbers of Black students, the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching practices become increasingly necessary for student academic success. Teachers whose practices are considered culturally relevant see their connection to the community as integral to their identities as teachers (Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994). As Hyland (2005) explained, “The roles and practices adopted by teachers identified as culturally relevant are not determined by the teacher’s race; but these teachers actively identify and resist racism in school” (p. 430).

Considering the documented achievement gap and other measurements indicating a lack of success of Black male students, researchers have concluded that these practices are rare among White teachers (Chubbuck, 2004; Delpit, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004, 2006; Mazzei, 2008).

Perceptions of White female teachers

Numerous studies have concluded that effective teachers of Black students are conscious of the social construct of White privilege and racism (Kailin, 1999; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 2002; Mazzei, 2008). However, data from research studies (Kailin, 1999; Mazzei, 2008; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002) indicate that some Whites are not aware of White privilege. The behaviors associated with White privilege may be perceived as a form of racism. For example, Kailin's (1999) respondents did not see the social dilemma of a detention room or special education class being filled with an inordinate number of Black students. In Uhlenberg and Brown's (2002) North Carolina study, for example, White teachers blamed the child, parents and home environment for the achievement gap between Black and White students at a higher percentage than did Black teachers. These conclusions were supported by comments from teachers suggesting that they believe that Black students come from bad home environments and do not value education. Respondents from Kailin's research cited some of the same examples as explanations for the achievement gap (Kailin, 1999; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). This mistaken belief is "deeply engrained in the thinking of many White Americans" (Kailin, 1999, p. 730). Do teachers ask themselves why Black parents are not involved, or do they simply assume parental involvement can only be defined as a commitment to the "White middle-class dominated PTA" (Kailin 1999, p. 730)?

White Teachers, Culture and Racial Identity Development of Whites

If one believes all children can learn, then how do we explain the challenges facing Black male middle school students? Black students have experienced success in school with the right teacher, demonstrating that, ultimately, the "heart of the educational

process is the interaction between the teacher and student” (Rodriquez, 1983, p. 508).

Cultural backgrounds may also influence teachers’ perceptions of appropriate school behavior (Graybill, 1997). The idea, perception and ultimately the behavior of cultural values enters the classroom via the teacher. These values can initiate a cultural mismatch between the behavior of students of color, their language and learning style, and their teachers’ expectations within a school setting (Irvine, 1990).

How White teachers respond to these cultural mismatches impacts the success of Black students (Chubbuck, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Howard, 2006; Irvine, 1990; Kunjufu 2002). Irvine (1990) noted a cultural disconnect in her study in that White teachers, frequently female, viewed Black males as disruptive and acting out. Kailin also described comments from White teachers that Black students are intimidating or that they have parents who are racist and not supportive (1999). These comments demonstrate that cultural discontinuity can evolve in a classroom with anyone and especially with Black male students. Classroom teachers who understand this disconnect are more able to create classrooms with a welcoming atmosphere, “encouraging students to speak freely, learn collaboratively, and incorporate out-of-school experiences into the classroom” (Delpit, 2006; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2004).

The cultural process for White teachers is a journey of racial identity development. No one is born with a complex knowledge and integrated sense of racial identity (Howard, 2006). In fact, many White teachers do not view themselves as having a significant racial position based in a world of privilege that may adversely impact the classroom experience for Black students (Mazzei, 2006). The recognition and understanding that race is a social construct along with the dynamic processes of public

schooling is critical for White teachers (Chubbuck, 2004; Helms, 1994, 1996; Howard, 2006). Often White is a race that goes “unnamed, unnoticed, and unspoken,” which may lead to a lack of recognition in White teachers of their racial positionality (Mazzei, 2006, p. 1127). Helms (1994, 1996) and Howard (2006) have described a process and continuum for cultural awareness and development for “Whiteness.” The six stages within this process are (1) contact, (2) disintegration, (3) reintegration, (4) pseudo-independence, (5) immersion-emersion, and (6) autonomy. These stages function as part of a continuum of racial awareness and development. Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003) have described a similar continuum that begins with cultural destructiveness and culminates in cultural proficiency. The characteristics of autonomy and cultural proficiency are very similar and acknowledge a deep recognition and passion for equity.

According to these models, the stages within the continuum of racial identity provide moments of awareness and development for Whites. Initially, Whites are uncomfortable in relationships with people of difference races. Within this stage there are signs of Whites’ being “color-blind” by suggesting that race is not identified, seen, or recognized. Often teachers may say, “I don’t see color, I teach children” (Kunjufu, 2002, p. 17). In addition to the lack of acknowledgment of race there is also an ignorance of White privilege which perpetuates the rationale of color-blindness (Chubbuck, 2004; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Mazzei (2008) has argued that such professed color-blindness serves to maintain the White culture as the norm and to protect the silence that is perpetuated by this paradigm.

As Whites continue through this continuum of racial development they begin to acknowledge aspects of race and privilege. This development begins with feelings of

guilt and anxiety about the mistreatment of other races. As one develops, questions, and reflects upon the social construct of race, he/she will “acknowledge White responsibility for racism and confront” the issue of White privilege (Howard, 2006, p. 96). This questioning often can lead to the individual’s becoming isolated among other Whites (Helms, 1992; Howard, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2003). While Whites are in the pseudo-independence stage of cultural development, questions remain unanswered and the complexity of race grows without a resolution.

The final two stages are immersion-emersion and autonomy. When Whites enter these stages they can ask the questions, “Who am I racially?” and “Who do I want to be?” (Helms, 1990, p. 62). There is a motivation and quest to seek positive White role models and develop relationships with those who are on the same journey of racial identity and development. Finally, Whites develop the realization that race is no longer a threat and use their knowledge to develop correlations between racism and other forms of inequality (Howard, 2006). This stage is referred to as autonomy (Helms, 1992, 1996; Howard, 2006) or cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2003) and is a state of growth and reflection. Whites develop an appreciation for their own Whiteness and understand how and when to identify oppression. There is a motivation to continue to learn about the social construct of race and other inequalities. White teachers in this stage have “evolved a position cultural and racial identity” (Howard, 2006, p. 101).

White Teacher Orientations

Howard (2006) describes a continuum of orientations common to White teachers and their correlation to White racial identity development. These orientations—fundamentalist, integrationist, and transformationist—are based on how the White

teacher thinks, feels, and acts about racial issues. The acting aspect of the orientation discusses the “approach to cross cultural interactions, approach to teaching about difference and approach to leadership” and management (Howard, 2006, p. 104). A transformationist seeks interactions that are cross cultural and believes in authentic engagement of learning from other cultures and even challenges the Eurocentric perspective and White dominance (Howard, 2006).

The behavior of the White teacher within each stage impacts his/her teaching approach with children. Fundamentalists subscribe to a color-blind mentality and believe they treat all students the same with no recognition or acknowledgement of race. While integrationists are willing to learn about other cultures, they are still tacitly Eurocentric. During this orientation, White teachers support special programs for students who have special needs in a manner that continues some level of oppression. Finally, transformationists believe in social and authentic engagement for students with an ability to learn and appreciate information about other cultures. They also are willing to challenge the dominant Eurocentric culture and fight against oppression (Howard, 2006). The transformationist teacher uses the beliefs of the Achievement Triangle (see Appendix A) to provide instructional practices that are effective for Black students (Howard, 2006).

Black male students

Black male students face significant challenges and barriers in overcoming the academic achievement gap. The media may refer to Black males as an “endangered species” that is systematically programmed for failure in school and in American life (Cooper & Jordan, 2005; Jordan & Cooper, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002). In addition to the plight of being an “endangered species,” environmental factors, social interactions, and

stereotype threat impact the academic progress of Black male students (Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2002; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Taylor, 2003; Taylor & Phillips, 2005). Furthermore, there are at least 10 theories that have tried to explain the achievement gap between Black and White students. These theories include: (1) deficit, (2) structural inequality, (3) tracking, (4) cultural discontinuity, (5) fourth grade failure syndrome, (6) acting white, (7) peer pressure, (8) parents are at fault, (9) underprepared teachers, and (10) low teacher expectations (Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2002; Ogbu, 1987; Perry et al., 2003; Taylor, 2003; Taylor & Phillips, 2005; Thompson, 2002, 2004). Effective teachers of Black male students have knowledge of these theories and their implications and are able to effectively integrate culturally relevant pedagogy and practices into their classrooms. These characteristics enable many Black male students to overcome the plight of negative outcomes which these theories seek to explain.

How do schools meet the needs of Black male students? Public schools are challenged with meeting the needs of all students. Teachers have classrooms with more Black students than ever before and are faced each day with providing high-quality instruction for their learning. It is crucial to determine if these Black male students are noticed by their teachers, learn something each day, and are acknowledged in a manner that demonstrates care and concern for their academic and social success (Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004; Thompson, 2002, 2004;). The perceptions classroom teachers have of their Black male students have the potential to positively or negatively impact their academic learning (Dee, 2004; Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Teachers' Perceptions

Kailin's (1999) study in Lakeview focused on "the teacher as the variable" and ways in which teachers perceive the issue of racism (p. 724). Uhlenberg and Brown (2002) documented teachers' perceptions of the causes and possible solutions of the achievement gap between Black and White students. Similarly, both studies concluded that the perceptions of teachers may impact student academic performance.

The data collected from both Kailin (1999) and Uhlenberg and Brown (2002) provide information regarding the perception held by White teachers regarding race, Black male students, and Black families. Kailin (1999) explained that awareness of the influence of White privilege was absent from most of the White teachers in his study. In fact, it was as if race were invisible and never acknowledged in their minds. Only a mere 5.6 % of the teachers in this study even acknowledged that there were biases in the curriculum, aspects of school culture, and extracurricular activities (Kailin, 1999). In the North Carolina study, White teachers tended to blame the achievement gap on Blacks (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Unfortunately, blaming leads to deficit thinking and ignores the idea that becoming aware of the cultural incongruities in schooling impacts the success of Black students, especially males (Howard, 2006; Ogbu, 1987; Taylor, 2003; Taylor & Phillips, 2005; Thompson, 2004).

Social Skills Development, Social Systems, and Academic Engagement

Thorough understanding of the social development and learning styles of Black male students provides teachers with effective academic and social strategies to use in the classroom. Black males are usually more extroverted than their White counterparts and

tend to be more keenly aware of facial expressions and emotions (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999; Ford & Harris, 1996; Shade & Edwards, 1987). Investigation of Black males has also identified some additional learning characteristics: they are more visual than auditory; they are more tactile and kinesthetic; they enjoy social interaction with peers; and they thrive in environments with cooperation, structure, and nurturing rather than competition (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999; Ford & Harris, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004; Shade & Edwards, 1987; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Taylor, 2003; Taylor & Phillips, 2005; Wilson-Jones & Caston, 2004).

Therefore, the academic achievement of Black males can be improved by devising strategies that counter the effects of harmful environmental and cultural forces. An analysis of the ways in which environmental and cultural forces interact and influence academic outcomes, and how these factors shape the relationship between identity, provides recommendations for educators who seek to support young African American males (Noguera, 2003). However, changing academic outcomes and countering the risks experienced by Black males is not simply a matter of developing programs to provide support or bringing an end to unfair educational policies and practices (Kunjufu, 2002; Monroe, 2005; Nichols, 2004; Noguera, 2003).

Black males often adopt behaviors that make them complicit in their own failure. It is not just that they are more likely to be punished or placed in remedial classes; it is also that they are more likely to act out in the classroom and avoid challenging themselves academically. Behaviors exhibited by Black males are informed by their upbringing and experiences. Habitus is comprised by “one’s past and present

circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences” (Maton, 2008, pp. 51). Past experiences of repeated failure and lack of cultural connections in the classroom leads to some of the behaviors by Black male students. Recognizing that Black males are not merely passive victims but may also be active agents in their own failure means that interventions designed to help them must take this into account (Kunjufu, 2002; Monroe, 2005; Nichols, 2004; Noguera, 2003). Deepening our understanding of how individuals cope with, and respond to, their social and cultural environments is an important part of developing successful strategies for Black male students.

One aspect of developing these successful strategies may focus on the social development of Black male students. Taylor (2003) described four types of social skill deficits. These deficits occur when a student does not know how to perform a particular social skill and/or lacks the understanding for the appropriate use of the particular skill (Taylor, 2003). Ultimately, these students need a social skills curriculum to provide the specific skills necessary for academic success in school and in the world (Taylor, 2003; Taylor & Phillips, 2005). Because social interaction is reciprocal, it is important that skills be taught in an environment where students can practice. Also, behaviors should be reinforced naturally by peers and modeled by adults (Taylor, 2003). The goal of social skills development is to provide Black male students with strategies to overcome skill deficits. Some of these skills are as follows: developing positive self-esteem; developing positive social relationships; developing respect for others, rules, and regulations; and developing effective communication and decision-making skills (Okwumabua, 1999; Taylor, 2003).

In the study conducted by Price (2006), 10 urban public school teachers across eight different schools were recommended by their principals for participation based on the criterion that they were effective teachers of Black students. The goal and purpose of this study was to “discover how interactions within classroom social systems influences academic engagement” of Black students (Price, 2006, p. 128). Important components of this study were personal power, social interaction, and academic engagement.

Discovering one’s personal power begins with knowing one’s self. Price examined how personal power relates to the classroom teacher and how the teacher interacts with students in the educational setting (Price, 2006). Personal power in this context is defined as the ability to understand that one has the capability to take specific steps to create positive change in one’s life. The behavior exhibited by the teacher and his or her perceptions of and interactions with students are based on the teacher’s sense of personal power. Examination of personal power allowed Price (2006) to conclude that there are four types of people: adders, subtractors, multipliers, and dividers. Teachers who discover their personal power and choose to develop it in a positive manner—adders—will experience “an increased sense of purpose about their calling to teach, an increased passion for living and life, and a greater commitment to the profession and their students” (Price, 2006, p. 125).

The characteristics Price identified in adders were reiterated by Ladson-Billings (1994) and Kunjufu (2002) when they referred to teachers as coaches. As strong athletic coaches recognize the talent of each player, the same is true with academic coaches (teachers). They see the individual talents of each student and create an atmosphere to help students thrive (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006). These teachers see that Black

students have potential and are willing to motivate and empower them to succeed. Adders are willing to make time for their students without expecting anything in return and see themselves as giving back to the community (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Price, 2006). This comparison describes effective teachers of Black students with such qualities as the ability to operate behind the scenes while believing all students are capable of excellence.

Classrooms where Black students were consistently engaged in academics are led by teachers with the following characteristics: respectful, courteous, complimentary, active listeners, approachable, positive, high energy, and knowledgeable (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Price, 2006; Taylor, 2003; Thompson; 2002, 2004). They respect each student and give their time without expecting something in return, and, most importantly, they have “demonstrated respect and appreciation for cultural diversity” (Price, 2006, p. 132). Finally, Price’s study provided the following specific strategies for effective teaching of Black male students: understand and learn more about one’s own personal power, discover the story in one’s students through critical questions, learn how to be a more effective leader in the classroom, and use words to motivate and encourage students (Price, 2006).

The conclusions drawn from Price’s study mirror the information gathered from Ladson-Billings (1994), Levine et al. (2000), and Thompson (2002). The characteristics necessary for Black student success are the same as those characteristics of culturally relevant teachers and classrooms where racial and cultural differences are appreciated and valued by teachers (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Hyland, 2005). Classrooms that have mutual respect, high expectations, authentic cognitive applications, and positive interaction between the teacher and students provide cultural salience in an environment where

Black middle school students can be successful (Hale, 2001; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004; Levine et al., 2000; Price, 2006; Taylor, 2003; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Middle school and positive academic performance

Middle School

Middle school can be configured in a variety of methods and house students in Grades 5 through 9. For the purpose of this study, *middle school* refers to students in Grades 6 through 8. Middle schools are designed to provide a smooth transition for students from elementary to middle to high school (Styron & Nyman, 2008). Effective middle schools provide a positive and safe school climate; effective organizational structures, such as interdisciplinary teams; varied instructional practices; and professional development for staff (Styron & Nyman, 2008). Middle schools are effective when all students have a healthy climate that cultivates respectful, supportive, and nurturing relationships among the staff, students, and community (Styron & Nyman, 2008; Swaim, 2003). Collaboration among the entire community fosters an atmosphere where students can be academically successful (Styron & Nyman, 2008).

The organizational structures, instructional practices, and professional development compliment the positive climate within a middle school. Interdisciplinary teams provide a common planning time that facilitates collaborative decision-making and curriculum integration (Danielson, 2002; Styron & Nyman, 2008). Effective teachers of middle school students use this collaborative planning time to design units that provide varied instructional strategies for students. Middle school teachers who vary instructional practice and assessment to meet the developmental needs of students often see high

academic achievement (Styron & Nyman, 2008). Finally, professional development that supports the collaboration of teachers and various instructional strategies, such as Marzano's nine high-yield strategies, provides the support necessary for continued success within the school environment (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Styron & Nyman, 2008).

Marzano identified the following nine high-yield strategies: (a) identifying similarities and differences, (b) summarizing and note-taking, (c) reinforcing effort and providing recognition, (d) homework and practice, (e) nonlinguistic representations, (f) cooperative learning, (g) setting objectives and providing feedback, (h) generating and testing hypotheses, and (i) questions, cues, and advance organizers (Marzano et al., 2001). The research conduct at McREL was designed to identify instructional strategies that will provide the highest probability to increase student achievement. These nine high-yield strategies provide the greatest impact for positive academic results for students in all grade levels. When these strategies are used appropriately and consistently in classrooms, students have an opportunity to access the curriculum (Marzano et al., 2001). Effective classroom teachers provide instructional opportunities for students to interact with content in a manner that increases student achievement.

Marzano's strategies of identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note-taking, and cooperative learning focus on the teacher's role in providing specific instructional opportunities for students. The strategy of identifying similarities and differences includes comparing, classifying, creating metaphors, and creating analogies (Marzano et al., 2001). Teachers should create opportunities for classroom activities that allow students to interact with content by grouping things into categories and identifying

relationships between concepts. Developing the skills of summarization and effective note-taking requires that the classroom teacher provide explicit instruction for all students. Students have to learn how to identify important and extraneous information in text as well as the structure of the text. Finally, cooperative learning is more than just placing students in small groups. Cooperative learning has five defining elements: “positive interdependence; face-to-face promotive interactive; individual and group accountability; interpersonal and small group skills; and group processing” (Marzano et al., 2001, pp. 85-86). Cooperative learning strategies allow students to interact with each other and the academic content in an effective manner. These three strategies—identifying similarities and difference, summarizing and note taking, and cooperative learning—occur in classrooms when the teacher is deliberate and purposeful in the classroom instruction necessary for high student learning.

Marzano’s other high-yield instructional strategies include setting objectives; nonlinguistic representations; generating and testing hypotheses; cues, questions and advance organizers; and homework and practice (Marzano et al., 2001). Setting objectives and providing feedback is most effective when teachers use the following generalizations: “instructional goals narrow what students focus on, instructional goals should not be too specific, and students should be encouraged to personalize the teacher’s goals” (Marzano et al., 2001, p. 94). This particular strategy initiates the learning process and provides guidelines for students to be successful academically. Within classroom instruction the use of nonlinguistic representations provides students with an opportunity to visualize the content in different ways. This strategy includes creating “graphic representations, making physical models, generating mental pictures, drawing pictures

and photographs, and engaging in kinesthetic activity” (Marzano et al., 2001, pp. 73-74). Effective use of this strategy allows students to create a representation for their learning within the classroom. Generating hypotheses, questioning, and advance organizers provide students with strategies and opportunities to communicate their knowledge to the classroom teacher. Students are challenged to clearly explain their hypotheses and conclusions to teachers. Often this can be followed by the teacher asking high level questions that elicit inferences from students. The final strategy, homework and practice, is successful only when it is explained to the student explicitly and provides them with the opportunity to elaborate on content already mastered in the regular classroom (Marzano et al., 2001). In addition, homework has more success when parent involvement is limited and feedback is provided by the teacher (Marzano et al., 2001).

Positive Academic Performance

In the current era of accountability, a positive academic result for middle school students is important not only for each student; it is also important for the entire school community (Hoffman & Nottis, 2008; Styron & Nyman, 2008). Hoffman and Nottis (2008) found that eighth grade students were motivated by extrinsic rewards and knowing that a member of school administration may review their test answers. In fact, male students were more likely than female students to value snacks and other extrinsic rewards offered for their success; females were more influenced by tasks completed during the year and on the particular high-stakes test (Hoffman & Nottis, 2008). The classrooms in this study were also identified as classrooms with teachers who had positive relationships with their students. In another study, Patrick and Ryan (2007) discovered that creating, developing, and sustaining positive relationships with students

led to high student academic mastery. Their study was conducted using approximately 200 students attending a traditional rural middle school. Additionally, when students believed that their teacher did not care about them or was unfriendly, students demonstrated little concern or efficacy for mastery (Haselhuhn, Al-Mabuk, Gabriele, Groen, & Galloway, 2007; Patrick & Ryan, 2007). The perception and power of the classroom teachers' relationship with his/her students can positively or negatively affect student academic success (Ferguson, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Thompson, 2004).

A study conducted by Wenglinsky (2004) found evidence that middle schools can make a positive difference in the Black-White test gap. Due to the requirements of No Child Left Behind, "testing primarily occurs during the middle school years," which places a significant burden on these schools to reduce the achievement gap between Black and White students (Wenglinsky, 2004, p. 1). The purpose of Wenglinsky's study was to investigate which instructional practices can be modified to reduce this achievement gap. The conclusions indicate that there was a positive impact on Black students when the following strategies occurred: students work in groups, communication is emphasized, and students do math projects (Wenglinsky, 2004). Cooperative learning groups have been identified as an effective strategy for Black students and are often employed by culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006; Marzano et al., 2001; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

In addition to these qualitative studies (Coleman, 2007; Howard, 2001; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004) that examined the results of culturally relevant practices, Love and Kruger (2005) developed a survey to address the

link between these practices and student achievement on standardized assessments. Prior to this study, researchers had not specifically examined how teachers' beliefs vary with student achievement. Love and Kruger's (2005) study sought to (a) create a survey that measures teachers' culturally relevant beliefs based on Ladson-Billings (2004), (b) sample beliefs of teachers who teach mainly Black students in urban schools, and (c) ascertain which specific beliefs correlate to higher student achievement on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

This study was conducted in the southeastern United States in low-wealth, urban elementary schools with high percentages of Black students (Love & Kruger, 2005). There were over 240 teachers and other certified and classified staff included, ranging from no prior experience to over 37 years (Love & Kruger, 2005). Participants provided demographic and background information to the researchers. Through this self-identification, 48% were Black; 42%, Hispanic; 3%, biracial; and 7% did not report an ethnicity. All of the participants completed the survey by responding to a five-point likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The survey included 48 total items: 23 of the statements were aligned to the belief that ignores a student's cultural characteristics, while 25 of the items were aligned with culturally relevant practices (Love & Kruger, 2005). The questionnaire was divided into the following six dimensions: "(a) knowledge; (b) students' race, ethnicity, and culture; (c) social relations in and beyond the classroom; (d) teaching as a profession; (e) teaching practice; and (f) students' needs and strengths (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 89). Each question was directly linked to a specific dimension, and responses were used to draw specific conclusions about teachers' practices and beliefs.

The results of this study provide positive implications for future research regarding the correlation of culturally relevant practices and positive academic achievement. These data indicate that teachers overwhelmingly believe effective teaching involves “creativity, flexibility, and attention to students’ responses” and “the importance of students’ race, culture and ethnicity” (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 95). The results are similar to those found in Ladson-Billings’ (2004) study. The conclusions for achievement were based on the correlation of the survey items on the questionnaire to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Love & Kruger, 2005). Nine of the items on the survey correlated significantly with high student achievement. Seven of the nine statements are aligned with beliefs of successful teachers of Black students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Foster, 1997). Love and Kruger (2005) indicated the following statements are highly correlated with positive student achievement: “(a) ability to connect with students, (b) interdependence of students on one another for success, (c) seeing and hearing parents, (d) teaching as a way of giving back to the community, (e) switching roles with students in the classroom, and (f) believing in the success of all students” (pp. 96-97).

This study provides positive implications for further research; however, there are some limitations that should be noted. Participants self-reported and completed the survey, and they may have had a bias to some of the organized change efforts in the schools (Love & Kruger, 2005). Also, standardized test scores are only one measure of successful student achievement and can be perceived as controversial (Love & Kruger, 2005). Nevertheless, the link identified between culturally relevant practices and teaching strategies and the success of Black students is significant. The survey used in this study expounds on the previous research of Ladson-Billings (1994) to demonstrate how

characteristics of teachers can provide an educational environment where Black students can be successful on standardized assessments.

Motivation

How does motivation impact student learning? There is a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for students. Intrinsically motivated students tend to complete an activity because they enjoy it; however, extrinsically motivated students do so to receive a reward (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Research studies have demonstrated that social and academic goals relate to adolescents' academic success and social behavior (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Kaplan & Maehr, 1999; Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998; Wentzel, 2003).

Mucherah and Yoder (2008) investigated the correlation between reading motivation and student performance on the standardized reading test in Indiana. Previous research from Baker and Wigfield (1999), Oldfather and Wigfield (1996), Rowe (1991), and Wigfield (1994) suggesting that students' motivation can positively affect performance in areas such as reading initiated this study. This study used the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) developed by Wigfield and Guthrie in 1995. The MRQ has three categories: self efficacy, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation and goals, and social aspects of motivation (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Each of the 388 sixth and eighth grade students from two public middle schools in Indiana was given the survey. These data were compared to the results on the Indiana state reading assessment given each year to all students.

The comparison of data was used to determine which dimensions of motivation were related to performance on the Indian state assessments; to assess whether students'

motivation to read was influenced by school, grade, gender, or race; and, finally, to investigate which specific motivation aspects predicted high performance on the Indiana assessments (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). The results clearly indicate that certain reading motivation is significantly related to student performance on the Indiana state assessment in reading. When students had high self efficacy and enjoyed reading, they performed better than their counterparts who did not enjoy reading, as measured by results from the MRQ and the assessment data. This study also indicates that minority students outperformed their majority counterparts in reading curiosity. Unfortunately, reading curiosity did not have high correlation to higher success on the Indiana state assessment (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Also, minority males in one of the schools outperformed all other participants. The researchers noted that further research would be necessary to explain why; however, this could be due to special reading programs and/or specific instructional strategies employed at the school for this group of students.

Academic and social successes are important to the overall achievement of middle school students. Teachers use various strategies to create an environment that motivates students to be socially and academically successful (Wentzel, 2003). A model described by Wentzel (2003) identifies positive, pro-social behavior as helping, sharing, and cooperating. These behaviors are also reiterated in classrooms where teachers employ culturally relevant practices (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004, 2006; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2001; Wentzel, 2003; Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004). Teachers who have a deep understanding of the developmental characteristics of children, especially adolescents, can define specific criteria of social competence that motivates students to conform appropriately (Wentzel, 2003). Outcomes

for students that have been previously identified by researchers in the area of motivation and academic success include the following: sharing with others, being helpful to others, being responsive to rules, being persistent, being inquisitive, and getting good grades (Wentzel, 2003). Ultimately, students become socially successful when they can achieve those goals both in school and life.

Rural, urban, and low-wealth schools

According to NCES, over 84 million schools were categorized as rural and low-income in 2006 (retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007> on August 5, 2008). The characteristics of these schools present a myriad of challenges for teachers and school leaders. Rural schools often have a significant number of students who live in poverty; in fact, this number is usually larger than that in suburban and urban areas (retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/ruraled/chapter1_7.asp on August 5, 2008). Rural schools can be characterized as facing the following challenges: students who live in poverty, smaller tax base, students from migrant and immigrant families, and students who are more transient than those in suburban schools (Beeson, 2001). Starry Sky is located in the Southeast, which has the nation's largest percentage of students enrolled in rural schools (retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/ruraled/chapter1_4.asp on August 5, 2008). Due to its location, the school district would be described as both rural and low-wealth. In 2006, over 19% of the families within the county were living below the poverty level (retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pub2007/ruraled/tables/table1_4asp?referrer=report on August 5, 2008).

Starry Sky School District is a rural district with approximately 33% minority students. Based on data from NCES in 2003, only 6% of rural schools nation-wide have

minority student percentages higher than 75%, while 63.4% of large city/urban schools have schools with over 75% minority students (retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/ruraled/exhibit_a.asp on April 5, 2009). These data suggest that urban schools are characterized by high numbers of minority students, especially Black, and high numbers of White teachers. Also, many urban schools have high instances of poverty (Kunjufu, 2002). The middle schools used in this study have higher percentages of students in poverty than the school system average, about 33%, and in that way are more like the urban schools examined in much of the literature. The challenge faced by these schools is unique and provides possible application to other schools that may be both rural and low-wealth.

Cultural Relevance

Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities

Thorough investigation of voluntary and involuntary minority groups provides insight into academic success in school. *Voluntary minorities* are described as those groups who migrated to the United States (Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992). Usually this journey was in hope of a better future, both socially and financially. These voluntary minority groups have cultural models and strategies that enable them to interpret hardships as temporary challenges that can be overcome with education and hard work. On the other hand, *involuntary minorities* are part of American society due to slavery, conquest, or colonization (Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992). Involuntary minorities include Blacks, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and native Hawaiians who have no other homeland to return to. These involuntary minority groups are more likely to experience significant challenges in schools (Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992).

Why is the schooling process more difficult for involuntary minority groups? The overarching cultural models for these minority groups have led them to conclude that their race is the reason for their economic challenges and other difficulties. In fact, they may attribute these hardships to institutionalized discrimination (Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992). Furthermore, some of these minority groups must overcome difference in language and other cultural norms to be academically successful in traditional school settings (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992; Thompson, 2004). Involuntary minorities are more likely to need a curriculum that embraces their culture, learning and communication style to be academically successful (Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992). Teachers who have knowledge of this history and dynamic must embrace the qualities of culturally relevant pedagogy to ensure academic success of both voluntary and involuntary minority groups (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004, 2006; Ogbu, 1982, 1987, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2001).

Culture and Race

Race is endemic in American society and is evident when class- and gender-based arguments “are not powerful enough to explain the variance in school experience or performance” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 51). Race is deeply ingrained in American life in all aspects, including legally, culturally, and psychologically (Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Monroe, 2005; Nichols, 2004). Although there is some research that examines the issues of class and race in schools, taken alone or together they do not account for the extraordinarily high rates of school dropout, suspension, expulsion and failure among Black males (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Gross (1993) examined student academic performance in math in

Grades 4 and 6. In Grade 4, 92% of Black students and 86% of White students scored in the highest group of stanines on the California Achievement Test for Mathematics. However, only 68% of same cohort of Black students scored in highest stanines in Grade 6 (Gross, 1993). These results were contrary to in-school academic performance in math. What theory explains this drop in academic performance for Black students? One could possibly apply Steele's (Perry et al., 2003) stereotype threat or teachers' expectations (Ferguson, 1998). These findings reiterate that race is a significant factor for academic achievement in America, and Black students have academic performance that is significantly below their White counterparts (Addison & Westmoreland, 1999; Ferguson, 1999; Hedges & Nowell, 1998; Howard, 2003).

The misunderstandings of culture between Whites and Blacks lead to academic and behavior struggles within the classroom. Black students tend to have higher suspension and dropout rates when compared to White students (Kunjufu, 2002; Monroe, 2005; Nichols, 2004). This may be a result of a cultural mismatch between White teachers and Black students, leading to unclear expectations and possible repeated office referrals (Irvine, 1990). The cycle of failing Black students can continue when White teachers do not understand each student's culture (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2005; Ogbu, 1987, 1992). Unfortunately, this phenomenon is evident in other studies and in culturally relevant recommendations for teachers (Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ogbu, 1987; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). When White teachers acknowledge race and culture as a factor for educating children, they have the ability to integrate more effective instructional strategies for all children (Howard, 2006; Hyland, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002).

What defines the difference between race and culture? According to Lindsey et al. (2003), “Culture is defined to include all shared characteristics of human description, including age, gender, geography, ancestry, language, history, sexual orientation, and physical ability, as well as occupation and affiliations” (p. 14). Race, on the other hand, is the notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics. When classroom teachers have limited knowledge of the complexity of both race and culture, assumptions may occur that eventually penalize Black students (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Nichols, 2004). Ladson-Billings (2004) argued that “culture is an exotic element possessed” by all people and is too often used as a convenient explanation for why Black students cannot achieve academic success in the classroom (p. 83). Culture can be acquired, modified and changed, whereas race remains constant. White female teachers can become multicultural and develop an appreciation of their students’ culture; however, they will still be considered White. Some White teachers develop an understanding and appreciation of both race and culture, therefore providing an academically appropriate environment for Black males (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mazzei, 2008).

Teachers’ perceptions of their actions and culture contribute to the classroom environment as well (Ferguson, 1998; Howard, 2006; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Hyland (2005) conducted ethnographic research in an effort to describe the roles and behaviors of four White teachers in an elementary school. All four teachers described themselves as successful White teachers of Black students. This assumption could lead to identifying them as culturally relevant teachers as described by Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2004). However, through careful observations and ethnographic interviewing,

Hyland noted that three of the four described their role as teachers in ways that were identified as actually perpetuating racism: a good teacher is a helper; a good teacher is assimilated; and a good teacher is an intercultural communicator (Hyland, 2005). Initially, these descriptors may be seen as good; however, central to these metaphors is that the Black students and families are needy and that low expectations are the only way for Black students to be academically successful (Hyland, 2005). In fact, these metaphors were echoed in a research study conducted by Milner and Howard (2004) in which participants described the perception that White education would rescue Black children after the landmark *Brown* decision in 1954. This “rescue” model, held by White and Black educators after the *Brown* decision, as by the teachers in Hyland’s study, is based on an assumption that Black children are bad, their families are bad, and the curriculum they have learned is bad (Milner & Howard, 2004; Hyland, 2005); therefore, Black children must be rescued by White teachers. In contrast, culturally relevant teachers recognize that the knowledge Black students bring to the classroom can be re-created into the knowledge necessary to be academically successful in the school setting (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2001). They see the knowledge Black students possess in a positive manner and in that perception add to their students’ experience, rather than indicating Black students need to be rescued (Delpit, 2006; Milner & Howard, 2004; Price, 2006).

When educators face the challenge of Black students who come to school lacking the skills of their White counterparts, often “we put them on a track of slower pace” (Delpit, 2006, p. 221). Where do we expect them to end up? Do we really expect them to miraculously move to the more accelerated academic educational pathway? Effective

classroom teachers of Black students believe in the philosophy of more, not less. When teachers are dedicated to filling any academic gaps and accelerating students forward, students begin to see academic success. Once we begin to teach them more, we must create an atmosphere that verbally and nonverbally demonstrates they can learn and achieve academic success. As Delpit (2006) concluded, “To teach children who have internalized racist beliefs about themselves, one of the things that successful teachers must constantly say to them is, you will learn” (p. 225).

Frequently, Black children come to school with many skills and talents; however, they are not contextualized in a manner of public school knowledge. Students may be able to rap the newest version of a hip-hop song; however, they have no understanding of poetry rhyme and meter (Delpit, 2006). Effective teachers become “cultural brokers”; that is, they have the ability to identify these strengths and translate them into new knowledge necessary for academic success (Delpit, 2006, p. 226). This understanding allows students to use their “street knowledge” in the classroom, which creates an atmosphere where students can feel successful. Recognizing each student’s strengths is a foundational step necessary to develop an emotional connection between the teacher and the students. As Delpit (2006) explains, “If [students] do not feel connected to a teacher on an emotional level, they will not learn, they will not put out the effort” (p. 227). The connection and relationship needed by classroom teachers is reiterated by Howard (2006), Ladson-Billings (1994, 2004, 2006), Milner and Howard (2004), Murrell (2002), Taylor (2003), Taylor and Phillips (2005), and Villegas and Lucas (2001). As Delpit (2006) put it, “Teachers truly can revolutionize the education system and save this country, one classroom at a time” (p. 231).

Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio)

Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio) is a well-known experiment in reducing class size (Dee, 2004). This project followed a cohort of over 11,000 students from 79 schools as they matriculated from kindergarten through third grade. Students were randomly assigned to two types of classrooms: a small class of 15 students or a larger class with 22 students. Students in Project STAR were administered the Stanford Achievement Tests in math and reading during the spring of each year they were in the study. Ninety-four percent of White students were in classrooms with White teachers, while only 45% of the Black students had Black teachers. Testing results indicated that Black children's having a Black teacher resulted in a three to five percentile point increase in math scores and a three to six percentile point increase in reading scores. These results suggest that increasing the number of minority teachers is a simple solution to the systemic educational dilemma of Black student underachievement.

These results evoke many questions about the impact on learning based on the race of the classroom teacher. Upon further investigation of the data, including classrooms and schools involved in the study, Dee (2004) stated that the "same difference could also indicate that classroom racial dynamics such as stereotype threat and role model effects are particularly relevant in more disadvantaged and segregated communities" (p. 58). For further investigation, Dee (2004) suggested comparing students within the same classroom, some of whom share the teacher's race while others do not. While acknowledging that the results of his study "could be construed narrowly as supporting increased racial segregation of teachers and students as a means of improving overall achievement," ultimately Dee cautioned against such a conclusion:

“Not only is the interpretation blind to the potentially adverse social consequences of such a policy,” he said, the results of Project STAR do not inform educators about “why the racial match between students and teachers seems to matter” (2004, p. 59).

Color-Blindness

“Color-blindness” may manifest itself when teachers espouse that they do not see race but treat all students the same. Many teachers even believe that this color-blind position is effective in eradicating racism in schools and classrooms (Chubbuck, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ferguson, 1999). However, this paradigm ultimately prevents teachers from reflecting on their own classroom practices and their role in the underachievement of Black students (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005). One of the foundational tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and practice is acceptance and understanding of students’ culture. Culturally relevant teachers “encourage academic success and cultural competence” and help students “to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). The perceptions, beliefs, expectations, and behaviors of self-professed color-blind teachers may sustain, “and perhaps even expand, the Black-White test score gap” (Ferguson, 1999, p. 313). In contrast, successful teachers of Black students focus on developing student academic achievement and promoting students’ social-political consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2004, 2006).

Culturally relevant pedagogy and teachers

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy is described by Ladson-Billings (1995) as practice that addresses students’ academic achievement while helping students accept and affirm their individual cultural identity. Teachers who practice this pedagogical model also

challenge the inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006). Successful teachers of Black students have the unique ability to look keenly for talents and gifts in students rather than simply finding a plethora of deficits (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004). They are able to view students as human beings with a rich culture that is valued and appropriately integrated into the pedagogical practice (Thompson, 2002, 2004). Finally, this pedagogy can be described as a practice with the following components (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2004):

1. An active-reflective theory of teaching and learning
2. Knowledge in practice
3. A system of organizing human systems, instructional material, and human resources that promotes the learning and development of children
4. A rich cultural content
5. A socio-culturally, linguistically, and historically grounded system of teaching

Accomplished and effective teachers of Black students comprehend these facets and integrate this paradigm into their classrooms daily (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Teachers who are successful in educating Black students understand how to create an intellectual environment and cultural community that provides social, intellectual, and cultural learning and development (Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2004). These teachers challenge themselves to develop a profound knowledge of their students' culture, history, language, life, and community (Murrell, 2002). This knowledge enables them to establish meaningful, caring relationships with each student (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006;

Murrell; 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2001). In addition, this pedagogical practice culminates daily by stewarding students into capable, caring, and intelligent young adults (Murrell, 2002).

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally relevant teachers (CRT) understand the importance of social relationships within the school context. These teachers effectively demonstrate a connectedness with students while creating a community of learners within the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). CRT have a core knowledge of themselves as agents within the classroom and have the ability to use that knowledge to construct learning that has meaning to students (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Finally, the relationship created is “fluid, humanely equitable, and extends to interactions beyond the classroom and into the community” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 55).

The practice of CRT “entails a highly complex set of professional knowledge, including curriculum, pedagogy, instructional design, developmental psychology, history and philosophy of education, legal issues, human relationships, cross-cultural communication, conflict management, and more” (Howard, 2006, p. 126). Specific behaviors practiced by these teachers may include the following: (a) involving students in the construction of knowledge, (b) helping students access prior knowledge, (c) reminding students of the big picture, (d) encouraging students to synthesize, and (e) giving students multiple ways to succeed academically (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). When schools encourage and support the development of culturally relevant practices, they provide self determination for students,

honor and respect the students' home culture, and help Black students understand the world as it is and equip them to change it in a positive manner (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Culturally relevant teachers exemplify these beliefs daily within their classrooms in several ways. These environments can be identified by reviewing assignments that emphasize cultural salience. Academic rigor is appropriately implemented in elementary and middle school classrooms to prepare students for honors and advanced placement courses in high school (Hale 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Finally, the school leader supports these teachers by providing an infrastructure that values each child's culture and ensures that appropriate instructional and curricular materials are available for each classroom (Hale, 2001).

Conceptual Framework

The Achievement Triangle

The Achievement Triangle (Howard, 2006) describes the process and behaviors of a transformationist teacher. The aspects of the Achievement Triangle include: (a) knowing myself, (b) knowing my practice, (c) knowing my students, (d) the doorway of rigor, (e) the doorway of responsiveness, (f) the doorway of relationships, (g) passion for equity, (h) cultural competence, and (i) culturally responsive teaching (see Appendix A). The aspects of the Achievement Triangle assume the behaviors and characteristics of a transformationist teacher (Howard, 2006). These teachers actively take responsibility for unraveling and ending classroom practices that perpetuate the achievement gap between Black and White students.

The inside of the Achievement Triangle includes the aspects of (a) knowing myself, (b) knowing my practice, and (c) knowing my students. The foundation of this

triangle refers to the teacher knowing and understanding his/her practice. *Practice* specifically refers to knowledge of content as well as cultural aspects of students and schooling. Additionally, teachers need a set of complex skills including instructional development and design, pedagogy, history, philosophy of education, human relations, and conflict management (Howard, 2006). The knowledge foundation continues to thrive as the teacher learns new information and integrates it into effective practice within the classroom.

Knowing my practice

One aspect of The Achievement Triangle is that the teacher knows his or her practice. In this framework, *practice* refers to the pedagogical expectations required of classroom teachers. Black students are often disproportionately exposed to teachers who are less qualified than their White counterparts (Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002). Teachers who understand their specific content in middle school have developed a highly complex set of skills which enables them to transfer knowledge in a collaborative manner within the classroom. Furthermore, these teachers understand the need for knowledge to be recreated, recycled, and shared by both the student and the teacher (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This type of classroom environment provides ownership among the student and the teacher for the creation of knowledge; therefore, learning is not static (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Knowledge of practice assumes that teachers will integrate research-based instructional strategies that provide students with the best opportunity to be academically successful (Hardre et al., 2007). Observable practices demonstrated by teachers who know and understand their practice have been identified as (a) involving students in the construction of knowledge, (b) helping students access prior knowledge,

(c) reminding students of the big picture, (d) encouraging students to synthesize, and (e) giving students multiple ways to succeed academically (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006; Thompson, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Finally, knowledge of one's practice also requires constant and honest reflection on classroom behaviors and their impact on student academic success (Howard, 2006). This aspect of The Achievement Triangle is important; however, it only represents one third of the necessary skills for creating a culturally relevant classroom environment for Black students.

Knowing myself

Another dimension of this framework refers to the set of experiences required for knowing themselves as teachers and instructional leaders within the classroom. Knowing oneself as a teacher includes racial, personal, political, and professional identities. For White teachers this means acknowledging and understanding their identity as White persons (Howard, 2006). Kunjufu (2002) has explained that the evidence of race and color is seen through teachers' actions, bulletin boards, curriculum content, and relationships with students. In an effort to help White teachers become more effective with Black students, Kunjufu has recommended three steps: (a) admit race as a factor, (b) understand race by reading the history and culture of students, and (c) appreciate the culture. Within this dimension, teachers can examine their Whiteness and their racial identity in a manner that leads to reflective practice in the classroom (Howard, 2006; Hyland, 2005). This reflection provides a filter that is necessary to limit the powerful ideology and social construct of White privilege and power within the classroom (Hyland, 2005). White teachers who are ignorant about the social construction of race

and their individual racial development potentially create a dangerous classroom environment for all students, not just Black students (Howard, 2006).

Transformationist teachers have discovered a profound shift in thinking and application of race within their personal and professional lives. These teachers have depth of knowledge in their understanding of the dominant culture and its social construction. This knowledge demonstrates a passion for equity. Their practices reinforce countering the dominant paradigm of the achievement gap and other racial, social and gender inequities that exist (Howard, 2006). In addition, they understand how race can manifest itself within the classroom and how to ensure that each student's race and culture are valued and appreciated (Howard, 2006). They are also committed to dismantling the legacy of privilege and foundations of White hegemony. Within schools, these teachers willingly educate their White colleagues about privilege and power and how to prevent these paradigms from entering the classroom environment (Howard, 2006). Ultimately, when teachers know themselves, they take ownership of "unraveling the classroom inequities" that perpetuate White dominance and the achievement gap between Black and White students (Howard, 2006, p. 119).

Knowing my students

One of the most critical aspects of this framework is the teacher's knowing his or her students. The degree to which teachers understand themselves as racial beings is related to the extent that they can create meaningful relationships with their students (Howard, 2006). The process of knowing one's students is complex and includes an understanding of culture, racial identity, language, family background, home situations, learning characteristics, economic status, personality, strengths and challenges (Howard,

2006). Ultimately, the more teachers know about themselves as leaders in the classrooms and their students, the more students will be authentically engaged in the learning process. The more teachers know and understand their students, the less likely they will project their own individual beliefs, assumptions, and biases within the classroom environment (Howard, 2006).

Classroom teachers who exhibit characteristics of knowing their students and using this knowledge about themselves and their practice create classrooms that represent culturally relevant practices. These characteristics are reiterated by both Price (2006) and Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2006), albeit with different terminology: Price (2006) uses the term *adders*, while Ladson-Billings (1994) refers to these master teachers as *culturally relevant* and *coaches*. These teachers see that Black students have potential and are willing to motivate and empower them to succeed. They also are willing to make time for their students without expecting anything in return and see themselves as giving back to the community (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Price, 2006). Effective teachers of Black students demonstrate the ability to believe that all students are capable of excellence. They see the individual talents of each student and create an atmosphere to help students thrive (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006).

Classrooms where Black students are consistently engaged in academics have teachers with the following characteristics: respectful, courteous, complimentary, active listeners, approachable, positive, high energy, and knowledgeable (Price, 2006). They respect each student and give their time without expecting something in return, and, most importantly, they demonstrate “respect and appreciation for cultural diversity” (Price, 2006, p. 132). Finally, these teachers can use their personal power and agency to create

classrooms where Black students are successful. Some of the strategies include the following: (a) reflect and reevaluate your calling as a teacher; (b) learn about how to be a more effective leader in your classroom; (c) discover the story in your students through critical but thoughtful questions; (d) encourage your students to dream and envision their future and then ask them to write it down; (e) challenge your students to achieve and refuse to let students fail by giving them opportunities to try again; (f) use your words to motivate and encourage students; and (g) create a personal vision for yourself as a teacher and for all of your students (Price, 2006).

Classrooms where teachers know their students and appreciate their respective cultures create an environment where Black students can be successful (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Hyland, 2005). Classrooms that have mutual respect, high expectations, authentic cognitive applications, and positive interaction between the teacher and other students provide an environment for students to demonstrate success on classroom activities and standardized assessments (Kunjufu, 2002; Hale, 2001; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006; Levine et al., 2000; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Price, 2006). Furthermore, these teachers exhibit cultural competence toward educating their students. The evidence of this competence is through acknowledgement of the racial and cultural dominating forces within the world (Howard, 2006). Acceptance of the cultural aspects of all students and willingness to integrate culture into the academic expectations of the classroom provide an environment for students to show academic success in classroom activities. Collectively, these behaviors describe a transformationist teacher who provides a process for engaging students and recognizing their own individual identities and cultures (Howard, 2006).

The Doorways of Rigor, responsiveness, and relationships

The Achievement Triangle also represents a very important aspect of culturally relevant teaching: relationships. The relationship between the teacher and the student allows the teacher to respond to the individual needs of the student. These needs may include affirming students' cultural connections and creating opportunities for individual and cooperative activities (Howard, 2006). The more teachers know about their students, the more opportunity there is for academic success on standardized assessments (Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The three major points on the Achievement Triangle are *rigor*, *responsiveness*, and *relationship*. Ladson-Billings (1994) describes culturally relevant teachers with a deep conception of themselves, others, and the social relationships necessary for students to thrive academically on classroom activities and standardized assessments. In *Through Ebony Eyes: What teachers need to know but are afraid to ask about African American students*, Thompson (2004) reiterates this aspect by noting relationships as one of the critical aspects necessary for teachers. Rigor, responsiveness, and relationships occur at the intersection of two dimensions within The Achievement Triangle. Collectively accessing the doorway to each component, along with a passion for equity, cultural competence, and culturally responsive teaching, creates a holistic view for teaching that can positively impact Black students.

The doorway of rigor

Howard (2006) defines *rigor* as “being relentless in our belief in our students’ capacity to learn and being equally vigilant in improving our capacity to teach” (p. 129). Rigor encompasses the ability to care deeply about each child and having high

expectations for academic achievement (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Effective teachers of Black students have high expectations for students; they believe in teaching more, not less; and they recognize and build on students' strengths (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This description demonstrates the intersection of *knowing myself* and *knowing my practice* (see Appendix A). The doorway leads to the relentless passion and belief that all students have the capacity to be academically successful and to personal improvement in classroom teaching practices for all students (Howard, 2006).

The doorway of responsiveness

Responsiveness is the ability and capacity of teachers to know and connect content with the actual lived experiences of students in the classroom (Howard, 2006). The transformationist teacher makes the learning experience real for students by constructing knowledge and connecting it to the real world (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2004). The doorway to responsiveness occurs at the integration of *knowing my students* and *knowing my practice*. This point directly refers to the capacity of classroom teachers to create real-world learning experiences that directly connect with the students' environment (Howard, 2006). These teachers have a significant depth of understanding about the differing modalities of students within their classroom and adapt their instructional practices to respond to the needs of each learner.

The doorway of relationships

Relationships occur on The Achievement Triangle at the intersection between *knowing myself* and *knowing my students*. This point refers to an authentic, meaningful

relationship between the teacher and students. The foundation of this relationship provides motivation for the students to know that the teacher acknowledges and values his/her presence within the classroom environment (Howard, 2006). The effectiveness of this relationship can be measured by the opportunities for academic success that are created for the student by the teacher. This powerful relationship between a White female teacher and her Black students occurs when there is a commitment toward a journey of cultural competence. When teachers value, appreciate, and respect students' culture and history, the relationship can impact student success (Howard, 2006). Teachers must have persistent passion for making a personal connection with each and every child within the classroom.

Developing a personal relationship with students demonstrates that the teacher cares about their academic, social, and personal development. Thompson (2004) reiterates how important caring is in *Through Ebony Eyes*. Thompson identified 18 strategies that are effective with Black students. These strategies are as follows:

1. Let students know you care.
2. Share the real you, by letting them see you are a real human being.
3. Have high expectations.
4. Keep reminding them of the big picture and why what they are doing in class is important.
5. Get to know students on a personal level.
6. Make the classroom experience relevant to the real world.
7. Use schema theory.
8. Use storytelling to arouse their interest.

9. Showcase their talent.
10. Give students multiple ways to succeed academically.
11. Encourage them to synthesize.
12. Use questioning to spark discussion.
13. Encourage students to write letters to authors of books they have read.
14. Stress core vocabulary.
15. Use the old and the new (with reference to postmodern literature, multicultural literature as well as the classics).
16. Assign regular, beneficial homework.
17. Offer multiple extra credit opportunities.
18. Assess their skills and knowledge in advance.

(Thompson, 2004, pp. 65-68)

Two of the strategies noted are “let students know you care” and “get to know students on a personal level” (Thompson, 2004, pp. 65). The high school students Thompson (2002) studied indicated that they believed 61% of their high school teachers cared about them. This percentage is higher than the middle school percentage of 54%. Teachers’ developing effective and meaningful relationships with students is very important for all students (Kunjufu, 2002, Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004). It is important to ask, then, why, according to Thompson’s study, middle schools have the lowest percentage of students who believe their teachers care about them.

Teachers undoubtedly have the power to alter what happens in classrooms in America (Delpit, 2006; Ferguson, 1998). There are schools in America such as “the Marcus Garvey School in Los Angeles, California; the Chick School in Kansas City,

Missouri””; and many others where students are academically successful despite their race and socioeconomic status (Delpit, 2006, p. 220). The truth and reality of education in American public schools is that, with modification in attitudes and behaviors, classroom teachers can change the lives of their students (Delpit, 2006). The foundation of the recommended precepts from Delpit is effective and meaningful relationships with students (2006). The following are 10 lessons employed by teachers who develop these relationships:

1. See their brilliance; do not teach less content to poor, urban children, but instead teach more.
2. Ensure that all children gain access to basic skills, the conventions and strategies essential to success in American society.
3. Whatever methodology or instructional program is used, demand critical thinking.
4. Provide the emotional ego strength to challenge racist societal views of the competence and worthiness of the children and their families.
5. Recognize and build on children’s strengths.
6. Use familiar metaphors, analogies, and experiences from the children’s world to connect what children already know to school knowledge.
7. Create a sense of family and caring in the service of academic achievement.
8. Monitor and assess children’s needs and then address them with a wealth of diverse strategies.
9. Honor and respect the children’s home culture.

10. Foster a sense of children's connection to community, to something greater than themselves.

(Delpit, 2006)

These precepts describe a holistic approach to understanding the needs of Black students and creating an atmosphere that enables them to thrive academically (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Hale, 2001; Howard, 2006; Levine, Cooper, & Hilliard, 2000; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Passion for equity, cultural competence, and culturally responsive teaching

Finally, The Achievement Triangle integrates the facets of a transformist teacher as demonstrating a passion for equity, cultural competence, and culturally responsive teaching. Transformationists teachers have a unique perspective that allows them to see beyond the dominate perspective within their classrooms. This pedagogy displays a passion for equity and cultural competence in instructional practices for students. The instinct to conform to social dominance is overcome through cultural competence and creating a learning environment where all students can thrive. Furthermore, transformationist teachers recognize that, collectively, their passion for equity and knowledge of cultural competence lead to culturally responsive teaching. Classroom teachers are "either acting in complicity with the forces of dominance that underlie the achievement gap, or they are consciously and actively seeking to subvert these dynamics and inequities in the service of their students," (Howard, 2006, pp. 135). These teachers are demonstrating the effective practices of culturally response teaching and are vigilant in their efforts to provide exceptional educational experiences for Black male students.

Conclusion

Middle schools are full of energy and life, with adolescents yearning for adults to care for and connect with them on an emotional level. Black male middle school students need teachers who have knowledge and a thorough understanding about the impact of race and culture. As Guile (1994) explained:

Most important, teachers should believe in the ability of all their students to achieve. Let us teachers consider the questions, what do we expect our students to be able to do? Do we look at our students and think—future president, future teacher, future garbage collector, future clerk, future executive, future computer whiz, future ax murderer, future bank robber? Is it possible for us to look at our students and expect all to be future presidents and executives? A teacher who truly understands culture and learning styles and who believes that all students can learn, one way or another, can offer opportunities for success to all students.

That's what it's going to take. (p. 19)

This quote reflects the belief that teachers' paradigms can positively or negatively affect the schooling experience of Black male middle school students. Culturally relevant teachers believe the potential of their students is endless, and they provide academic learning opportunities that allow students to thrive (Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Application of the belief that all children can succeed in a school environment with a principal who supports culturally relevant teachers will initiate a positive transformation for all students.

Some teachers have developed skills and strategies that have enabled them to see Black male students excel academically and behaviorally. How have these effective skills

been able to transform Black students? How did these teachers acquire these skills, and how do school leaders develop these skills in others? Qualitative inquiry seeks to answer questions within the naturalistic setting and make unique educational discoveries. This study has the potential to provide information to school leaders that will allow them to create learning communities where Black students thrive academically and behaviorally.

CHAPTER 3

Design

The purpose of this research was to investigate the practices of White female teachers who are successful in teaching Black male middle school students. Successful White teachers were identified by the following criteria: (a) at least five Black male students in the class, (b) fewer than two office referrals for Black male students per nine-week period, and (c) class average test scores at or above the average of all students on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math. In addition, these teachers were identified by their principals as exhibiting teaching practices that lead to positive results with Black male students.

The major research question for this study was, What are the practices of White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students? The research sub-questions that guided this study were as follows: (a) What strategies are used by White teachers to develop a positive relationship with Black male students?; (b) What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance in the classroom instruction?; and (c) What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students? Exploration of these questions occurred using qualitative inquiry research methods.

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative research provides the opportunity for discovery, exploration, and hypothesis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Qualitative research is chosen for the following situations:

... research that cannot be done experimentally for practical or ethical reasons, research that delves in-depth into complexities and processes, research questions where the relevant variables and interconnections have yet to be identified and described, and research that seeks to discover and explore how previous theory fits, explains, and predicts, with an openness to several theoretical perspectives. (Marshall, 1985, p. 358)

Studies using qualitative data gather rich information that can be analyzed to provide recommendations and conclusions in the field of education. A major strength of qualitative research is that the data are “usually collected in naturalistic settings” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). Further exploration of these research questions will provide school leaders with specific evidence of the qualities that allow White female teachers the ability to produce successful results with Black male middle school students.

The strategies used by White female teachers to ensure positive academic and social results must focus on the success of Black male students. However, issues of race and the education and success of students are not usually discussed openly. Some research seems to suggest that the only method for increasing the success of minority students is to hire and retain minority teachers (Dee, 2004). Although some qualitative research methods elicit views that are emic, belonging to those with the power and access to control the education process (Lincoln, 1993), the role of social science is to contribute genuine transformation to areas of research that focus on the silenced. In this light, the researcher must be committed to researching and gathering new information on those issues that are underrepresented (Lincoln, 1993). The researcher is obligated to seek the

stories and to engage the participants in dialogue that helps school leaders understand the characteristics necessary for White female teachers to be successful with Black male middle school students. The data collection methods are chosen based on this obligation and commitment to the research questions.

Counter stories are those stories which are contrary to the dominant literature. These stories are often used to describe the occurrences in classrooms with effective teachers of Black students. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) have argued that “critical writers use counter stories to challenge, displace, or mock pernicious” and dominant narratives (p. 43). The stories of teachers using practices described by both Delpit (2006) and Ladson-Billings (1994; 2004; 2006) are counter to the dominant teaching strategies. Effective teachers of Black students respect each student and demonstrate an appreciation for cultural diversity (Price, 2006). In addition, they believe in providing students with the academic tools necessary to be successful in the world. This strategy occurs through their use of familiar metaphors, analogies, and experiences from the children’s world to connect school information to the real world (Delpit, 1995, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Finally, these teachers have high expectations for students and provide opportunities for students to synthesize information (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Further investigation of the research questions sought to address why and how some White teachers have success with Black male middle school students. Based on this goal, this research lent itself toward qualitative inquiry. Observing and interviewing the study participants allowed relationships to develop between the informants in the field (Dean et al., 1967). Understanding these relationships was necessary for eliciting data

that is authentic and genuine. Although collecting qualitative data required significant time for observing and talking with participants, the outcomes and conclusions from the inquiry should provide valuable information to school leaders.

Participants and Location

Participants included middle school teachers from Starry Sky School District. Principals identified teachers based on classroom demographics and student academic performance. Successful white teachers were identified by the following criteria: (a) at least five Black male students in the class, (b) fewer than two office referrals for Black male students per nine-week period, and (c) class average test scores at or above the average on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math. In addition, these teachers had at least 22 students per class, with a minimum of five Black males. Two middle schools in Starry Sky were used, with a total of seven teachers participating. Students in the participant's classrooms may be at or above grade level since previous student achievement information was not part of the criteria. All of the classes in this study were regular education classes. No special education or academically gifted classes were part of data collection. Access was obtained through the central office of the Starry Sky School System.

Starry Sky School District is located in the southeast along the I-85 corridor, which provides access to many larger cities. It was formed in 1996 from a merger of Starry County and Sky City School Districts. It is now the only district in the county and serves over 23,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through Grade 12. There are over 140,000 people residing in Starry Sky County, and, according to the most recent census data (2008), the largest city in the county is 66% White, 25% Black, and 10% Hispanic

(retrieved from <http://starrysky.gov/index.asp?N10=264> on June 29, 2008). The median income for Starry Sky County is approximately \$40,000, but the median income for Black households is only \$32,000. Starry Sky is also designated as a low-wealth district by their state department. This indicator is based on school system funding and the population of students eligible for free or reduced price meals. Starry Sky School District was selected for this study based on the rural nature of the school system and its proximity to the researcher. Starry Sky is defined as rural based on information from the National Center of Education Statistics and local economic information.

Role of the Researcher

Honesty and access are tightly coupled in qualitative research. During the process of the researcher's acquiring access to the school system, the purpose and intent of this research was likely scrutinized by system officials. It was important that the researcher provide an honest representation of the study while demonstrating reciprocity. Usually race is one of the unspoken issues in public schooling and, therefore, the design and description of the study needed to demonstrate enough reciprocity to overcome the delicate nature of the topic. In addition to describing the study in an honest manner, the behavior of the researcher throughout the duration of the research needed to be honest, too. Participants likely came to expect a level of honesty once trust was established; betraying the trust, once established, could have sabotaged the data.

The roles of the qualitative researcher are important to the validity and goodness of the data collected during the research process. As the research instrument, the researcher was an observer while learning about the environment and the participants within the research study. The role of researcher required being conscious of all

communication, verbal and nonverbal, as all communication stood to send a message to the participants within the study. Another major characteristic of observation and interviewing is its non-standardization (Dean, Eichhorn, & Dean, 1967). Changes in research occurred based on the data collected and the constant reflection of the biases of the research instrument. Another important aspect of the role is the relationship established with the participants (Dean et al., 1967). The researcher sought to establish herself as a trusted member of the school community in order to elicit honest data from the teachers during the interviews. The researcher was aware that her relationships and interactions could be discussed among participants and that perceptions and interactions with the participants could create both positive and negative assumptions about the researcher. The researcher strove to be aware of these assumptions and of her behavior at all times during the research process.

As a Black school leader, this researcher has learned through experience that there is a lack of qualified minority teaching candidates; at the same time, she has observed that, in a school serving more than 85% Black and Hispanic students with over 75% White teachers, the success of some White teachers has been remarkable. The researcher has observed their unique ability to connect to students and create learning environments that allow them to thrive. The interpretations of culture and work leadership are constructed through social interactions and social cultural contexts (Dillard, 1995). However, this researcher's race and gender affected her role during this research process (Dillard, 1995). Her role as researcher required understanding of this dynamic and recognition that preconceptions and misinterpretations may arise during the research process.

Data Collection Strategies

Several data collection strategies were utilized for this study. The data collection strategies most useful for this inquiry were participant observation; ethnographic, semi-structured interviews; and member check focus group interviews. Each strategy was used to elicit data that answer the research questions about the effectiveness of White female teachers with Black male students.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is effective when the researcher seeks “to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange” (Glesne, 2006). The strange becomes familiar through observation and reflection from the researcher. Making the familiar strange is more challenging because the researcher must first question her own assumptions and perceptions about the environment (Glesne, 2006). Participant observation allows the researcher to learn through being a part of the social setting; this observation will bring forth patterns of behavior and interactions between the teacher and students.

There are four descriptions of participant observation as identified by Glesne (1999): (a) non-participant observation, (b) observer as participant, (c) participant as observer, and (d) full participant. A *non-participant observer* does not participate in the culture in any way and is considered an outsider. This type of participant observation has the highest lack of trust by the participants in the study. Other options for participant observation are *observer as participant* and *participant as observer*. Both of these options also create some disconnect between the researcher and the research participants. Aspects of the role of *observer as participant* include someone who is always considered foreign by the community and may not be permitted to participate in the social situations

of the community. In the role of *participant as observer*, the researcher lives in the community and does not disclose his/her full self or the intent to study the culture of the community. Both of these roles within participant observation are based on the level of trust gained from the community and/or environment. A *full participant* is completely entrenched in the community and has gained the trust of the native members of the community.

In this research study, the researcher assumed the role of participant as observer. The researcher lives and has worked in the community and has an understanding of the culture of each school in Starry Sky School District. This familiarity allowed her to have access into the school district and a level of trust amongst the principals and teachers. However, based on the researcher's role as assistant superintendent, there was some inhibition from being a full participant. As a participant observer, the researcher observed the interactions between the White female teachers and their Black male students (see Appendix B). Verbal and non-verbal interactions were documented as they occurred between the teachers and the students. The researcher used this information, along with interview questions discussed below, to gather information from and about the teachers. Collectively, the data from a minimum of two classroom observations and follow-up teacher interviews provided information regarding the characteristics of these White female classroom teachers that make them successful as instructors of Black male students.

Ethnographic Interview

Ethnography is research that describes a culture (Spradley, 1979). These research questions require data collection strategies that go beyond mere words and actions. While

participant observation allows the researcher to observe the interactions between the White teacher and her Black male middle school students, ethnographic interviewing enables the researcher to understand the culture of the environment through both descriptive and structural questions. As one goal of this study was to provide school leaders with specific strategies that can help White teachers become more effective instructors of Black male students, the core of this research focused on the meaning, language, behavior, and interactions between students and teachers.

Glesne (2006) has explained that “ethnography literally means to describe a people or cultural group” (p.8). Ethnography yields empirical data about the lives of people in specific situations. Ethnography offers other dividends to anyone involved in culture change, social planning, or trying to solve wide range human problems (Spradley, 1979). An ethnographic interview has the ability to elicit information that reflects cultural relevance and the history of the participant. The information gathered from the interviews conducted in this study was analyzed using the Achievement Triangle and the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching. This type of interviewing allowed the researcher to capture the beliefs and knowledge that create an environment where Black male middle school students are successful. These interviews were also enhanced by the data collected from participant observation and allowed deeper exploration of the participants’ perspectives on teacher-student interactions.

An ethnographic interview is a specialized type of interview. Questions designed by the researcher are chosen to gather cultural data from the participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Ethnographic interviewing focuses on the culture through the lens of the participant. The researcher asks several descriptive questions to sample the participant’s

language and behavior. Structural questions within the ethnographic interview are designed to discover the individual participant's cultural knowledge and provide additional information to the researcher about specific terms (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In this study, the researcher asked each participant to describe herself racially and how her race may or may not impact the classroom environment. There were also questions that elicited from the teachers the cultural and real-world examples they used with their students.

During the interviews there were also direct language questions (see Appendix C). These questions were specific to the culture and language use of the participant and the group to which they belong. Specific language questions helped the researcher understand how the group communicates with each other and within their environment. The types of questions used during the ethnographic interview "lead directly to a large sample of utterances that are expressed in the language used by" participants (Spradley, 1979). These questions provided insight about the specific strategies and practices used to construct knowledge and build relationships with students. The relationship and rapport with the participants created an atmosphere where open, honest communication could occur. Ultimately, the researcher was able to compare and contrast the information from the ethnographic interviews with data gathered from classroom observations within the school setting.

This study sought to describe those interconnections between White teachers and Black male students that allow student success in middle school by using culturally responsive teaching as a framework to explain and inform school leaders with strategies applicable to White teachers. The ethnographic interview, along with the information and

data collected from participant observation, demonstrated a goodness of qualitative research. There were three ethnographic interviews for each participant in this study. These interviews occurred after classroom observations. There was at least one school day in between each observation to allow time for the interviews. The interviews occurred at a time and place convenient for the teachers.

Member Check Focus Group

The final data collection tool appropriate for this research study is member check focus group. Focus group interviews provide an opportunity to gather similar participants together to dialogue about the research question in a manner that is safe and comfortable for the participants. The goal of the member check focus group is to elicit responses from participants that have similar backgrounds and to provide the participants an opportunity to review the data collected (Janesick, 2000; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Effective focus groups limit the number of participants, use a moderator, and ask open-ended questions to create dialogue (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Focus groups are often preferred when the interaction between participants will generate useful information that could not be ascertained in individual interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Focus groups are very successful when the researcher creates an atmosphere that promotes participant expression in a comfortable, safe environment (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Focus groups allowed the researcher to check initial conclusions and trends as their use is combined with participant observation and ethnographic interviewing. One issue the researcher must be especially aware of is how power dynamics can occur in focus groups. This requires the researcher and moderator to

facilitate the focus group in a way that allows all participants to feel comfortable and willing to express themselves (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Initially, the researcher was concerned that a focus group for this study was not an appropriate tool, due to the sensitive topic of race; however, these participants were selected because of their success in their classroom with Black male students, making the topic of race a relevant, familiar, and perhaps even welcome one. Ultimately, there were two focus group settings in an effort to accommodate the schedules of the participants and were held in the county of Starry Sky School District during a time convenient for most of the participants. These sessions allowed interaction between the teachers and provided data that was not be available through individual interview sessions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).. Questions focused on teachers' classroom behaviors, strategies, and applications that are successful with Black students (see Appendix C). An atmosphere that created a sense of safety and focuses on the success of the teachers elicited useful dialogue. This dialogue enhanced the information from participant observation and ethnographic interviewing.

Data Analysis Strategies

Further investigation of these research questions generated data from participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and member check focus group interviews. After data was collected and recorded, data analysis occurred. Often this aspect of the study is frightening to researchers. Some stories that are shared by qualitative researchers include that “the data are no good, systematic error has occurred, conclusions are trivial, and the data resist analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As Marshall and Rossman (2006) have noted, data analysis can be organized into these seven phases: (a) organizing the data, (b)

(c) immersion in the data, (d) generating categories and themes, (e) coding the data, (f) offering interpretations through analytic memos, (g) searching for alternative understandings, and (d) writing the report for presenting the study.

Data analysis occurred continuously throughout the research process and with the constant question: what are the next steps for data collection? Case analysis occurred after participant observations and each ethnographic interview. In this process, the researcher looked at the main themes, impressions and summary statements culled from the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was important to make sure these themes were free from judgments. Next, the researcher developed explanations and speculations about what was going on within the classroom and the teachers' relationships with students. The observation data provided information about how the relationships between the teacher and the student have a positive impact on student academic success. The researcher then developed some alternative explanations and some possible disagreements; these explanations were explored further during the interview with the teachers. Finally, as the researcher continued to review the data, the next steps for data collection and any revisions and updates for coding schemes were determined (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Initial coding schemes focused on the application of the conceptual framework and use of the Achievement Triangle (Howard, 2006). Field notes from observations and participant interviews were used to identify how often relationships, rigor, and responsiveness are referenced by teachers using codes (see Appendix D). Additionally, acknowledgments of Delpit (1995, 2006), Howard (2006), Ladson-Billings (1994, 2004, 2006), and Thompson (2002, 2004) were documented. Furthermore, the concepts of

knowing themselves as classroom teachers, *knowing their students*, and *knowing their practice* from Howard's (2006) conceptual framework were noted with codes.

Coding data from observations and interviews is a formal representation of the research thinking process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Some codes were initially developed based upon Howard's (2006) conceptual framework and the research questions. This process brought meaning to raw interview data. Themes, recurring ideas, and specific language and patterns elicited similarities and differences. Overall, this data analysis strategy allowed the researcher to align the findings with the conceptual framework and answer the research questions. All classroom observations and interviews were coded to yield specific themes. Due to the nature of this study's goal to name and discuss race and the context in the classroom, additional terms, such as *minority* and *diversity*, were coded for race. A complete list of the initial codes for data analysis can be found in Appendix D.

This data analysis strategy included thorough organization of the data collected during research. Classroom observations notes were documented on the form in Appendix B. Field notes documented from the observations were used in the initial coding schemes and provided information for each interview. The interview protocol yielded raw data for coding and analysis. This process allowed the researcher to search for grounded, systematic themes across all observations and interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Ultimately, thorough analysis provided triangulation between the conceptual framework, classroom observations, participant interview, and member check interviews (see Appendices E & F).

Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research it is important that the researcher establish trust with respect to data collection and analysis. The scope of this research limited its generalizability; however, triangulation of the data served to enhance trust in the research findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Furthermore, as Glesne (2006) noted, there are several questions for the researcher to consider in an effort to develop trust in data analysis and interpretation: “(a) what do you notice, (b) why do you notice what you notice, (c) how can you interpret what you notice, and (d) how can you know that your interpretation is the ‘right’ one? (Glense, 2006, pp. 166) These questions provided a purposeful reflection for the researcher during the data collection and analysis process.”

As discussed earlier, the purpose of this research was to identify specific practices of White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students. Data sources included classroom observations, participant interviews, and member check interviews. Triangulation of these data sources provided trust for the analysis and research conclusions. The first question from Glense (2006) required the researcher to reflect on what is noticed and ask what might have been missed during observation. In other words, if one aspect of the observation or interviewed is highlighted, something may have also been neglected. The researcher constantly reflected on her own opinions and subjectivity during the data collection process (Glense, 2006). Heightened awareness created the ability to reflect critically on the research process and information gathered during data collection.

Furthermore, the use of different data sources corroborates, elaborates, and illuminates the information necessary to address the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Triangulation strengthens the research process and provides trust in the

data and research conclusions. The final two questions from Glense (2006) address the interpretation of what the researcher noticed during data collection. The time and persistent engagement in the observation process yielded credibility among the participants and eventually trustworthy data collection (Glense, 2006). The triangulation process in this study along, with constant reflection from the researcher, yielded trustworthy data.

Timeline and Feasibility

Planning is an integral part of success in a qualitative inquiry study: the researcher must develop a plan that is reasonable and allows for stumbling blocks. In addition, the plan must consider time for study data collection and analysis, funding for the study, and any additional resources necessary (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). First, the researcher must consider the needs of the study and break them into small, manageable tasks such as planning, necessary meetings, site visits for observation, data analysis, report writing, conferences with advisors, and possible preparation for publishing (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Predictions about time depend on fieldwork, interviews and focus group interviews. The timeline is also dependent on the scheduling of participant observations and availability of teachers for interviews. Because the researcher scheduled at least three ethnographic interviews with each participant, planning was essential to ensure timely completion of the study. Special deliberation for any financial needs was also considered. Data collection occurred over a five-month period and was continuously analyzed. The researcher then had the interview data transcribed.

The conclusion of this research project answered questions regarding how these White female teachers have developed skills and strategies that have enabled them to

help Black male students excel academically and behaviorally. How did these teachers acquire these skills, and how do school leaders develop these skills in others? Data was collected through participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and member check focus group interviews. During data analysis, major themes emerged from coding techniques of common concepts and ideas. The ultimate goal was to develop understanding for the skills and strategies necessary for White teachers to ensure success with Black male students. The application of this information will assist principals as they work to develop these specific skills with other teachers. This process has the potential to improve academic achievement for Black male middle school students.

Conclusion

Merely understanding why qualitative research is appropriate for this question is not enough to deem the study good. Marshall (1985) explains that qualitative research meets the standard of goodness when

the problem or question is discovered out of personal curiosity and out of observation in the real world, the researcher is a valuable research instrument, the analysis uses cross-cultural perspectives and is open to competing paradigms, and there is an appropriate match between the information sought and the various modes of gathering and reporting data. (p. 361)

These research questions used the researcher's personal curiosity about why and how some White teachers have the ability to make learning meaningful to Black middle school males in a manner such that the students are successful academically and behaviorally. Also, the modes of gathering data are both appropriate and matched to the information necessary to make conclusions. Participant observation and ethnographic

interviewing provided data about the atmosphere of the classroom, the relationship between student and teacher, and the culture unique to the group of teachers involved in the study.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Location and Description

The purpose of this research is to examine the specific practices of White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students. The research questions that guided the data collection process are as follows: (a) What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?; (b) What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance into the classroom instruction?; (c) What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students? Teachers in Starry Sky School District's two middle schools, Orion and Pegasus, participated in the qualitative inquiry that comprised the study. Teachers were observed and interviewed according to the protocol in Appendices B and C. Pseudonyms are used for the school district, schools and participants involved in the research study.

Starry Sky School District (SSSD) is located on the I-85 corridor in the Southeast. SSSD was formed through the merger of Starry County and Sky City School Districts in 1996. SSSD serves over 23,000 students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12. Orion and Pegasus Middle Schools both enroll students in Grades 6 through 8. Both middle schools receive Title I funding due to the large number of students eligible for free and/or reduced-priced lunch meals. Information obtained from the schools' most recent North Carolina School Report Card (retrieved from <http://ncreportcards.org> on August 21, 2010) includes student demographic information and teaching staff demographics. Orion Middle School serves over 600 students with the following demographics: Black, 34%; Hispanic, 28%; White, 36%; and Other, 2%. The overall proficiency in 2008-2009 was

55% for reading and 73.8% for math

((<http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?pYear=2008-2009&pLEACode=010&pSchCode=350>), retrieved on August 21, 2010). The school has 40 classroom teachers. Pegusus Middle School serves over 700 students with the following demographics: Black, 45%; Hispanic, 43%; White, 9%; and Other, 3%. At Pegusus Middle School the overall proficiency in 2008-2009 was 41.8% for reading for and 62.1% for math

(<http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?pSchCode=310&pLEACode=010&pYear=2008-2009>, retrieved on August 21, 2010). The school has 56 classroom teachers. At both schools, 100% of the teaching staff is considered highly qualified, according to the standards of No Child Left Behind and a requirement for Title I Schools (retrieved from <http://ncreportcards.org> on August 21, 2010). Furthermore, both schools actively participate in interscholastic athletics and have clubs and organizations for all students.

The researcher has had previous experience with both schools in the study. This unique position allowed the researcher to have informal conversations with the principals and teachers at both schools. The atmosphere of both middle schools was pleasant, calm, and conducive to learning for all students. The overall structure of both schools included the formation of interdisciplinary teams and common planning (Danielson, 2002; Styron & Nyman, 2008). The common planning time was also used for professional development initiated by both the school district and individual school leadership teams. Classroom observations yielded raw data of effective instructional strategies that produced positive academic and social results for Black male students (Delpit, 2006; Marzano et al., 2001; Thompson, 2004).

Access

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher discussed the purpose with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum of SSSD. After this discussion, the Assistant Superintendent granted the appropriate permission and documentation to allow the study to begin. Next, the researcher contacted the principals at Pegasus Middle School and Orion Middle School, who provided the names of teachers who might be interested in participating in the study, using the following criteria: (a) at least five Black male students in the class, (b) fewer than two office referrals for Black male students per nine-week period, and (c) class average test scores at or above the average on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math. These teachers had at least 22 students per class with a minimum of five Black males. A total of 11 teachers were identified by the principals, 6 from Pegasus and 5 from Orion. The researcher contacted all potential participants by email. All of them were willing to participate in the study; however, due to scheduling observations and interviews, only seven were able to be a part of the study. Observations and interviews were scheduled based upon schedules of mutual convenience for the teacher and the researcher.

This qualitative study was conducted in Starry Sky School District. Two middle schools, Orion and Pegasus, were used for teacher observations and interviews. The principals at both schools identified teachers who met the minimum criteria: (a) their classrooms contain at least five Black male students, (b) they made fewer than two office referrals of Black male students per nine-week period, and (c) class averages were at or above average on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math. Seven teachers at Orion and Pegasus Middle Schools qualified to be part of the study. Each of these

teachers was observed at least twice, and some teachers were observed three times (see Table 1). All participants were interviewed three times (see Table 2). All classroom observations occurred prior to the end of the 2009-2010 school year. The researcher used classroom observations, interviews, and classroom artifacts as data for this research study. Data collection occurred from April through September 2010.

Data Analysis

The researcher gathered data at Orion and Pegasus Middle School using three data collection strategies. Participant observation allowed the researcher to learn through being a part of the social setting and classroom environment (Glesne, 2006). As a participant observer, the researcher was able to develop trust with the participants; however, due to the current role of the researcher as an Assistant Superintendent in another school district, there was some inhibition to becoming a full participant in the classroom (Glesne, 2006). Ethnographic interviews were then conducted with each participant according to a mutually agreed-upon schedule. Finally, the interviews and member checks interviews were conducted. This process, along with the review of classroom artifacts, allowed triangulation of the raw data.

The data in the research study were limited by only positive examples of White female teachers. These data provided results obtained from observations of and interviews with teachers who have demonstrated the ability to provide classroom instruction that leads to positive academic and social results for Black male students. Teachers who are ineffective with Black male students were not included in this study. Other delimitations of this study included using only one rural school district, using only schools at the middle school, and studying only White female teachers and Black male

students. The researcher of this study is a Black female who has worked in this school district and currently is an Assistant Superintendent in a neighboring district. This factor, along with the study's focus on race, may have impacted the results of this study, especially as there were no other researchers collecting data or facilitating the participant interviews. The scope of this study was further limited to the description of positive relationships, student motivation and cultural relevance. Collectively, due to the limitations and lack of comparison to ineffective teachers of Black male students, the results of this study may not be transferable to other similar situations.

The raw data were collected, reviewed and analyzed. The interview data were recorded and transcribed. The researcher used ATLAS.ti version 6 to analyze the interview data and code information for themes aligned to the research questions and conceptual framework. Each interview was coded according to the initial codes as shown in Appendix D. The coding process illuminated specific themes within each research question aligned to the conceptual framework (Glesne, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition to the interviews and classroom observations, artifacts were also collected from teachers. Teachers shared lesson plans and activities that they believed provided positive academic and social results for Black male students. The documents were collected to validate and corroborate the classroom observation data and interview data. The artifacts also provided insight to classroom activities that may have occurred outside the scope of the classroom observations. These documents were reviewed and coded to elicit thematic connections along with interview data.

Teacher assessment data

Teachers in this study were asked to participate due to the academic success of Black males in their classrooms, as measured using local benchmark data. The intent of this study was to highlight examples of White teachers who are able to produce positive academic and social results from Black male students. In addition to their being successful with Black male students, the assumption was that these teachers are effective with all students. Benchmark data are used as the academic performance measure. The expectation was that teachers in this study have averages at or above the district average on the benchmark assessments. SSSD gives a benchmark three times during the school year in both reading and math. The averages for both the school district and the teachers were determined by averaging all three benchmark assessments given during the school year.

Teachers in the study also had at least 22 students in their classrooms, with a minimum of five Black males. Table 1, below, provides information regarding the district average, teacher average, number of Black males in the classroom and the average score of the Black males. The reference in parentheses indicates the subject and grade; “M” is used for the math benchmark and “R” is used for the reading benchmark. It is important to note that the average of the Black male students compared to the overall class average indicates that there is not a gap between the Black and White students in the classrooms of the participants. This aspect is extremely positive; however, the data also revealed that the Black students are not performing much higher than the average. Chapter 5 provides further discussion of this phenomenon.

Table 1 District, teacher, and student benchmark data

Teachers	District average	Benchmark average (reading)	Benchmark average (math)	# of Black male students	Black male average
1	55.15% (M6)	N/A	54.50% (M6)	7	55.02% (M6)
2	55.72% (M7)	N/A	59.43% (M7)	8	56.21% (M7)
3	61.08% (R6) & 55.15% (M6)	63.32% (R6)	55.22% (M6)	6	62.95% (R6) & 55.76% (M6)
4	58.40% (R8)	59.15% (R8)	N/A	5	58.69% (R8)
5	55.72% (M7)	N/A	56.87% (M7)	8	55.33% (M7)
6	56.83% (R7) & 55.72% (M7)	58.14% (R7)	56.04% (M7)	7	57.22% (R7) & 55.34% (M7)
7	56.83% (R7) & 55.72% (M7)	57.86% (R7)	54.98% (M7)	6	58.24% (R7) & 56.11 (M7)

Careful review of this information demonstrates that the teachers in this study are able to produce positive academic results with Black male students. The results of the teachers in this study also demonstrate success when compared to school averages. The school averages in most instances are lower than the district averages, and yet these teachers have class averages at or above the district average (see Table 2).

Table 2 School and district benchmark data

Assessment	District Average	Orion Middle School Average	Pegasus Middle School Average
Math Grade 6	55.15%	48.75%	45.77%
Reading Grade 6	61.08%	58.76%	53.75%
Math Grade 7	55.72%	57.99%	44.04%
Reading Grade 7	56.83%	54.42%	48.25%
Math Grade 8	49.46%	48.33%	49.67%
Reading Grade 8	61.53%	59.10%	58.40%

Due to the current emphasis on accountability and grade-level testing requirements, all of these middle school students participate in high-stakes assessments. The benchmark given in SSSD is an effort to help teachers and students prepare for the high-stakes assessment that determines Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for each school. Positive academic results for students are important in middle school, especially in schools where there are high numbers of minority students (Hoffman & Nottis, 2008; Styron & Nyman, 2008).

How do positive academic results align with the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and Howard's Achievement Triangle? The findings in this study demonstrate that the participants in this study recognize how important personal connections and relationships are with students, especially Black males. Patrick and Ryan (2007) discovered that creating, developing, and sustaining positive relationships with students led to high academic mastery. These teachers have demonstrated that they can integrate

the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and produce positive academic results for Black male students. Furthermore, the data from this study confirm the results of Love and Kruger (2005), whose quantitative survey linked culturally relevant practices to student achievement. The positive results from Love and Kruger (2005), along with the qualitative studies from Coleman (2007), Howard (2001), Hyland (2005), Ladson-Billings (2004), and Thompson (2002, 2004), support the results found in this study. It is also important to note that all of the Black male students whose teachers participated in this study achieved growth in academic achievement, even if they did not make the proficiency score as determined by the state. These data, along with classroom observations and interviews, highlight the practices and strategies necessary to produce positive academic results for Black male middle school students.

Teacher discipline data

Teachers in this study had to demonstrate minimal classroom management skills, as measured by office discipline referrals. Participants in this study had fewer than two office referrals for Black male students per nine-week period. The data in the table below are the averages for each of the four nine-week periods in the school year. How are these teachers able to produce positive social results for Black male students? Because Black males often adopt behaviors that make them complicit in their own failure and are more likely to act out in the classroom, effective teachers of Black male students must recognize that they are not merely passive victims but may also be active agents in their own failure, both socially and academically (Kunjufu, 2002; Monroe, 2005; Nichols, 2004; Noguera, 2003). The participants in this study appear to understand this phenomenon and are able to provide a classroom environment where students

demonstrate appropriate social behavior. Classroom observations indicate that the teachers in this study have good classroom management skills and provide an atmosphere of mutual respect for all learners. Interestingly, based upon feedback from the principals, the participants in this study have very few discipline referrals for any of their students, regardless of race. Table 3, below, shows the results of data collected on each teacher's disciplinary referrals for 2009-2010. These referrals are for Black male students; however, the numbers represented are significantly lower than teachers not involved in this study.

Table 3: Teacher discipline data

Teacher	Average number of referrals per nine-weeks
Teacher 1	1
Teacher 2	1
Teacher 3	2
Teacher 4	1
Teacher 5	0
Teacher 6	0
Teacher 7	1

Findings

The classroom observations allowed the researcher to examine the culturally relevant practices of each teacher and her specific interactions with Black male students. The characteristics of culturally relevant practices and teaching include a set of “professional knowledge, including curriculum, pedagogy, instructional design, developmental psychology, history and philosophy of education, legal issues, human

relationships, cross-cultural communication, and conflict management, and more” (Howard, 2006, p. 126). In addition, the research of Delpit (1995 & 1996), Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2004, & 2006), Murrell (2002), and Thompson (2002 & 2004) examined specific characteristics and instructional strategies that are likely to provide positive results for Black male middle school students. Accordingly, special notation was made when the researcher observed verbal interactions between the teachers and Black male students and instances in which teachers provided motivation for Black students. These instances were initially coded as noted in Appendix D. The codes that were consistently repeated amongst all participants and were also replicated in interviews were personal connection, care, individual attention and relationship.

Thorough analysis of all interview data through the coding process illustrated themes aligned with the research questions and conceptual framework. Information from the data analysis process allowed the researcher to categorize ideas and topics that were repeated by participants. The researcher has identified these categories as the following overarching themes: (a) personal connection and relationships, (b) high expectations and motivation, and (c) cultural connections and race. Table 4, below, summarizes some of the aspects of each of the three major themes identified from data analysis.

Table 4: Thematic overview

Personal Connections & Relationships	High Expectations and Motivation	Cultural Connections and Race
Student observation	Classroom participation	Real-world connections
Individual attention	Quality of work	Music
Positive affection	Cooperative groups	Athletics
The learning process	Questioning	Childhood experiences

Outside events	Competition	Stereotypes
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These themes are directly related to the research questions. Each participant identified specific examples where initiating, developing and sustaining an individual relationship with their Black male students created opportunities for the students' success, both academically and socially. The themes support the following practices as described by Ladson-Billings (1995), Murrell (2002) and (Thompson, 2002 & 2004):

1. An active reflective theory of teaching and learning
2. Knowledge of practice
3. A system of organizing human systems, instructional material, and human resources that promotes the learning and development of children
4. A rich cultural content
5. A socio-culturally, linguistically, and historically grounded system of teaching

Ultimately, the teachers' knowledge of their students' culture, history, and community enables them to establish meaningful and caring relationship with students (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006; Murrell; 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2001). The alignment of these characteristics with the research questions and conceptual framework are discussed below in more thorough detail.

The classroom environment includes the teaching practices of the participants and the physical environment. The classroom environment should be a welcoming environment for all students, as well as one that is conducive to learning and high achievement (Murrell, 2002 & Thompson, 2004). Teachers who are successful in educating Black male students know how to create an environment that is academically

stimulating. Additionally, they challenge themselves to develop a thorough knowledge of their students' culture, history, language, life and community (Murrell, 2002).

Personal connection and relationships

Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle identifies *knowing my students* as an important aspect of culturally relevant teaching practices. The process of developing a relationship with one's students includes an understanding of culture, racial identity, language, family background, home situations, learning characteristics, economic status, personality, strengths, and challenges (Howard, 2006). The process allows teachers to understand their students and ultimately means they are less likely to project the ideology of White privilege and power (Howard, 2006).

The first research question sought to identify strategies that are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students. One theme that evolved from the data is the significance of personal connections. Teachers in this study consistently use observations and questions to develop a personal connection with their Black male students. The initiation of this personal connection leads to the formation of a meaningful relationship that is often used to ensure academic and social success. In the Achievement Triangle the *doorway of relationship* occurs at the intersection between *knowing myself* and *knowing my students*. This point directly refers to an authentic relationship between students and teachers (Howard, 2006). Thompson (2004) provides 18 strategies that are effective with Black students. All of Thompson's strategies were identified by the participants in this study during data collection. Three of these strategies were consistently reiterated through the interview and observation data collected in this study:

- Let students know you care.
- Get to know students on a personal level.
- Use questioning to spark discussion.

Participants could not always name the strategies used to initiate meaningful relationships; however, they could share stories and experiences that occurred with Black male students that reflected those relationships. The researcher used the data collected from classroom observations and observations beyond the classroom to substantiate the strategies used by the participants.

All of the teachers in the study indicated that developing a positive relationship with students, especially Black male students, was integral to student academic and social success. Evidence of developing meaningful relationships was evident outside the classroom through observations with four of the teachers. Ms. Harding explained that, “With any students but specifically my Black males, [I] just take an interest. I’m very vigilant the first two weeks of school. I notice what they wear” (T202). Ms. Smith was observed interacting with students as they entered the building (T101). During her interaction, the researcher heard her ask the following questions to several students: “How are you?”; “How was your game last night?”; “I missed you yesterday, were you sick?” (T101). Furthermore, she gave several students hugs or a “high-five.” Other participants discussed similar instances of interacting with students outside the classroom to develop success within the classroom, especially when topics were challenging for certain Black male students. Overall, this type of interaction demonstrates a level of *responsiveness* to students’ needs. Effective teachers of Black male students know the needs of their students and provide an atmosphere that recognizes their strengths

(Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006). Acknowledgement and interaction outside the classroom provide an opportunity for teachers to gather information and assess the academic, social, and, more importantly, emotional needs of their students.

Beyond interaction outside the classroom, how do White teachers establish a personal connection and develop meaningful relationship with Black male students? Each participant identified that relationships are integral to student success; however, there was some variance in how teachers initiated positive connections and relationships with students. Ms. Smith described an interaction at the beginning of the year with a student who always wore a Duke tee shirt or sweatshirt:

“Oh, so you’re a Duke fan?” [Student:] “No, my mom just bought this.” Then that starts a whole other conversation. I was like, “Oh, I hate when that happens.

You have to wear it just because she makes you.” (T1I2)

Although superficial initially, this demonstrates that the teachers is making note of observations. She noticed a pattern and is taking an interest in the student beyond academics. Ms. Smith discussed in an interview how this student was struggling academically mid-year and how the relationship that was initiated by this simple conversation has grown into respect (T1I2). This mutual respect and caring allowed the teacher to work with the student one-on-one in tutoring sessions before and after school to provide the academic support necessary for success.

Ms. Harding discussed how she makes keen observations as students enter the classroom. During her second classroom observation, she was observed interacting with each student as they entered the classroom (T2O2). She spoke to each student by name and asked several students questions. Students were smiling and appeared to be excited to

enter the classroom. Ms. Harding explained that “recognizing and knowing that they [students] are upset and showing them that they [students] can express themselves without being aggressive is really important to my relationship with my Black male students” (T2I2). In fact, she continued:

I give them those other options instead of forcing them to sit through my class with--maybe they just broke up with the girl beside them, they don't want to be by them, and if you put them in another class, they'll be fine. And they'll be fine the next day. I guess understanding them and being a good example socially makes a difference. (T2I2)

The ability to make initial observations about students and their social well-being as they enter the classroom was exhibited and discussed by all participants. The teachers in this study recognize how observations provide an opportunity to make personal connections, ultimately leading to academic and social success.

In addition to observations, Ms. Rossen explained the process she uses to involve the students in developing a positive relationship with her. She uses students in developing the rules and expectations for the classroom. Because this occurs at the beginning of the year, she believes it allows her to develop relationships and personal connections with her Black male students. During the process students share behaviors that they believe are respectful and disrespectful. For example:

I try to get them in on the rule-making with the capturing kids' hearts. They create the rules and expectations and all of us follow them, including me. It shows them that I care about them.. (T4I2)

Another teacher, Ms. Likke, expanded on the idea of involving students in the process of developing personal connections and relationships. She has participated in several trainings involving the Schlechty Center and engagement. Ms. Likke explained that students need to be engaged during the learning process and in all activities within the classroom. In fact, she explained:

I want my students to be engaged in my lessons and I just try to tweak it the best that I can, and I can generally tell if they really like it or they don't, you know, that whole engagement thing with WOW [Working on the Work], if they don't like it I do feedback. (T3I1)

Ms. Likke stated that she believes that the students can provide valuable information to her regarding her lessons. Allowing students to provide feedback to her regarding classroom activities gives students the agency necessary to become actively involved in their learning. In fact, this is an example of the personal power discussed by Price (2006) and the ability of teachers to see the individual talents of their Black male students (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006).

Two teachers made specific references to Black male students' needing more positive affection from their teachers. All of the participants indicated that positive, verbal recognition provided motivation for students. In fact, during all classroom observations, participants were seen providing simple positive compliments, such as "Great job," "Good work," "I'm proud of you," "Keep working hard," and "Thank you for working hard today." Ms. Cooper described a scenario where she noticed that a student needed positive, affectionate behavior:

I especially had one child this year that I started getting hugs from him like the first week of school. He really needed that extra attention because he really went home to some bad circumstances. And I really think that they need that connection because if somebody doesn't care about them, they don't care either.

(T6I3)

Ms. Davis noted something similar and made a general observation about her experiences with Black male students:

Well, I noticed with my Black male students more than my White male students, my Black male students tend to be more buddy-buddy. They're the ones that will walk up to you, and put their arm on your shoulder, and lean against you, and that kind of thing. And I probably should but I don't discourage that behavior. (T7I2)

Overall, these instances demonstrate that successful teachers recognize the needs of their students and, in an effort to ensure success, they are willing to make sure students have the emotional support and connections necessary. Teachers who are respectful, courteous, complimentary, active listeners, approachable, positive, high energy, and knowledgeable provide an environment where Black students are consistently engaged in academic activities (Price 2006).

The participants appeared to recognize how important it was for the students to know and understand that the teachers cared about their success both academically and socially. Ms. Doe explained how she initiates her relationships:

Just giving them a pat on the shoulder when they come in and walking up to them individually - when the kids are settling down, I'll be like, "How is everything? How are things going? What do you like to do? What are some fun things that

you do?” Or I tell them a joke. They really like jokes and they love to tell me jokes then, too. (T5I2)

Another participant explained how she has grown as a professional and recognized even more the significance of relationships.

I do feel that any student could learn if they're willing to learn and the longer that I have been here, because each year I feel like I have grown more and more, that any person can teach if they care enough about the students, they care enough about what they're teaching, and they can relate it to what the kids are going through, something that they can connect to their life in some way. (T3I1)

Ms. Likke acknowledged that developing personal relationships and caring about students also includes connecting the content to the students. Ms. Cooper expounded on this idea by simply stating, “I think you have to make a connection with the kids in order to actually have the kids want to learn” (T6I2). Ms. Doe stated:

In English/Language Arts as we read it, we talk about it and ask questions and they ask me questions and I've found that that's very effective with all students but especially Black males because they want somebody to be there with them and they want somebody to feel like they're being supported. (T5I2)

Although Ms. Doe did not use the word *care* or *relationship*, *support* implies that students need a personal connection to participate and be successful in academic activities. She continues this thought later in the interview by saying:

They need the kind of teacher that is going to be able to talk to them in more of a friend way than as just a strict, I'm a teacher and you're a student type of a way. I feel like they need a closer relationship. My Black male students want a closer

relationship and so that's probably the biggest strategy I use to get to know them better and ask them how their weekend was and things like that. (T5I2)

Another important strategy used by study participants to develop personal connections and relationships is to demonstrate interest in students' lives beyond the classroom. Two participants explicitly noted how they attend school events in addition to athletic events to show Black male students they care about their well-being. All of the participants implicitly discussed showing interest in students' lives by attending athletic events and school events. Ms. Doe explained in her second interview that she attended athletic events:

I go to their games, you know, the football players, I go to the football games. I make sure they see me at the football games. I go to the basketball games. I make sure they hear me scream at the basketball games, especially with the sports players. (T5I2)

Ms. Cooper noted that she actually attends events outside the school venue to demonstrate a personal interest in her students:

Actually, also I should add, for the kids that don't have sports, there was a kid this year that did Martial Arts, and I went to the testing things, and that was totally outside of school. That was in a totally different building and he saw me there, and that makes a huge difference. So, just little things like that where you show up and you don't have to. They know that. (T7I3)

Ms. Harding said, "I've noticed if you show them [Black males] you care about things they care about, like sports, it makes a difference" (T2I2). She continued:

I'm always at every sporting event, activity that I possibly can make it to so just I think them seeing me there and just talking to me as a person instead of, "Oh, she's not just the teacher." I'm also a coach and so they see me in that light and so they know they can come talk or whatever. I think that's basically - we go from there. I would say in the beginning of this year, it was a little rough but by the end, we were good to go. (T2I2)

Ultimately, making keen observations, listening to students, and making a special effort to develop a personal connection with Black males was evident in the behavior of the participants. The importance of personal connection and relationship was most evident in these quotes from interview data:

With any student but specifically Black males, [I] just take an interest. (T1I2)

I think you have to make a connection with the kids in order to actually have the kids want to learn. (T6I2)

[I say,]... "Now that we've gotten through the rules and expectations I want you to understand the reason I'm here is for you guys. Yeah, the reason I'm here is so you guys will learn and so that you guys get the information that you need to move onto the next grade." (T6I1)

Delpit (2006) identified ten precepts that are employed by effective teachers of Black students. One of these precepts is to create a sense of family and caring. Ms. Cooper simply stated, "I think you have to make a connection with the kids in order to actually have the kids want to learn" (T6I1). This personal connection appears to be directly related to the academic success for students. Ms. Smith supported this idea by noting, "The kids I tutored this year, they were all Black males and they did very well

one-on-one” (T1I2). Again, this quote supports this notion that personal attention and connection may lead to positive academic performance. Developing personal connections and relationships with students provides a family atmosphere that leads to effective teaching and learning for Black male students. Teachers undoubtedly have the power to alter what happens in American classrooms (Delpit, 2006). When teachers modify their behavior based on the needs, attitudes, and behaviors of their students, they can change the classroom environment in a positive manner for all children (Delpit 2006).

High Expectations and Motivation

Positive relationships and connections with students are the foundation for producing positive academic results. Ultimately, the goal of classroom teachers is to ensure that students learn the content of the course. Patrick and Ryan (2007) discovered that creating, developing, and sustaining positive relationships with students leads to high student academic mastery. The perception and power of the classroom teachers’ relationship with his/her students can positively or negatively affect student academic success (Ferguson, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Thompson, 2004). For the purpose of this research, academic success was defined by Black male students’ meeting or exceeding the district average on local benchmark assessments. In addition, evidence of classroom teachers *knowing their practice* and providing rigorous activities was expected during classroom observations and interview.

Observable practices exhibited by effective teachers include the following: (a) involving students in the construction of knowledge, (b) helping students access prior knowledge, (c) reminding students of the big picture, (d) encouraging students to synthesize, and (e) giving students multiple ways to succeed academically (Ladson-

Billings, 1994, 1995, 2006; Thompson, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). *High expectations* involve providing rigorous classroom activities for students. *Rigor* encompasses the ability to care deeply about each child while having high expectations for academic achievement (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Participants in this study demonstrated high expectations, rigor, and competition in a manner that yields positive academic results for Black male students.

Having high expectations of students was found to be part of the teaching philosophy of participants in the study. During the interview process, all of the participants explicitly stated a belief that all students can learn. For two of the participants, this belief was part of their teaching philosophy. Evidence of high expectations occurred in relation to academic and social behavior. One aspect of high expectations is ensuring that all students participate in the learning process. Ms. Likke explained that she uses a deck of cards to guarantee that all students actively participate during classroom instruction:

I make them [students] answer. I've always had - I use a deck of cards with their names on it and if your name gets called, you have to give me an answer whether it's, what I would call, an elementary answer, a intermediate answer or an advanced answer and if I think - if you give me an elementary answer and I think you can give me a higher answer, I will try to probe you to answer or go deeper with that. (T4I2)

The ability to motivate students to think critically and the ability to use knowledge to construct learning that has meaning for students demonstrates a commitment to high expectations. Ms. Cooper linked her behavior to student motivation by explaining:

Those are the things that really motivate the kids and when it's exciting and me as a teacher, when I'm excited about it. If I'm depressed about a subject, the kids are obviously going to hate it, but if I'm excited about it, I find that the kids really are into it and that actually becomes a motivational factor, too, just my willingness to want to teach them and my jumping up and down and crawling on desks and pretending that my ruler is a rifle and that I'm in the Civil War like a character in a book or whatever. That motivates the kids to want to learn as well. (T6I2)

Another important aspect is the belief that students have the capacity to learn and being vigilant about continuously improving the capacity to provide challenging activities for students (Howard, 2006). Showing her belief in a rigorous classroom for all students, Ms. Harding reflected on exchanges that occurred during the beginning of the year when she explained to students her high expectations:

[I say,] "I'm not accepting this," and so they would have to go back, because a lot of them they want to please you so they want to be done and I'm like, "That's not how we work here." [I say,] "I don't know what you did in elementary school but here you're going to take your time and you're going to get your projects done and you're going to actually use your brain," so I would challenge them that way. (T2I3)

Ms. Harding expects high quality work from all her students, even if this means students have to re-submit assignments. This belief in providing multiple ways for students to demonstrate success and learning is supported by the research of Ladson-Billings (2004) and Thompson (2002). Ms. Harding's response initiated a discussion about allowing students to re-submit assignments. Ms. Harding explained that her goal is for students "to

demonstrate mastery in math,” and sometimes that means students have to re-submit a project or assignment several times. Furthermore, she explained that the number of re-submissions tends to decrease as the year progresses as students begin to understand the quality of work necessary to achieve mastery in assignments and projects.

Ms. Smith uses groups to provide academic support and motivation for students to be academically successful in classroom topics. She explained:

Whatever their level is, we do group centers low to high. I work with the lowest group then the other groups, they might have a color for that week, if they are accelerated [they] have green. If they're middle, they'd have yellow and if they're low, they'd have red and then the lowest, lowest would be with me. The groups mix and change for whatever topic we're working on. (T1I1)

The groups allow students to work with other students in a non-threatening atmosphere, motivating them to learn the particular concept or topic. Ms. Smith explained that the groups change based on the students' needs and knowledge within the classroom. Ms. Smith also uses questioning to motivate student success without the risk of failure. Like Ms. Harding, students in Ms. Smith's class have the opportunity to re-submit assignments and re-take assessments if necessary. Ms. Smith stated:

Keep probing them with extensive questions to make them get the right answer. Just having a chance to redeem themselves if they fail. If they don't do well, they can do a different assignment or they can ask different questions or take the test again or have another week for the homework or another five weeks for the homework, whatever they need, until they feel confident in that subject. I also tutor with the kids before school/after school if needed. (T1I2)

Ms. Doe finds that questioning helps give students the confidence and motivation that may lead to good results her class. She stated:

A lot of times when they ask a question, I'll return it with a question and I find that that - and then whenever they say, "Oh yeah, I think so," I'm like, "Why [were] you asking me? You're so smart, you already know." That always makes them laugh, and they realize that they do know these things and they just need to trust themselves and have the confidence. (T5I1)

All of these examples demonstrate strategies to help motivate students toward positive academic results.

Ms. Rossen discussed having high expectations for social behavior as well. Students at Pegusus Middle School receive an office referral after receiving so many marks from teachers in a behavior folder. This process is part of the Positive Behavior Support framework for social behavior. As she explained, "They knew if they talked in the hallway, they were getting a mark from me. It wasn't going to be - there was no leeway" (T4I2). Ms. Rossen further explained that, although this behavior may have been perceived as harsh in the beginning, students appreciated knowing the expectations. According to Ms. Rossen, by the end the first semester students say, "We love your class" (T4I2). Ms. Rossen believes that it is important for students to "know that you're not going to change for X, Y, Z," (T4I2). In her words, simply stated, "That's it and just social behavior" (T4I2). Additionally, Ms. Rossen does not raise her voice with her students, and she encourages students to talk to her individually. Individual conversations allow her to discuss academic progress and develop personal connections with students. Ms. Harding provided a similar example:

The last class I had this year, specifically about Black males, it was probably 50% black males. It was my biggest - of the three I had, it was the biggest, I would say, of Black males, and it was rough at first. They were like, "You're mean," but they knew if they had gum, [they were] going to spit it out. "What? No." (T2I2)

She continued that, by the "end of the first month or so they appeared to really like my class" (T2I2). Ms. Harding provided another example of using her relationship with a student to provide motivation. She explained:

I've seen sports drive a lot of the black males and so giving them - for instance, one student he was failing and so he couldn't try out for baseball and I had told him, I said, "Okay, if you come to tutoring every morning that grade it can be - I can go back and change it." He's like, "You can change it?" I was like, "Yeah, but you have to make the effort." (T2I2)

These examples provide support for high social expectations in addition to academic expectations and the possible link to personal connections and relationships. Ultimately, positive results may be an implication of high expectations for both social and academic behavior.

High expectations and collaboration were also evident in the rigorous activities provided for students. Many of these activities allowed students to work in collaborative groups to demonstrate academic and social success. Many activities had a connection to real-world experiences of the students. One example was from Ms. Cooper:

Yeah, we did checkbook this year also, working on the checkbook this year, and I brought in some sample checkbooks that I actually got from Wachovia Bank, and I had the kids, I gave them a certain amount that was already in their checkbook,

and I gave them a sheet saying you bought this, this, this, and this. “You still need to buy this. How much more are you going to need after you've already bought these things?” And that kind of thing; we balanced the checkbook for a few days, and that was also part of decimals activity. (T6I3)

Ms. Cooper noted that this activity actually impacted students’ families, as two students asked her for check registers for their parents. Similarly, Ms. Davis used another activity in her math class that provided real-world application rigor for students: “I had the kids do percentages with the flyers because we couldn’t go to the store and that kind of thing” (T7I2). Students used newspaper advertisements to calculate prices based on percentages. These examples appear simple, but teaching decimals, fractions, and interest in a manner that directly relates to the real-world is profound. Percentages and fractions are usually challenging for sixth grade students; however, when the topic is presented in a manner that connects to their life and is challenging, they become interested. Ultimately, providing rigorous activities allows students to think critically and attain new academic skills. Ms. Likke noted that she uses an interest project that allows students to choose a car and pay the car loan:

I use a lot of word problems and using real world situations. We do the interest project where they have to pick a car and they have to figure out how much they have to pay and their eyes get real big because they all want that Lamborghini or something and they realize they’ve got to pay \$2,500 a month. (T3I2)

Providing students with rigorous activities that they perceive as fun ensures that students develop appropriate academic skills. The goal is to provide students with challenging experiences with high expectations.

High expectations and rigor are named throughout the research on Culturally Relevant Teaching and Pedagogy; however, competition is not explicitly discussed. An interesting finding of the interviews is that teachers in this study frequently referenced creating an atmosphere where competition and collaboration are part of academic activities within the classroom. This instructional strategy is a component of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning has five defining elements: “positive interdependence; face-to-face promotive interactive; individual and group accountability; interpersonal and small group skills; and group processing” (Marzano et al., 2001, pp. 85-86). Participants believed these activities provided motivation for students to master difficult content. In fact, teachers specifically linked competition and motivation to Black males who were involved in athletics. For example, Ms. Smith used the excitement of the World Cup to engage her students:

We did a World Cup thing for intervention, and the team winner got goals and it was very competitive for them because there was - I think - they chose their teams. I let them choose their teams and I think one team ended up being all Black males and they were very competitive. (T1I3)

Ms. Smith noted that she also integrates the NCAA basketball tournament into class activities during the month of March. The thread of constant, healthy competition motivates her students to perform well academically in the classroom. The competitive activities described by participants effectively include the characteristics of cooperative learning. Students individually and collectively work together toward acquiring new information.

Evidence gathered through classroom observations and interviews indicates that creating an atmosphere of high expectations and integrating classroom activities that encourage collaboration and competition provide motivation for students to be academically successful. In acknowledging that the teacher has a responsibility to provide information so students can be academically successful in school beyond their current grade placement, the participants in this study exhibited high expectations and competition through specific classroom activities and behaviors necessary to foster high academic achievement and positive social behavior. Ultimately, the participants in this study emphatically use their personal power and agency to create an atmosphere of high expectations for academic and social success (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2006; Price, 2006).

Cultural connections and race

Teachers who effectively integrate the ideas of the Achievement Triangle embody Culturally Responsive Teaching and Cultural Competence (Appendix A). When White teachers acknowledge race and culture as a factor for educating children, they have the ability to integrate effective instructional strategies for all children (Howard, 2006; Hyland, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002). Participants in the study described a few examples of activities that they believed provided culturally appropriate strategies for Black males, although only two of the participants were able to explicitly name culture and race as a factor that affects their Black male students. Participants appeared to describe race and culture only in reference to students. The White female teachers were not able to describe and/or discuss themselves as raced; therefore, they were not included in their own acknowledgements of race and culture.

Participants in this study frequently made real-world connections and provided activities that were relevant to real-world experiences. Initially, the researcher expected to see more activities that were directly related to the culture of the students. However, teachers devoted time and energy into creating meaningful relationships with students that allowed the participants to develop activities that motivated students to learn. Some examples of cultural activities and real-world activities are examined below.

Two participants integrated music into their classroom instruction. Students were required to write a rap in Ms. Smith's classroom:

They had to choose a topic. It was an open project. They had to choose a topic and they had to come up with a rap to share with us how they remember it or something like that. (T1I3)

During the interview, Ms. Smith explained that the rapping activity would not be an activity she would be able to do in her home time. Her hometown was all White and in fact she even described her grandparents as racist in a previous interview. Ms. Smith learned appreciation and value for race and culture while in college. Now, as a young, White female teacher, she connects well with all of her students, including Black males. Similarly, Ms. Cooper has integrated music in several classroom activities. In fact, during one of her observations, her students were required to re-write poetry and then share it using music. Students had the opportunity to choose the genre of music. She discussed how she has integrated rap this school year:

Actually, this year we did a lot with rapping, and I usually consider that a pretty African-American thing, but we do a lot with rapping this year. It's pretty funny. They were given a little extra leeway this year with certain projects, and those

kinds of things, and it was amazing some of the things they came up with, with rap. Ms. James [not in the study] did a few projects with poetry and without being prompted Sally and Matthew, a Black male student and a Black female student, to come up a rap. (T6I2)

Ms. Doe reflected on using the Olympics and newspaper articles to connect her content to students.

Real world experience. We'll use stories. I'll pull in newspaper articles about - the last Olympics, I pulled in a newspaper article about the American basketball team, about how they felt like this was the first time that they had really worked together and so the kids could really identify with the basketball side of it and then take the lesson away from the article, is the first one that pops in my mind. My examples, I'll use football examples because they connect with those football examples. That's part of when I build relationships. I talk about my fantasy football team and we get all excited about that. Those are ones that come in my head right away. (T5I3)

Surprisingly, Ms. Doe explained that she uses these statistics involved in these athletic examples to connect to math instruction. These examples, along with other strategies that connect the content to the real world, provide opportunities for Black male students to demonstrate academic success.

Clearly, the participants' awareness of the impact of race and culture is crucial to their success with Black students. However, the privilege and power that comes with being White often goes "unnamed, unnoticed, and unspoken," which may lead to lack of recognition in White teachers of their racial positionality (Mazzei, 2006, p. 1127). As

Whites develop through the stages of racial identity, they become more comfortable with the aspect of privilege and power. Ultimately, developing an appreciation for their own Whiteness and understanding of how and when to identify oppression is a significant step for teachers.

The childhood and upbringing provided insight into how some participants were introduced to the concept of race. Ms. Rossen reflected on the first time she recognized race, as a child at a county fair, When she asked her mother about the kids at the fair who appeared to have a “really good tan”, she recalled that her mother responded this way:

There are some kids that have a really good tan, because my mother loves to tan. It’s really bad for her skin, but she will probably be one of those old women in a tanning bed everyday that looks like a suitcase after a while. And she said, honey, they’re black people, but all you’ve got to know is that they tan better than you, and I said okay [chuckle] because we go to the beach, and I tan, and so I don’t ever remember besides that really ever just saying, whoa! That’s a black person.

(T4I3)

Ms. Doe also reflected on her childhood experiences and how it impacted her initial interactions with people of difference races, especially Blacks:

I didn’t want to say the wrong thing. You know when you’re growing up you hear that, “If you say this thing, they’re going to get really mad at you,” and so I was very uncomfortable and very nervous at first. (T5I3)

Ms. Doe acknowledged being worried as a child and young adult about her interactions with Blacks. She continued in the interview to explain how she has evolved since young adulthood:

Then I finally realized that we all want to be treated with respect and we all want somebody to talk to us like they care about us. I didn't want my sarcasm to get me in trouble so if I established when the kids or anybody walked in that I was somebody who cared about them that no matter what I said, even if it probably wasn't the right thing to say, that they were either A, forgive me or B, I'd be the last person - because I was always worried somebody was going to think of me as racist. (T5I3)

These childhood experiences appear to be connected to the participants' racial development and progression as a White female.

The teachers in this study were able to discuss race openly in regard to students; however, they often found it difficult to explicitly name the ideas of power and privilege associated with being a White female. Many fell back to the less-constructive approach of color-blindness. For example, Ms. Likke explained how she describes herself racially:

I always tell the kids, when somebody starts talking about race, I tell them that I am not White, that I am blue striped because obviously, I'm so pale that you can see my veins and honestly, it just breaks the tension and makes everybody laugh to the point where it's like, "Oh well, I'm red-dotted because I have freckles" or whatever. I feel that's the best way to approach it. (T3I3)

Ms. Doe responded similarly about how she describes herself:

I don't see myself as a specific color. I've noticed once or twice that - I'll go halfway through the year and realize that I'm the only White person in the classroom and how my experiences are different from my kids' experiences but

that just motivates me to want to learn more about them so that I know, so I don't feel that uncomfortable in the future. (T5I2)

Both Ms. Doe and Ms. Likke appear to be absolved from their own racial history; however, they appear to be able to acknowledge the racial identity of their students.

Conversely, participants recognized that Black males face challenges that are unique to them and openly discussed how they combat these issues in their middle schools. Each participant stated that their goal is to provide an atmosphere where Black male students can overcome the challenges they are likely to face in society. This claim is supported by their acknowledgement of racial stereotypes. Ms. Cooper reflected on a conversation about stereotypes with her students:

We were just talking about stereotypes today, that black males are stereotyped, that they are going to be drug dealers and that they're going to make babies that they're not going to raise, and that's very unfortunate because there are many, many Black males, even in our school building, who are successful and they provide for their families and even if they aren't married to the person that they had a child with, that they take care of that child and that child is so important to them. (T6I3)

When we discussed stereotypes in our Member Check Interview #1, Ms. Davis explained the following:

I wish that the kids could see the stereotype versus the reality and see, "I can be a part of this reality. I don't need to be a part of that stereotype" because I think some of our kids see, "Oh, I'm either going to make money playing ball or I'm not going to make money and I'm going to be like this." (T7MC1)

Both of these examples demonstrate that the teachers recognize race and possible challenges with students; however, they still made no acknowledgement of their participation or development as being raced or of the role of White power and privilege in their own lives.

Interestingly, the teachers often reflected on experiences of racism and discrimination within the school. In fact, they noted that these lived experiences motivate them to provide more positive academic opportunities for Black male students. Ms. Davis reflected on how she has seen Black male students being treated by other teachers:

I'll be completely honest with you; I have seen teachers in the past treat Black students differently than White students or Hispanic students. Somehow they'll give the White student just a little bit more leeway than the Black student and, it's funny, but I never thought people did that until I saw it. It just never dawned on me that people actually did that, but I have seen teachers that, if there is a Black student involved in an altercation as opposed to a White student involved in the altercation, they tend to be more lenient on the White student. (T7I3)

As Ms. Davis shared her experience, it was obvious through body language that she was disturbed by how these Black students may be treated by other teachers. In fact, Ms. Davis indicated that she has talked to teachers about how they treat students if she has observed a student in the situation she described. It was obvious, in her willingness to confront teachers and challenge them to see students differently, that she is developed in her own racial identity.

In addition to racial identity and discrimination, the participants recognized that the school environment may be safer than society. Each participant had an opportunity to

share their thoughts about the future of the Black male students in their classes. Will racism and discrimination affect them in the future in the real world? Ms. Doe simply stated the following:

I know it is unfortunate and I hate it. I hate it because I feel like that they're [Black males] going to have a harder time than some of the other races that I teach. (T5I2)

Ms. Harding described a conversation that she has with students prior to a field trip:

When we go places and they're [Black males] like, "Why can't we wear our pants down or our shirts out?" It's not that we don't want you to express yourself. It's that you don't understand how your people judge you instantly. I said, "It's a cruel world out there. They're going to judge you. What do you see on TV?"

[And they said,] "Well, you see people being gangsta with their pants." (T2I2)

The participants in this study understood the power of perception, how the world perceives Black males and how other teachers perceive Black males. Often Whites tend to blame the achievement gap on Blacks, music, and/or family structure. Blaming leads to deficit thinking and ignores the idea that becoming aware of the cultural incongruities in schooling impacts the success of Black students, especially males. Participants used their knowledge of perception and lived experiences to provide information to students in a manner that allowed them to be both academically and socially successful. They made it clear that appropriately integrating rigorous content and social skills along with cultural awareness allows Black male students to thrive in the classroom.

Triangulation of data

The researcher analyzed classroom observation and interview data. In addition, the researcher reviewed and summarized teacher assessment and discipline data for each participant. Finally, some teachers shared classroom activities and lesson plans they believed were particularly successful with their Black male students. The researcher relied mostly on the interviews and classroom observations. The data collection and analysis process revealed three themes: (a) personal connection and relationships, (b) high expectations and motivation, and (c) cultural connections and race. The Black male students in the participants' classrooms are achieving, both academically and socially. The Black males in these teachers' classrooms on average have benchmark scores aligned with the district average, and all of them demonstrated growth on the high-stakes assessment. They also demonstrate positive social behavior and are referred to the office rarely by the teachers in this study. Overall, the triangulation process shows that teachers integrate most of the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and Howard's Achievement Triangle into their classroom practices. There is also some suggestion that the area of cultural relevance should be investigated further in future research, as this area appears to be less developed based on data from this study than other areas of culturally relevant pedagogy and the Achievement Triangle.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine practices that are used by White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male students. The results from this study indicate that effective White female teachers use personal connections and relationships, high expectations and motivation, and cultural connections and race as strategies to provide an appropriate environment for students.

These White female teachers have the unique ability to look keenly for talents and gifts rather than finding a plethora of deficits. Ultimately, they view their students as human beings with a rich culture that is valued and appropriately integrated into the pedagogical practice (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships of White female teachers with Black male middle school students in order to highlight the characteristics, motivation, and skills they possess that provide appropriate strategies for their Black male students. Through participant observation and interviews, this qualitative study gathered information regarding the specific strategies employed by effective White female teachers of Black male middle school students. This chapter reviews the purpose of this study, summarizes the study's findings and theorizes the data using the conceptual framework, and provides recommendations and implications for further research.

Summary of study

This study sought to examine the specific practices and strategies used by White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students. More specifically, the data collected focused on (a) strategies used to develop positive relationships with students, (b) strategies used to incorporate cultural relevance into classroom instruction, and (c) strategies used to motivate Black male students. If educators can appropriately identify these strategies and characteristics in White female teachers, schools stand to experience increased success for Black male middle school students.

Why is it important for educators to examine the dynamic that occurs in a classroom between a White female teacher and her Black male students? A better understanding of this dynamic may help educators address the achievement gap between Black and White students. Current theories about the persistence of this gap include

deficit deprivation, tracking, acting white, low teacher expectations, stereotype threat, and cultural misunderstandings (Irving, 1990; Ogbu, 1987; Perry et al., 2003; Thompson, 2002). Many of these theories were developed after the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) that led to the creation of integrated schools that often lacked the strong sense of culture and community Black students had experienced in segregated schools, possibly initiating the achievement gap (Milner & Howard, 2004). Today, many Black students experience a school culture that is removed from their own: according to NCES (2005), over 82% of America's teachers are White and female (NCES, 2005, retrieved June 17, 2008), while only 8% of the teaching force is Black. Therefore, Black males have a high likelihood of having a mostly White female teacher during their 13 years of public schooling.

If educators still hope to close the achievement gap between Black and White students, Black students need to experience increased academic success, especially in the transitional stage of middle school. As American classrooms become ever more racially and culturally diverse, the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching practices are essential for the continued academic success of these students. The characteristics of culturally relevant teaching practices have been documented by several researchers; however, many are not consistently employed by White female teachers (Chubbuck, 2004; Delpit, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mazzei, 2008). This study provides an analysis of seven White female teachers who have at least partially integrated the characteristics of Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle and Culturally Relevant Teaching and Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

Conceptual Framework

Howard's (2005) Achievement Triangle effectively describes the characteristics and behaviors of teachers who are successful with Black male middle school students. This framework, along with the characteristics documented in Culturally Relevant Teaching and Pedagogy, provides specific information about the strategies employed by effective White female teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004). The three major points on the Achievement Triangle are *rigor*, *responsiveness*, and *relationship* (Appendix A). The aspects of the Achievement Triangle include (a) *knowing myself*, (b) *knowing my practice*, and (c) *knowing my students*. Within the Triangle, Howard indicates that this teacher employs a *passion for equity*, *cultural competence*, and *culturally responsive teaching* (Howard, 2005).

Thorough analysis of the data collected in this study has led to the emergence of three major themes in the philosophies and practices of these teachers: (a) personal connection and relationships, (b) high expectations and motivation, and (c) cultural connections and race. The teachers in this study were able to explicitly provide information regarding initiating, developing, and sustaining positive relationships with Black male middle schools. They provided specific examples of classroom activities that were rigorous, demanded high expectations from students, and motivated students to become academically successful. All of the participants indicated a belief that all children can learn as part of their philosophy of teaching. Teachers also provided insight toward cultural connections and the impact of race; however, most of the data in this area were not explicitly named and appeared more challenging for the participants to describe in detail.

Intuitively, the participants all shared some experiences about recognizing race, family interactions, and/or teaching experiences that have led to their developing this set of skills that contribute to the success of their Black male students. Upon closer examination, however, the researcher was pushed to question the study's original definition of success. In Chapter 1, *success* and *positive academic results* were defined as scoring at or higher than the local average and formative assessments and also as maintaining grades of *C* or higher in core classes (English/language arts, math, science, and social studies) and elective classes. *Success* also is represented in achievement within the current social structures extant in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Academic success can be positively impacted by student motivation, especially in reading (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Based on the data presented in Chapter 4, the teachers in this study meet the definition of success, but just barely. Students are performing just above the local average on the benchmark assessments. After careful review of all the data, the researcher is forced to ask, Is this really success? The criteria initially stated were followed and teachers were identified appropriately; however, should not success be defined by a higher standard?

Ultimately, a careful review of the data suggests that the participants lack development in a few aspects of the Achievement Triangle (Howard, 2006). In the areas of *knowing myself* and *knowing my students*, there only appears to be superficial acknowledgement by the teachers of their students as Black males and of themselves as White females. The data reveal that the teachers do not acknowledge themselves as racial beings and/or recognize the ideas of power and privilege due to their Whiteness. Family background and upbringing may contribute to their ability to embrace race and culture.

Furthermore, there is not evidence of their thorough understanding of students' cultural and racial identity beyond superficial connections such as music and athletics.

Recognition of thoroughly knowing their students would include an understanding of culture, racial identity, language, family background, home situations, learning characteristics, economic status, personality, strength and challenges (Howard, 2006).

The combinations of these characteristics lead teachers to enter the *doorway of responsiveness* that connects the cultural awareness to the academic content of the classroom. In spite of their meeting the study's original definition of success, the researcher is forced to question whether, in light of their lack of cultural and racial development, the participants in this study can fully respond to the needs of their Black male students.

White privilege and race

Can White female teachers be effective instructors of Black male middle school students without acknowledgement of race, culture, power, and privilege? The participants in this study were able to articulate how they developed positive relationships and motivated Black male students. However, as Kailin (1999), Kunjufu (2002), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Mazzei (2008) have concluded, effective teachers of Black students are also conscious of White privilege and race. Only two participants in this study were able to communicate an understanding of White privilege and race. Furthermore, when one participant indicated in a member check interview #1 that she did not see race in her classroom, several participants nodded in agreement. This response indicates colorblindness, an inability to acknowledge the race and culture of students. Colorblindness also indicates this teacher does not see herself as a racial being—an

inherent element of culturally relevant teaching. The first step is for White teachers to identify themselves as racial beings, and then they can openly recognize race and culture of their students.

All of the participants indicated they believe all children can learn as part of their philosophy of teaching. There was evidence during classroom observations and interviews that teachers believed the success of Black males was directly linked to the positive relationships created between the teacher and the student (Rodriquez, 1983). Participants used these relationships to gather information regarding what activities would connect with the students in the classroom. Teachers used music and athletics consistently as activities they believed appropriately integrated culture and relevance into the classroom. Students participated in and were probably excited about the integration of their interests into instruction; however, these activities are not the same as integrating and recognizing the culture of Black male students. In fact, these activities are superficial in their attempt to bring cultural relevance into the classroom. Furthermore, teachers could have developed their relationships with students in a manner that provided information about their culture and family background. Relationships were initially created on superficial observations and the information middle school students shared with their teachers. Could their relationships have more depth if teachers had inquired more about culture, race, and family background?

There was one powerful, yet isolated, example of cultural relevance from one of the participants. Ms. Davis incorporated information regarding the Middle East and slavery when introducing a novel about World War II. She began with a discussion on the internment of Japanese-Americans and allowed students to make connections to slavery

in America's history and to the Middle East conflict. In her words, "It was actually a very, very good discussion" (T7I3). Although the researcher found this a powerful example, it is unclear whether the teacher recognized that this was a true example of recognizing culture and appropriately allowing students to think about how content applies to their lives. She was more excited during the interview when she was discussing the poetry rap activity. Lack of acknowledgement of race and culture can lead to a cultural mismatch that then hinders the progress of Black male students (Irvine, 1990). Can meaningful relationships and motivation compensate for the lack of cultural awareness?

Culturally relevant teachers also understand how to provide rigorous classroom instruction and create an environment that is comfortable for Black male middle school students. This environment allows teachers to motivate students to see success, both academically and socially. Outcomes that motivate students to achieve academic success include sharing with others, being helpful to others, being responsive to rules, being persistent, being inquisitive, and getting good grades (Wentzel, 2003; Wentzel et al., 2004). Coincidentally, these strategies are also employed by culturally relevant teachers. The teachers in this study did demonstrate these characteristics. Across the board, the participants indicated that being fair and consistent with rules, allowing students to work together, and providing individual attention as necessary appeared to motivate students to become academically successful. Other strategies employed by teachers in this study include frequent classroom discussions, real-world application and activities, and competition in academic games. The teachers in this study have some characteristics of

culturally relevant teachers; however, they appear to lack the depth of cultural relevance described by Kailin (1999), Kunjufu (2002), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Mazzei (2008).

White teachers' racial development

How White teachers respond to cultural mismatches in the classroom impacts the success of Black male students (Chubbuck, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Howard, 2006; Irvine, 1990; Kunjufu, 2002). The cultural process for White female teachers is a journey in racial identity development comprising six stages, as defined by Helms (1994, 1996): (a) contact, (b) disintegration, (c) reintegration, (d) pseudo-independence, (e) immersion-emersion, and (f) autonomy. Whites in the contact stage exhibit colorblind behavior, refusing to identify race in the classroom and seeing students as only children, not as raced. But by the final stages of the continuum, immersion-emersion and autonomy, Whites are reflective about their own racial and cultural identity (Helms, 1990, 1992). At the end of this journey, Whites develop the realization that race is no longer a threat and use their thorough understanding to develop correlations between racism and other forms of inequality (Howard, 2006). They also develop a keen sense of how and when to identify oppression and racism (Helms, 1992, 1996; Howard, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2003). Initially, due to the apparent success of the Black male students in their classrooms, the researcher hypothesized that these teachers were in either the stage of immersion-emersion or autonomy in the racial development continuum. Surprisingly, though, one participant in the study indicated that she did not see race when she looked at her students (color-blind behavior). This lack of acknowledgement of race also indicates an ignorance of White privilege (Chubbuck, 2004; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and

is not aligned to culturally relevant teachers. Furthermore, even after several questions and probing, only two participants in the study were able to describe themselves racially.

Is it possible to be an effective teacher of Black male students without acknowledgement of race, privilege and power? The participants in this study were able to identify areas of inequality and racism when asked how Black males may be affected in society; however, there were no other connections to culture and race within the classroom or curriculum. Teachers attempted to use rap and music as a method to connect race and culture to content. This strategy does not provide the depth necessary to help Black males recognize their culture and history. Ultimately, it appears that these teachers are partially effective with Black male students in that they respond to their needs based on the relationships they develop with them and provide high quality, rigorous classroom activities that allow students to work cooperatively; however, they lack some of the characteristics of a culturally relevant teacher as defined by Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle (Appendix A) because they are still developing an understanding of themselves racially and therefore lack the ability to integrate cultural relevance consistently in their classrooms.

Implications

This study sought to examine specific practices of White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students. The researcher observed classrooms, interviewed teachers and reviewed artifacts from classroom activities. Data collection provided information regarding the specific strategies these teachers use to develop positive relationships with students and provide motivation for them. The goal of the study was to see if these effective White female

teachers embody the characteristics described in Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle and align with the practices of culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Thompson, 2002, 2004).

This study was conducted in only one rural, low-wealth school system, Starry Sky. Although located in a rural area, the school characteristics are more similar to schools in urban settings (Kunjufu, 2002). Approximately 33% of the students in Starry Sky are minority, and the middle schools used in this study have higher numbers of Black and Hispanic students. The percentages of Black students at Orion and Pegasus are 34% and 45%, respectively. Both schools are identified as School-Wide Title I schools, which indicates that at least 75% of their students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. The study included seven teachers from Orion and Pegasus who were identified by their principals using the following criteria: (a) their classrooms contained at least five Black male students; (b) they made fewer than two office referrals of Black male students per nine-week period; and (c) class averages were at or above average on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math.

The research and information from Delpit (1995, 2006), Howard (2006), Ladson-Billings (1994), Murrell (2002), and Thompson (2002, 2004) provide the characteristics necessary for White teachers to be effective with Black students. This research confirms the strategies previously identified by Thompson (2002, 2004). This study reinforces previous research and highlights the significance of relationship and motivation for academic and social success of Black male middle school students. The answer to the prevailing question regarding practices employed by effective White female teachers is provided through analysis of the data reported in the findings and conclusions of this

study. The results of this study add to the body of literature regarding White female teachers who are effective in teaching Black male middle school students. Furthermore, insight regarding positive relationships and motivation for Black male students has been identified.

The researcher was able to discern from the study answers to two of the research questions: What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?, and What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?. One major finding of this study was the significance of the personal connection and relationship between these teachers and their Black male students. Teachers provided several specific examples of how they initiate and sustain these relationships. They clearly stated that they believe that this is the foundation for motivating the students throughout the year when content becomes challenging. They reiterated the importance of making sure the students know they care about them, even beyond the classroom. Each participant made note of extending the relationship to athletic events and/or community events. Anything beyond the classroom that demonstrated a personal connection was believed to be significant in sustaining their relationship and ensuring positive academic and social results for the students.

The manner in which the relationships were established and maintained appears to be positive and could lead to acknowledgement of cultural connections and race. However, the teachers did not develop the relationships in a manner beyond shallow knowledge of Black males; in fact, teachers used the information gathered from students to determine their interests. Middle school students may only be able to effectively articulate superficial information, such as music and sports. The teacher has the

responsibility and power to develop a significant relationship with students that includes acknowledgement and understanding of culture and race. Initiating a deep relationship with students could include gathering information about their family background, religious practices and traditions. This information would provide an opportunity for cultural connections within the classroom beyond music and athletics. Without thorough knowledge of the students' backgrounds and understanding of culture, the teacher is powerless in responding the students' academic and social needs (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2006; Kunjufu 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2004).

The data gathered from teachers on the remaining research question—What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance into the classroom instruction?—did not fully align with recognized practices for cultural relevance in the classroom. The researcher observed a surprising lack of thorough racial and cultural reflection from the participants in the study. In fact, the other areas of culturally relevant practices (relationships and motivation) were so significant that the researcher wonders how these teachers can be so effective without a more explicit acknowledgment of race, privilege, and power. The participants, with the exception of one, were not able to identify cultural examples other than music and athletics. These examples do not positively recognize the culture of Black students, as they are superficial in nature. As discussed earlier, when asked to describe herself racially, Ms. Likke said:

I tell them that I am not white, that I am blue-striped because, obviously, I'm so pale that you can see my veins and, honestly, it just breaks the tension and makes everybody laugh to the point where it's like, "Oh well, I'm red-dotted because I have freckles or whatever." I feel that's the best way to approach it. (T3I3)

This statement clearly avoids the racial identification and shows that the teacher does not feel comfortable in her own Whiteness. This attitude initially may seem appropriate; however, it discounts the race of the teacher and those of the students. Teachers should recognize that acknowledging race and color is positive for both the teacher and the student (Delpit, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mazzei, 2008).

Based on the data gathered from this study, the researcher believes these teachers are somewhat effective with Black male middle school students. However, they do not see and embrace color and race. How is this possible? Culturally relevant teaching practices embody an appreciation for race and culture and effectively incorporate culturally relevant examples for students (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The researcher believes that the teachers have not been exposed to research or cultural development about race, privilege and power. Conversely, it was evident that the teachers cared about their Black male students and worried about stereotypes and perceptions that may hinder them in society. Participants provided students with strategies regarding appearance and wanted students to be perceived in a positive manner when representing the school on field trips. The teachers in this study had an internal desire to see academic and social success for their Black male students. Teachers were also proud of the academic results they had seen with their Black male students and more proud of the lack of discipline problems from Black male students in their classrooms. It is also important to note that the teachers in this study did not appear to have discipline problems with any students.

It is likely that these teachers would be even more effective and better equipped to respond to the needs of their Black male middle school students if they participated in

professional development about culturally relevant pedagogy. These teachers have exhibited a strong foundation for providing positive relationships, motivating students, and creating a classroom atmosphere where students can be academically and socially successful. Self-reflection regarding family history and cultural traditions may allow teachers to more fully embrace their own racial identities. Further training in culturally relevant practices could provide these teachers an opportunity to develop an appreciation for their own Whiteness and racial identity as well as a stronger understanding of the culture and racial identities of their students—and the importance of both in their approach to teaching.

Recommendations for future research

Research is clear that teachers who understand and consistently implement the practices of culturally relevant pedagogy provide an environment where Black male students can be academically and socially successful. The cycle of failing Black students often continues when White teachers do not understand each student's culture (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2005; Ogbu, 1987, 1992). Teachers need to recognize that race and culture are factors in the success or lack of success of students in traditional school settings. Once White female teachers are willing to recognize and name race and culture as factors, they will be able to continue on the racial development continuum (Kunjufu, 2002). This progression could lead to more appropriate integration of culturally relevant examples within classroom instruction.

Data from this study revealed that these White teachers possess some of the characteristics of culturally relevant teachers; however, they lack complete racial development. Further study that examines how teachers respond to professional

development that incorporates racial development, including ideas of race, power, class, and privilege, may contribute to the body of literature on effective White female teachers of Black male students. In fact, this type of professional development could be used with teachers who already have some positive results with Black males, like the participants in this study. This professional development could help teachers develop a level of comfort in their own Whiteness and an appreciation for the culture of their Black male students. Ultimately, such a study could lead to appropriate integration of classroom activities that are culturally relevant and motivating for students. Another area for further study involves widening this study's scope to include other school levels, a longer period of study, and a larger number of participants. This study was conducted over a few months in a one rural, low-wealth school district and was limited to two middle schools and effective White female teachers. It may be useful to conduct this study in other levels, such as elementary and high school, and over a longer period of time. Furthermore, this study only involved seven participants. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies include more participants from other school levels and an extended period of time. This expansion could provide insight into the results of teachers' developing relationships that extend beyond shallow information such as music and sports and include culture and family background.

Additionally, this study focused on the classroom teacher as the variable. This study did not include the perspective of the Black male middle school students, school principals, and/or parents and community members. As the participating teachers believed they were incorporating cultural relevance by using music and athletics, it would be interesting to determine the perception of this incorporation from students and parents.

Research conducted in schools that have a critical mass of Black students versus schools with low percentages of Black students would add to the literature in this area. The idea of critical mass as a variable could provide additional insight for professional development for White female teachers. A study that incorporates White female teachers, Black male students, and parents may provide further insight into this phenomenon. The perceptions of the other groups may also provide data that inform the practice and instructional strategies used by White female teachers.

Another limitation of this study is that it only used one researcher. The researcher is a Black female who has been a principal in the district and is currently an assistant superintendent in a neighboring district. This aspect potentially affected the conversations and the data collected during the study. White female teachers were posed questions regarding race and Black male students by a Black female. It is possible that teachers believed the appropriate answers regarding race were to discount its power. They may have also believed that acknowledgement of themselves as racial beings and the identification of White privilege and power was inappropriate. Conducting this study with a White female researcher may provide additional information regarding the ideas of White privilege and power among White female teachers. Further research may lead to more information that would help school leaders support White female teachers provide appropriate instruction for Black male middle school students.

One additional recommendation remains. The definition of student success provided the criterion for the selection of the participants in this study. Future studies may need to define success using a higher standard, possibly as those students performing in the top third of the class rather than merely above the class average. The teachers in

this study have provided initial information about moderate progress for Black male middle school students. These teachers do not have a high achievement gap between their Black and White students. However, evidence from teachers who are producing higher scores from Black male students would further contribute to the current body of literature.

Conclusion

The current plight of Black male students in education can be daunting to educators who desire to close the achievement gap between Black and White students. Prior to integration, Black students were taught by Black teachers in a community environment that valued their culture and academic development (Milner & Howard, 2004). This school environment fostered an atmosphere that valued personal relationships and the other tenets of culturally relevant teaching, such as incorporating cultural connections into the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner & Howard, 2004; Murrell, 2002). A return to such priorities could have a tremendous impact on the success of Black male students in today's classrooms.

The initial idea for this research evolved from the researcher's noting that a few White female teachers were getting positive academic results from Black male students. Because there is significant research and information from Kailin (1999), Kunjufu (2002), Mazzei (2008), and Uhlenberg and Brown (2002) that indicates that White female teachers lack the skills to provide meaningful classroom instruction for Black male students, the researcher wondered how this phenomenon was possible. This quote from Ms. Likke embodies the data collected during this study:

I do feel that any student could learn if they're willing to learn, and the longer that I have been here, because each year I feel like I have grown more and more, that any person can teach if they care enough about the students, they care enough about what they're teaching, and they can relate it to what the kids are going through, something that they can connect to their life in some way. (T3I2)

Like Ms. Likke, the participants have a strong passion for the relationships they have with Black male students. They believe that the personal connection is the foundation for student academic and social success. It is possible for White female teachers to provide instruction that is rigorous and engaging to Black students. These teachers demonstrated that they embody some of the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching.

The teachers in this study were willing to talk about their success and reflect on the specific strategies used to develop relationships and motivate Black male students. This type of dialogue is important and helped the researcher understand their behavior within the classroom. The participants clearly recognized how powerful relationships were to Black male students' success. More importantly, the teachers in this study demonstrate that White female teachers can be effective with Black male students when they have the desire to see success in all students. However, the teachers in this study lacked the racial and cultural awareness necessary to fully embody all of the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching. Why did the participants lack the motivation to create deeper relationships with their students that would provide cultural connections and acknowledgement of race and power in society?

Educators and especially building-level school leaders should be keenly aware of the interactions that occur between teachers and students. Transformationist teachers

have a depth of knowledge in their understanding of dominant culture and its social construction (Howard, 2006). These teachers understand themselves as racial beings and use that knowledge to create meaningful relationships with students and provide instruction that incorporates culturally relevant examples (Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thompson, 2002, 2004). Teachers have the power to provide opportunities for student success when they consistently integrate the tenets of culturally responsive teaching into their classroom.

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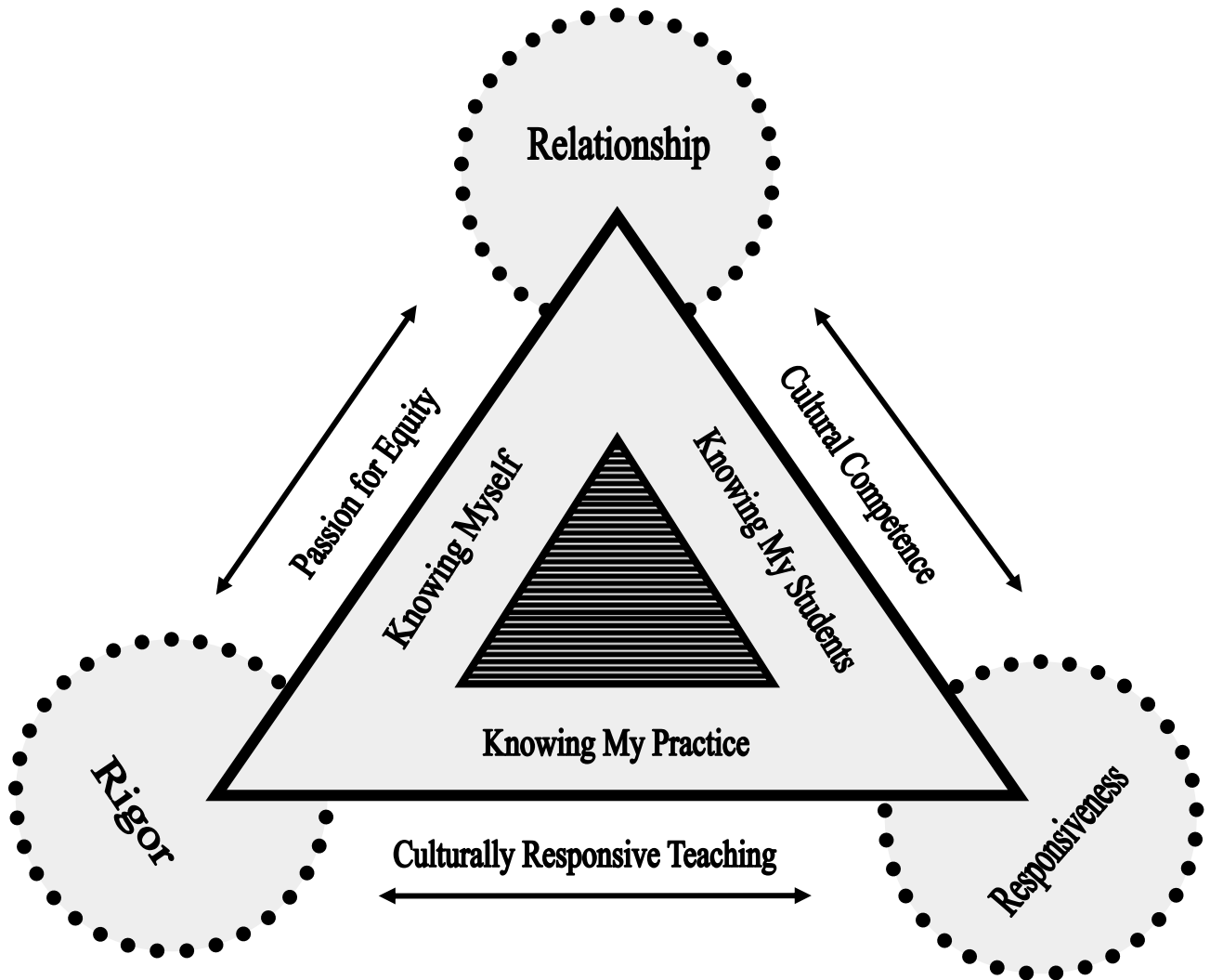
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APPENDICES

A: Howard's (2006) Achievement Triangle (Conceptual Framework)



B: Observation Protocol

Teacher Talk:	Student reaction, student behavior, student responses (verbal & non verbal), student motivation strategies:
Lesson Objectives/Agenda:	Classroom Activities/Culturally Relevant Examples or Interactions:
Classroom Management/Social Interaction(s)/Redirection/Motivation:	Descriptive Environment:

Additional Notes/Observations/Questions:

C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol #1

1. Tell me about your background as a classroom teacher?
2. Describe your teaching philosophy?
3. What are the practices that you use to produce positive academic results with Black male middle school students?
4. What teaching strategies do you use to help Black male students with your content?
5. Of the strategies you mentioned which are most effective with your Black male students?
6. Why do you think they are most effective?
7. Tell me an instance where you use cultural or “real-world” references to help Black male students understand the content.

Interview Protocol # 2

1. When did you first decide to become a teacher at _____ middle school?
2. Can you tell me about the class I just observed? What went well? Is there anything you would change?
3. What do you do to initiate and maintain a positive relationship with your students, especially Black males?
4. What are the practices that you use to produce positive social results with your students?
5. Discuss how these strategies get positive results with your Black male students.
6. Discuss how you academically challenge your students, especially Black males.

7. Tell me an instance where you use cultural or “real-world” references to help Black male students understand the content.
8. When did you first recognize race? What is your first racial memory?
9. How do you describe yourself racially?

Interview Protocol # 3

1. Describe strategies you use to motivate your Black male students?
2. Why do you use this (or these) strategies?
3. Does racism affect you? How might racism effect your students?
4. How does your principal show support of the strategies that you are using in your classroom?
5. Any additional thoughts for our final interview.
6. Do you have any questions for me?

Member Check Interview Protocol

1. Discuss your teaching philosophy and commitment to students being academically successful.
2. Share some strategies you use to create positive relationships with your students?
3. Are some of these more successful with your Black male students? If so, why?
4. Describe how you motivate Black male students in your classroom.
5. Are there specific strategies that you use to help Black male students construct knowledge in your classroom?
6. Discuss other practices that you use to help Black male students experience success academically and socially.

D: Interview and Observation Codes

Conceptual Framework	Research Questions	Codes
Knowing (myself) yourself	What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance in the classroom?	White, Black, poor, diversity, middle class, privilege, race, pedagogy, culture, student culture, student background lesson plan, lesson design, classroom activities, instructional strategies, group work, power, and discipline.
Knowing your students	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students? What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance in the classroom? What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?	Race, student family, care, relationship, sympathy, empathy, potential, ability, respect, classroom activities, instructional strategies, marginal, low, low level, and group work.
Knowing your practice	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?	Pedagogy, culture, lesson plan, lesson design, classroom activities, instructional strategies, group work, graphic organizers, making connections, relate, relationships, projects, verbal learning (presentations), and culture/cultural.
Rigor	What practices are the practices of White female students that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students?	Student capacity, student potential, activities, challenge, hard, and difficult.
Relationships	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?	Care, relate, relationship, values, culture, and personal connection.
Responsiveness	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students? What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?	Real-world examples, real-world experiences, culture, cultural background, student background, instructional strategies, and classroom activities.

E: Conceptual Framework and interview questions

Framework	Interview Questions
Knowing yourself	Interview # 1- 1, 2 Interview # 2- 1, 7, 8, 9 Interview # 3- 3 Member Check- 1, 6
Knowing your students	Interview # 1- 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Interview # 2- 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Interview # 3- 1, 2, 3, 7 Member Check- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Knowing your practice	Interview # 1- 2, 4 Interview # 2- 3, 4, 5, 6 Interview # 3- 1, 2, 6 Member Check- 1, 5, 6
Rigor	Interview # 1- 3, 4, 5, 6 Interview # 2- 5, 6, 7 Interview # 3- 6 Member Check- 2, 3, 5, 6
Relationships	Interview # 1- 6, 7 Interview # 2-3, 4, 6, 7 Interview # 3- 2, 3, 4 Member Check- 2, 3, 6
Responsiveness	Interview # 1- 4, 5, 6, 7 Interview # 2- 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Interview # 3- 1, 2, 3 Member Check- 2, 3, 5, 6

F: Framework and research questions

Framework	Research Questions
Knowing yourself	What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance in the classroom?
Knowing your students	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students? What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance in the classroom? What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?
Knowing your practice	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?
Rigor	What practices are the practices of White female students that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students?
Relationships	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students?
Responsiveness	What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students? What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?

Interview and Member Check Question Correlation.

Research Questions	Interview Questions
What strategies are used by White female teachers that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students?	Tell me about your background as a classroom teacher? What are the practices that you use to produce positive academic results with Black male middle school students? How does your principal show support of the strategies that you are using in your classroom?
What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop a positive relationship with male students	Tell me about your background as a classroom teacher? What are the practices that you use to produce positive academic results with Black male middle school students?
What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance into classroom instruction?	What teaching strategies do you use to help Black male students with your content? Tell me an instance where you use cultural or “real-world” references to help Black male students understand the content.
What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male middle school students?	Describe strategies you use to motivate your Black male students.

G: Data Tables

Table 4, Timetable for Classroom Observations

Teachers	Observation # 1	Observation #2	Observation #3
Teacher # 1	T1O1 (5.26.10)	T1O2 (5.27.10)	T1O3 (6.8.10)
Teacher # 2	T2O1 (5.26.10)	T2O2 (6.8.10)	Not Observed
Teacher # 3	T3O1 (5.26.10)	T3O2 (5.28.10)	T3O3 (6.8.10)
Teacher # 4	T4O1 (5.26.10)	T4O2 (5.28.10)	T4O3 (6.8.10)
Teacher # 5	T5O1 (6.5.10)	T5O2 (6.7.10)	Not Observed
Teacher # 6	T6O1 (6.5.10)	T6O2 (6.7.10)	Not Observed
Teacher # 7	T7O1 (6.5.10)	T7O2 (6.8.10)	Not Observed

Table 5, Timetable for Teacher Interviews

Teachers	Interview # 1	Interview #2	Interview #3
Teacher # 1	T1I1 (5.26.10)	T1I2 (5.28.10)	T1I3 (6.11.10)
Teacher # 2	T2I1 (5.26.10)	T2I2 (6.10.10)	T2I3 (6.17.10)
Teacher # 3	T3I1 (5.27.10)	T3I2 (6.7.10)	T3I3 (6.11.10)
Teacher # 4	T4I1 (5.27.10)	T4I2 (6.7.10)	T4I3 (6.11.10)
Teacher # 5	T5I1 (6.7.10)	T5I2 (6.10.10)	T5I3 (6.17.10)
Teacher # 6	T6I1 (6.7.10)	T6I2 (6.10.10)	T6I3 (6.17.10)
Teacher # 7	T7I1 (6.7.10)	T7I2 (6.10.10)	T6I3 (6.17.10)

Table 6, Timetable for Member Check Interviews

Member Check Interview	Participants
Interview #1 (8.6.10)	Teachers # 1, 2, 4, 7
Interview #2 (9.4.10)	Teachers # 3, 5, 6

Table 7, Teacher Profiles

Teachers	Childhood	Currently Live	Years of Experience	Education Level
Teacher # 1	Farm, upper middle class, all White, north	Middle class suburb	4	Bachelor level
Teacher # 2	Rural, poor, all White, south	Middle class rural	7	Bachelor level
Teacher # 3	Suburb, middle class, mixed (Black & White), south	Upper middle class suburb	14	Bachelor level
Teacher # 4	Rural, middle class, all White, south	Middle class suburb	23	Masters level
Teacher # 5	Rural, middle class, mostly White, south	Middle class rural	5	Masters level
Teacher # 6	Rural, poor, all White, south	Middle class rural	7	Bachelor level
Teacher # 7	Suburb, middle class, mixed (Black & White) north	Middle class rural	18	Bachelor level

Table 8, Teacher School and Subject(s)

Teacher	School	Grade taught	Subject(s)
Teacher # 1	Pegasus Middle School	6	Math
Teacher # 2	Pegasus Middle School	7	Math
Teacher # 3	Orion Middle School	6	Math & English/Language Arts
Teacher # 4	Pegasus Middle School	8	English/Language Arts
Teacher # 5	Orion Middle School	7	Math
Teacher # 6	Pegasus Middle School	7	Math & English/Language Arts
Teacher # 7	Pegasus Middle School	7	Math & English/Language Arts

H: IRB Application and approval

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS

Institutional Review Board

APPLICATION FOR IRB APPROVAL OF
HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
Version June 25, 2009

Part A.1. Contact Information, Agreements, and Signatures

Date: May 17, 2010

Title of Study: Portraits of Success: Effective White Teachers of Black Male Middle School Students.

Name and degrees of Principal Investigator: Nakia Hardy

Department: School of Education mailing address/CB #: 3500

UNC-CH PID: 710160360 Pager: N/A

Phone #: 336-202-7266 Fax #: 336-627-2660 Email Address: nhardy@rock.k12.nc.us

For trainee-led projects: ☐ undergraduate ☒ graduate ☐ postdoc ☐ resident ☐ other

Name of faculty advisor: Dr. Kathleen Brown

Department: School of Education Mailing address/CB #: 3500

Phone #: 919-966-1354 Fax #: 919-962-1693 Email Address: brownk@email.unc.edu

Center, institute, or department in which research is based if other than department(s) listed above:

Name of Project Manager or Study Coordinator (if any): N/A

Department:

Mailing address/CB #:

Phone #:

Fax #:

Email Address:

List **all other project personnel** including co-investigators, and anyone else who has contact with subjects or identifiable data from subjects. **Include name, location (UNC or specific outside location), role and email address for each person who should receive electronic copies of IRB correspondence to PI.**

Name of funding source or sponsor (please do not abbreviate):

☒ not funded ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ industry ☐ foundation ☐ UNC-CH
☐ other (specify):

For external funding, RAMSeS proposal number (from Office of Sponsored Research):

For industry sponsored research (if applicable):

Sponsor's master protocol version #:

Version date:

Investigator Brochure version #:

Version date:

Any other details you need documented on IRB approval:

Checklist of Items to Include with Your Submission

Include the following items with your submission, where applicable.

- Check the relevant items below and include one copy of all checked items 1-11 in the order listed.
- Also include two additional collated sets of copies (sorted in the order listed) for items 1-6.

Applications must “stand alone” and should provide all information requested, i.e., complete answers must be contained in the application. While you may reference other documents with supporting information, do not respond solely by stating “see attached.”

Applications will be returned if these instructions are not followed.

Check	Item	Total No. of Copies
X	1. This application. One copy must have original PI signatures.	3
X	2. Consent and assent forms (include DHHS-approved sample, when one exists), fact or information sheets, phone and verbal consent scripts.	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. HIPAA authorization addendum to consent form.	3
X	4. All recruitment materials including final copies of printed advertisements, audio/video taped advertisements, scripts, flyers, letters, and emails.	3
X	5. Questionnaires, focus group guides, scripts used to guide phone or in-person interviews, etc.	3
X	6. Documentation of reviews from any other committees (e.g., Clinical and Translational Research Center (CTRC), Oncology Protocol Review Committee, or local review committees in Academic Affairs).	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Protocol, grant application or proposal supporting this submission, if any (e.g., extramural grant application to NIH or foundation, industry protocol, student proposal). This <u>must</u> be submitted if an external funding source or sponsor is checked on the previous page.	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Addendum for Multi-Site Studies where UNC-CH is the Lead Coordinating Center.	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Data use agreements (may be required for use of existing data from third parties).	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Only for those study personnel <i>not</i> in the online UNC-CH human research ethics training database (http://cfx3.research.unc.edu/training_comp/): Documentation of required training in human research ethics.	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. For drug studies, Investigator Brochure if one exists. If none, include package insert for previously approved uses..	1

Principal Investigator: I will personally conduct or supervise this research study. I will ensure that this study is performed in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and University policies regarding human subjects research. I will obtain IRB approval before making any changes or additions to the project. I will notify the IRB of any other changes in the information provided in this application. I will provide progress reports to the IRB at least annually, or as requested. I will report promptly to the IRB all unanticipated problems or serious adverse events involving risk to human subjects. I will follow the IRB approved consent process for all subjects. I will ensure that all collaborators, students and employees assisting in this research study are informed about these obligations. All information given in this form is accurate and complete.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Faculty Advisor if PI is a Student or Trainee Investigator: I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this study complies with all the obligations listed above for the PI.

Signature of Faculty Advisor

Date

Note: The following signature is not required for applications with a student PI.

Department or Division Chair, Center Director (or counterpart) of PI: (or Vice-Chair or Chair's designee if Chair is investigator or otherwise unable to review): I certify that this research is appropriate for this Principal Investigator, that the investigators are qualified to conduct the research, and that there are adequate resources (including financial, support and facilities) available. If my unit has a local review committee for pre-IRB review, this requirement has been satisfied. I support this application, and hereby submit it for further review.

Signature of Department Chair or designee

Date

Print Name of Department Chair or designee

Department

Part A.2. Summary Checklist *Are the following involved?*

Yes	No
A.2.1. Existing data, research records, patient records, and/or human biological	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.2. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups with subjects?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A.2.3. Videotaping, audiotaping, filming of subjects, or analysis of existing tapes?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A.2.4. Do you have <u>specific plans</u> to enroll subjects from these vulnerable or select populations:	
a. UNC-CH students or UNC-CH employees?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Non-English-speaking?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. Decisionally impaired?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d. Patients?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e. Prisoners, others involuntarily detained or incarcerated, or parolees?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f. Pregnant women?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g. Minors (less than 18 years)? <i>If yes</i> , give age range: to years	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.5. a. Are sites outside UNC-CH engaged in the research?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Is UNC-CH the sponsor or lead coordinating center for a multi-site study?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> , include the Addendum for Multi-site Studies .	
<i>If yes</i> , will any of these sites be outside the United States ?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> , is there a local ethics review committee agency with jurisdiction? (provide contact information)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A.2.6. Will this study use a data and safety monitoring board or committee?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> : UNC-CH NC TraCS DSMB? (must apply separately)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Lineberger Cancer Center DSMC?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Other? Specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
A.2.7. a. Are you collecting sensitive information such as sexual behavior, HIV status, recreational drug use, illegal behaviors, child/physical abuse, immigration status, etc?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Do you plan to obtain a federal Certificate of Confidentiality for this study?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. Is this research classified (e.g., requires security clearance)?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.8. a. Investigational drugs? (provide IND #)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Approved drugs for “non-FDA-approved” conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>All studies testing substances in humans must provide a letter of acknowledgement from the UNC Health Care Investigational Drug Service (IDS).</i>	
A.2.9. Placebo(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.10. Investigational devices, instruments, machines, software? (provide IDE #)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.11. Fetal tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.12. Genetic studies on subjects’ specimens?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A.2.13. Storage of subjects’ specimens for future research?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> , see instructions for Consent for Stored Samples .	
A.2.14. Diagnostic or therapeutic ionizing radiation, or radioactive isotopes, which subjects would not receive otherwise?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> , approval by the UNC-CH Radiation Safety Committee is required.	
A.2.15. Recombinant DNA or gene transfer to human subjects?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> , approval by the UNC-CH Institutional Biosafety Committee is required.	
A.2.16. Does this study involve UNC-CH cancer patients?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes</i> , submit this application directly to the Oncology Protocol Review Committee .	
A.2.17. Will subjects be studied in the Clinical and Translational Research Center (CTRC) or is the CTRC involved in any other way with this study? If yes, obtain the CTRC Addendum and submit completed application (IRB application and Addendum) directly to the CTRC. The CTRC includes facilities located on the 3 rd floor of the Main Hospital (formerly GCRC) and Ground floor Burnett-Womack (formerly CCCT).	<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

A.2.18. Will gadolinium be administered as a contrast agent?	..__	.._X_
A.2.19. Will subjects' Social Security Number (SSN) be collected for:		
a. processing payments greater than \$200 per year, to support IRS reporting (see also B.6)?	—	_X_
b. processing payments of any amount through UNC-CH Accounts Payable?	—	_X_
c. use as a unique identifier for study tracking purposes for national registry or database?	—	_X_

Part A.3. Conflict of Interest Questions and Certification

The following questions apply to **all investigators and study staff** engaged in the design, conduct, or reporting results of this project **and/or their immediate family members**. For these purposes, "family" includes the individual's spouse and dependent children. "Spouse" includes a person with whom one lives together in the same residence and with whom one shares responsibility for each other's welfare and shares financial obligations.

<p>A.3.1. Currently or during the term of this research study, does any member of the research team or his/her family member have or expect to have:</p> <p>(a) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with the sponsor of this study?</p> <p>(b) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?</p> <p>(c) A personal financial interest in or personal financial relationship (including gifts of cash or in-kind) with an entity engaged in the performance of this project as a subcontractor, sub-recipient or vendor?</p> <p>(d) A board membership of any kind or an executive position (paid or unpaid) with the sponsor of this study or with an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?</p>	<p>___ yes</p> <p>___ yes</p> <p>___ yes</p> <p>___ yes</p>	<p>__X__ no</p> <p>__X__ no</p> <p>X__ no</p> <p>__X__ no</p>
<p>A.3.2. Has the University or has a University-related foundation received a cash or in-kind gift from the sponsor of this study for the use or benefit of any member of the research team?</p>	<p>___ yes</p>	<p>__X__ no</p>
<p>A.3.3. Has the University or has a University-related foundation received a cash or in-kind gift for the use or benefit of any member of the research team from an entity that owns or has the right to commercialize a product, process or technology studied in this project?</p>	<p>___ yes</p>	<p>__X__ no</p>

If the answer to ANY of the questions above is yes, the affected research team member(s) must complete and submit the form, which is accessible online at <http://coi.unc.edu>. List name(s) of all research team members for whom any answer to the questions above is yes:

Certification by Principal Investigator: By submitting this IRB application, I (the PI) certify that the information provided above is true and accurate regarding my

own circumstances, that I have inquired of every UNC-Chapel Hill employee or trainee who will be engaged in the design, conduct or reporting of results of this project as to the questions set out above, and that I have instructed any such person who has answered “yes” to any of these questions to complete and submit for approval a Conflict of Interest Evaluation Form. I understand that as Principal Investigator I am obligated to ensure that any potential conflicts of interest that exist in relation to my study are reported as required by University policy.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Faculty Advisor if PI is a Student or Trainee Investigator: I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the PI complies with the University’s conflict of interest policies and procedures.

Signature of Faculty Advisor

Date

Part A.4. Questions Common to All Studies

For all questions, if the study involves only secondary data analysis, focus on your proposed design, methods and procedures, and not those of the original study that produced the data you plan to use.

Complete answers must be provided. While you may reference other documents with supporting information, do not respond solely by stating “see attached.”

A.4.1. Brief Summary. Provide a *brief* non-technical description of the study, which will be used in IRB documentation as a description of the study. Typical summaries are 50-100 words. *Please reply to each item below, retaining the subheading labels already in place, so that reviewers can readily identify the content.*

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships of White female teachers and Black male students in middle school, grades 6-8. Through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, the specific strategies used to create positive relationships with Black male students will be documented.

Participants: The participants will be classroom teachers who have been nominated by their principals as having a history of establishing effective relationships with their Black male middle-school students..

Procedures (methods): Classroom observations and teacher interviews will be used to investigate the strategies used by teachers to create positive relationships with Black male students.

A.4.2. Purpose and Rationale. Provide a summary of the background information, state the research question(s), and tell why the study is needed. If a complete rationale and literature review are in an accompanying grant application or other type of proposal, only provide a brief summary here. If there is no proposal, provide a more extensive rationale and literature review, including references.

The pedagogy required for Black male students is thought by some (??many) to encompass the ideas of African-centered pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of White female teachers (who have a reputation for effectiveness) that produce positive academic and social results for Black male middle school students. The research questions that guide this study include the following: (a) What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students? (b) What strategies are used to incorporate cultural relevance into classroom instruction?; and (c) What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?

I have educational experience as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal and central office administrator. This background provides a depth of experience in understanding the dynamics that occur in a classroom between the teacher and the students. In fact, my experience as a middle school principal heightened my awareness of the ability of some teachers to provide a positive learning environment for Black male students. To provide an effective academic setting for Black males, teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to Black students' social and cultural realities (Howard, 2006; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004, 2006; Thompson, 2002, 2004;

Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This research will document the specific strategies used by White female teachers who are successful with Black male middle school students.

A.4.3. Subjects. *You should describe the subject population even if your study does not involve direct interaction (e.g., existing records).* Specify number, gender, ethnicity, race, and age. Specify whether subjects are healthy volunteers or patients. If patients, specify any relevant disease or condition and indicate how potential subjects will be identified. Researchers are reminded that additional approvals may be needed from relevant “gatekeepers” to access subjects (e.g., school principals, facility directors, hospital or healthcare system administrators).

The subjects in the study are classroom teachers. Principals will be asked to identify classroom teachers who meet the following criteria: (a) the teachers are white and female, (b) their classrooms contain at least five Black male students; (c) they made fewer than two office referrals of Black male students per nine-week period; and (d) overall class averages were at or above average on local benchmark assessments in reading and/or math and (e), in the view of their principals, these teachers exhibit teaching practices that lead to positive results with Black male students.

It is hoped that at least eight such teachers will participate in the study.

A.4.4. Inclusion/exclusion criteria. List required characteristics of potential subjects, and those that preclude enrollment or involvement of subjects or their data. Justify exclusion of any group, especially by criteria based on gender, ethnicity, race, or age. If pregnant women are excluded, or if women who become pregnant are withdrawn, specific justification must be provided.

This investigation includes only teachers who are white (Caucasian) and female who are teaching middle school students. This study is focused on the specific strategies of White female teachers with Black male middle school students.

A.4.5. Full description of the study design, methods and procedures. Describe the research study. Discuss the study design; study procedures; sequential description of what subjects will be asked to do; assignment of subjects to various arms of the study if applicable; doses; frequency and route of administration of medication and other medical treatment if applicable; how data are to be collected (questionnaire, interview, focus group or specific procedure such as physical examination, venipuncture, etc.). Include information on who will collect data, who will conduct procedures or measurements. Indicate the number and duration of contacts with each subject; outcome measurements; and follow-up procedures. If the study involves medical treatment, distinguish standard care procedures from those that are research. If the study is a clinical trial involving patients as subjects and use of placebo control is involved, provide justification for the use of placebo controls.

This study of at least 8 White female teachers employs qualitative data collection strategies. This study will include participant observation, ethnographic semi-structured interviews, and one focus group interview. The use of different data sources corroborates, elaborates, and illuminates the information necessary to address the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Triangulation strengthens the research process and provides trust in the data and research conclusions. The following research questions will focus this investigation: (a) What strategies are used by White female teachers to develop positive relationships with Black male students? (b) What strategies are used to incorporate cultural

relevance into classroom instruction?; and (c) What strategies are used to provide motivation for Black male students?

Each classroom observation will last a minimum of 30 minutes, and generally last 45 minutes; each interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. There will be three (3) observations and three (3) different interviews for each participant (teacher) in the study. The research questions, which served as the foundation on which the protocols were formulated, will also serve as the foundation for the data analysis. Interviews will be digitally recorded or taped and transcribed for the purposes of analysis (see attached copies of interview protocols).

Classroom observation data will be collected through handwritten notes. There will be NO audio recording or video recording. During both classroom observations and focus group interviews notes will be taken about culturally relevant behaviors and cultivating relationships with students.

Students will be told that the principal investigator is a peer observer of the classroom teacher.

A.4.6. Benefits to subjects and/or society. Describe any potential for direct benefit to individual subjects, as well as the benefit to society based on scientific knowledge to be gained; these should be clearly distinguished. Consider the nature, magnitude, and likelihood of any direct benefit to subjects. If there is no direct benefit to the individual subject, say so here and in the consent form (if there is a consent form). Do not list monetary payment or other compensation as a benefit.

This research will explore the strategies used by White female teachers to promote academic and social success among Black male middle school students. These strategies can be used by other White female teachers and school leaders to provide professional development for White female teachers. Participation in this study will contribute to a body of knowledge about effective teaching strategies for Black male students; however, there will be no direct benefit to the individual participants.

A.4.7. Full description of risks and measures to minimize risks. Include risk of psychosocial harm (e.g., emotional distress, embarrassment, breach of confidentiality), economic harm (e.g., loss of employment or insurability, loss of professional standing or reputation, loss of standing within the community) and legal jeopardy (e.g., disclosure of illegal activity or negligence), as well as known side effects of study medication, if applicable, and risk of pain and physical injury. Describe what will be done to minimize these risks. Describe procedures for follow-up, when necessary, such as when subjects are found to be in need of medical or psychological referral. If there is no direct interaction with subjects, and risk is limited to breach of confidentiality (e.g., for existing data), state this.

The participants will be classroom teachers. They will be asked to discuss their pedagogy and practice within the classroom with respect to Black male students. The researcher is aware that there could be some sensitivity for white teachers to be discussing their success with Black boys with a Black female educator, but I will communicate my own awareness of this phenomenon, although one may not find much mention of such success in the popular press. The researcher will assure all participants of strict confidentiality to maintain their privacy and that no personally identifiable information will be used.. In

addition, data will be analyzed using overall trends , no individual or individual school will singled out in the analysis or in any of the reports.

A.4.8. Data monitoring and analysis. Tell how the qualitative and/or quantitative data will be analyzed. Explain how the sample size is sufficient to achieve the study aims. This might include a formal power calculation or explanation of why a small sample is sufficient (e.g., qualitative research, pilot studies). Describe the provisions for monitoring the data to ensure the safety of participants. These plans could range from the investigator monitoring subject data for any safety concerns to a sponsor-based DSMB, depending on the study.

Data analysis procedures will follow the methods recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). The interviews will be recorded with permission, transcribed, and will be analyzed for common themes and concepts. Constant comparative analysis/coding will be done as themes emerge.

A.4.9. Will you collect or receive any of the following identifiers? Does not apply to consent forms.

☐ No ☒ Yes *If yes, check all that apply:* for contact information purposes

- a. ☒ Names
- b. ☒ Telephone numbers (**work only**)
- c. ☐ Any elements of dates (other than year) for dates directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, date of death. For ages over 89: all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 and older
- d. ☒ Any geographic subdivisions smaller than a State, including street address, city, county, precinct, zip code and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of a zip code (**School information**)
- e. ☐ Fax numbers
- f. ☒ Electronic mail addresses
- g. ☐ Social security numbers
- h. ☐ Medical record numbers
- i. ☐ Health plan beneficiary numbers
- j. ☐ Account numbers
- k. ☐ Certificate/license numbers
- l. ☐ Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers (VIN), including license plate numbers
- m. ☐ Device identifiers and serial numbers (e.g., implanted medical device)
- n. ☐ Web universal resource locators (URLs)
- o. ☐ Internet protocol (IP) address numbers
- p. ☐ Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints
- q. ☐ Full face photographic images and any comparable images
- r. ☐ Any other unique identifying number, code, or characteristic, other than dummy identifiers that are not derived from actual identifiers and for which the re-identification key is maintained by the health care provider and not disclosed to the researcher

A.4.10. Identifiers in research data. Are the identifiers in A.4.9 above linked or maintained with the research data?

☒ yes ☐ no needed for contact information, due to multiple observations and interviews, and to link an individual's data from the observations and interviews together.

A.4.11. Confidentiality of the data. Describe procedures for maintaining confidentiality of the data you will collect or will receive. Describe how you will protect the data from access by those not authorized. How will data be transmitted among research personnel? Where relevant, discuss the potential for deductive disclosure (i.e., directly identifying subjects from a combination of indirect IDs).

Individual participants, school sites, and the school district will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. All identifiable data, audiotapes, and subsequent transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet inside the private, locked office of the Principal Investigator. This information will not be shared with anyone. Pseudonyms will be used for the school district, individual schools, and classroom teachers. Information from individual participants will not be shared with any other participants (other than what the participants themselves share in the context of the focus group interview). Principals will not have access to any of the information shared by classroom teachers).

A.4.12. Data sharing. With whom will *identifiable* (contains any of the 18 identifiers listed in question A.4.9 above) data be shared outside the immediate research team? For each, explain confidentiality measures. Include data use agreements, if any.

- ☒ No one
- ☐ Coordinating Center:
- ☐ Statisticians:
- ☐ Consultants:
- ☐ Other researchers:
- ☐ Registries:
- ☐ Sponsors:
- ☐ External labs for additional testing:
- ☐ Journals:
- ☐ Publicly available dataset:
- ☐ Other:

A.4.13. Data security for storage and transmission. Please check all that apply.

For electronic data stored on a desk top computer:

- ☐ Secure network ☐ Password access ☐ Data encryption ☒ Password protected file(s)
- ☐ Other comparable safeguard (describe):

For portable computing devices/external storage devices (e.g. laptop computer, PDA, CDs, memory sticks):

- ☒ Power-on password ☒ Automatic log-off ☐ Data encryption ☐ Password protected file(s)
- ☐ Other comparable safeguard (describe):

For hardcopy data (including human biological specimens, CDs, tapes, etc.):

- ☒ Data de-identified by research team (stripped of the 18 identifiers listed in question A.4.9 above)
- ☐ Locked suite or office ☒ Locked cabinet
- ☒ Data coded by research team with a master list secured and kept separately

___ Other (describe):

A.4.14. Post-study disposition of identifiable data or human biological materials. Describe your plans for disposition of data or human biological specimens that are identifiable in any way (directly or via indirect codes) once the study has ended. Describe your plan to destroy identifiers, if you will do so.

Upon completion of dissertation defense any identifiable information will be disposed of and/or remain in a locked cabinet until it is determined that it is no longer useful scientifically, at which time it will be destroyed. Tapes/digital recordings will be erased once transcription is complete..

Part A.5. The Consent Process and Consent Documentation (including Waivers)

The standard consent process is for all subjects to sign a document containing all the elements of informed consent, as specified in the federal regulations. Some or all of the elements of consent, including signatures, may be altered or waived under certain circumstances.

- If you will obtain consent in any manner, complete **section A.5.1**.
- If you are obtaining consent, but requesting a waiver of the requirement for a signed consent document, complete **section A.5.2**.
- If you are requesting a waiver of any or all of the elements of consent, complete **section A.5.3**.
- If you need to access Protected Health Information (PHI) to identify potential subjects who will then be contacted, you will need a *limited waiver of HIPAA authorization*. This is addressed in section B.2.

You may need to complete more than one section. For example, if you are conducting a phone survey with verbal consent, complete sections A.5.1, A.5.2, and possibly A.5.3.

A.5.1. Describe the process of obtaining informed consent from subjects.

Describe who will be obtaining consent (or permission) and from whom. Include discussion, as relevant, any waiting period between the initial consent discussion and obtaining consent, and steps that will be taken to minimize coercion or undue influence. If children will be enrolled as subjects, describe the provisions for obtaining parental permission and assent of the child. If decisionally impaired adults are to be enrolled, describe the provision for obtaining surrogate consent from a legally authorized representative (LAR). If non-English speaking people will be enrolled, explain how consent in the native language will be obtained. Address both written translation of the consent and the availability of oral interpretation. It is expected that the information in the consent document(s) will be communicated to participants or their LAR. *After you have completed this part A.5.1, if you are not requesting a waiver of any type, you are done with Part A.5.; proceed to Part B.*

Prospective participants will be contacted via e-mail (see attached recruitment script). If email is not feasible for some, a phone call will be made using the same content as the email script, and the researcher will then send a copy of the consent form via email, or regular mail, to the teachers contacted on the telephone. Teacher participants will thus have heard/read about the

study, and have received the consent form before they get in contact with the researcher about interest in the study, and to ask any questions they might have.

Because there are a series of observations and interviews, the participants reiterate their consent throughout the study in scheduling those events at times that are convenient for them.

At the time of the first classroom observation, all participants will be asked to sign a copy of the consent form that they had received earlier.

A.5.2. Justification for a waiver of written (i.e., signed) consent. *The default is for subjects to sign a written document that contains all the elements of informed consent.* Under limited circumstances, the requirement for a signed consent form may be waived by the IRB if either of the following is true.
Choose only one:

a. The only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality (e.g., study topic is sensitive so that public knowledge of participation could be damaging). *Participants should be asked whether they want documentation linking them with the research and the participants' wishes will govern whether they sign the form.* Note: This justification cannot be used in FDA-regulated research. ___ yes ___ no

Explain.

b. The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context (e.g., phone survey). ___ yes ___ no

Explain.

If you checked "yes" to either (and you are not requesting a waiver in section A.5.3) consent must be obtained orally, by delivering a fact sheet, through an online consent form, or be incorporated into the survey itself. Include a copy of the consent script, fact sheet, online consent form, or incorporated document.

→ If you have justified a waiver of written (signed) consent (A.5.2), you should complete A.5.3 *only* if your consent process will not include all the other [elements of consent](#).

A.5.3. Justification for a full or partial waiver of consent. *The default is for subjects to give informed consent.* A waiver might be requested for research involving only existing data or human biological specimens (see also Part C). More rarely, it might be requested when the research design requires withholding some study details at the outset (e.g., behavioral research involving deception). In limited circumstances, parental permission may be waived. This section should also be completed for a waiver of HIPAA authorization if research involves Protected Health Information (PHI) subject to HIPAA regulation, such as patient records.

___ Requesting **waiver of some elements** (specify; see SOP 28 on the IRB web site):

___ Requesting **waiver of consent entirely**

If you check either of the boxes above, answer items a-f. To justify a full waiver of the requirement for informed consent, you must be able to answer "yes" (or "not applicable" for question c) to items a-f. **Insert brief explanations that support your answers.**

a. Will the research involve no greater than minimal risk to subjects or to their privacy? ___ yes ___ no

Explain.

b. Is it true that the waiver will *not* adversely affect the rights and welfare of subjects? *(Consider the right of privacy and possible risk of breach of confidentiality in light of the information you wish to gather.)* ___ yes ___ no

Explain.

c. When applicable to your study, do you have plans to provide subjects with pertinent information after their participation is over? *(e.g., Will you provide details withheld during consent, or tell subjects if you found information with direct clinical relevance? This may be an uncommon scenario.)* ___ yes ___ not applicable

Explain.

d. Would the research be impracticable without the waiver? *(If you checked "yes," explain how the requirement to obtain consent would make the research impracticable, e.g., are most of the subjects lost to follow-up or deceased?).* **Explain.** ___ yes ___ no

e. Is the risk to privacy reasonable in relation to benefits to be gained or the importance of the knowledge to be gained? ___ yes ___ no

Explain.

If you are accessing patient records for this research, you must also be able to answer “yes” to item f to justify a waiver of HIPAA authorization from the subjects.

f. Would the research be impracticable if you could not record (or use) Protected Health Information (PHI)? (If you checked “yes,” explain how not recording or using PHI would make the research impracticable). __ yes __ no

Explain.

Part B. Questions for Studies that Involve Direct Interaction with Human Subjects

→ *If this does not apply to your study, do not submit this section.*

B.1. Methods of recruiting. Describe how and where subjects will be identified and recruited. Indicate who will do the recruiting, and tell how subjects will be contacted. Describe efforts to ensure equal access to participation among women and minorities. Describe how you will protect the privacy of potential subjects during recruitment. *For prospective subjects whose status (e.g., as patient or client), condition, or contact information is not publicly available (e.g., from a phone book or public web site), the initial contact should be made with legitimate knowledge of the subjects’ circumstances. Ideally, the individual with such knowledge should seek prospective subjects’ permission to release names to the PI for recruitment. Alternatively, the knowledgeable individual could provide information about the study, including contact information for the investigator, so that interested prospective subjects can contact the investigator.* Provide the IRB with a copy of any document or script that will be used to obtain the patients’ permission for release of names or to introduce the study. Check with the IRB for further guidance.

The middle schools (2 to 3) targeted for contact will be selected because they have the highest probability of meeting the criteria of having five (5) or more Black males in a classroom. With permission from the Alamance Burlington School District, each school principal will be contacted via phone or email and asked if they are willing to provide names of three to four teachers. Please see the attached email/telephone contact script that I will use in contacting the principals, which describes the study, what is involved for the teacher participants, and the criteria for nomination..

Presuming that I will receive more nominations than I need (at least 8 for this qualitative study) I will randomly select some of the potential classroom teachers and invite them to participate. Please see the attached email script, which will include an attachment of the consent form for prospective participants to read in advance. Each potential participant will have the opportunity to grant consent in a voluntary way after making an informed decision based on study details provided by the Principal Investigator. All participants will sign a consent form at the time of the first classroom observation.

B.2. Protected Health Information (PHI). If you need to access Protected Health Information (PHI) to identify potential subjects who will then be contacted, you will need a *limited waiver of HIPAA authorization*. If this applies to your study, please provide the following information and complete Section C.

- a. Under this limited waiver, you are allowed to access and use only the minimum amount of PHI necessary to review eligibility criteria and contact potential subjects. What information are you planning to collect for this purpose?
- b. How will confidentiality/privacy be protected prior to ascertaining desire to participate?
- c. When and how will you destroy the contact information if an individual declines participation?

B.3. Duration of entire study and duration of an individual subject's participation, including follow-up evaluation if applicable. Include the number of required contacts and approximate duration of each contact.

The entire study should be completed within six months.

Each classroom observation will last a minimum 30 and most likely 45 minutes. Each interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The focus group interview will last approximately 90 minutes. Total time commitment for the observations and the interviews is between 6 and 7 hours.

B.4. Where will the subjects be studied? Describe locations where subjects will be studied, both on and off the UNC-CH campus.

Classroom observations will occur in the classrooms at school sites. All interviews will be conducted in a private location at the participating school sites. The focus group interview will be held in a private neutral location, to be determined.

B.5. Privacy. Describe procedures that will ensure privacy of the subjects in this study. Examples include the setting for interviews, phone conversations, or physical examinations; communication methods or mailed materials (e.g., mailings should not indicate disease status or focus of study on the envelope).

The privacy of the subjects will be observed throughout the study. Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Each interview will occur in a private location (e.g., conference room, school office, unoccupied classroom). Only the Principal Investigator and the individual participant will be present during the individual interview. Only other study participants will be present during the focus group interview. All data will be coded to preserve anonymity.

B.6. Inducements for participation. Describe all inducements to participate, monetary or non-monetary. If monetary, specify the amount and schedule for payments and if/how this will be prorated if the subject withdraws (or is withdrawn) from the study prior to completing it. For compensation in foreign currency, provide a US\$ equivalent. Provide evidence that the amount is not coercive (e.g., describe purchasing power for foreign countries). Be aware that payment over a certain amount may require the collection of the subjects' Social Security Numbers. If a subject is paid more than \$200.00 per year, collection of subjects' Social Security Number is required (University policy—see [SSN Guidance](#)) using the Social Security Number collection consent addendum found under [forms on the IRB website](#) (look for Study Subject Reimbursement Form).

No incentives will be used for participation in this study.

B.7. Costs to be borne by subjects. Include child care, travel, parking, clinic fees, diagnostic and laboratory studies, drugs, devices, all professional fees, etc. If there are no costs to subjects other than their time to participate, indicate this.

There will be no cost to the subjects other than their time to participate, and possible transportation costs to the focus group interview that will be conducted in a neutral location. Travel will not be extensive because all the teachers are in the same small school district.

To: Nakia Hardy
School of Education
CB: 3500

From: Behavioral IRB

Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 5/18/2010
Expiration Date of Approval: 5/17/2011

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
Submission Type: Initial
Expedited Category: 7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups,6.Voice/image research recordings
Study #: 10-0863

Study Title: Portraits of Success: Effective White Teachers of Black Male Middle School Students

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

Purpose: To investigate the relationships of White female teachers and Black male students in middle school, grades 6-8. Through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, the specific strategies used to create positive relationships with Black male students will be documented.

Participants: White classroom teachers who have been nominated by their principals as having a history of establishing effective relationships with their Black male middle-school students (n = 8).

Procedures (methods): Classroom observations and teacher interviews will be used to investigate the strategies used by White teachers to create positive relationships with Black male students.

Investigator's Responsibilities:

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the

expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification form at ohre.unc.edu/forms). Any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others (including adverse events reportable under UNC-Chapel Hill policy) should be reported to the IRB using the web portal at <https://irbis.unc.edu/irb>.

Researchers are reminded that additional approvals may be needed from relevant "gatekeepers" to access subjects (e.g., principals, facility directors, healthcare system).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Good luck with your interesting research, Nakia!

Lawrence B. Rosenfeld, Ph.D.
Office of Human Research Ethics
Co-Chair, Behavioral Institutional Review Board
aa-irb-chair@unc.edu

CC: Kathleen Brown, School of Education
Crystal Daniel (School of Education), Non-IRB Review Contact