THE SCHOOLING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN JUNIOR HIGH EXPLORING THE PREPARATION AND PEDAGOGY OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

by

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Abstract

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Today, ethnically diverse learners[1] represent the majority student population enrolled in the U.S. public school system. However, the teacher workforce remains predominately middle-class, female, and White. As ethnically diverse learners, particularly African American students continue to endure gaps in academic achievement, the gaze has shifted to teacher education's abilities to produce effective teachers of this population.

While the achievement gap is widely known, the literature concurrently documents a racial discipline gap, as African American students are suspended

[1] Students from different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. See glossary for an expanded definition.

and expelled more than any other racial ethnicity. Though disparities in achievement and discipline significantly converge in the middle grades (6th-8th), gaps in the literature remain on teacher preparation for African American students, and even more restricted when addressing the junior high grades (7th-8th). Thus, this collective case study examines the preparation and pedagogies of five effective teachers of their African American junior high students using the theoretical lends of CRT. Data collected through (2) semi-structured interviews and (2) classroom observations reveal that 1) cultural factors were mainly attributed as preparation for effective teaching and 2) teacher orientations towards the culture of their African American students decidedly influenced instructional and management practices.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teacher education programs across the United States aim to equip future educators with the knowledge and skills to support the achievement of all students. Despite these efforts, ethnically diverse learners, students from different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (see Appendix A for complete definitions), continue to perform lower on multiple indicators of school success than their White peers (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task force on Educational Disparities, 2012; Delpit, 1995; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Scores from the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) [2] indicate that White 12th graders outscored Black[3] 12th graders by 27 points in reading and 30 points in math, and Whites outperformed their Hispanic peers by 22 and 23 points respectively (Aud et al., 2011). Mirroring similar trends across content and grade level (4th, 8th), longitudinal NAEP assessments reveal that even when test scores significantly increase, the gaps in scores between Whites and ethnically diverse learners

[2]The 2009 standardized NAEP scores were used to address gaps in achievement as it is the most recent assessment of all three grades: 4th, 8th, and 12th by which a longitudinal comparison could be made. In 2011, 4th and 8th grade NAEP scores indicated minimal grade level variances in reading, 8th grade increased by a point. In Math, 4th and 8th grade showed significant gain (4th = +28pts, 8th = +21pts), however there was no measurable difference in the achievement gap between the identified subgroups. The average overall Black-White differential was 25 points and the Hispanic-White gap was 22 points. Asian students did not follow achievement trends, scoring on average 5 points higher than Whites (Aud et al., 2012).

[3] Black is the terminology used to describe student populations of African descent in the NAEP report. This term will also be used interchangeably with African American throughout this study.

consistently and respectively remain unchanged (Aud et al., 2012). As standardized tests continue to point out the differentials in academic performances of various subgroups, primarily White and non-white, data reveals that ethnically diverse learners are experiencing significant gaps in scholastic achievement.

Furthermore, major studies conducted by the Civil Rights Project[4] and the Center of Research for the Education of Students Placed At Risk[5,] report the disproportionally low high school graduation rates of students of color as a silent national crisis" (Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Legters & Balfanz, 2010; Losen, Orfield, & Balfanz, 2006; Neild et al., 2007; Orfield et al., 2004). Contradicting the NCES' 78.2% average freshmen graduation rate[6], raw enrollment data substantiates that more than 25% to over 40% of the nations' minority youth are not graduating from high school with diplomas. Thus, educational researchers advocate for the implementation of comprehensive interventions to respond to predictive signs of academic disengagement in middle school (Aud et al., 2013; Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Legters & Balfanz, 2010; Neild et al., 2007; Orfield et al., 2004).

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[4] The Civil Rights project was located at Harvard University at the time of the study, but is now actively located on the University of California at Los Angeles's campus.

[5] The Center of Research for the Education of Students Placed At Risk is formerly a joint partnership between Howard University and John Hopkins University. CRESPAR has been renamed on Howard's Campus as the Capstone Institute and serves as the Center for Social Organization of Schools on the campus of John Hopkins University.

[6] The NCES average freshmen graduation rate does note that African American students have the lowest high school graduation rates. The high school graduation rates are as follows: African Americans 66.1%, Alaskan Natives 69.1%, Hispanics 71.4%, Whites 83%, and Asian Pacific Islanders with the highest graduation rate of 93.5%.

Recognizing the importance of middle school grades (6th-8th)[7] in predicting student educational attainment, research suggests the need to examine probable connections between achievement gaps and high suspension rates[8] encountered by students of color, particularly African Americans during this period (Gregory, Skiba, Noguera, 2010; Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Skiba et. al, 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2000). African American students, constituting only 14% of the nations' public school enrollment, are suspended and expelled at higher rates than any other ethnicity for relatively lesser offenses (America's Children in Brief, 2012; Losen et al., 2012; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Monroe, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011). As academic and disciplinary disparities converge, the literature contends that African Americans may unduly experience wide-ranging repercussions, extending well beyond the middle school years (Losen et al., 2012; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Monroe, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011).

Although inequitable outcomes persist throughout the K-12 educational experiences of African American students, teacher education programs are largely deemed inadequate in producing effective teachers for this population (Bergeron,

[7] The term middle school and junior high are often used interchangeable. However, traditional grade level configuration of middle school is 6^{th}-8^{th} (in some regions 5^{th}-8^{th}), which encompasses traditional junior high configuration of grades 7^{th}-8^{th} (also in some regions 7^{th}-9^{th}).
[8] Although disaggregated culmination data is not available on the national level; research on 18 of the largest school districts in the US depicts high disproportionate middle school suspension rates, indicating that most likely this is a common occurrence.

2008; Gay, 2002; Hyland, 2005; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Van Hook, 2002; Yeo, 1997). The literature remains limited on teacher preparation specifically for African American students and is even sparser when focused on preparation for African American students in the junior high grades (7th-8th). Additionally, many middle and junior high school studies frame student achievement within the context of transitional adjustments or congruence of developmental needs and environment fit (Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles, Lord, & Midgely, 1991; Feldlaufer, Midgley & Eccles, 1988; Holas & Huston, 2012; Midgely, Feldlaufer & Eccles, 1989; Wentzel, 2002). Few studies explore the preparation of junior high teachers to not only consider teacher education (pre-service and in-service[9]), but also potential factors such as background and upbringing, beliefs about efficacy and ethno-racial diversity, cultural affiliations and associations, and experiences with race and or racism (see Appendix A: for extended definition of preparation). Therefore, further research is needed to analyze preparation as a broader concept, particularly probing for how race and culture contributes to teacher understandings of pedagogy that facilitate the achievement of African American junior high students.

[9] See Glossary.

Research Questions and Methodology

My dissertation attempts to frame the academic and disciplinary inequities faced by African Americans junior high students within the context of pedagogy and teacher education. Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, this study intends to examine the role of race and culture in the effective teaching of African American junior high students and the preparatory factors attributed to fostering these pedagogies. More specifically, I seek the answers to the ensuing questions: 1) What role does race and culture play in the pedagogies of effective teachers[10] of African American junior high students? 2) What factor(s) inform these pedagogies and how were they developed? 2a) What underlying theories drive their work? 2b) What are the educational and life histories that shape their perspectives? Lastly, 3) What are their recommendations for teacher education and pedagogical practice?

Employing a collective case study, I plan to utilize interviews and classroom observations to explore teacher pedagogies that foster the academic achievement of their African American students. The major goals of this study are to analyze: 1) teacher pedagogical understandings and the relevancy of racial and cultural knowledge in facilitating academic development of African American junior high students; and 2) teacher perceptions of preparation (formal education and informal learning factors) and applicability to classroom

[10] Effectiveness will be operationally defined on each site by campus administrators and teacher leaders guided by tenets of culturally responsive/relevant teaching.

instruction. As the theoretical backdrop, Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be used to frame the pedagogies and preparation of effective junior high teachers within the context of their experiential knowledge and perceptions of culture and race. Bringing race to the forefront, CRT provides a conceptual lens to examine teachers' racialized conceptions of the abilities and consequently the needs of African American students exhibited in instructional approaches and interactions. Thusly, CRT will not only allow for the connection of the study's major goals but also lend a framework to examine the convention of race and culture in the process of teaching and learning.

A Case of Personal Relevance

Seven years into my career as a public school teacher, I transitioned from elementary to junior high school math. Although the content adjustment was not challenging, my instructional and management techniques had to be altered to lend a balance of flexibility and structure more appropriate for this age (Feldlaufer et al., 1988; Holas & Huston, 2012). As I tried various techniques with my predominately African American students, I resorted to my fail safe plan of being my "mama" in the classroom; an authoritative figure that spoke in directives to command excellence and respect. My mothering incorporated a sternness that was balanced with authentic demonstrations of understanding and care, a "warm demander" (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2004; Ware, 2006; Young, 2010). As a class, we created a familial environment, a learning community which expected academic

excellence, relied on mutual consideration and rapport, while incorporating elements of humor (Gay, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Monroe & Obidah, 2004). Using culturally congruent approaches that often differed from traditional pedagogical and management practices yielded improved academic achievement, mostly noted from higher standardized test scores (Gay, 2002; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Ware, 2006).

Throughout my five-year tenure as a 7th and 8th grade math teacher in various districts, the school-wide focus primarily remained the same: to meet the criteria for an exemplary or recognized annual yearly progress (AYP) rating[11], the staff had to raise the test scores of African Americans and Economically Disadvantaged students[12]. As these subpopulations oftentimes overlapped, I was puzzled by an alarming trend that seemed to undermine the school's objective; the disproportionate use of suspensions to discipline African American students (Irvine, 1991; Losen et al., 2012; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Monroe, 2005a, 2009; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011). With African American junior high students being excessively put out of the classroom, the question remained, how do you increase their test scores if the target population was not in class? Noticing that particular teachers were repeatedly placing students in the hallways or

[11] Schools must meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) criterion or reach improvement goals for all students and designated sub populations (e.g. African American, Hispanic, and Economically Disadvantaged) to receive ratings of exemplary, recognized, or academically acceptable. Schools that fail to reach AYP are indicated as academically unacceptable.

[12] These categories often overlap as Economically Disadvantaged often largely encompasses the African American and Hispanic student sub populations.

sending them to the office, I would ask my students what was happening in that classroom. In consensus, the students would reply, "Ms. [So and So] is racist." I initially discounted their replies as my interactions with these colleagues were cordial. However, as the frequency of student referrals escalated, I became increasingly concerned about recurrent claims of racism, especially when my students began missing considerable amounts of math due to consequences acquired in other classes. Maybe my students' assertions of differentials in treatment because of their "blackness" had validity. Even if teachers were not intentionally malicious, could racial and cultural understandings influence teacher expectations of and interactions with African American students? Further, were functions of race isolated to individual teacher behaviors and classroom experiences or reflective of larger systemic issues; particularly considering the historic role of racism in American education which was founded upon prevailing societal beliefs? After all, these teachers were "qualified" but conceivably they were just as ill-prepared to teach African American junior high students as I was, except I had my personal racial and cultural connections to draw upon.

Reflecting on my teacher preparation experience, diversity training promoted the message often embedded in multicultural education; despite differences in appearance, traditions, or sexual orientation, we are all the same (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gay, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000). We learned of resources to celebrate various ethnic holidays, were exposed to certain nuances of

cultural difference in behavior, and encouraged to find out about the lives of our immigrant students as their backgrounds would likely be the furthest removed from ours and other American students. Regarding African Americans, the class engaged deficient orientations to account for the disadvantages of these students: many come from broken homes, hold a lower socio-economic status, are predisposed to violence, and lack basic skills due to deficiencies in exposure and home life (Brandon, 2003; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010a; Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Van Hook, 2002).

Even though these circumstances did not accurately describe my upbringing, I defended the black experience, as these descriptors were not discussed in relation to the current and historical economic, political, and social oppression endured by African Americans in the United States. Grounded in an orientation of deficiency, these statements denied the richness of African American families and culture, disregarded the triumphs of navigating systematic injustices, and hence, further marginalized and discounted my experience (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2004, 2010a; Kohli, 2009; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Feelings of isolation and lack of validation are also echoed in the preparatory accounts of other teachers of color, as many faced similar negative racial and cultural biases towards themselves and children of color, often in forms of subtle discrimination (Delpit, 1995; Kohli, 2009; Milner, 2003a). Collectively, personal

and professional experiences inform my pedagogical understandings of the challenges and learning needs of African American students which also guides this query to delve into the racial and cultural knowledge(s) of effective teachers: its relevancy, acquisition, and instructional use (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010a; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1985; Milner, 2003a, 2003b, 2010). Thereupon, is it possible that the esteem of certain attributes, realities, and values in learning environments probably contribute to or potentially mediate the educational disparities experienced by African American students in junior high school? Moreover, if educators are not being trained to specifically teach African American junior high students, despite documented educational disparities often directly linked to teacher education, then what experiences prepares effective educators? Possibly a broader view of preparation, including the role of race and culture in the lived experiences and knowledge of effective teachers may provide a necessary pedagogical link.

Significance of the Study

In the final analysis, teacher education programs have remained largely inadequate in producing effective educators of ethnically diverse learners, especially of African American preadolescent youth. Despite acknowledging the growing demographic divide and persistent academic and racial disciplinary gaps converging in the middle grades (6th-8th), the literature remains limited on teacher preparation specifically for African American students, expressly

restricted when referencing the junior high grades (7th-8th). Thus, this multiple case study frames the achievement and disciplinary disparities encountered by African Americans junior high students within the context of teacher education, preparation and pedagogy. This refocuses the "achievement gap" lens off of remediating African American junior high students but directs the gaze to the classroom; examining and apply corrective actions to make more equitable scholastic experiences. Since teachers serve as the gatekeeper of information and control the dynamics of the classroom, this study proposes that teacher education must become a central issue in the discourse of African American scholastic achievement (Delpit, 1995; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner, 2003b; Ullucci, 2010; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Yeo, 1997). Acknowledging that effective educators of African American students do exist, this study raises practical questions: What has prepared teachers to be effective? What pedagogies are employed in their classrooms? How were these pedagogies developed?

Exploring the answers to these questions, also holds implication for general education policy and practices, as well as those of teacher education; warranting further examination. Indicating a lack of specialized junior high teacher training as well as inadequate preparation to teach African American and other ethnically diverse learners, this study may shed particular insight into developmental and cultural understandings that facilitate effective classroom

instruction. Not only procuring practical implications for teacher education but also potentially calling for the re-examination of educational policies that do not require specialized training for junior high teachers, thus encouraging wide creation and certification endorsements of these types of preparation programs. More research needs to examine if junior high teachers receiving specialized teacher education are more effective in the classroom, with all students.

Additionally, highlighting the perspectives of effective teachers, may provide frank commentary on the treatment of race and culture in teacher education programs; particularly as it pertains to cultural and racial understandings about African American students. Knowing the intended or unintended messages received or left intact in preparation programs, may help teacher educators to systemically build more meaningful and inclusive views that not only expose the "masked" cultural understanding of pre-service teachers but also show how these knowledges, brought by teachers and students, shape and affect the "shared" classroom space (Delpit, 1995; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ndura, 2004; Parsons, 2005; Terwilliger, 2010, Ullucci, 2010). Furthermore, acknowledging specific learning and behavioral preferences embedded in African American culture, may also provide concrete best practices and pedagogical decisions that cater to the performance styles of African American students, thus allowing teachers to offer more equitable

classroom experiences (Boykin, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Irving, 1991, 2010; Web-Johnson, 2003).

In summary, the literature asserts that learning and teaching does not occur devoid of culture so this study aims to probe the pedagogies of effective teachers for the role of culture and race in pedagogical understandings and practices. Examining theories that underpin effective pedagogies could not only hold significance for teacher education and best practices, but also potentially lends insight into the experiences and acculturation of African American junior students in the process of schooling, hence holding larger implications for the policies, practices, and organizational structures employed in the education of ethnically diverse youth.

Purpose of the Study

Although a growing body of literature exists on teacher education, the research remains "largely marginalized and underfunded" (Hollins & Guzman, 2005, p. 480). Primarily conducted by teacher educators themselves, research is often executed within an isolated context, a single class or field experience, and focuses on the effects of particular pedagogical approaches on the disposition development of White teacher candidates (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Gay, 2010a; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Additionally, the literature is expressly limited in addressing teacher preparation for African American junior high students due to the following convergence in general

research gaps: delimitations regarding teacher education for the junior high grade-levels and teacher education explicitly for the instruction of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2000; 2009). Thus, I aspire for this study to contribute to gaps in the literature by providing a more integrated and holistic depiction of teacher preparation— from pre-service to in-service; in the context of teacher education as well as the lived experience; exploring factors that meaningfully inform the pedagogical understandings of effective teachers of African American junior high students. Secondly, my aim is that this research lends insightful dialogue on the applicability of preparatory experiences to classroom practices and instructional choices.

Lastly, I desire that this dissertation adds to the dialogue of pedagogy to extend best practices that specifically aid the academic development of African American junior high school students. Whether it is particular approaches or an understanding of culture, I hope that this study increases the knowledge-base of methods that foster African American student achievement. By highlighting teacher preparation for the competent instruction of Black students, I strive for this research to deepen the understanding of how teachers learn about diversity, what informs their practices, what practices are effective, and how these approaches facilitate academic growth and success. Hence, this study potentially may provide practical implications for preparation and pedagogical practices for teachers at the junior high levels.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

In the early 1900's, the U.S. public education system, traditionally configured elementary school grades 1st-8th and high school grades 9th -12th, underwent a dramatic structural reorganization with the establishment of the junior high (Cuban, 1992; Lounsbury, 1960). Responding to a myriad of social factors such as large numbers of unemployed 12-13 year old drop-outs, an industrial need for semi-skilled workers, and a deficient repetitious elementary curriculum; educators criticized the eight-grade elementary schools for pushing early adolescents into the streets. Consequently, these "street children," who generally expressed dissatisfaction with school, were not only ill-prepared for high school but also lacked the training needed for emerging vocational occupations (Cuban, 1992, p. 232). As sweeping debates prompted the creation of several experimental grade-level schools, in 1918, the newly formed National Education Association's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education endorsed that students spend equal time in both, receiving six years of primary and of secondary[13] education (Cuban, 1992).

Prodded by the plausible link between the current social realities and arising understandings of child development and school fit, educators began expressly creating schools to address the unique needs of early adolescents, the

[13] Elementary school is a primary education and schooling beyond these years is considered a part of secondary education (i.e. high school and later junior high).

junior high. Aided by child labor laws and mandates of compulsory attendance, junior high schools— initially 7th-9th grades and later 7th-8th, would become a permanent widespread fixture in the U.S.'s educational system (Beane, 1991; Cuban, 1992; Lounsbury, 1960). Although junior high schools were designed with an intended purpose, Cuban (1992) and Beane (1991) note that the myriad of socioeconomic interests resulted in no clear direction and thus, junior high schools became smaller versions of the high school. Re-addressing preadolescent education in the 1960's, reformers emerged with a new concept that again re-structured grade levels to create the middle school (6th-8th)[14]. Similar to the case of the junior high, middle schools have also failed to respond to the characteristically different physical, social, and emotional needs of preadolescents while presenting the academic rigor to engage students intellectually (Beane, 1991; Meyer, 2011, Taking Center Stage, 2001). Regardless of the grade-level configuration, the education of early adolescents continues to confound educators calling for a re-examination of school environmental factors in the context of human stage development and learning needs.

The Misfit of Junior High: Environment-Fit and Functions of Race

While widely noting the importance of the middle level grades (6th-8th), the literature concurrently documents substantial achievement loss generally associated with the junior high (7th-8th) and middle school (6th-8th) transitions

[14] Grade levels vary according to region. Some middle schools also include grade 5.

(Eccles et al., 1991; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles, Wong, & Peck, 2006; Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Holas & Hutson, 2012). In a national longitudinal study of 24,559 8th graders, Eccles et al. (1991) found no major differences between middle school and junior high school[15]. As the study reported grade level structure (timing of transition) had minimal effects, but changes in school environment factors (classroom organization, instructional practices, and climate variables) held significance on academic motivation— a factor and predictor of achievement loss (Eccles et al., 1991). Thus, transition literature, espousing stage or person-fit theories, support that declines in motivation is not just a feature of early adolescence but a consequence of the ill fit between their developmental needs and school environments (Eccles, et al., 1991; Eccles, et al., 1993; Eccles, et al., 2006; Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Holas & Hutson, 2012; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007). For instance, declines in motivation were minimized when students transitioned to warm efficacious classrooms of teachers with higher self-efficacy[16] (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Holas & Hutson, 2012). Research also supports a plausible link between reported declines in teacher self-efficacy and the severe teacher shortages, particularly in the middle grades, as probably

[15] Eccles et al. (1991) found that although middles schools were designed under different educational philosophies, middle schools function and operate the same as traditional junior high schools.
[16] See Glossary.

indicative of a lack of specialized middle school teacher training[17] (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2013; National Council of Teacher Quality, 2012: Radcliffe &Mandeville, 2007).

Moreover, studies conducted by Eccles et al. (2006), Smalls et al. (2007), and Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff (2003) find that for African American junior high students developmental mismatches also include experiences of daily racial and ethnic discrimination from teachers and peers. Although very few studies examined the impact of racial discrimination on academic achievement of African Americans adolescents[18], Eccles et al. (2006), Smalls et al. (2007), and Wong et al (2003) cite their findings were consistent with studies on African Americans in high school, in college, and adults in the workforce: devalued capabilities are linked to increased anger, stress, behavioral problems, and dissatisfaction with school or work (e.g. Ogbu, 1978; Taylor, Casten, Flickringer, Roberts, & Fulmore, 1994). Determining that racial discrimination was a normal developmental risk factor for African American students, Smalls et al. (2007) argues that although there is no fixed Black identity (as people can hold multiple racial ideological beliefs), students with positive perceptions of their blackness,

[17] According to the NCTQ (2013), only 8 states offer separate middle school certification programs. Most states offer middle certification as an endorsement under elementary or secondary (high school), as licensure requirements for middle school do not often require content specific tests; such as 1st-6th, 1st-8th, or a 4th-8th generalist certification (according to state designations). However, some states do offer testing in at least one content area. Whereas, in high school certification requires content specific testing as there is no generalist standard license.

[18] This age span would include African American students at the middle school or junior high levels.

possessing a strong racial ethnic identity actually correlated more to positive school achievement (Eccles et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003).

Arguing that strong cultural connections can serve as a promotive or protective factor[19], Eccles et al. (2006), Smalls et al. (2007), and Wong et al. (2003) refute the Black identity-at risk approach which assumes that acting white promotes academic achievement (Fordman, 1988) or that placing emphasis on ethic membership or minority status was damaging or detrimental to achievement motivation (Aronson, 2002; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). However, Eccles et al. (2006) and Smalls et al. (2007) also note that although strong cultural ties potentially reduced effects of discrimination, racism still held a significant crippling influence on academic achievement, reducing engagement on all levels. Therefore, Eccles et al (2006) recommends that middle and junior high schools "do all they can" to lessen prevalent experiences of racial discrimination (p. 421). Consequentially, for African American junior high students, the achievement-loss generally experienced during this period due to developmental mismatches becomes potentially compounded by issues of race which is explicit in the racial patterns found in school disciplinary treatment.

[19] Multiple risk models show that exposure to certain risk factors (poverty, single parent households, low parental education, unemployment, and low income communities and schools) predict or negatively impact academic achievement and social skills in middle schools unless mediated or made vulnerable by protective factors (coping skills such as a high self-concept and efficacy, parenting, language acquisition). For African American children protective factors would include racial identity and buffers of expected discrimination.

The Convergence of Achievement and Discipline Gaps

Losen and Skiba (2006), Monroe (2005, 2009), Skiba et al. (2002), and Skiba et al. (2011) propose an imperative need for research to extensively examine the convergence of academic and racial disciplinary gaps particularly experienced in the middle grades. In a study of the disciplinary referral data of 272 (K-6) elementary schools and 92 (6-9) middle schools[20], results yield that racial disciplinary gaps in middle school were more pronounced, as African Americans were 3.86 times more likely suspended[21] than Whites in middle school and 2.19 times more in elementary school (Skiba, et al, 2011). Examining the referral data of middle and junior high schools in 18 of the largest school districts in the United States, Losen and Skiba (2006) also found that suspension rates of African Americans at least tripled that of Whites with males suspended at higher rates than their female counterparts. However, when disaggregated by gender and race, referral data also exhibits that Black females are suspended at higher rates than Hispanic or White males (Losen & Skiba, 2006; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011).

[20] For the 2005-2006 academic year, weekly referral data was voluntarily retrieved from the reporting system of 432 total schools with various grade level configurations, thus grade level determinations of elementary (K-6) and middle school (6-9) were based on producing the least overlap, resulting in 364 schools. Schools were compared against a sample of schools using NCES data to control for biases such as size, location, and population composition (race, ethnicity, SES).
[21] This refers to Out of School Suspension (OSS), this data does not include In School Suspension (ISS) or other types of disciplinary practices employed during the school day.

Moreover, a major state-wide longitudinal study, conducted by the Council of States Governments (CSG) Justice Center tracking all Texas 7th grade public school students to 12th grade[22] substantiated disciplinary and achievement gaps (Fabelo et al., 2011). Analyzing the individual school and disciplinary records of 928,940 students (14% African American, 40% Hispanic, and 43% White), the CSG Justice Center found that Texas suspends[23] or expels 6 out of every 10 students. Seventy-five percent of African American students were suspended at least once[24] for discretionary discipline reasons[25] and 83% had at least one school violation. When variables were controlled for race[26], African Americans were 31% more likely than Hispanics or Whites to receive discretionary disciplinary actions (Fabelo et al., 2011).

Additionally, findings reveal disproportionate ramifications in the school and disciplinary records of suspended and expelled students. Of these students, 31% repeated at least one grade, 10% dropped out, and 59% of students disciplined 11 times or more did not graduate from high school. Students

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[22] The study did not use a sample size but tracked every 7th grade class in Texas in the academic years of 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 for an 8 year span—1 year before 7th grade to see if disciplinary actions were results of previous actions in 6th grade, the 6 year span for high school graduation, and one year after what would be the students' 12th grade year to note any resulting disciplinary actions.

[23] This data does not include in school suspension or other in-school disciplinary actions.

[24] The average suspension of all students was 8 times.

[25] For example, talking excessively loud, being disrespectful, and or a class distraction (See Glossary for extended definition).

[26] Using multivariate analyses, this study controlled for 83 variables including, location, SES conditions, student demographics, school characteristics, etc. However, race remained a significant predicting factor of discretionary discipline actions.

receiving suspensions and expulsions were also three times as likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system (Fabelo et al., 2011). Although the CSG warns against the generalizability of its results due to variances in state, district, and school policies; it warrants the significance and relevancy of its findings for three major reasons: 1) major findings of this 8-year longitudinal study of academic and disciplinary outcomes uniquely represented an entire population versus a sample; 2) Texas is the second largest school system in the U.S. with a student population that resembles the ethno-racial diversity found in the nation's public schools; and 3) most importantly, findings highlight the relatively common state-wide use of suspension and expulsions as a disciplinary method[27] (Fabelo et al., 2011).

Furthermore, not only is the racial disparity in disciplinary treatment alarming but also documents that Black students in junior high are "being removed from the opportunity to learn at much higher rates than their peers… [thus] raising the question of unconscious and conscious racial and gender biases at the school level"— starting with differential classroom treatment (Losen & Skiba, 2006, p. 8). Although alternative hypotheses are offered to address disciplinary disproportionality such as the interconnectedness of race and poverty, research maintains that when socio-economic factors are statistically controlled

[27] Texas' K-12 out-of-school suspension (OSS) and expulsion rates are not regarded as extreme. Texas' OSS rate (5.7%) is lower than California's (12.75%) and Florida's (8.7%), and is comparative to the OSS rate of New York (5.2%). Although expulsion data was not available for New York, expulsions are generally used to a lesser degree than suspensions.

race was still a significant contributing factor (Fabelo et al., 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2006, Skiba et al., 2002, 2011). Describing consequences of learning while black, Webb-Johnson (2003) contends that it is often the unfamiliarity with cultural characteristics that lead to the misjudgment of classroom behaviors and interactional patterns[28], resulting in disproportional, more severe consequences placed on African American students (Bireda, 2010; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009; Milner, 2008; Monroe, 2005a, 2005b; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Siwatu & Stalker, 2010); "damag[ing] black students' educational progress and life chances" (Irvine, 1991 p. 19). Implying a probable link between academic and disciplinary gaps experienced by African American junior high students, the literature returns the dialogue back to teacher quality, classroom instruction, and culture.

Teacher Quality and Preparation

Today, children of ethnic and racial minorities, representing 50.2% of the nations' public school enrollment, make up the majority student population in most urban cities (The Condition of Education, 2015). However 40% of the schools attended by ethnically diverse learners will not have a teacher of color (Cross, 2003; Terwilliger, 2010). With an 81.9 % predominately White middle-class female teacher workforce (NCES, 2012), primarily educated in all-white preparation programs, with limited previous interactions with minority

[28] In this instance, interactional patterns describe communications and connections between students and peers and between teachers (adults) and students.

populations, Cross (2003) contends there is "an enormous gap between who prepares teachers, who the teachers are themselves, and who they will likely teach" (p. 204). Acknowledging the demographic divide[29] between teachers and students and the gaps in achievement experienced by African Americans and other ethnically diverse learners, research maintains that cultural conflicts[30] – significant differences between the student's home culture and the culture possessed by teachers and schools – are highly probable in today's increasingly complex diverse classrooms (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Bergeron, 2008; Bireda, 2010; Cross, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Gordon, 2005; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Irvine, 1991, 2010; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010; Milner, 2003a, 2008, 2010; Pope & Wilder, 2005; Siwatu & Starker, 2010).

Cultural Conflicts, Mismatches, and Incongruence

Depicted as a "cultural incongruence," Milner (2008) explains cultural conflicts occur as a result of the "different repertoires of knowledge" possessed by White teachers and students of color (p. 336). Gay (2010a) further expounds teachers and "their most culturally diverse students live in two different worlds," and daily perfunctory interactions in the classroom do not foster the authentic relationships that could challenge stereotypes and build appreciation for each other's experiential realities (p. 144). Moreover, framing cultural mismatches in

[29] The demographic divide is also referred to in the literature as the demographic imperative
[30] Throughout the literature cultural conflict is used interchangeably with terms such as cultural mismatch, cultural incongruence, cultural incompatibility, cultural dissonance, and the lack of cultural synchronization.

the context of schooling and teacher development, Bergeron (2008) suggests that the problem of cultural mismatch lies directly with the educational system; its cultural incompatibility and the lack of teacher preparation to address the needs of ethnically diverse learners. Although recognized that cultural mismatches will and do exist, scholars contend that unacknowledged cultural conflicts lead to the lack of resolutions which has potential detrimental effects on the educational experience, especially of students of color (Bergeron, 2008; Cross, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Gordon, 2005; Irvine, 1991, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Kohli, 2009; Milner, 2008; Santoro, 2009; Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Van Hook, 2002).

Proposing Irvine's (1991) "cultural synchronization" as the role of culture in mediating teacher-student interactions as a viable alternative theory for the gaps in achievement. Talbert-Johnson (2006) provides a descriptive analysis of the lack of cultural synchronization and its effects:

> Because teachers bring to school their own set of cultural and personal characteristics that influence their work, it is not surprising that their beliefs, dispositions, behaviors, and experiences would also be included. The reality is that when teachers and students are out of sync, the inevitable occurs: miscommunication and confrontation between the student, the

> teacher, and the home; hostility; alienation; diminished self-esteem; and eventually school failure (p. 153).

Teacher beliefs and values are exposed in classroom practices and significantly sway the instructional decisions teachers make (Brandon, 2003; Easter, Shultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1999; Gay, 2010a, 2013; Gilbert, 1997; Irvine, 1991; Liggett, 2008; Milner, 2010; Santoro, 2009; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Terwilliger, 2010; Yeo, 1997; Young, 2010). Consequently, cultural conflicts are often manifested in two ways: misinterpretation of capabilities and intent and the use of instructional and disciplinary methods that go against cultural norms (Bergeron, 2008; Cross, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009; Milner, 2003b, 2008, 2010; Monroe, 2005; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Webb-Johnson, 2003)

In essence, teacher attitudes, beliefs, norms, and expectations determine the "official" curriculum and define classroom interactions, which actuates a culture of power—codes and rules, reflective of the dominant culture that operate in the classroom (Delpit, 1995; Milner, 2010). Consequently, success in schools is determined by the ability to acquire these codes and when missed or misinterpreted due to cultural conflicts, students are denied access to the conventions of power established in the classroom (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Hyland, 2005; Milner, 2010; Monroe, 2005). Delpit (1995) warns that these veiled commands have real consequences and when "ignored, the child will be labeled a behavior problem and possibly officially classified as behavior

disordered" (p. 34). Bireda (2010), Delpit (1995), and Milner (2010) also caution that cultural conflicts limit learning opportunities and their lack of resolution is evidenced by the "academic/disciplinary cycle of failure that is played out daily in classrooms" (Bireda, 2010, p. 8).

Thereupon, to be successful, ethnically diverse learners must be made conscious of existing power structures and become bi-codal: taught the rules needed to navigate mainstream society as well as to recognize the value of their own culture (Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Yosso, 2005; Young, 2010). Hence, central to conflicts of culture is the perception of normality and "thus students of color are often misunderstood, exploited, abused, and targeted for not being acquainted with cultural norms different from their own" (Milner, 2010, p.123). Concurring that cultural match is far too complex to offer same race/culture solutions, Achinstein and Aguirre (2008) and Milner (2010) stress that an extensive focus must be placed on the induction experience: the "unique phase during the transition from student of teaching to teacher of students...a critical period of socialization into the norms of a profession" (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008, p.1506). Thus, it is crucial that teacher education programs train teachers to understand the role of culture in learning and behaving to foster pedagogies that discern and mediate these conflicts (Bireda, 2010; Cochran-Smith 2003; Gordon, 2005; Pope & Wilder,

2005; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Terwilliger, 2010; Ullucci, 2010; Webb Johnson, 2003; Yeo, 1997).

The Role of Culture

Central to the dialogue on normality, compatibility, and access is the consideration of culture. For this deliberation, Ndura (2004) denotes culture as a "refer[ance] to the acquired complex knowledge that individual and communities use to affirm and interpret the values, beliefs, and customs, and practices that distinguish them from other people and groups in society" (p. 10). All human beings are the product of culture and people's lives, attitudes, actions, and beliefs are all formed and informed by life experiences (Delpit, 1995; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gay, 2002, 2004, 2010; Ndura, 2004; Santoro, 2009; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Filtering, connecting, and constructing all knowledge, the role of culture profoundly influences how we learn and teach. Quoting the words of an Alaskan educator, Delpit (1995) affirms, "In order to teach you, I must know you" (p. 183). Recognizing and legitimizing a person's beliefs, experiences, and types of knowledge allows one to be seen, to be heard, to be validated (Delpit, 1995; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gay, 2004, 2010; Ndura, 2004; Santoro, 2009).

Thusly, to meet the needs of ethnically diverse learners, teachers need an explicit knowledge of cultural diversity behooving understandings of specific attributes and contributions of different ethnic groups. This explicit knowledge can be engaged in the process of teaching and learning; such as a knowledge of

cultural learning styles, modes of communication, relational patterns, traditions, and values (Bireda, 2010; Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gay, 2002, 2004; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2009; Santoro, 2009; Valentin, 2006; Web-Johnson, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Illustrating the necessity of an explicit cultural knowledge in teachers' instructional considerations and decisions, Gay (2002a) explains:

> Teachers need to know (a) which ethnic groups give priority to communal living and cooperative problem solving and how these preferences affect educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance; (b) how different ethnic groups' protocol of appropriate ways for children to interact with adults are exhibited in instructional settings; and (c) the implications of gender role socialization in different ethnic groups for implementing equity initiatives in classroom instruction (p. 107).

At the same time, Gay (2010a) advocates that this cultural responsiveness is only actuated when teachers first become conscious of their own cultural identity and its influence on perceptions of attitudes and expectations.

Examining the individual cultural characterizations of 34 predominately White in-service teachers enrolled in a master's cohort multicultural education

course, Ndura (2004) found eight reoccurring themes in the participants'[31] awareness of cultural identity: a) a new discovery, mainly afforded by the self-reflective activity; b) "typical/normal and a rather simplistic phenomenon" as participants identified with the United States' White middle class (p. 12); c) offered "pride, confidence, and satisfaction" due to given privileges of membership, (p. 12); d) a "shelter from the world of differences" as encounters with diversity were rare, memorable occasions (p. 13); e) a barrier or limiting factor that could lead to cultural conflicts; f) a "source of opportunity" providing privileges of exposure and exploration (p.14); g) "an evolving phenomenon" yielding growth opportunities when positions of privilege where probed, revealing glimpses of "hidden realities" (p. 14); and (h) a "reality that must be unveiled and confronted" in efforts to recognize that assumed privileges may not extend to all members of society (p. 14). Teachers, first recognizing their own cultural identities can then begin to consciously analyze curriculum and instruction for perspectives and practices that respond to the learning needs of ethnically diverse learners (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010a; Gordon, 2005; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2003a, 2003b, 2008; Ndura, 2004; Terwilliger, 2010).

[31] The participants are from 5 separate cohorts enrolled in the researcher's course from the summer of 1999 to summer of 2000. The study notes that the predominate White teacher population and the diverse student enrollment of the southwestern state (55% White, 32% Hispanic, 7% American Indian and Alaska native, 5% Black, and 2% Asian and Pacific Island), represent the trend of teacher-student cultural mismatch found in the U.S. Position papers, (a 2-week, take-home midterm assignment) were collected from the cohorts, coded, and organized according to concepts or themes.

The ethnic other. Although, research addresses some learning needs of ethnically diverse students through their respective language and culture, the literature primarily designates the experiences of all non-whites as a collective, non-distinct other (Gomez & White, 2010: Ladson-Billings, 2000). However, Ladson-Billings (2000) advises that every culture has distinct features and to effectively teach Black students educators must "understand the specific and unique qualities of the African American cultural experience" (p. 207). Unfamiliarity with cultural characteristics not only leads to misjudgment of behaviors but also shifts the instructional focus on classroom management instead of learning (Bireda, 2010; Delpit, 1995; Milner, 2010; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Expressly, Webb-Johnson (2003) describes misconceptions of *learning while black*:

> When African-American students "behave" in modes affirmed and sanctioned by dimensions of African-American culture and those modes are unfamiliar to or misinterpreted by teachers, most of whom are white, their behavior is often perceived as inappropriate. Further when these behaviors are misinterpreted and disrespected, African American learners often display behaviors that resist the system of control designed by teachers (p. 5).

African Americans are then "unbefittingly characterized as difficult to teach," which oftentimes reinforces already held preconceived negative stereotypical beliefs (Siwatu & Starker, 2010, p.11).

Conversely, in a case study of an African American 8th grade teacher and her predominately Black class[32], Monroe and Obidah (2004) found that although traditional management approaches were used, the teacher's utilization of cultural humor and demonstrations of strong emotion and affect resulted in only two office referrals within two, nine-week grading periods[33]. Primarily observing a collective parental-like compliance in student responses, Monroe and Obidah (2004) note that these practices—such as use of humor, even though effective and based in African American culture, would be judged as inappropriate teacher conduct versus a culturally responsive management technique. Although the literature extensively discusses culturally responsiveness in curriculum, more research needs to examine the role of cultural synchronization in classroom management and possible correlations to the gaps in racial discipline and academic achievement (Monroe, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Henceforth, for more equitable and inclusive practices,

[32]The class was composed of 22 students: 12 African American boys, 9 African American girls, and 1 White girl in a southeast urban middle school.

[33] Perceptions of disruption were based on a pre-designed Classroom Code of Conduct and Expectations. Results indicate 387 coded student disruptions: 11 addressed by short dialogues reflecting African American cultural humor (playful banter), 101 brief retorts or pointed remarks based in cultural humor; the incorporation of strong emotion and affect included—delivering 5 extended lectures, 68 frank comments mirroring blunt word choice of students, 21 positive reinforcements; and 120 traditional forms of management included changing seats, and 2 office referrals. 51 disruptive acts were not addressed.

classroom interactions— learning and behavior, should be viewed through the cultural lens of the student's community to engage contrasting and varying perspectives of appropriateness (Bireda, 2010; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010a; Irvine, 2010; Kohli, 2009; Monroe, 2005a; Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Webb-Johnson, 2003).

Furthermore, if culture is a point of reference, Bireda (2010), Irvine (1991, 2010), Ladson-Billings (2009), and Webb-Johnson (2003) find it unsettling that the literature does not view African American culture as a viable rubric for understanding or serving the needs of African American students. Debunking the myths of an inferior non-distinct culture, Bireda (2010) distinguishes the African-based cultural attributes of African Americans as a collective orientation with a keen sense of fairness, expressive individuality, an adherence to social time versus clock time, high-energy and intense communicative styles "verve," and possessing more authoritative child rearing practices (Boykin, 1986, 2001; Carter, Hawkins, & Nartesan, 2008; Hale-Benson, 1986; Lynch & Hanson, 1992). Also noting the research of several scholars, Irvine (1991) outlines African American culture is rhythmic and relational and thus Black students are "predisposed to learning characterized by freedom of movement, variation, creativity, divergent thinking approaches, inductive reasoning, and a focus on people" (Irvine, 1991, p. 31). In contrast, Eurocentric cultural styles are more analytical, learning is defined by "rules and restriction of

movement, standardization, conformity, convergent thinking approaches, deductive reasoning, and a focus on things" (Irvine, 1991, p. 32). Schools, utilizing analytical approaches, often deny the relational aspects of teaching and learning, and hence chose instructional methods that do not capitalize on the strengths of the learning modalities of African American and other ethnically diverse learners (Bireda, 2010; Boykin, 1986, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Hale-Benson, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2009; Yosso, 2005; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).

For instance, in a study of 211 middle school students[34] in an urban school district in southeast Texas, Carter et al. (2008) found a significant statistical difference between the verve levels of African American and European American students ($p < 0.05$)[35]. Drawing from the literature, Carter et al. (2008) illustrates various forms that verve may assume in the classroom, such as "(a) a loud noisy working environment; (b) students preferring group work rather than individual work; (c) joking, teasing, and playing while doing class work; and (d) preferring hands-on, interactive learning instead of paper-and-pencil tasks" (p. 34). Although finding that African American pre-adolescents show more verve remains

[34] The 211 students were composed of 104 White students (59 male, 45, female), and 107 African American students (60 male, 47, female) between the ages of 13 and 14. The Child Activity Questionnaire was given to determine verve levels. Then the (2003-2004) TAKS scores were used as a measure of academic achievement of the students who possessed higher verve levels (which consequentially were then the test scores of African American middle school students).

[35] Two t-tests were conducted to determine if there was a statistical significant difference between the verve levels of Black and White students, and then verve levels of Black male and female students. The first test used ethnicity as the independent variable ($p < 0.05$), with an estimated effect size of 48.27%.

consistent with previous research linking culture, verve and movement; the studies does note that "surprising[ly]"African American females possess even higher verve levels than African American males[36] (Carter et al., 2008, p. 39).

Relating verve levels to teacher perceptions of behavior and educability, research suggests that the "vervistic characteristics" of African American females are more "accept[ed]" by teachers in classroom settings than those of counterparts (Jones & Gerig, 1994), thus resulting in more negative and punitive treatment of Black males (Carter et al., 2008, p. 39). Additionally, Carter et al. (2008) also conducted regression analyses on TAKS Reading and Math scores to examine the effect of verve on African American academic achievement[37]. Although this regression did not warrant statistical significance ($p > 0.5$), it was concluded that results held "practical significance" as African American students with higher verve levels scored lower on TAKS Reading and Math than African American students possessing lower verve levels, particularly in Math. Thus, offering "practical recommendations," Carter et al. (2008) suggest the utilization of professional developments to educate teachers about "culturally responsive and

[36] Gender was the independent variable in this second t-test showing that Black females had higher verve than Black males ($p<0.05$), with an estimated effect size of 71.03%. The study notes the unexpected findings of higher verve levels in African American females because of prior connections with verve and moment and just the physicality of boys.

[37] Two regression analyses were conducted, there was no significant difference between students with higher and lower verve levels among the reading scores of African Americans when controlled by Math scores, however when verve was directly regressed on academic achievement (Reading and Math TAKS scores), it had "an adverse impact (negative regression coefficients), on both African American reading and math TAKS scores, "with a greater negative impact on Math" (Carter et al., 2008, p. 38).

vervistic instructional approaches" and to assign students with higher verve levels to teachers that already employ culturally responsive practices (p. 34).

Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2000) expounds that the exclusion of these type of instructional practices that would favor black cultural norms are underpinned by perceptions generally held about African American culture, and conversely African American learners. As she explained:

> Rather than seeing African Americans as possessing a distinctive culture, African Americans learners are often treated as if they are corruptions of white culture, participating in an oppositional counterproductive culture. Schools and teachers treat the language, prior knowledge, and values of African Americans as aberrant and often presume that the teacher's job is to rid African American students of any vestiges of their own culture (p. 206).

Correspondingly, the devaluation of African American cultural attributes in United States educational system mirrors the prevailing beliefs operating in American culture (Bireda, 2010; Delpit, 1995; Hyland, 2005; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lewis, 2003; Lynn, 2006; Milner, 2003b, 2008; Ullucci, 2010; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Yeo, 1997). Ullucci (2010) argues that schools, which are based upon mainstream norms, replicate existing societal power structures and thus become "non-neutral sites impacted by the same racism as the greater community" (p. 140). Therefore central to the understanding of how the

academic successes of African-American students are developed, must be the discussion of how race and racism impacts society, teacher preparation, and thus education at-large.

Race and Racism in Education

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Milner (2008), and Solórzano (1997) affirm that not only is race under-theorized in education, but also propose that this postulate also holds true for teacher education. Critical race theory contends that issues of race and racism are so entrenched in American society, that all institutionalized systems, practices, procedures, and policies retain vestiges of its deep roots (Blaisdell, 2005; Gordon, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Milner, 2008; Terwilliger, 2010; Ullucci, 2010; Young, 2010). Hyland (2005), Lewis (2003), and Terwilliger (2010) explain that race is not a biological determinant but a social construct used to assign social position. This hierarchy was created to keep the "in-group" in power through the prescription of an "other" (Gomez & White, 2010; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Parsons, 2005) . It is for this declaration that whiteness was created, dominance enacted, and racism used as a means of stratification. Hyland (2005) depicts the American esteem of whiteness:

> White European culture has been assumed, by way of historical and institutional assertions of power, as the superior culture in terms of values, religions, art, languages, and perspectives. At the same time, the cultural features of African Americans, Asian

> Americans, Native Americans, and Latinas and Latinos have been derogated. Because Whites and their cultural norms dominate the major U.S. institutions, Whites are privileged, and members of other races are disadvantaged…Racism relies on institutional power and the mask of normalcy to subordinate people of color (p. 431).

Throughout history different racial and ethnic groups have comprised the "out-group" (Hyland, 2005, p. 431). However, people of African descent have always been fixed as a lower group (Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Ladson-Billings (2000) reiterating the created racial hierarchy, attests that locating African-Americans and Whites as polar opposites "has positioned all people in society and reified "whiteness" in ways that suggest that the closer one is able to align with whiteness, the more socially and culturally acceptable one is perceived to be" (p. 207). Whiteness loses its racial and cultural distinction, and bears the "invisibility" that is regarded as normalcy (Terwilliger, 2010, p. 21).

Hence, students that can capitalize on the culture of schools; thus possessing attributes and behaviors more compatible with perceptions of normalcy, are allowed to succeed (Blaisdell, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Lewis, 2003; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010; Milner, 2008; Parsons, 2005; Terwilliger, 2010; Young, 2010). Additionally, the Eurocentric bias of the U.S. education system is also depicted in the marginalization of people of color in curriculum, textbooks,

and or classroom discussions (Delpit, 1995; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Love, 2004). Addressing the effects of white dominance in most textbooks and state standards, Kohli (2009) warns that "promoting white cultural values in the absence of the culture and perspective of Communities of Color is a subtle, but powerful form of racism" (p. 241). As students of color learn about the world through perspectives of white sovereignty, this may have an unfathomable impact on perceptions of self and the way they perceive the rest of the world (Delpit, 1995; Kohli, 2009; Ndura, 2004).

Furthermore, teachers may also play a role in the racism enacted in schools (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Gay & Kirkland, 2010; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Milner, 2008; Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Through differentials in treatment, such as in levels of engagement, interaction, and support of students whose appearances and actions are more compatible with mainstream norms; teachers unknowingly assign the privilege of "whiteness"—whereby creating inequitable access to the curriculum (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Blaisdell (2005), further contends that "by not naming these notions as white but rather couching them in terms of acceptable behavior or appropriate speech, Whites create regulations that in effect guarantee their own unequal access to more rigorous curriculum and make deviants who do not have equal access" (p. 36). Additionally, Terwilliger (2010) and Love (2004) respond that when whiteness is not named, whether ignored or

undetected, Whites enjoy another advantage; the privilege of not having to engage race. As a matter of fact, Gordon (2005) offers that the real luxury of "whiteness" is actually the leisure of not having to think about race at all. However, Kohli (2009) contests when teachers choose not to actively oppose cultural biases or engage discussions of race and racism, they adopt a neutral stance which condones racism, oftentimes done unintentionally. Whereas, people of color cannot afford this benefit of neutrality as they must maneuver and reposition themselves to combat racism for survival (Terwilliger, 2010).

Accordingly, effective teachers of African-American children must be critically conscious of the role of race in education (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Gordon, 2005; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ullucci, 2010). Delpit (1995) delineates critical consciousness as operating on three levels "1) teachers understand racism impacts schools; 2) they acknowledge and draw on racial and cultural backgrounds of students; [and] 3) they understand the value of culturally relevant pedagogies" (p. 138). Nonetheless, Hill-Jackson (2007) notes the transformation to critical consciousness remains a challenge for the one multicultural course mandated by national teacher standards for pre-service teachers. Studying the perspectives of 94 White middle class pre-service teachers in a semester long multicultural education course, Hill-Jackson (2007) delineates three shifting stages of multicultural consciousness: a) unconsciousness; the teacher candidate is "blinded"—not a racial being, superficially aware of traits

and stereotypes, and is unconscious of other racial groups' multiple experiential realities (p. 30); b) responsive, a "multicultural purgatory" as new information about the experiential realities of others conflicts with teacher candidates' world views causing them to vacillate between acceptance and denial, some reverting back to unconsciousness (p.32); and c) critical consciousness, white privilege is recognized and empathy is shown towards the cultural realities of other racial groups due to seeing them as equal, prompting a social justice orientation. Hill-Jackson (2007), finding 63% had reached varying levels in the responsive stage, suggests no teacher candidates achieved critical consciousness in this time frame because of their struggles with seeing whiteness.

Colorblindness in Education

Blaisdell (2005) and Gordon (2005) offer two different notions of what is meant by colorblindness. Blaisdell (2005), expressing the ambiguity of White teachers when using the term, finds that even though colorblindness is thought to mean not seeing a person's race, White teachers adopt the term to imply that they in fact saw race but did not treat the children differently. Therefore, colorblindness is intertwined with notions of equality and fairness (Blaisdell, 2005; Love, 2004). Gordon (2005), also noting the sight in colorblindness, proposes whether occurring individually or systematically, colorblindness was "self-inflicted blindness" that functions to preserve white privilege (p.139), and thus an active form of racism (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Zamudio, et. al, 2011).

Continuing the cycle of inequitable relations through the assumptions of an equal playing field; Ladson-Billings (2000) further addresses ramifications of colorblindness in the education of African-American students:

> This rhetoric of "equality means sameness" tended to ignore the distinctive qualities of African-American culture and suggested that if schools were to make schooling experiences identical for African-Americans, we somehow could achieve identical results. However, because African Americans learners do not begin at the same place as middle-class White students either economically or socially, and because what may be valued in African American culture differs from what may be valued in schools, applying the same "remedy" may actually increase educational disparities (p. 208).

Teachers, engaging in colorblindness, deny salient aspects of their students experience as well as their own. Treating and teaching students the same way regardless of their backgrounds, continues to favor White students as the whiteness in curriculum and modes of interaction go unquestioned (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Gordon, 2005; Irvine, 2010; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Love, 2004; Milner, 2008, 2009; Santoro, 2009; Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Talbert Johnson, 2006; Terwilliger, 2010). Further marginalizing the experiences of students of color, colorblindness lends credence to the myth of meritocracy:

success is based on the merit of individual efforts in an impartial system; ergo those that get more, deserve more and those receiving less are lacking (Blaisdell, 2005; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Gordon, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Love, 2004; Milner, 2010; Ullucci, 2010)

Additionally, Talbert-Johnson (2006) asserts that teachers not only influence the achievement and cognitive development of African American students but also their attitudes and concept of self. Delpit (1995) questions the self-esteem implications presented when teachers refuse to see race:

> "I don't see color, I only see children." What message does this statement send? That there is something wrong with being black or brown, that it should not be noticed? I would like to suggest that if one does not see color, then one does not really see children. Children made "invisible" in this manner become hard-pressed to see themselves worthy of notice (p.177).

The influential power of teachers is disturbing when teachers do not possess critical cultural consciousness and minority children are exposed to and impacted by their unexamined assumptions (Ndura, 2004; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Terwilliger, 2010). Given that, teachers must align their pedagogy with the cultural experiences and learning styles of their students, or join the ranks of teachers who insufficiently meet the needs of ethnically diverse learners (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cross, 2003; Gay, 2010a; Gordon, 2005; Ladson-Billings,

2000, 2009; Milner, 2010; Ndura, 2004; Santoro, 2009; Sleeter, 2001; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Young, 2010). Although, accrediting the lack of student achievement solely to teaching quality promotes the fallacy that teachers can fully compensate for society, Mills and Ballantyne (2000) insist that due to the "centrality of the work of teachers," teachers "can and do make a difference" (p. 267). Therefore, teachers must not only be prepared to see race, but also understand its influence in the process of teaching and learning.

Critique of Teacher Education

The treatment of culture and race in teacher education programs has precipitated its greatest critique, the systematic failure to produce teachers that meet the needs of ethnically diverse learners (Bergeron, 2008; Blaisdell, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cross, 2003; Gordon, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2009; Milner, 2010; Picower, 2009; Terwilliger, 2010; Van Hook, 2002; Yeo, 1997). Teacher education programs, teaching the business of school, endorse Eurocentric norms and behaviors which often leaves the dispositional beliefs of White pre-service teachers unchallenged; as notions of culture, race, and the privilege of whiteness are not confronted in stand-alone multicultural education courses (Blaisdell, 2005; Gordon, 2005; Irvine, 2010; 95; Milner, 2008, 2010; Ndura, 2004; Sleeter, 2001; Terwilliger, 2010; Valentin, 2006; Yeo, 1997). Not only is the silencing of race a disservice to the diversity preparation of White prospective teachers, but it also ignores the experiential knowledge and

developmental needs of minority candidates as well (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Delpit, 1995; Kohli, 2009; Milner, 2008). Milner (2008) states minority candidates must also examine their own identity, perceptions of self and others, as "dominant societal constructions of people of color, for instance, might allow teachers of color to believe that they and students of color are inferior to White people" (p. 120). On the other hand, Kohli (2009) suggests the insights of teachers of color, often first-hand knowledge of race and racism which may not be possessed by White teachers, could be used as training tools to understand the experiences of students of color as well as to combat racism in schools.

Nonetheless, the ineffective preparation of teachers pronounced in urban schools continues to negatively and disproportionately impact the education of ethnically diverse learners. Throughout the literature, research attributes inadequate training to teacher education program's lack of an integrated approach to develop pre-service dispositions towards diversity (Baszile, 2008; Brandon, 2003; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Causey et al., 2000; Gordon, 2005; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010; Picower, 2009; Pope & Wilder, 2005; Santoro, 2009; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008; Valentin, 2006; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). Three dominant themes categorizing the dispositions of pre-service teachers in the literature are: a) optimistic individualism, the belief that hard work and individual effort can champion any obstacle or situation (Causey et al., 2000; Pope & Wilder, 2005); b) Naïve egalitarianism, the belief that everyone

is created equal with the same opportunities for access and thus should be treated equally (Causey et al., 2000; Pope & Wilder, 2005); and c) deficient thinking, which blames the victim for failure— deeming students' home lives, communities, lack of cultural capital, or the children themselves insufficient (Brandon, 2003; Gilbert, 1997; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano &Yosso, 2002; Valencia, 1997, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

Although, all three dispositions cause teacher candidates to overlook cultural differences, white privilege, and the effects of discrimination; Brandon (2003), Solórzano (1997), and Valencia (1997, 2010) maintain that deficit thinking is the longest-held and most widely-accepted belief among scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. Presuming that students fail because of "internal deficits" and or "familial deficits and dysfunctions," deficit thinking is an "endogenous theory"— a racist belief that over time has become an commonly accepted justification for school failure, is based on the assertion that "deficits are a result of limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behavior" (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). Stemming from genetic and cultural deficit models, deficit thinking fosters professional stereotypes that judges students as inadequate, calls for assimilation, and shifts responsibility to "fix" the student instead of undertaking the "complex and highly demanding" work to make large-scale reforms to an "inequitable and exclusionary" educational system (Valencia, 2010, p. 9). Illustrating contemporary examples of

deficit thinking in education, Valencia (2010) notes the resurgence of cultural deficit models such as espoused in Ruby Payne's "Culture of Poverty"[38], and the common discourse of risk[39]. Valencia (2010), noting the wide popularity of Payne's "Culture of Poverty" in educational forums and teacher trainings—despite its lack of yielding or being grounded in empirical evidence, warns that this rhetoric of deficit thinking continues to resurface because it reinforces long-held stereotypical beliefs, connecting to dispositions that already exist. Thus, Valencia (1997, 2010) insists that deficit thinking is the disposition that must be dismantled to foster and respect diversity.

Moreover, Brandon (2003), Easter et al. (1999), and Gilbert (1997), conclude that the un-examination of these dispositions lead to the preservation of

[38] This research is being heavily criticized for lack of empirical evidence, heavily drawing from several scholarly works of pseudoscience which also featured ambiguous research methods, stigmatizing race and poverty (although White children are the largest group in poverty, people of color were depicted as participants in the case study conducted in a predominately White neighborhood), selective use of conclusions drawn from major works, no consideration of alternative explanations, inferring that people of a certain economic status share a communal mindset—thus fostering "stereotypes of epic proportions" (Valencia, p.79, 2010). Valencia surmises detailed rebuttals of several scholars who have critiqued Payne's research.

[39] The discourse of risk assumes that certain populations are "at-risk" for school or life failure due to the lack of individually possessed attributes or deficits found in their environment, i.e., communities and or homes. In education, the "at-risk" label targets linguistically diverse learners (students with "limited English proficiency"), those possessing a lower socioeconomic status (the "economically disadvantaged"), students demonstrating academic challenges "one or more grade retentions or below average grades," who are largely from single-parent households. Other "at-risk" discourses include federal definitions of at-risk populations as those that are not sufficiently independent—economically disadvantaged, do not have proper health care, possess limited means of communication (referring to English proficiency and or literacy), without transportation, lack adequate family guidance and supervision (the elderly, those possessing a mental disability, and unaccompanied children), and those with limited access to information due to social or cultural isolation—preventing the ability to navigate in unfamiliar surroundings. The rhetoric of risk judges students of color, their families, their communities, and culture as insufficient because of these perceived characteristics instead of addressing policies, practices, and structures that aid in inequitable and disproportional achievement and life outcomes.

antiquated and ineffectual instructional practices, unduly impacting students of color. Although opinions differ about the flexibility of dispositions to multicultural training, scholars agree that teacher education programs must teach and provide opportunities for self-reflective critical consciousness (Baszile, 2008; Liggett, 2008; Lynn, 2006; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010; Ndura, 2004; Santoro, 2009; Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang, & Mac Donald, 2006;Valentín, 2006; Yeo, 1997). Picower (2009) and Valentin (2006) suggest opportunities for conscious raising experiences are increased when teacher education programs take a holistic approach to diversity, instead of utilizing stand-alone peripheral classes that endorse an additive method, marginalizing issues of diversity and race.

Nevertheless, teacher education programs must afford opportunities for prospective teachers to undergo "mental somersaults," the reflective struggle endured when pre-existing convictions and worldviews are confronted with information that conflicts or extends previous understandings (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002, p. 406). Although the process of critical self-reflection may invoke some emotional discomfort (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002), it is imperative that teacher education "bring to light the interpersonal and intrapsychic beliefs that influence teachers, by making these largely implicit beliefs explicit educational programs can induce change" (Easter et al, 1999, p. 209). Then again, the literature markedly notes the beliefs of White pre-service teachers are often reiterated in teacher education due to cultural compatibility: shared dispositions

with predominately White faculty and the whiteness in curriculum, raising further questions about the multicultural competence of teacher educators and their diversity development (Easter et al., 1999; Gordon, 2005; Kohli, 2009; Milner, 2010; Picower, 2009; Santoro, 2009; Sleeter, 2001; Smolen et al., 2006; Trent et al., 2008; Ullucci, 2010; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). With all this in mind, Milner (2010) describes the distressing demand confronting teacher education:

> The task of preparing teachers for the diversity they (will) face in P-12 schools is shaped and grounded in a range of complex realities in U.S. society and in education. Whether through traditional or alternative teacher education programs, preparing teachers for diversity, equity, and social justice are perhaps the most challenging and daunting task facing the field (p. 119).

Deemed the epoch of the 21st century, teacher education programs are charged with developing reflective practitioners that recognize and value diverse experiences and repertoires of knowledge. With the understanding that all students are holders of knowledge, teacher education programs must craft more effective ways to engender belief systems that recognize, incorporate, and value these diverse resources. Hence equipping teachers with the tools to acknowledge and esteem varied representations of cultural capital exchanged in the learning environment, mediated daily in classroom interactions (Santoro, 2009; Talbert-

Johnson, 2006; Terwilliger, 2010; Van Hook, 2002; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

Cultural Capital, Community Cultural Wealth, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural reproduction advances that inequities in education can be attributed to the possession of cultural capital by class. Existing in three distinct forms, Bourdieu (1986) depicts cultural capital as: a) *embodied*, cultural traits and nuances embedded in the bearer's body and mind; b) *objectified*, a form of cultural good which demonstrates cultural qualifications; and c) *institutionalized*, a systematic recognition of cultural capital which confers worth. Bourdieu (1977) proposes that educational systems, reflecting the norms of the dominant culture, serve to legitimize and maintain the social order as those who become credentialed are familiar with the cultural traits and nuances of the preeminent higher-class (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, masking academic success as pure acts of meritocracy, education covertly perpetuates the status quo as it not only justifies social inequities but also "gives recognition to a cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 32). Additionally, explaining the disadvantages and eventual failure of students from lower classes, Bourdieu (1977) resolves:

> By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the education system demands of everyone

> alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture (p. 494).

Therefore, the educational system continues to preserve the ways of being and knowing that differentiates social class through the replication of cultural capital.

Frequently, used as an explanation for the educational failure of African Americans and other ethnically diverse learners, traditional notions of Bourdieu presumes that communities of color do not possess the capital needed for educational attainment because they do not hold cultural resources of value (Watson, 2011; Yosso, 2005). Analyzing cultural capital through the lens of critical race theory, Yosso (2005) counterclaims:

> While Bourdieu's work sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor. This interpretation of Bourdieu exposes White, middle class culture as the standard and therefore all other forms and expressions of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm'. In other words, cultural capital is not just inherited or possessed by the middle class, but rather it refers to an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society…So are there

> forms of cultural capital that marginalized groups bring to the table that traditional cultural capital theory does not recognize or value? CRT answers, yes (p. 76-77).

Expanding the narrowly defined restrictions of capital, Yosso (2005), interjects the broader notion of wealth, the overall "accumulation of assets and resources" (p. 77). She proposes that communities of color are not lacking, but hold "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by communities of color to survive and resist macro and micro forms of oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p.77). Thus community cultural wealth fosters six forms of capital: 1) Aspirational capital –the ability to hold on to dreams despite obstacles; 2) Linguistic capital—the intellectual and social skills acquired from being able to communicate in different languages or styles; 3) Familial capital–the collective consciousness of a shared history, common understanding, a kinship inclusive of the immediate and extended family; 4) Social capital—the social networks created to provide agency; 5) Navigational capital—the ability to maneuver institutions that historically and traditionally exclude people of color; and 6) Resistant capital—consciously created oppositional behavior designed to fight against oppression (Yosso, 2005).

Community cultural wealth challenges the notions of deficiency imbedded in cultural capital theory and thus uncovers the theory's deficit premise. Therefore community cultural wealth provides a different context for the mission of schools:

instead of viewing African-American learners as deficient, largely resulting in a programmatic orientation built upon remediation, (Gay, 2010a; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lewis, 2003; Valencia, 2010; Watson, 2011; Webb-Johnson, 2003); schools must attempt to tap into the capabilities of ethnically diverse learners by reorganizing its practices to acknowledge and access the communal wealth used and owned by people of color (Yosso, 2005).

Culturally responsive teaching. Literature on the academic development of African-American students holds that successful teachers of students of color employ culturally relevant or responsive pedagogies (Bergeron, 2008; Delpit, 1995; Easter et al. 1999; Gay, 2010a; Hyland, 2005; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ullucci, 2010; Valentin, 2006; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Young, 2010). Gay (2010b) defines culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (p. 31). Acknowledging, integrating, and valuing the unique cultural backgrounds and experiences of all students in the instructional process (Bergeron, 2008; Easter et al, 1997; Gay, 2002, 2004, 2010a, 2010b, 2010; Hyland, 2005; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Santoro, 2009; Young, 2010); culturally responsive teaching attempts to create equitable educational opportunities by accepting ethnic group and individual differences as "normative to the human condition, and valuable to societal and

personal development" (Gay, 2013, p. 50). In other words, all students have funds of knowledge and culturally responsive teaching utilizes the students' base of familiarity to bridge new ideas and concepts (Bergeron, 2008; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010b, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2009; Parsons, 2005; Santoro, 2009; Yosso, 2005; Young, 2010).

Therefore, in culturally responsive classrooms, learning is reciprocal, knowledge is created and recycled, and the learning community is established and sustained through a rapport built upon fairness (Bergeron, 2008; Gay, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Pushing the envelope, culturally relevant teachers go beyond routine practices as they question and critique mainstream conventions for the inclusivity of multiple cultural perspectives. For instance, the use of multicultural and ethnic examples to teach general concepts and linking cultural responsiveness to content, situations, and tasks in the classroom were two specific examples of cultural responsiveness found in the literature (Gay, 2004, 2010a, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Young, 2010). Gay (2013) and Ladson-Billings (2009) suggest that culturally responsive/relevant teaching is artistry, evolving as teachers grow in consciousness, using reflective practices to hone their craft.

Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2000) delineates three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy: "a) Students must experience academic success; b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current

social order" (p. 160). Highlighting the socio-political critique embedded in culturally relevant pedagogies, Hyland (2005), Ladson-Billings (2003), Parsons (2005), and Young (2010) maintain that cultural responsiveness fosters an oppositional pedagogy. Aligning culturally relevant teaching with caring, Young (2010) espouses the significance of countering the status quo in the education of African-American students:

> The existing order perpetuates race-related beliefs and norms that support a privilege that limits black students' access to the same quality of experience enjoyed by their white counterparts. By disrupting the existing order, teachers are engrossed and act in the best interests of all students rather than in the best interests of only the privileged few; this is the essence of culturally relevant caring" (p. 31).

Culturally responsive pedagogies foster success because they are knowledgeable and supportive of African-American cultural norms and challenges; focus on overall student development; hold high expectations; and link their lived experiences to the curriculum while maintaining a sense of connectedness to the student and their community (Delpit,1995; Gay, 2004; Gordon, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000;Webb-Johnson, 2003; Young, 2010). Thus uncovering, honoring, and supporting the strengths that African American students bring to the classroom culturally responsive pedagogies supplant pathological and deficient

views of African American students and their communities with positive, affirming perspectives (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010a, 2013b; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009; Webb-Johnson,2003).

Lastly, Irvine (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) suggest that even if the target audiences are not students of color, culturally relevant teaching is just good teaching. Culturally responsive teachers recognize that they do not instruct culturally homogenized, generic students in non-distinct school settings. Still unactualized, Delpit (1995) depicts what should be the vision of multicultural teacher education, and education in general:

> Teachers must not merely take a course that tells them how to treat their students as multicultural clients, in other words, those that tell them how to identify differences in interactional or communicative strategies and remediate appropriately. They must also learn about the brilliance the students bring with them "in their blood." Until they appreciate the wonders of the cultures represented before them…they cannot appreciate the potential of those who sit before them (p.182).

In the final analysis, the literature supports that effective teachers of African American students actually see their children; their race, culture, challenges, and strengths (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010a; Gordon, 2005; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Milner, 2009; Ndura, 2004; Santoro, 2009). Valuing and

validating the cultural characteristics of African Americans and their lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge that belongs in the classroom, creates a learning community responsive and relative to the needs and interest of all its constituents (Bireda, 2010; Gay, 2004; 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005; Webb Johnson, 2003). Therefore, pedagogical practices crafted from wealth-oriented understandings of race and culture could possibly buffer the developmental and cultural mismatches likely endured by African American students in junior high, potentially creating environments that positively impact academic development.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Sixty years after the landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education [40] pervasive inequitable educational conditions and outcomes continue to fall along racial lines (Delpit, 1995; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Zamudio et. al., 2011). African Americans and other students of color continue to trail behind their White peers on various academic indicators—from lower standardized test scores, accelerated and or gifted course placements, and high school graduation rates to higher suspensions and disciplinary referral rates, grade retentions, and special education placements (Bonilla-Silva, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Losen et. al, 2006; Lynn, 2005; Zamudio et al., 2011). Conjointly, academic disparities are frequently experienced within the walls of underfunded de facto[41] segregated schools—adversely affecting the status of resources and facilities, staffing and teacher quality, and curriculum availability and choice (Bonilla-Silva, 2005; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Lynn, 2005; Zamudio et al., 2011). These systemic inequities disproportionally and persistently characterize

[40] *Brown v. Board*, 1954 landmark Supreme Court case which determined that legally sanctioned separation was not equal ordered the desegregation of public schools and other public facilities.
[41] De facto segregation is segregation that occurs by fact instead of legally imposed by law. For instance the segregation of many urban schools is a result of residential patterns due to White flight.

the academic experiences and educational outcomes of many African American youth.

Thus to examine the academic development of African American students, a critical approach must probe for the role of race and racism in the policies, practices, and structures that form their education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Milner, 2008; Zamudio et al., 2011). Evolving from its legal origins, which critiqued the inherent unfairness of the U.S. legal system due to its failure to address racism in the law (Bell, 2004; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado, 2008; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993); critical race theory (CRT) in education also contends that until race is theorized in education, African Americans and other students of color will continue to experience educational inequality (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lynn, 2005; Milner, 2008, 2010; Solórzano,1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et al., 2011). Moreover, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) specifically define CRT in education as a "framework or set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom" (p. 25).

Delineating five tenets as vital analytic tools for framing disparities in education, CRT in education maintains: a) race and racism is a central organizing

and endemic feature of American society, intersecting with other forms of oppression (class, gender, and sexuality); b) current challenges endured by students of color should be viewed within the "historical trajectory of racism" in education; c) voice given to marginalized groups not only legitimizes experiential knowledge but also serves as a tool for analyzing racism; confronting "master narratives" of neutrality, universality, merit, and colorblindness; d) educational and school polices, practices, and structures must be expressly examined to note in "tangible, specific ways, how educational inequality is manufactured:" and e) students of color can be granted educational equality when policies and practices are created to abate gaps in achievements (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 165).

In addition, schools replicate hierarchical relationships embedded in American[42] society. Thus, CRT in education brings race to the foreground as it challenges racialized power dynamics and ideologies of white supremacy found in the processes of schooling, due to education's esteem of Euro-American attributes, beliefs, and epistemologies (Duncan, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 2005; Ullucci, 2010; Zamudio et al., 2011). Linking race, culture, and schooling, CRT provides a theoretical framework that questions the privilege and property of whiteness by asking: whose culture is valued, whose needs are being fulfilled, and how are these assets and interests transferred and protected in education? (Chapman, 2007; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan,

[42] In this instance, American refers to the United States.

2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005; Zamudio et al., 2011). Therefore CRT provides an inquisitive construct to examine the racial and cultural knowledge(s) of effective junior high school teachers by probing for the potential role of whiteness in perceptions of African American students and assessments of learning needs, pedagogical theories, and the nature of pedagogical practices employed.

Furthermore, fundamental to CRT and this study is the use of voice to recognize the experiential knowledge of communities of color and other groups marginalized by mainstream discourse (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Zamudio et al., 2011). Utilizing stories, CRT illustrates the lived realities of the "oppressed," thus serving to document and explore discriminatory acts perpetuated and normalized as occurrences of daily life (Chapman, 2007; Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado, 2008; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Matsuda et. al., 1993; Zamudio et al., 2011). As voice empowers members of the out group to name their own reality, silenced stories become knowledge sources that express and validate alternative realities of how people of color overcome systemic barriers to create moments of triumph (Chapman, 2007; Crenshaw, 2011; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Zamudio et al., 2011). These counterstories contradict dominant narratives masked as objective truths, such as narratives of colorblindness and

meritocracy, confronting them as *stock stories* used to justify privileged positions of power (Chapman, 2007; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Lynn, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Thus, CRT's storytelling not only chronicles history from a marginalized perspective but also fosters an oppositional voice, exposing structures of racial inequality in efforts to build a more just society (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan, 2005; Love, 2004; Zamudio et al., 2011). Cognizant that voice does not imply that all marginalized people share the same story; CRT attests that themes of racialism highlight broader societal issues which relate these experiences — voicing stories of struggle, resilience, and hope (Chapman, 2007; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et. al., 2011). With this is mind, critical race theorists insist that to pursue real educational reform all voices must be invited and respected in the dialogue, including those of parents, practitioners, and students of color (Bell, 1983; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Love, 2004; Zamudio et.al, 2011). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) further suggest that without these voices nothing of value is really known about education in communities of color. Hence, in regards to scholastic achievement, Bell (1983) and Love (2004), propose that voices of effective teachers in communities of color should play a major role in crafting curriculum, pedagogies, policy, and programs for the positive academic development of students of color.

In like manner, CRT's storytelling also contributes voice to the methodology and purpose of educational research. Silenced by the academy, CRT's growth as a methodological tool was a response of scholars of color to the exclusion of their interests and those of communities of color in traditional educational research (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Love, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et al., 2011). Disregarding the contradictions posed by subjective lived experiences of people of color, traditional educational research often favors objective measurable inquiry, promulgating biases embedded in majoritarian stories (Duncan, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et al., 2011). For this reason CRT also cites and critiques the function educational scholarship "has played and continues to play in the maintenance of social inequality and the status quo via biological, social, psychological, and cultural deficiency explanations of minority student failure" (Zamudio et al., 2011, p.116). Thus race and racism is not only under theorized in education but also remains under examined in educational research and analysis.

In the final analysis, CRT's unconventional use of storytelling in educational research offers rich thick details that are typically associated with case studies, as the experiences of people of color and other marginalized groups are focally centered and told from their vantage point (Love, 2004; Zamudio et al., 2011). Encouraging examiner insight and sensitivity throughout the research process to CRT's goals of using narrative analysis and storytelling to create

counterclaims that interrogate dominant ideologies, CRT asks: Which story is being told, what is the story saying, who is telling the story, for what purpose is the story being told, and why is the story being told that way (Chapman, 2007; Zamudio et al., 2011)? Thusly, CRT's storytelling is essential in exploring themes ingrained in the ideological constructs of teachers and environments that are effective in the academic development of African American junior high students.

With the understanding that this study may depart from traditional usage of CRT, due to its use to analyze the stories of a conceivably racial and ethnically diverse group of teachers; CRT's applicability as a theoretical lens is as follows 1) CRT posits effective academic development of African American youth within the context of teacher education which challenges deficiency orientations in narratives of student achievement (Chapman, 2007; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Powers, 2007; Solórzano, 1997; Zamudio et.al, 2011) ; 2) CRT provides the analytical tools to examine the narratives of effective teachers for functions of race and racism in diversity preparation, pedagogical understandings, classroom practices, school policies, and structures (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Duncan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Love, 2004; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et. al, 2011); and 3) with the possibility of juxtaposing the narratives of effective White teachers and those of effective teachers of color, CRT not only potentially exposes master

narratives espoused in the education of African American students, but also of procuring silenced voices of opposition and hope (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Love, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Zamudio et. al., 2011). Lastly, by choosing to acknowledge race in education, these stories of effective teachers could open up "frozen conversations" concerning race and racialisms in teacher preparation and practices that enhance or impede the academic development of African American junior high students—thus taking one step closer to CRT's vision of educational equality (Zamudio, et al, p. vi)!

Chapter 4

Research Design

A qualitative research design was selected to investigate the preparation and pedagogy of effective teachers. It advances the study's descriptive and exploratory nature; warranting the lack of pre-determined variables in favor of a more inductive, data-yielding theory approach (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, seeking to understand these experiences, qualitative research designs lend to inquiry methods that supports "knowledge claims" largely embedded in "constructivist perspectives (i.e. multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e. political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both" (Creswell, 2003, p 18).

Utilizing qualitative methods such as interviews and observations, this study attempted to capture the diverse realities of effective teachers by extending analysis beyond *the what*— to the why, how, and or what way (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Hence, qualitative research affords a closer proximity to the subject studied, as the emphasis is placed on the lived experience and the researcher is immersed in the field to gain this insight (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Furthermore, the use of experience and voice in qualitative research not only corresponds to the study's research problems and goals but also lends to the study's theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT); (Creswell, 2003; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Zamudio et al, 2011). Addressing gaps in the literature regarding teacher preparation for African American junior high students and pedagogical understandings of effective teachers of this student demographic (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Yeo, 1997), a qualitative research design could grant participants, traditionally overlooked, access to this dialogue (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As effective teachers of African American junior high students share their experiential knowledge, qualitative research offered a forum to document these marginalized experience, presenting counterstories to confront dominant deficit discourse of African American academic achievement often embedded in education and thus, conventional educational scholarship (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Valencia, 1997, 2010; Zamudio et. al., 2011). By exploring the stories of teachers who positively facilitate the academic development of African American pre-adolescent youth, a qualitative research design aided the advocacy goals of CRT (Love, 2004).

Methodology

A collective case study design was employed for this study because of its ability to examine multiple cases to inquire about real-life phenomenon in a bound context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 1998, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984, 2009). Hence the teachers' perceptions of the particular conditions and pedagogical practices that contribute to their effectiveness remained the locus of the study. Deeply probing participants in a naturalistic setting, a case design allowed for flexibility in methodology to yield thick rich details that describe, explain, or explore the unit of analysis and its important contextual conditions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984, 2009). In real life, the subject and its context are not always distinguishable, thus case-study designs allowed for the in-depth investigation of both, contributing to the understanding of the individual and the linked phenomena which "retains the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p. 4).

Although, the case research design is its own design and can serve different functions, its common definition conveys the purpose of this research design, "[t]he essence of a case study, the central tendency among all type of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (Schramm, 1971, as quoted in Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) further proposes that the case-study research

design places emphasis on striving to “understand how the actors, the people being studied, see things"(p. 12). Therefore Baxter and Jack (2008), Stake (1995), and Yin (2009) emphasis that case research is not a qualitative or quantitative research method, however research questions, and methodological decisions made to analyze the participants’ world, primarily decide the type of research that will be conducted by the case study design. Thus, for the reasons aforementioned, this case study research design was qualitative.

Moreover, the collective or multiple-case design attempts to not only understand the unique specific nature of each individual case, but also provides for the exploration of differences within and between cases; thus affording the ability to draw comparisons (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009).Therefore, a collective case design was utilized to make corresponding connections between the decisions and understandings of effective teachers, situated in the context of their own past and present realities, concurrently engaged in their instructional interactions with the African American junior high students in their classrooms (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009). Furthermore, Baxter and Jack (2008), Stake (1995), and Yin (1984, 2009) offer that the more complete depiction produced by a multiple-case study approach lends insight, as it not only grants a general understanding of the phenomenon in question but also reoccurring actions, problems, and responses yield to analytic assumptions, producing theory. In addition, the collective case study featured an embedded design (Yin, 1984,

2009), as each case explored the potential role of race and culture in each subset unit of analysis: preparation (formal and informal learning factors) and pedagogical practices (instructional decisions/understandings, classroom climate, and teacher-student interactions) of effective teachers and the impact on academic development.

Lastly, unlike other qualitative research approaches, the case study design requires theory development before data collection is acquired to provide a "sufficient blueprint" for the study (Yin, 2009, p. 36). Starke (1995) and Yin (2009) both note that prior theory development, may warrant a "descriptive theory" (Yin, 2009, p. 36); a conceptual framework depicting what is being explored and the possible relationship between constructs derived from "logic, theory, and/or experience" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 533). Guided by the theoretical framework, research questions, and the review of literature; a conceptual framework was used to create a case protocol, an outline of general procedures, rules, and propositions that were followed for data collection in each case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Although the conceptual framework guides the study; Baxter and Jack (2008) warn that rigid adherence, "may limit the inductive approach when exploring a phenomenon:" suggesting journaling and discussion with other researchers to ensure research is not overly framework driven (p. 533).

Site

Bell Independent School District (BISD), located in three major cities: Joshua, Vineyard, and Albertson[43] hosts 55 schools (41 elementary schools, 8 junior high schools, 6 high schools) with a total enrollment of almost 36, 946 students (TEA, 2012). Founded in 1854, BISD has become home to an economically and ethnically diverse student population: 23.2% African American, 6.9% Asian, 38.7% Hispanic, 28.4% White, and 2.4% of two or more races (TEA, 2012). Of the district's students, 57.1% are economically disadvantaged and 42.7% are labeled at-risk[44] (TEA, 2012). With an 11.9% turnover rate, BISD employs 2,417.2 full time teachers with an average of 10.4 years of experience[45] (7.1 years in BISD), with the following ethnic and racial backgrounds: 8.7% African American, 0.2% American Indian, 1.7% Asian, 10.1 % Hispanic, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 77.4% White, and 1.8% designated as other (TEA, 2012). BISD also reports a 15.3:1 student to teacher ratio[46] (TEA, 2012).

Although the city of Albertson features a median income of $70,228, almost $20,000 higher than Texas' median income of $50,920; its surrounding

[43] Joshua hosts 60%, Vineyard 35%, and the city of Albertson, itself only 5% of the schools in BISD.
[44] The AEIS campus profile indicates 13 factors could warrant the at-risk label: grade retention for 1 or more years, consistent unsatisfactory performance on standardized tests, placement in an alternative education program, expelled or on parole, limited English proficiency, reported a drop out, in foster care or under the care of the Department of Protection and Regulatory Services, or attending the district due to placement in treatment facility, and or homeless. Noting the deficiency of the at-risk label some scholars advocate for the term students place at risk.
[45] Data also reports that 42.1% of these teachers have five or less years of teaching experience.
[46] Teacher student ratio indicates the ratio of teachers to students in the building, and not necessarily indicative of class size.

cities, accommodating 95% of the schools in BISD, has the following household median incomes: Joshua $42,259 and Vineyard $52,441 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011). Comparatively, the percentage of people living below poverty in the communities served by BISD varies from the state's 17% average, according to the city: Joshua 23%, Vineyard 14.5%, and Albertson 10% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011). Despite, challenges posed by compelling economic disparities, from 2006-2012, BISD has received a "Recognized" rating from the Texas Education Agency, and remains the largest and most diverse district in Texas to continuously achieve that standard in the six-year span (BISD Website; TEA Accountability ratings, 2011). The district also acknowledges a 96.4 attendance rate and an overwhelmingly majority graduation rate of 91.9% (TEA, 2012).

Furthermore, BISD's student population provided a unique ethnic and racial composition not found in many of the larger surrounding districts in Texas, as they are either predominately Hispanic or White (CRCD, 2010; TEA, 2012). However, even though lower than the reported national and state disciplinary data, in 2010[47], African Americans, then 25.1 % of the student population, similarly experienced notable disparities in school discipline; constituting 44.9% of in-school suspensions (ISS), 56.7% of out-of-school suspensions (OSS), and 42.6% of the district's expulsions (CRDC, 2010). Consistent with the teacher-student cultural mismatches and the racial disciplinary gap, BISD has consistently

[47] Most current disaggregated data regarding school disciplinary actions by district.

remained a highly diverse and scholastically rated district, thus demonstrating measures of academic success with African Americans and other ethnically diverse learners. Therefore, three BISD junior high schools, featuring traditional grade-level configurations (7-8th) with a significant[48] African American student population were initially selected as case study sites. Located in Joshua, less than 10 minutes from each other[49], these sites were not only selected because they had the highest number of African American students (Prairie Junior High (40.2%), Sam Ripple Junior High (41%), and Rick Kindred Junior High (30.8%) but also their respective TEA rating indicated a base-line, a state standardized measure of academic success with the target population (Walker -Haynes, 2011).

After my proposal defense meeting, Sam Ripple Junior High (SRJH) and Prairie Junior High (PJH) were the selected research sites because my committee members and I determined that there was a similar percentage of African American/Black (30.8%), White (33%), and Hispanic/Latino (28.5%) students at Rick Kindred Junior High (RKJH). After receiving UT Arlington and RISD Institutional Review Board approval to conduct search, I reached out to the administrators at PJH and SRJH to inform them about my study. The principal at SRJH did not give me access to his school and teachers. Therefore, the proceeding section profiles the student and teacher demographics, and class-size

[48] Significant indicates that the schools selected had the largest African American student subpopulations which were approximately a third of the entire student population or greater
[49] 10 minutes indicates approximate driving distance.

ratios and 2011 State Accountability rating[50], disciplinary rates, campus improvement plan, as well as the opportunities and resources available for students and families at Prairie Junior High.

Campus profile. Rated in 2011 as Academically Acceptable[51], Prairie Junior High (PJH) enrolled 600 students with the following ethnic distributions: 40.2% African American, 33.5% Hispanic, 11.2% White, 0.3% American Indian, 12.3% Asian, and 0.3% Pacific Islander, and 2.2% of students represented by two or more races (TEA, 2012). PJH, with 21.1% mobility rate[52], held a 96% attendance rate and a classification of Title 1 as 73.3% of the student population is economically disadvantaged and 39.3% of the students are placed at-risk (TEA, 2012). Hiring a staff of 60.9, PJH enlisted 44.8 teachers, 10.1 professional support staff, three campus administrators, and three educational aides (TEA, 2012). With an average of 10.3 years of teaching experience, 9.1 years in district, PJH's teachers possessed the following ethnic/racial classifications: 4.2 African

[50] The four ratings are hierarchical as follows: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, and Academically Unacceptable. Accountability ratings for Texas are based on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test performance of 100% of all student subpopulations meeting minimum group size criterion and other components and exceptions such as completion, dropout rates, and percentage of student improvement gains (TEA, 2011 Accountability Manual). No accountability ratings will be assigned by The Texas Education Agency (TEA) in 2012 because of the creation of a new accountability rating system to reflect the adoption of the new state standardized assessment, State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR).

[51] Academically Acceptable Rating demonstrates that 70% all students and each student group meets basic standards on tested subject (English, math, reading or social studies) or meets required campus improvement. A Recognized rating denotes that 80% of all students and subpopulations meet testing standards on subjects or 75% floor and requirement improvement. Exemplary indicates 90% of all students and subgroups meet testing standards.

[52] Mobility references the if students have missed 6 or more weeks in a particular school, thus attending school less than

Americans (9.3%), 2.3 Hispanic (5.2%), 36 White (80.3%), 1.5 American Indian (3.3%), 0.5 Asian (0.3%) and 0.5 Pacific Islander (1.2%) (TEA, 2012). According to the 2011-2012 AEIS Campus Profile, the student-to-teacher ratio is 13.4:1 and class sizes ranged from a mean of 19.1 students in English Language Arts to 24.3 average students in Social Studies classes[53], consistent with district averages (ranging from 19.9 to 25.6[54]) and marginally higher than those found across the state (15.8:1 teacher student ratio; class sizes ranging from 17.3 to 19.5) [55] (TEA, 2012). Moreover, 2010-2012 TAK scores[56] noted the passage percentage rates of African Americans students[57] on PJHs campus in the following subjects: 86.2% Reading with 20.6% commended[58]; 80.3% Math and 12.4% commended; 94.6% Writing with 23.4% commended; 95.1% Science with 30.4% commended, and 85.2% passed Social Studies with 29.6% achieving commended performance (TEA, 2011). African American also retain a 95.4%

[53] Other class sizes are as follows 19.4 average students in Math, 23.2 in Foreign Language classes, and 20.8 in Science.
[54] 19.9 Foreign Language and 25.6 in Social Studies represents the highest and lowest in district class sizes.
[55] 17.3 was the lowest class-size average which was in English Language Arts and 19.5, the state's highest class size average was also in Social Studies.
[56] 2010-2011 TAKS results were the last standardized test results used in the Campus Improvement Plan, The school report card, and by TEA reporting (Academic Excellence Indicator System, Campus Profile 2010-2011) due to the implementation of STAAR. STAAR was field tested to determine the passing criterion in 2011-2012 and the first test administered in 2012-2013. At this time STAAR incorporates a "phase-in" process where the standards of passing are being implemented in a sliding scale, defined by categories. States and districts are still determining some of the rating procedures and provisions for exemptions. Thus 2010-2011TAKS scores will be used for the initial discussion of school progress but will not be the sole indicator in the study's determination of academic success, based partly on this ambiguity.
[57] Discussion of TAKS results focus on African American students due to their central role in the study.
[58] Commended indicates high performance on the TAKS test in that subject tested areas.

attendance rate (TEA, 2012) with 25% of Black students in gifted and talented program and 35.7% enrolled in Algebra 1[59] during the 2009-2010 academic school year (CRDC, 2010).

PJH's 2012-2014 Campus Improvement Plan also incorporated the goal of increasing the test scores by 10% for all students, with a specific regard to raising the math and reading scores of its Limited English Proficient (LEP) and special education population. Similarly, activities offerings extended instructional services included Saturday Schools, tutoring through advisory periods and pull-outs[60] during the academic day, and "Twilight Camps" (i.e. fun nights with an academic focus) target populations of students placed at-risk[61] as well as the initiative of creating sheltered classes[62] for all core subjects (PJH Campus Improvement plan, 2012). Action items in the Campus Improvement plan—such as the school-wide SAT word of the week, the utilization of a support specialist to monitor student performance, and the indicated need for teacher professional development in project based learning and differentiated instruction, suggest PJH's goal of "increasing the awareness of …requisite content knowledge, skills and experiences required for academic success in high school and beyond" (PJH

[59] Algebra 1 enrollment is shown because standardized EOC (end of the year course exams) grant advanced placement, which is an indication of career path and college readiness.
[60] Students are pulled –out, or allowed to miss class for mandatory tutoring conducted by a fellow teacher or approved tutor.
[61] LEP students are often included in the students placed at-risk category as limited English proficiency is a category in the at-risk classification.
[62] Sheltered classes provide grade level instruction through the use of visual aids, physical activity, and the environment as an instructional approach to teach academic content and vocabulary to non-English or limited English speaking students.

Campus Improvement Plan, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, initiatives for teacher training will introduce a series of job embedded rolled-out[63] professional developments, which will also include book studies on selected educational topics and research. Additionally, PJH's Campus improvement plan marked a two-fold objective of retaining the number of Pre-AP students and recruiting students to these classes as well, stating a desired 5% increase in student enrollment.

Moreover, two consistent concerns were also communicated in PJH's Campus Improvement Plan: increased parental involvement and student disciplinary issues. The second identified need written on PJH's Campus Improvement plan was "data indicate a need for an increase in parent communication and involvement in their students' academic lives" (p. 1). The expected change was increased parent attendance of school events and "raising awareness of their student's academic performance, was addressed by improving school-community-parent relationships through two "Parent Out-reach" Nights, one in the fall and spring which informs parents of school events, programs, and initiatives (PJH Campus Improvement Plan, 2012-2014, p.1, 3). Further, the last set of campus improvement goals focused on student disciplinary behavior as it stated "student survey data indicate a reduction in student bullying for the 2011-2012 academic year," and "data indicate a need for increased student awareness of the benefits of constructive behavior" (p. 1). The expected change was that PJH

[63] Rolled out refers to a training that is conducted in phases.

will "maintain the 2% student- reported bullying rate for the 2012-2013 academic year" while "decreasing student disciplinary rates and referrals by 10%" (PJH Campus Improvement Plan, 2012, p. 1 & 2). Although the areas of identified needs and goals of change may not even be related, the Campus Improvement Plan reported declines in student-reported bullying and yet, elevated school disciplinary referrals and sanctions. According to the Civil Right Data Collection in 2009-2010[64], African Americans on PJH's campus held the following percentages of disciplinary actions: 47.2% of in-school suspensions, 42.1% of out-of-school suspensions, and 50% of expulsions[65] (CRDC, 2010). Lastly, data from the 2011-2012 academic year indicated that the 11 students with disciplinary placements were not disaggregated by ethnicity nor type of placement, which could be a disciplinary or juvenile justice placement[66] (TEA, 2012).

Participant Sample

Of the eight teachers nominated[67] to participate in the study from Prairie Junior High, five teachers were selected based on meeting the criteria of teacher

[64] Data from the 2009-2010 academic school year was used because it is the most comprehensive record of disciplinary data at the school and district level at this time. School disciplinary referrals were not reported by the CRDC.

[65] There were 10 students expelled, thus 50% of expulsions would be 5 students. The remaining 50% of students expelled were Hispanic.

[66] Student disciplinary placement counts the number of students placed in an alternative education programs, and thus removed from the traditional educational setting for at least one day. However, students can have multiple removals as count does not indicate the number of times a student has been placed after the first time. The calculation is as follows $\left(\frac{\textit{the number of students with oneor more placement}}{\textit{the number of students in attendance at the time of the school year}}\right)$.

[67] Fourteen nominations were received from PJH, however multiple entries resulted in eight teachers recommended as effective teachers.

nomination and granting teacher consent (Ladson-Billings, 1989; Walker-Haynes, 2011). Candidate selection was purposive, which maximized my ability to supply rich, thick description within a smaller, bounded scope; since cases were limited to their respective candidate pool for this campus (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994, 2009). Potentially examining a diverse group of teachers, possibly indicated by race, ethnicity, subject area taught, and/or years of experience; the study's participants were selected to expressly include all cases under which the phenomena investigated would most likely occur (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994, 2009). Distinguishing between statistical generalizations and analytic generalizations, Yin (2009) further reiterates that cases are not "sampling units" and thus a "replication, not sampling logic" should be used when making case selections (p. 38). According to Yin (2009), replication logic refers to applying the same methods to each case (i.e. same data collection methods, processes of inquiry).

Likened to a "laboratory investigator" analyzing a topic, in a collective case study, each case is similar to an experiment and "should be chosen because of their perceived ability to replicate "similar results (a literal replication) or contrasting results (a theoretical replication) predicted explicitly at the onset of the investigation" (Yin, 2009, p. 60). As literal and theoretical replication refers to the "holding" of certain patterns and themes in a case, the aim of the case researcher is to "expand and generalize theories:" a "generaliz[ability] to

theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (Yin, 2009, p. 15). Accordingly, Yin (2009) states replication holds when "two or more cases" support the same theory, with even stronger results when an "equally plausible or rival theory" is not supported by case findings (p.38-39).

Recruitment process. Administrators and instructional leaders (i.e. administrators of academic content with duties of teacher evaluation and instructional coaching) at Prairie Junior High were sent an email announcement (see Appendix B) to discuss the study and submit the request for teacher nominations of their best teachers of African American students based on a rubric (Ladson-Billings, 1989; Walker -Haynes, 2011). Moreover, six total administrators and instructional leaders were emailed a nomination form[68] to rate their respective candidate according to tenets of culturally responsive/relevant teaching as well as offered an open-ended question to solicit additional understandings of teacher effectiveness (see Appendix D for Nomination Form). These nominations were then used to create a pool of teacher candidates (Ladson-Billings, 1989). Due to the elusiveness of effectiveness (Ladson-Billings, 1989; Stronge, Ward, and Grant, 2011) and the problematic nature of standardized testing for many students of color (Hursh, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1989; Madaus & Clarke, 2001), the nominations from administrators and instructional leaders, based on a culturally responsive rubric, was be employed to not only

[68] A google form requiring administrators to log in to their BISD google accounts to respond. Administrators could make multiple submissions.

operationally define effective teaching but also to broaden the scope of achievement; to include measures of academic development and efforts of teachers that may not be solely reflected by standardized test scores (Ladson-Billings, 1989; 2009). Noting the harsh economic and social realities in which academic performance occurs in many urban schools and the inherent cultural biases found in standardized tests, Ladson-Billings (1989), also made the "conscious" methodological decision to not use test scores as the "sole determiner of teacher success" when looking for effective teachers in majority minority urban school settings (p. 5).

Moreover, nominations for effective teachers were confined to the recommendations of administrators and other teacher leaders due to their central role in the direct instructional environment. While African American parents would be ideal experts in a nomination process to identify effective teachers of their children, two factors potentially hinder this process at the junior high level: significant decrease in parental involvement and variance in school structure (Eccles & Harold, 1999; Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Research indicates that significant declines in school-based parental involvement during early adolescence[69] potentially derive from various barriers and influences such as a) parent characteristics and experiences: lack of energy, time, economic resources, and knowledge of parent roles; feelings of incompetency; and history

[69] Early adolescence describes the period between 10 and 14 years old.

of negative parent school interactions, especially noted in the schooling of African Americans in the United States (Cross, 2003; Hills & Tyson, 2009); b) school characteristics and practices: large, departmentalized impersonal schools, poor reporting practices, and negative beliefs about low-income and minority parents (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Lightfoot, 2004); and c) child characteristics: age, sex, and the child's previous academic experiences (Eccles & Harold, 1993).

Also contrary to elementary, the more complex structure of junior high warrants that students are instructed by more teachers. Thus parents are not only challenged with navigating the terrain for access, but even more so to develop and maintain productive relationships with their child's teachers (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Therefore, this study excluded African American parents in the nomination process due to plausible limited information of their child's multiple teachers and learning environments, as well as restricted access to a large forum of African American junior high parents. This issue is consistent with research that acknowledges wide variation in parental involvement according to ethnicity and income (Gutman & Midgely, 2000).

Demographic table summary. The five effective teachers of African American students at Prairie Junior High who participated in this study were reflective of the racial demographics of the current teaching force in the U.S. K-12 education system. These educators (4 White women, 1 African

American/Black woman, and 1 White man) came from varied familial, socio-economic, and educational backgrounds. Their experiences teaching various grade levels, subject areas, and student populations also varied. (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Participants' Background Information

Name	Racially Identify/ Self Identity	Age/Sex	Levels of Education	Years of Exp.	Type of Cert. Program	Grade level/Subjects Taught
Paul	White/ White	28/M	B.A. in Philosophy	7 yrs. (PJH)	Alternative	Currently 7th, 8th grade Social studies (ESL, Pre-AP, and SPED inclusion classes); previous courses included 7th grade AVID
Jackie	African American/ Black	39/F	B.A. in Elementary Ed. from HBCU; Masters in Reading	18 years (w/in BISD; 2 at PJH)	Traditional	3rd-6th Grade, K-6th instructional coach & reading specialist; currently 7th & 8th grade reading specialist.
Kimetra	White/ White	35/F	B.S. in General Family Consumer Science w/ dual teacher certification	11th yr. (PJH)	Traditional	Principals of Human Services 1 & 2; 7th grade Avid; currently Exploring Human & Hospitality Services towards the Culinary Arts, 8th grade Avid
Ann	White/Native American (25%)	46/F	B.A. Political Science; MS in aeronautics; MBA, M.Ed. PhD in Ed. (in progress)	10 yrs. (PJH)	Alternative	Strategic reading; Resource reading in Special Education setting; currently 1st yr. teaching career & technology course
Terri	White/ White	33/F	B.A. in Scenic Design; Minor in Art History	3yrs (CA); 9yrs (BISD); 1yr (PJH)	Alternative	1st-12th Art; Reading/Language Arts; also Reading Language Arts in resource Special education setting.

Data Collection

The five effective teacher candidates were further studied as separate cases through two semi-structured interviews and two classroom observations (Ladson-Billings, 1989, 2009; Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995; Walker -Haynes, 2011; Yin, 1994, 2009). Two semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information regarding the case participant's preparatory and pedagogical experiences through an inquiry about their background, preparatory experiences, classroom experiences, pedagogical development and beliefs, and classroom practices (Walker -Haynes, 2011). Addressing the study's conceptual framework, the semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendix F) were created based on thematic domains found in the literature (e.g. teacher knowledge of self, students, and community; characteristics of teacher-student interactions; teacher beliefs about and experiences with—race, culture, ethnicity, equity, and efficacy; attributes of classroom climate and management; and types of instructional practices) (Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles et al., 2006; Holas & Hutson, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Midgely, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989; Smalls et al., 2007; Stronge et. al., 2011; Walker-Haynes, 2011). Although each interview was audio taped, I also made jottings to record observations, such as initial impressions or changes in the participants' facial expressions or tone, which afforded interpretive insight into "how incidents 'fit together' in meaningful patterns" (Emerson, Fret, & Shaw, 1995, p. 34). Thus jottings further assisted me in the co-construction of

meaning from the interview responses of selected teacher candidates (Crotty, 2003; Emerson, Fret, & Shaw, 1995; Merriam, 2002).

Furthermore, two 45-to-50 minute direct observations were conducted in each teacher's classroom, as Merriam (2002) proposes that observations are the best data collection method to use when "an activity, event, or situation" can be observed first hand (p. 13). The first semi-structured observation protocol primarily focused on the classroom's social dynamics: classroom climate, interactions, and management (see Appendix G for Observation Protocol 1). The second observation targeted the teacher's instructional best practices (see Appendix H for Observation Protocol 2). To prepare for this observation, each participant was asked to prepare their "best lesson," allowing them to operationally define effective teaching through the presentation of instructional content and techniques. Field notes from observation protocols was be organized by the same thematic domains as the interview protocols, thus triangulating and providing additional evidence of attributes and practices that may or may not be described in the interviews (Ladson-Billings, 1989, 2009; Merriam, 2002; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Walker-Haynes, 2011). Furthermore, utilizing an observation protocol, to guide field notes may balance interests of capturing descriptive details, commentaries, and analytic asides which Emerson, Fret, and Shaw (1995) depict as an active writing process requiring continuous reflection and analysis.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that data analysis is a selective process that should be guided by the study's conceptual framework and research questions; which identify and operationalize main constructs and the potential relationships of key factors. In turn, these constructs and variables are used to create codes, "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Therefore, for the purpose of this inquiry, audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber and then coded by me. These codes, attached to information of varying sizes, chunk information according to description, descriptive codes, or based on the meaning inferred, pattern codes (Emerson, Fret & Shaw, 1995; Merriam, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Noting that pattern codes are usually assigned when an emerging pattern is recognized, Miles and Huberman (1994), explain that codes can change in levels of analysis, may be assigned at different stages in data analysis, and are able to cluster large amounts of data together for thematic analysis.

In addition, codes must be well-defined and fit within the given structure, should be assigned a name close to the concept it represents, and checked for definitional clarity and consistency; especially if information can be multi-coded (descriptive and inferential) and if coding is revised, often based on new insights (Merriam, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, field notes were also

coded, chunked, and clustered to reveal emerging themes. Individual case themes were written up in a separate case study report. Lastly, in a multiple case study, the findings or patterns in each case were compared across cases—for each embedded unit of analysis, to draw conclusions and yield pragmatic findings that aid the development of policy implications and theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Trustworthiness

A discussion of trustworthiness addresses the validity, reliability and overall quality of the research design (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). Creswell and Miller (2000) define validity as "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (p. 124). In specific regard to a descriptive, exploratory multi-case study, Yin (2009) states that trustworthiness is established by using three tests of validity: construct validity, external validity, and reliability. Construct validity ensures that appropriate operational measures are identified and utilized for the concepts studied. Yin (2009) suggests three factors for construct validity: data triangulation, establishing a chain of evidence, and informant feedback (Yin, 2009). In this, study methods of triangulation included corroboration through interviews, observations, and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). The chain of evidence was provided through recorded semi-interviews and transcriptions, as

well as documentation from observations in the form of field notes. Standardized protocols for semi-structured interviews and observations also helped to establish an auditable chain. Furthermore, member checking is also a form of informant feedback, as case participants were asked to review the accuracy of their depictions in transcripts and field notes. Member feedback was then included in data analysis as the participants and I collaborated on realistic portrayals, points of clarity, and hence initial meaning-making (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It should also be noted that tests of validity also include the researcher looking for disconfirming evidence. So, even if a shared perspective is made through member checking, the researcher must rely on his or her individual "lens" to find inconsistencies (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

Chapter 5

A Brief Biographical Sketch

To provide a backdrop for this study's major preparatory and pedagogical findings, this chapter attempts to supply a succinct biographical sketch of each case participant. The five teachers, one male and four females, ranging from ages 28 to 46, possess significantly different educational and life histories which shape their perspectives on preparatory needs as well as pedagogies that contribute to their effective teaching of African American junior high students. Moreover, noting the lack of ethnic diversity, as this case study only includes one Black female teacher, participants still remain largely reflective of today's teacher workforce— predominately composed of White middle-class women. As aforementioned, while the biographical sketches may be brief, they are intended to give context for not only central themes but also probes of race and culture in the experiential knowledge and racialized understandings of each effective teacher.

Ann

Self-identifying as Native American Cherokee, by virtue of both parents being 25% Cherokee Indian with "her father's people travel[ing] the Trial of Tears," Ann, 46, was born in Ennis, Texas, in what she referred to as a White country community. While living in Ennis, her parents stayed with her maternal grandmother, who hired a nanny for Ann that spoke Czech and Polish. At the age

of four, Ann's mom relocated to East Joshua to, at that time, a predominately White neighborhood where she met and married Ann's stepfather, a criminal attorney. Ann maintained she had very minimal interactions with African Americans, until the age of six when she started to accompany her stepfather to meet his clients, chiefly members of a Black biker gangs and prostitutes. So even then, Ann suggested "[she] only saw the seedier side of it [referring to African Americans], however a lot of Hispanic clients we actually kept in our circle of friends." From corner dealings to the twice annual party thrown at their house, Ann noticed the cultural and racial differences of the African American biker gangs as they were rough, talked course, used profanity and had a lot of tattoos. "Lots of um coarseness in their behaviors." Ann indicated her stepfather's introduction of the biker gang to her was "probably the biggest impression" she had of racial and cultural differences. As the African biker gangs were dissimilar not only in appearance but also their behaviors and mannerisms contrasted with conduct she had seen customarily exhibited.

Although the African biker gangs were Ann's initial recognition of racial and cultural distinctions, she later suggested her early travels allowed her to experience the cultures of African people and other racial/cultural groups. Due to parents working for the airlines, at the age of 10 Ann began her travels around the world. Ann's travels abroad inspired her to pursue her first career as an aeronautical engineer. Visiting over 80 countries to date, Ann has seen different

races and cultures all over the world which she stated had real racial and cultural societal barriers such as certain caste systems and the restricted liberties of women. However, regarding cultural distinctions she has observed in America, Ann offers:

> The cultural differences not as much, because so much of – I think a lot having embraced more of the American melting pot. We're an American. This is how we do it kind of thing. I see less of it – less of the differences between those barriers here than I do in other countries.

Ann, proposes that since we all have "embraced" an American identity, distinctions as far as educational and social outcomes are the result of not taking advantage of those opportunities offered here in America.

Moreover, attending public school from kindergarten through first grade and private schools from second to tenth grade, Ann transferred her junior and senior years to the public school district where she now teaches. Noting, her matriculation into public school from private school as a result of money issues, Ann disclosed, "I was the poor White child in the A class [the smart class in Ann's private school]. I was the only one in there [the A class] that had no money." Further expressing, "fluctuations" in socioeconomic status due to her stepfather's practice being the main source of income, Ann describes "[s]o it was either – it was an all or nothing. We either ate steak or we had hot dogs and

cottage cheese. And there was very little in between." By the time Ann turned 14, her mother would divorce her stepfather for the second time, resulting in the birth of her "technically half-sister." Ann's mom, now virtually a single parent, would rely on Ann to take care of her sister while she worked the graveyard shift. At 19, Ann decides to marry to relieve the family's financial stress which ends a year later. Redirecting her focus, Ann earns a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, returns for a Master's degree in aeronautical science, and later a Master's degree in business administration where she joins her mother at the same airline as a trainer and engineer.

However, after the airline was purchased by another company, Ann accepted her severance package and looked for an opportunity that reconciled her love of training and avoid for children. Therefore Ann applied to an alternative certification teaching program. With the option to continue taking education courses, Ann received her third Master's degree in Education and has been teaching at Prairie Junior high for 10 years. In 2012, she became principal certified and is now working on her PhD in Educational Leadership.

Jackie

Growing up in a "little town with red dirt rock roads" in Louisiana, Jackie, 40 years old, characterizes herself as "a country girl at heart." The 10th child of 11 children, the baby of the family being her twin, Jackie was raised by her mom, a cafeteria worker; stepfather, owner of a small construction business,

and grandmother—whose front door faced the backdoor of their home. Living in a predominately African American neighborhood, though "definitely not middle class," Jackie stated she never realized she was poor until she took a mandatory Ruby Payne's "Culture of poverty" teacher training sponsored by her school district. Jackie, as she asserted, "I had all I needed" stated "class [was] a state of your own perception" as she rejected the social designation of being impoverished.

Attending the only three K-12 public schools in the town, which were "60% White and 40% Black," Jackie described being actively engaged and was often called "White girl" because of her scholastic enthusiasm, including participating in activities, "that a lot of [her] African American friends were not involved in." Jackie asserted that even if her mom did not explicitly express the importance of education through checking homework or navigating school policies, Jackie and her siblings knew the expectations, "we couldn't go outside until our homework was finished." From French club president to cheerleading, Jackie felt a sense of belonging and knew she could "be all, do all the things [she] wanted to do in school," simply because her "momma told [her she] can do it."

Moreover, voted most-spirited and equipped with confidence, Jackie did not care about being called "White girl," even as the only Black girl on the cheerleading squad until her senior year when she was offered a cheerleading scholarship. Awarded a full four-year scholarship by a predominately White

university while other squad members were only extended $500.00 a semester, Jackie explained how she was confronted with race:

> And why was I being offered a 4-year, full scholarship for cheerleading? And then it was because I would be their first African American cheerleader. So, that kinda hit home, that you are only offering this to me because I am Black… And at first, I was thinking I'm just that good and it's, no, it's just that you were just the right color. So, I ended up choosing to go to Grambling… I learned a lot about myself. I learned a lot about the history of African Americans as a people and how we grew and came together in our past and our future, and what that means to us…So, I went to Grambling, I'd say, to be grounded.

While, aware of race, as she states, "in Louisiana, racism was prevalent," Jackie admitted that her heavy involvement in school, social acceptance by White friends, and "not being raised" to discriminate provided a buffer—"I mean, I didn't feel it [racism] as much." Ironically, being granted a scholarship for "blackness" prompted Jackie to attend a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to learn more about her racial and ethnic heritage. With this in mind, Jackie chose to self-identify as a "Black American" because she felt it captured the unique experience of being born and raised as both.

Matriculating into Grambling, Jackie originally majored in special education as a result of being heavily involved in the education of her twin brother, diagnosed with a mental disorder. Largely through Jackie's advocacy, her twin was moved from public education to a specialized school where this teacher worked with Jackie's brother, raising him to a third grade level within the first year despite being "told he would never read." Frequently volunteering in her twin's classroom, Jackie chose to become a special education teacher. However the school's special education program lost accreditation which prompted Jackie to switch her concentration to elementary education. Currently, with 14 years teaching experience, a Master's degree in education with extensive hours in reading, Jackie serves as a junior high reading specialist. While previously teaching English language arts as a reading specialist in elementary school, Jackie's teaching experience has all been in BISD where she presently teaches.

Kimetra

Though Kimetra identified as White, the 36-year old is "often confused for Hispanic" because of her "very brown" complexion. Raised in a small town in the Rio Grande Valley, Kimetra recalled the pride she had with having her own bedroom in the home her parents rented from her grandparents, even if sleeping on the floor. Her parents worked in the family business, which afforded Kimetra and her older brother the ability to enroll in private school. Attending private school since pre-kindergarten, it was in fourth grade that she remembers the

teasing started about her name and dark complexion. At the same time, Kimetra began to observe sharp economic differences between herself and her friends along with undergoing noticeable pubescent changes, which also distinguished her from her counterparts. Seeing the emotional toll this took on their daughter accompanied with their own financial distress, Kimetra's parents decided to relocate and transfer their children to public school during that year.

After acclimating to her new "upper middle class" public school "where most of the White kids went," "which she loved," in 8th grade Kimetra was made to transfer to her residential neighborhood school due to the school district discovering their family used a "fake residence" to enroll. Once again forced to change schools, Kimetra recollected "hating her parents and the new school," and wouldn't talk the first several weeks upon arrival. In this predominately Hispanic school, Kimetra was the "minority" and just didn't fit in as she "was too dark to be White and to White to be Hispanic," especially since she did not speak Spanish. Unfortunately, her fair-skinned brother fared even worse as he endured name calling and harassment because of his paleness, experiences she classified as "reverse racism." Then questioning her parents' judgment and alluding to family problems caused by her father's drinking, Kimetra was encouraged by her mom to empower herself through making better life choices when she became an adult, being told "you're not living your life right now, you're living in mine." With the understanding that she soon would be able to live her own life, Kimetra

adjusted her attitude, engaged in school, and kept a packed bag in her closest in anticipation of leaving home for college.

Possibly prematurely packed at that time, Kimetra graduated from high school and decided to attend Baylor because she "knew one of the richest men in the valley graduated from [there]." Visiting the campus, it was her mom that scoured the course catalogs with her as she decided on being a business major. After a semester of business courses, Kimetra chose to pursue a degree in Family Consumer Science, which combined her interests of hospitality, interior design, and tourism. However, to increase prospects of employment, Kimetra was counseled to enter into the dual education and family consumer science program resulting in teacher certification. Admittedly, "not having the best student teaching experience" due to being ill-prepared for her "urban high school" placement, Kimetra is presently in her 11th year of teaching junior high at Prairie Junior High, the school in which she was originally hired. Teaching variations of Skills for Living, Exploring Hospitality towards the Culinary Arts, and Exploring Human Services, Kimetra is also the school's AVID coordinator, which recruits and equips students that will often be the first in their families to attend college.

Paul

As the 28-year old, son of missionary educators, Paul moved around a lot but claims Ennis, Texas as home. Paul described the then rural town of Ennis as a "blue collar-ish working class" community made up of "mostly Whites, I think

20% African Americans, 10% Hispanics but no Asians, you were either Hispanic, Black, or White." Interestingly, when asked about his own racial and cultural identity, Paul responds, "Huh, I don't know. I never thought about it. I just think like everybody thinks, middle class growing up, White community, I guess." Subsequently, Paul states he "strongly associates" his cultural identity with "Judaea Christian ethics."

Growing up with his father being a principal and mom a teacher, Paul recounted the active evangelism of his father throughout his life, including when their family moving to Guatemala for two years to help build and operate a Christian school. Paul, spending his 4th and 5th grades in Guatemala, portrayed the school demographics as "all those kids were White kids, wait some Hispanics. I saw one Black person in two years in Guatemala." Returning to Corsicana, Texas, in 6th grade, Paul recalled his first observance of racial and cultural differences:

> I guess whenever I came back from Guatemala; where there was no rap music. I came back in 6th grade, rap music was awesome. But there was only black rap music…I guess I didn't realize there was an African American culture and like music was a big part of it…So I guess that's whenever I kind of realized there's another— a shift in, like if you look different there's different cultures that go with it sometimes. Sometimes, not always.

Furthermore, Paul would relocate back to Ennis during high school. He suggested that public school taught him the most about different cultures and races and daily interactions really allowed him to make friends. Paul reasoned he wanted his kids to go to public school as well as "you can tell people about other cultures. But if you are not living life with those people then you don't know what another race or class is like." For Paul, interacting with classmates, playing football on his school's team, as well as inviting teammates over for his father's weekly bible study allowed opportunities to develop friendships with students of different ethnic backgrounds.

With plans to later attend seminary school, Paul pursued a double major in philosophy and history at the "very White" Texas A&M University. Observing the student body on campus, Paul found "it odd" that "in high school there were always of lot of Blacks and Hispanics, how come not in college?" Paul disclosed that this lack of racial diversity lead to several assumptions about the educational values of African Americans and Hispanics, since Asian communities were well represented on campus:

> So I guess it shaped my mind that not many African Americans go to college as White people do…But I really didn't think of [it] as an intellectual race thing but it was a societal race thing. Whereas when I grew up, my parents didn't tell me to go to college. It was shaped in my mind, it was a cultural education thing. So, I guess

> growing up I would've thought like the African Americans as a community doesn't support education as much as the White community does. But from being at Prairie Junior High, talking to parents, it's been the opposite. I haven't talked to any African American parents that were not 100% behind me and took education very seriously.

Recognizing this shift in racialized beliefs concerning African Americans and their educational values, Paul concluded that this consciousness may not have occurred if not for teaching. Initially aspiring to become a minister, Paul declared his "life was changed" when he did not receive the necessary recommendation from a local ministry. Although Paul served as a volunteer, the youth minister felt he had not known Paul well enough to offer the recommendation.

Devastated, Paul needed a job and decided to become a teacher as his parents and sister are educators. With his history degree, Paul quickly became alternatively certified and was offered a position in junior high. Although "Not really having the passion for it his first year," Paul started to learn the craft and five years in the field earns the distinction of district recognition as "Teacher of the Year." Over his seven years of experience, Paul remains in Prairie Junior high, teaching U.S history with sections of Pre-Academic Placement (Pre-AP) and English as Second Language learners (ESL). The husband and father of two

children now enjoys the malleability of junior high and regards teaching at this age as "making one of the greatest impacts in students' lives."

Terri

Identified with a learning disability in elementary school, ADHD[70], and coupled with the late diagnosis of dyslexia at 16 years old, Terri recalled school being a real source of struggle. Terri discussed the stigma of being placed in special education resource classes in elementary school and struggle in high school without the proper interventions. However in high school Terri found a slight reprieve within her major of scenic design. Illustrating this point, Terri shared how her English professor in "a large lecture class" wrote on her paper "I know learning a second language might be really hard but let's get you an ESL tutor." Thus, attending a prominent magnet high school for the visual and performing arts and later courses within her concentration of scenic design at California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts), Terri found a sense of belonging in the world of theater and arts.

Moreover, growing up with her parents in an "upper middle class" neighborhood, Terri describes the suburban community as a standard home division "not upper echelon but four bedroom, two bathroom house with a pool," in a suburb of Dallas. With a sister 20 years her senior followed by a brother 13 years older, Terri practically grew up as an only child as her siblings were in

[70] ADHD is the acronym for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

college. Terri often played with her "bi-racial" nephew, who she considers more of as a friend due to him being just four years her junior. As Terri's siblings were 16 and 20 years her senior and married to African American spouses, Terri described belonging to a "blended" family. Therefore, Terri suggested she has always been "immersed" in race and culture, and thus seemed to grapple with her response in how she self-identifies, offering:

> I don't know…You know I don't know if I identify—If I've ever thought that. So, I mean, I just really grew up in that blended family where I did not see or identify any other way with color, and I was just raised that way. I mean going to my mother-in-law's soul food Christmas and then to go to my grandparents over on this side, I mean, it was just very unique so my whole upbringing of what I remember is just being immersed in a blended family, because – I mean, my two babies are the only ones that are White.

Although wondering if she has "ever thought" of her own racial identification, Terri remained clear about her "babies" as well as class designation as she "works on a teacher salary and a husband who— we have a candy business on the side, you know—so middle class."

Matriculating from kindergarten to eighth grade in the BISD where she presently teaches, Terri transferred to a visual and performing magnet high school

in a neighboring school district. Gravitating towards the arts, Terri credits her background in theater for being "energetic and animated" and for the knowledge of reading plays, often referenced in her English instruction. However, Terri also affirmed that attending the magnet high school provided exposure to a diverse group of people, similar to what she would find at Cal Arts, "Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, gay, transgender… any group you could possibly think of." This "band of misfits" would become Terri's friends as they shared the love of arts and "believed in being non-judgmental" even deciding "not to have prom kings and queens at the senior prom" as a show of solidarity.

Although Terri had a choice of schools that recruited her during her senior showcase, the decision to attend Cal Arts was primarily based on family being nearby. Majoring in scenic design with a minor in art history, upon graduating, Terri landed a job teaching at Chinese day camp where she taught English and art. Once summer ended, Terri took what she regarded as her "first real teaching position" as a kindergarten through 12th grade art teacher at a special education private school in Valencia, California for "children of celebrities and other wealthy people." Staying for 3 ½ years, Terri left after her divorce and returned to Dallas in 2005. Terri, who "h[as] always known [she] wanted to be a teacher, just had to explore this art route" became alternatively certified as a special education teacher. With 13 years of total teaching experience, 9 ½ years in Texas, this is Terri's first year employed at Prairie Junior High where she teaches a

resource special education Reading Language Arts course coupled with administrative duties. Terri also taught special education reading language arts in her prior 9 years at Rick Kindred Junior High, a junior high school within her present school district, located within a 10 mile radius from her current assignment. Her previous experience at another predominately black junior high school known as "Rick Ghetto," serves as an insightful comparison between the neighboring schools as well as the perceptions of the other participants in this study who, excluding Jackie, has only worked at Prairie Junior High.

Conclusion

Biographical sketches of these five effective teachers are intended to grant context for preparatory and pedagogical understandings pertaining to the competent instruction of African American students in junior high school. The educational and life histories of each effective teacher not only drives their perception of preparatory needs but also the learning needs of their African American students, consequentially informing pedagogical practices. Lastly, framing the approaches of these five effective teachers' attempts to allow for probing of racialized understandings, which are brought into the classroom space impacting instruction and interactions.

Chapter 6

Factors of Preparation

This chapter will introduce major themes found in five effective teachers'[71] perceptions of preparation and applicability to the instruction of African American junior high students. In an attempt to posit a broader view of preparation, findings discussed will include formal education factors (e.g. pre and post-secondary education, teacher education, and in-service professional development), and informal learning factors (e.g. familial upbringing, experiential knowledge, and life histories) that are attributed to preparation. Additionally, themes embedded in the effective teachers' narratives not only lend insight into preparatory needs but also their understandings of the African American students they are entrusted to teach. Adhering to its collective case study design, this research attempts to present themes commonly held by case participants as well as those isolated to individual cases. Lastly, utilizing CRT as a theoretical lens, the preparatory experiences of teachers effective with African American junior high students will be probed for the functions of race and culture in their understandings of competent preparation, assigned factors of influence, and knowledge of learning needs.

[71] Effectiveness was determined by campus administration based on a culturally responsive rubric.

Informal Learning Factors of Preparation

Of the five emerging themes, three informal learning factors were commonly designated by all five effective teachers as preparation for their instruction of African American junior high students. These themes are as follows: 1) Familial upbringing as primary knowledge and mentorship; 2) Personal relatability through life experiences and counterstories; and 3) Learning on the job through trial and error. The subsequent themes of 4) Governed by faith and 5) Cultural knowledge and appreciation were informal learning factors found common in the narratives of two effective teachers: Paul and Jackie; and Jackie and Terri, respectively.

Familial upbringing as primary knowledge and mentorship

All five teachers attributed familial upbringing as the fundamental knowledge source, which served as a preparatory factor in their abilities to effectively teach African American junior high students. For each teacher, despite variances in familial structure and/or income, family embodied a home culture, a way of thinking and knowing—a way of life. Thus, housed in the notion of familial upbringing were not only beliefs and values which established norms, but also cultural connectors upon which knowledge was built that continued to inform, shaping the current pedagogies of these educators today. Even though, familial upbringing was a vastly overarching and overlapping theme, the lessons drawn upon as preparation by these teachers lend insight into their cultural norms

and perceptions of others through assessment of learning needs. For example, central to the familial upbringing of all five effective teachers were lessons of respect in regards to equal treatment[72]. However, Ann depicted a different notion of respect when highlighting the familial influences, which prepared her to effectively teach African American junior high students. She explained:

> At a very early age I was always taught manners. "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am," "Yes or no, sir." And to this day in my classroom that is one of the very first rules that I teach my students, if they haven't learned it at home, they will learn it in my classroom…It's "May I please." "Would you please?" And so the basis of my instruction starts with that. And I don't think they have been treated in that manner. Maybe some administrators or some teachers but it is not a frequent enough pattern in their life to…So clearly my upbringing has an effect on my teaching of what my expectation is. I think manners is just – is probably one of the primary things– that I bring with me to this day.

Couched as respect, Ann's indoctrination of "manners" revealed a teacher-brought norm that defines the classroom space—roles, rules, interactions and expectations. Also inherent in Ann's preparatory attributions and views of manners "not [being a] frequent enough pattern in their life" unless especially

[72] Views of respect and equity will be further discussed in later themes.

"instilled," was a value-laden judgment of African American students and their home lives based on Ann's upbringing. Therefore, as noted by Ann, the "effect" of familial upbringing was not isolated to lessons of childhood, but also, continued to mentor her cultural and pedagogical understandings of African American youth.

Personal Relatability through Life Experiences and Counterstories

Although personal relatability through life experiences and counterstories was identified as a major theme for all teachers, Paul's depiction diverged from his counterparts in the narration of this theme. Self-described as "White normal middle class" from a two parent household of educators, Paul considered himself as having experienced a fairly "traditional," "secure" home life. Although, Paul's upbringing may not necessarily reflect the lives of his African American students, he still credited relatability through life experiences as a factor of preparation. Observing lessons of failure and success regardless of background and upbringing, Paul's life experience extends a connection, which also shaped his role as an effective teacher of African American students. Paul elaborated:

> I think I have come across White people with different talents, abilities, and backgrounds that ended up in different ways. The same for Hispanic people with different backgrounds and upbringings and turned out different ways. The same with Black people. I have Black friends with different family structures and

> different stuff, and people ended up in different ways…So, I think just knowing and experiencing that –doesn't matter how poor you are or if you are from a two parent family or a single family, what race you are—you can still be a beneficial member to society. Sometimes it may not seem like it or others may write you off, it's not true. As a teacher, it helps me to realize that every kid is worth trying to work with.

Alluding to a social stratification that places value on deemed or preferred traits (e.g. race, socio-economics, family characteristics), Paul's life experiences highlighted that social location does not necessarily determine life outcomes. Accordingly, Paul believed that even though his African American students may encounter nontraditional backgrounds and familial structures— regarded in American society as a challenging socio-economic and racial positioning— social mobility can be achieved based on rightly applied effort, merit. As much as Paul's subscription to meritocracy possibly evokes a greater sense of teacher self-efficacy "every kid is worth trying to work with," it also voided a deeper analysis of societal, institutional, and therefore educational structures that perpetuate inequitable outcomes.

The remaining four effective teachers connected their success teaching African American junior high students to their personal identification with struggle. With varying nuances, the counterstories of Ann, Kimetra, and Terri

challenged mainstream narratives of normality often typified in the white experience. Whereas Jackie's story gave voice to accounts of African American familial values prompting educational attainment, often marginalized in prevailing depictions.

Moreover, while discussing her upper middle class two-parent rearing, Terri also disclosed the stigma of being placed in special education resource classes. With her persistent academic challenges because of her ADHD and the late classification of dyslexia, Terri described the lack of a sense of belongingness. As a result of Terri's frequently skipping school she was summoned to court due to truancy. Drawing parallels to her own scholastic encounters including disengagement and consequent choices, Terri felt a connection to the alternate realities of many of her African American students. She said:

> I've totally been there. Totally been there. So when babies come to me and they're like—I saw one of them skipping the other day. And I'm like "you ain't gonna pull nothing over me. You think you've done it all. I've done it all."

Terri's counterstory allowed her to locate herself within the experiences of students marginalized by the educational system. She framed academic struggle differently, within the context of school environment and person fit. Thereupon, personal relatability through counterstory prepared Terri with the instructional

understanding that academic struggle does not represent a deficiency of the child or his or her home life but potentially reflected incompatible school variables such as instructional settings and supports.

Kimetra's counter narrative also featured an empathy with her African American students due to personal familiarity with struggle. As a child, Kimetra recalled having her own bedroom but sleeping on the floor of the rental home that her parents leased from her grandparents. Although her parents worked for the family business and she attended private school, Kimetra noticed stark differences between her family's income and the lifestyles of her much wealthier friends. Additionally, economic distinctions were compounded by other dissimilarities as Kimetra "ha[d] a funny name," was noticeably more physically developed, and unlike her fair skinned mother and brother was considered "not White enough" because of her "very brown" complexion. Observing Kimetra's "spiraling decline," the family moved to "the country" with hopes that Kimetra would fit in better at the public school where "kids look[ed] more like her."

While enrolling in public school conceivably leveled the socio-economic division, Kimetra recounted being a "White minority" whose brown skin shielded her from the "White gringo" name-calling endured by her brother. Yet, her inability to speak Spanish and valley voice inflection served as a barrier to school belonging as Kimetra was "too dark to be White and too White to be Hispanic." Kimetra alluded to the impact of these transitions and admiration of her mom's

survival— living through extreme childhood poverty, resisting sexist beliefs held by her father that discouraged education, and later enduring her husband's alcoholism. In consequence, Kimetra interpreted struggle as a part of the overall human condition, forging bonds which prepared her to be an effective teacher of African American junior high students. She explained:

> I think with these kids that if I can give them real life situations and scenarios that I have already lived through or have experienced… that they can feel that connection.[T]hey can realize that they're not the only ones that have gone through something. And I tell them I am standing living proof because of my parents, because of my dad…but you can make choices, it's all about the choices you make. And so, I give them examples of things, of how I am because of what happened when.

Kimetra' counterstory, similarly challenging conventional mainstream narratives of normality, allowed for the embracing of multiple realities as character-forming survival stories ultimately mediated by choice. Perceiving the universal nature of struggle, Kimetra's life experiences promoted a responsiveness to African American junior high students through this common, inclusive, unifying principal of struggle, of humanness. According to Kimetra, those life challenges prepared her to relate to and teach from a place of commonality. Be that as it may, Kimetra's narrative concurrently revealed a deficit orientation. Designating a

lack of parental figures as “children might not ever see their parents,” Kimetra reasoned that African American junior high students “are so hungry for somebody to set limits for them, because lots of times these children have no limits at home.” As Kimetra impressed student survival of life challenges as resultant from being powerless extensions of “their parents’ lives,” though she does not necessarily attribute deficits to the African American student but seemingly to their parents and home lives.

Ann characterized her life experiences pertaining to economic and familial structure as “it ran the gamut.” From drastic influxes in household income due to the variability of her stepfather’s criminal attorney practice to later helping her mom “as a single-mother” raise her baby sister, Ann divulged that she married at 19 “to help take care of her family.” Shortly after marriage, Ann also divorced and embarked upon a career in aeronautics with the same airlines where her mother worked. Though possessing two masters and currently working on her PhD, Ann affirmed she related to “the poverty issue” and therefore, it is her mission to “expose” African American students to the importance of education as a means to “break through barriers.” Ann explained:

> Now granted I'm not African American, but I think they understand that I'm still invested in them and that it's not just a White person telling them what they should do, but it's somebody who is older and who has educationally— I've been around the

> block. And I've been through difficult times too….they may think that my life has been roses, but it hasn't been. You know, I know what it's like to have the electricity cut off…the water cut off. I know what it's like to have your parents get divorced and have to take care of a small child. You know I've been there. That doesn't mean that you can't get yourself out of there and that you can't stair-step it out.

Hence, Ann suggested her life experience prepped her to be an effective teacher of African American junior high students because she "know[s] hard times" as well as the significance of education in creating a better quality of life. Interestingly, Ann also reflected that it is "almost a negative" because her educational attainment was undeterred by struggle. More specifically, she found herself "more prejudice[d] in many ways because [she] know[s] that education is an option that many people choose not to take advantage of."

Furthermore, Ann citing the high education expectations in Asian cultures and the work ethic of a small group of African students on her college campus, stated she has "a higher respect for people who fought hard to go to school." She saw "that other people who've been in more difficult situations [have] been able to do it [graduate from college]." Ann's views of educational persistence, which hinted at dominant racialized ideologies such as Asians as the model minority and

the legitimacy of African culture but not that of African Americans[73], largely hinged on deficit thinking and the myth of meritocracy. Educational attainment, particularly true for those who had to strive for it, becomes the direct result of individual deeds and intellectual capabilities and thus, as Ann explained, serves as a distinguishing or sorting characteristic. She stated:

> I compare parents that I have with other people who are African American, who have higher education. I compare the differences – which is where I make a lot of my distinctions….[R]ather than it becoming he or she is Black, my distinction becomes he or she is well educated. Oh the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, because I have a parent who is highly tattooed, speaks in slang, and guttural and casual English. You know their child is fearful they're going to be beaten if they get a phone call [teacher calling home to talk to parents]. And it's a completely different experience between the people that I associate with who are my friends in our conversations and our discussions about students or their kids or whatnot.

Presupposing a leveled field stipulated by current access to opportunity, Ann refrained from any analysis of contemporary or historical economic, political, and institutional policies or practices that limit engagement particularly in light of

[73] These themes substantiated by the literature, will be discussed in greater detail later in the findings.

America's racist history. Despite the fact that educational attainment remained unexamined, in Ann's contemplation of African Americans degrees of education became a qualifying characteristic. Thus, educational status was not only a criteria of Ann's personal associations but also a determinant of intelligence. As Ann and her African American friends shared traits of being "well-educated," by comparison the lower educability and socio-economic status designated to parents of her African American students was perceived as resulting from inlying deficiencies. Whereupon, Ann linked observed distinctions, "highly tattooed, speaks in slang, and guttural and casual English" to social or cultural shortcomings rooted in negative perceptions of dissimilarity. Further Ann's outlook also housed an unwarranted presupposition as "[y]ou know their child is fearful they're going to be beaten" if the teacher calls home to make parent contact. Following the paradigm of deficit thinking, Ann held systemic factors blameless while inequitable outcomes are justified by blaming the victim—highlighting inadequacies within African American students, parents, and their home lives as facts when founded on opinions.

Jackie attributed her ability to effectively teach African American junior high students to a personal reliability through the shared experience of "blackness" framed by a counterstory of educational attainment. Jackie reasoned, "I don't think anything in my educational career taught me how to teach African Americans. I think it is because I am an African American, I can just relate to

African Americans." Jackie, seeing herself within her students, proposed a connection that allows her to effectively teach through common experiences and understandings facilitated by racial and cultural membership[74]. Thereupon Jackie referred to her counterstory of being one of 11 children raised by her mom to not only graduate college but furthered her education by obtaining a Master's degree in reading. Currently as a reading specialist, Jackie illustrated using her counterstory as preparation to instruct life lessons on "diligence and hard work…and living to one's potential" based on "be[ing] [her]self and teach[ing] from what's within."

Although personal relatability through life experiences is a central theme, Jackie's counterstory differed in expression and function from the accounts of Ann, Kimetra, and Terri. For instance, Jackie's story of educational persistence and attainment served as a counterstory because it refuted dominant narratives of academic failure associated with black abnormality. Whereas, the narratives of Ann, Kimetra, and Terri act to counter mainstream ideologies of "white normality," the esteem of Eurocentric beliefs, norms, and values typified as normalcy (also present in Paul's account). Therefore, Jackie's counterstory offered relatability by means of navigating the everyday struggles of Black life to success. Ann, Kimetra, and Terri's counterstories afforded relatability through encountering struggles uncommonly associated with whiteness and still

[74] The theme of racial and cultural membership will be explored in greater details later in the findings.

experiencing success. Lastly, as this study's only African American, Jackie's counterstory diverged from the narratives of her White counterparts by serving a two-fold purpose: 1) it presented a portrayal of Black educational attainment and scholastic success; and 2) granted insight into African American cultural beliefs and values concerning education and family which remains central to these effective teachers' understanding of their African American students and their, learning needs.

Learning on the Job through Trial and Error

Serving as commentary of teacher education, all teachers attributed learning on the job through trial and error as a major informal learning factor in their preparation to effectively teach African American junior high students. Albeit a learning curve is expected in any profession, four out of the five effective teachers portrayed feelings of having to perform beyond the scope of what their teacher education program prepared them to do. Accordingly, subthemes of learning on the job through trial and error can be categorized as follows: 1) instructional adjustments or 2) initial disorientation; which may often overlap.

Instructional adjustments. As an endorsement of her teacher education program, Jackie affirms that she wasn't taught how to teach "Black kids" but was "just prepared to teach children." Describing her teacher education program located on a prominent HBCU, Jackie clarified:

> They taught me how to prepare. They taught me the art of teaching and plus the science of teaching. So I take all of that and I look at student engagement and try to make sure that the things, the lessons that I'm preparing are geared towards benefitting my students. I don't plan for my Black students or my White students. I plan for my students based on their needs. And my educational programs taught me how to plan for student needs. Whatever that is. So that includes my SPED [special education] students and my ESL [English as a second language] students. I, teach. I plan lessons and I teach according to the data, not necessarily ethnic backgrounds.

Primarily focused on meeting leaning needs, Jackie adopted a student-centric approach that advocates instructional adjustments. She shared, "Let's say I'm just being me [referencing preferred instructional methods and delivery styles] and this kid is not getting it this way, let me try another way. Maybe that doesn't work for this kid so let's change it up." Pulling from her experiential knowledge and teacher education, Jackie figured out "what works bests" for her students hence, removing barriers through instructional adjustments. Additionally, it should be noted that although Jackie stated planning for learning needs is not "specific towards African Americans…just teaching, good teaching," she concurrently believed her instructional effectiveness with Black children was because as "an

African American, [she] bring[s] in [her] background for teaching African Americans kids." Even if considerations of student ethnicities are not intentionally part of planning, Jackie acknowledges that by "bring[ing] [her]self into the classroom" her race and culture not only mediates the shared space through instructional delivery, but also particularly effective when teaching her African American students.

Initial disorientation. Our four remaining effective teachers similarly stressed instructional adjustments as a key component of learning on the job through trial and error. However, Paul, Kimetra, Ann, and Terri also depicted an initial period of disorientation. From varying degrees of bewilderment, panic, and fear, these teachers implied additional, often personal transitions, possibly as a result of cultural gaps.

Paul and Kimetra briefly inferred feelings of disorientation in beginning efforts of learning to teach their African American students. Detailing her early teaching experience in an "inner-city school" Kimetra recalled:

> When I started there some of the students had kids. They…had tattoos. They had piercings all over the place. They had all different hair colors. They talked however they wanted to talk. That sort of thing. And that kinda freaked me out. I had to learn how to adjust and to just make it through each day…B]ut I do

> think that gave me the mentality of, okay, I survived this…I can do anything.

Although these students were older, as 9th grade would be eventually moved, changing the junior high to a more traditional (7th-8th) grade configuration. Kimetra disclosed being "freaked… out." Essentially, Kimetra was shocked due to her unfamiliarity with her predominately African American students' appearance, behaviors, and life situations. Thus, encountering an initial disorientation, Kimetra communicated her own personal adjustment and survival before she could develop her craft to effectively meet the needs of her students.

Moreover, Paul also expressed being perplexed with the task of effectively instructing his African American students. Admittedly, "hat[ing] it [his] first year" and being a "horrible teacher," Paul described being generally confused which prompted experimental efforts that he now credits for his preparation to effectively teach African American junior high students. He said:

> I didn't know what to do! … I guess trial and error, I think? I had really good mentors that teach differently. And I think I heard ideas from them just about how to teach in general. But I don't know…doing assignments and seeing if they will take it home and do the homework. By experiment. Okay, what if we do the assignment in class and say it's due to me by the end of the class period. Are they going to work better? If you build a relationship

with them, does that work with students? Or being really firm and not having that personal, like fear does that work? I think just trial and error. I think really how I've learned is through trial and error.

Amidst the complexities of instructional adjustments, Paul also raised questions about relational aspects when it pertained to teaching his African American students. As Paul contemplated teacher-student interactions governed by firmness, fear, or approachability, his apprehensions likely involved cultural understandings and exposure, or lack thereof—even though decisions eventually defines classroom exchanges for his African American students. Regardless, the maze of instructional and relational considerations proved to be challenging for Paul, particularly his first year.

Additionally, addressing the inefficiency of her teacher education program in preparing her to teach African American junior high students, Terri pointed out:

> I don't think there's any diversity classes or you know here's how to best teach African American students. I think it was being in the classroom, learning at Sam Ripple Junior High with that population of African American students. That first year, I think I had like maybe two Hispanics and the rest were African Americans

Even with prior teaching experience, Terri still credited her first-year of teaching predominately African American classes as grounds for preparation. However,

learning on the job did not come without several personal transitions, including disorientation due to fear. Terri explained her initial intimidation:

> I had just not expected the overall toughness of those kids…. I wasn't expecting to see a 13-year old with tats. Or reading names that I'm just like, "What's your name? Tell me again." And at that time period 12 years ago there was some real hard core kids. [B]ut once I got over that fear, because I was like, I can't show that I'm scared, because that's not going to help me at all. And then building my toolbox of how to teach those kids and it took me some time to build it, but now I feel very prepared to teach especially in the African American population.

With candor, Terri divulged that overcoming "fear" of her African American junior high students was a fundamental step in the teaching and learning process. Once these issues were resolved, Terri then had the capacity to begin "building [her] toolbox." More specifically, she equipped herself with instructional strategies that worked well for her students, hence developing greater teacher self-efficacy.

Furthermore, Ann also recalled a disorienting experience as a result of inadequate preparation to teach her African American junior high students. Thus, learning on the job, she chronicled her process of self-preparation. Ann said:

> I think that[s] how I prepared myself was on the job and was learning with other teachers at my school. It was observing what other people did. And I really had to step back. I'm a very analytical person in a lot of ways, and I had to really step back and really think about how I was going to do this. I wasn't prepared to teach these kids…And my training program didn't teach me how to do that. That was really me just looking, listening, and watching and trying to figure out what I needed to do, what they needed and talking with them and listening to them and listening to what they said about their parents and their home situation…I watch other teachers. I watched our administrators. Trial and error. What worked and what did not work. Talking with the parents, what works for them and what didn't work.

Ann "step[ped] back" to gather her bearings and then started canvasing administrators, other teachers, parents, and even her African American students to learn how to effectively teach them—all while officially in the position. In like manner, Ann "learn[ed] with other teachers," which possibly indicated that learning on the job through trial and error was not only an inefficient method for the primary preparation of educators to effectively teach African American junior high students, but still a practice commonly utilized.

Governed by Faith: Jackie and Paul

Jackie and Paul designated their Christian rearing and active faith subscriptions as a preparatory source in their teaching effectiveness with African American junior high students. Viewing teaching as a service unto God, Paul and Jackie affirmed that faith governs their work ethic as well as their treatment of people. This was further illustrated in Jackie's account. She explained:

> My Momma taught, my grandmother taught us to be honest people. To treat people right. To treat people fairly, I guess …that was our church upbringing. You gonna do right by people because no matter what the people do, you, God is still watching you. So that upbringing just carries over into me as of who I am today, um, making sure that I do my best in whatever I do, because I'm not just working under these kids, I'm working under God. So what I do for him must be right. So I'm trying to please him. So in that, and therefore, I'm taking care of my business with everything else.

As Jackie strived to "please God," the mission of teaching is also defined by Christian ethics of honesty, respect, and hard work. Therefore to do "right by God" Jackie had to be effectual in the purpose of "working under these kids," thus doing what it takes to effectively reach and teach all students.

Likewise, Paul regarded Christianity as a preparatory factor because its principles set standards for teaching that governed his teaching quality and

classroom interactions. Discussing how his Christian upbringing helped to prepare for effectively teaching African American junior high students, Paul explained:

> I think if I were not a Christian, on my gosh, I think I would be a terrible teacher [laughs]. I would be rude to the kids to get them to behave. I know I can be rude to put them in their place. But as a Christian, I am like that is not right and I need to figure out a way besides that to get children to behave. But I would be really mean. I think I am strict but I am not derogatory ever just cause I don't feel that's morally right. And also work-wise, you know I think, as a teacher, you can't get fired (laughs). So I would, I think I would mail it in every day. And be here and just get my pay check. But whatever you do, work hardly as for the Lord. You know with all your heart.

Without Christian morals Paul contended he would be a "terrible teacher," "really mean" to his African American students because of their behaviors and perform minimal job duties just to collect a check. However, Paul's faith framed teaching as a duty unto the Lord which prompts the manner in which he teaches and treats his students. Therefore, similar to Jackie, Christianity also governed his work ethic and mediated his treatment of people, encouraging respectful interactions.

Moreover, expounding upon the role of Christianity in his preparation, another facet of respect was revealed in Paul's accounts. Clarifying on how Christianity equips him to effectively teach African American junior highs students, Paul stated:

> I think Christianity would help a lot, just in the fact of how you approach other individuals, how you support, giving them value. But definitely being taught that everybody is equal. I mean you got to have just a good basis of that. And how to treat other people with respect. I saw that modeled by my dad and his interactions with other races and cultures. Working with Coach G and seeing how he dealt with various ethnicities of students was just another example of how to interact with other individuals and giving them value regardless of their race…

Noting the interactions of his father, a Christian missionary, and Coach G, another prominent figure in his life; Paul depicted these men as "model[ing]" Christian tenets in their race relations which functions as a form of mentorship. Through this mentorship, Christian teachings of "we are all equal in the eyes of God," informed Paul's racial understandings—all races should be regarded as equal and respect is shown through equitable treatment. Acknowledging the influence of mentorship in race relations to his abilities to effectively teach African American students, Paul implied that racial- knowledge and perceptions, possibly emerging

from a multitude of learning factors, play meaningful underlying roles in preparation as well.

Equally important, Paul's racialized understandings were further observed in the power dynamics characterized in exchanges with members of diverse racial and ethnic groups. For instance, Paul, considering his Christian mentorship in race relationships as a key preparatory component, learned how to "interact with other individuals giving them value… regardless of their race." Although possibly altruistic in intent, Paul saw people of color as a distinctly different ethic "other," a group he has been taught how to interact with through his upbringing and models of Christian regard—"But definitely being taught that everybody is equal. I mean you got to have that, just a good basis of that." Hence, Paul maintained a white observational power by which his decision to respectfully interact bestowed "value," thus awarded the abilities to "giv[e]" or assign worth. Therefore, Christianity not only regulated how Paul interacts with African Americans and other ethnically diverse learners but also mediated his views of them, deeming them worthy of equally respectful exchanges.

Cultural Knowledge and Appreciation: Terri and Jackie

Even though racial and cultural understandings were embedded in the narratives of all five effective teachers, only two teachers, Terri and Jackie, associated cultural knowledge as factor of preparation Through the accounts of Terri and Jackie, African Americans students were seen as possessing a definite,

recognizable culture which differed from the superficial pop culture associations, situational contexts designated as culture, or assimilationist American "melting pot" identity featured in the narratives of their effective teacher peers.

As a member of a "blended family," Terri joked that she is the only one with "White babies" due to the interracial marriages of both her much older siblings. With a bi-racial nephew four years her junior, Terri asserted growing up in a blended family— especially spending summers with her sister's mother-in-law, Grandma Inez— provided an exposure which aided in her preparation to effectively teach African American junior high students. Terri illustrated the cultural understandings she brought into her classroom and their influence on classroom practices. Terri remarked:

> I think understanding within a culture, within a race there is different norms or— different language, different traditions. And I think being exposed to that growing up and seeing different diversity of households, so seeing an African American momma is sometimes different than a White momma. And just being exposed to some of their cultural ways that they act and how they carry themselves. I think it has made me aware in the classroom and you know with my own diversity of being aware of cultural differences and having that you know as part of who I am. I think I'm effective with African American kids, because I feel that just

> because I'm White doesn't mean I can't speak to you the same way. And I speak to them in a manner in which I think they're going to hear me better. And it might be my tone is gonna change.... how my distance between them, you know my spatial awareness …and speaking their language I think makes me effective. Like, "Todd, I know you did not just come up in my class acting that way."

From her experiences of "growing up in that house seeing that's how Grandma Inez would talk to her children and seeing them responding:" Terri began to utilize her experiential knowledge of black culture to engage instructional methods that are more congruent to the home culture of her African American students. Thus, Terri also recognized her own "whiteness" as she distinguished cultural norms typically possessed by her White side of the family from traits exhibited by her Black side of the family, which lends to conversations of difference in lieu of designations of normality.

Furthermore, the cultural knowledge that Terri attributed to preparation extended beyond superficial associations (e.g. referents of pop culture, holidays, music, and/or foods) to a richer representation of mannerisms, values, and beliefs. Displaying her understandings of African American culture, Terri chose to pattern herself after her Grandma Inez, who she described as:

> Soulful. In every word, just you know soul momma that's no nonsense. This is how we're going to do it. Runs a tight ship, but

> also able to have fun. Churchy, spiritual, but then also very family oriented. You know growing up and having that Sunday dinner with the whole family every Sunday. So I think that's kind of what I modeled it afterwards, loving yet strict. Fun yet guarded.

Relying on these racial and cultural experiences, Terri brought this knowledge into her classroom to better understand and relate to her African American students. In addition, Terri suggested learning about race and culture, even attributes of physical features could potentially lessen the threat of African American students for some teachers. Referring to her own lessons about the physical differences of her bi-racial and Black family members, Terri offered:

> Having to learn all of the different things that you know just with your body and your skin color and who you are has made me effective in the classroom of students [African American students] because… I don't want to use the word intimidated, but I'm not intimidated by anyone. And I think some teachers – generally people are just not as comfortable.

Approaching sensitive themes of race, fear of diversity, racism; Terri advanced that competent cultural knowledge functioned to bridge "uncomfortable" gaps between teachers and their African American students. Cultural competence also might explain what eventually assuaged Terri's initial disorientation as she is now

confident in her abilities to teach her African American students, as a "White woman."

In like manner, Terri's cultural knowledge was also depicted in her "empathy" for her African American students as she conveyed "philosophically, just as an African American, you have lived a different life in the way people perceive you, the way you are perceived when you go into places." Although recognizing an alternate reality for African Americans (i.e. society's reaction to color), Terri initially reverted back to the politically correct colorblind approach as the rest of her effective teacher colleagues, as she maintained "I was raised to not to see color." However, as Terri discussed her parents' different reaction to Ferguson[75] than to the recent racial profiling of her dark-complexioned bi-racial nephew, she proposed a different revelation. Terri explained:

> And my parents – it was eye opening for them, because my mother started getting tears in her eyes, going, "I don't even look at color." I feel she doesn't. She feels she doesn't. But again, knowing it really does exist. And having that open dialogue, conversation you know— and it's just sad that that happens. So I think it's, yes, the White family says we don't see color, but I think also I'm learning that they don't see the problem...[M]y sister was telling me, you know she goes, "It's just different raising a Black son than it is for

[75] Riots occurred in Ferguson, Missouri due to an unarmed African American male shot by a White police officer, resulting in no indictment.

> you to raise your White sons." Like when he asks, "Momma, where can I go run?" And you know knowing exactly what that means- that you're going to get stopped and harassed and where is it safe for you?… And teaching them with cops you don't talk back.

Terri, recapping the conversations prompted by her sister and nephew, recanted her colorblind position and declared, "I see color, but I don't treat people differently because of it."

Lastly, with acquired knowledge of black lives and their realities, Terri fostered a cultural appreciation for the African American students she teaches in her classroom. Deviating from prevailing sentiments expressed— even by effective teachers in this study— of African American junior high students being disengaged, disrespectful, loud, and virtually neglected, Terri affirmed:

> I love my babies. They're just colorful, my students at least for sure, they're all just very colorful, and spiritual, and kind, and you can see that – "Ms. Addison [Terri's last name], what you just say?" you know? "What you talking about?" That's how we talk in my granny's house [referencing her own Black grandmother]. That kind of interaction– and, you know, that's their tone…

Terri voiced a fondness for her students and the attributes they bring to the classroom. She also ascribed cultural knowledge as the preparatory tool that not

only allows her to effectively teach her African American students but also contributes to an appreciation of them, and her role as their teacher.

Furthermore, as a cultural insider, Jackie assigned her experiential knowledge as preparation for effectively teaching African American junior high students. Being a "Black mama," Jackie embraced the cultural dynamics of this role, bringing this cultural knowledge into her classroom in the form of unconventional instructional strategies. She explained:

> Okay…they can easily see me as their mama—the Black kids can see me as their mama easily and most African American, Black don't gonna disrespect their mama. That's just a part of our culture. So when they see me coming in - and if I give them that mama look or that mama tone [snaps] they immediately jump to my attention because they can associate me with mama. That's nothing someone taught me how to do. I'm just Black, that's what I do. I'm a Black mama so that's what - I know how to do that. Versus if I do that same thing with a White student they can't associate me with being their mama. Their mama don't talk to them like that. That's how we talk to our kids in the Black home. I mean, so, but just my background and my being brought up that just comes out in what I do.

Entrusting her blackness, abilities to tap into the black experience as preparation to instruct Black students, Jackie made two salient points: 1) culture is innate and teachers automatically bring it into the classroom, and 2) teachers' cultural understandings define, shape, and grant access to the shared instructional space. Thus Jackie professed her cultural knowledge prepares for culturally responsive instruction of her African American students because she is not only a teacher but also "Black, that's what I do. I'm a Black mama so that's what- I know how to do."

Moreover, Jackie's insider cultural knowledge also equipped her with insight into the beliefs and values of her African American students and families. Without presuming African American culture is monolithic, Jackie's cultural understandings still provided voice to the African American community—including navigational and aspirational knowledge, which guided her instruction with an appreciation of her community's cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). For instance, through her knowledge of community cultural wealth, Jackie refuted mainstream claims that socioeconomic status determined the importance of education in African American households nor should it be blamed for disproportionate academic failure. Jackie counterclaimed:

> Ok. African Americans grew up poor. Parents value education. They made sure their children received an education. We have people whose parents came from slavery, yet they went on to

> become doctors and lawyers…Growing up, like I tell people now, I didn't know I was poor until I became a teacher and then I took a seminar from Ruby Payne. According to Ruby Payne, I grew up poor, but I didn't know it… Because I don't think I missed out on anything. We always had food. We always shared food…and we had a lot of love. That was the basis of our family. Faith, family and love.

With a knowledge of her community's cultural wealth, Jackie reiterated, that Black people have always navigated forms of oppression through creating supportive networks for sustainability, primarily through a kinship of immediate and extended family (Yosso, 2005). Thus, Jackie described a wealth that is not regarded in dominant societal standards or perceptions, "We don't have a lot of money, but we have a lot of love". Hence, finding the training "offensive," Jackie negated Payne's culture of poverty as it neglects the cultural wealth of communities of color that is not defined by socioeconomic status. Hence, Jackie's insider cultural knowledge prepared her to esteem what she considers as the real wealth of African American communities, understandings which are also brought into her classroom.

On the other hand, Jackie also appeared challenged by inconsistent racialized ideas concerning African Americans and academic achievement. Albeit a Black woman subscribing to community cultural wealth, Jackie

debunked the culpableness of systemic factors in education in favor of shifting blame to African American families and their educational values. Discussing the priorities of "some" African Americans as it pertained to education and academic failure, Jackie argued:

> [T]ake some African Americans today. There are families who education is not at the forefront of their family. Education means nothing in their household, and that's why we have the kids who are not succeeding in school because it's not being dealt with in the home. It's not at the forefront of the home. And then I look at Asians in America. Their socioeconomic status is just like ours or worse. Some of us [referring to African Americans] are worse.

Jackie located academic failure within African American values and home life which demonstrated deficit thinking. Jackie bypasses scrutiny of educational policies and practices that conceivably limit academic and social engagement, both impacting student achievement. Hence, even as a cultural insider, Jackie falls victim to deficit paradigms that are communicated through widely endorsed cultural deficits models. These models advance required remediation of the African American child and their families instead of analyzing and revamping methods that are failing to meet the child's learning needs.

Conclusion

Among the five major themes emerging from factors of preparation that effective teachers attributed to their instruction of African American junior high students, three patterns prevailed across the narratives of all teachers: 1) familial upbringing as primary knowledge and mentorship, 2) personal relatability through life experiences and counterstories, and 3) learning on the job through trial and error with subthemes of a) disorientation and b) instructional adjustments. The remaining themes of: 4) governed by faith and 5) cultural knowledge and appreciation were each shared by two of the five effective teachers. Although formal education factors were discussed (i.e. K-16 educational experiences, teacher education programs, and in-service trainings), none of the junior high teachers credited these sources for equipping them with the tools needed to adequately teach their African American students. Hence, the ascription of informal learning factors as the fundamental tools of preparation as well as depictions of initial disorientation further substantiated the literature's greatest critique of teacher education—its general incompetence to produce effective teachers for African Americans and other ethnically diverse learners (Bergeron, 2008; Gay, 2002; Kohli, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Terwilliger, 2010). Therefore, conventions of race and culture must remain central to conversations of teacher education in efforts to improve the educational outcomes of all learners, notably- African Americans students in junior high.

Chapter 7

Facets of Pedagogical Understandings and Practice

In this chapter, I examine the pedagogical understandings and practices of the five teachers deemed effective in their instruction of African American junior high students. An exploration of pedagogical understandings not only frames the relative importance of these teachers' practices but also yields meaningful commentary on perceptions of African American students and families characterized through their depictions of learning attributes and academic needs. Pedagogical knowledge acquired through semi-structured interviews was triangulated with classroom observations to offer context— heeding coherence of description with implementation and included researcher annotations. Moreover, due to the scope of teacher perceptions regarding theory and practice, the pedagogical findings will be organized according to thematic topics with an analysis of the varying nuances shared or individually rendered by the effective teachers under. The thematic constructs to be discussed are: 1) Teachers' perceptions of African American junior high students: Orientations towards behavior and conceptions of knowledge; 2) Linking pedagogy to practice: What is Good Teaching? and 3) Components of Classroom Management. Meanwhile, major findings will be probed for the functions of race and culture embedded in effective teachers' racialized understandings of pedagogy and practice found in each theme.

Teachers' Perceptions of African American Junior High Students

The five effective teachers agreed on teaching through the growing pains of junior high—as students are generally hormonal with varying levels of maturity typically exhibiting lower student engagement. However, effective teachers also concurred on their students' malleability and portrayed a compelling charge of equipping learners with skill-sets that potentially promote educational and life attainment. Therefore, probes of junior high teachers' characterizations of African American students remain essential in analyzing racialized orientations which inevitably inform pedagogical practices and hence, the scholastic experiences of these students. Views of African American students and their home lives could be potentially problematic depending largely on the nature of these perceptions and the centrality of these perspectives to pedagogy.

Negative Orientations of Colleagues. When I asked the teachers on this predominately African American junior high campus their general perceptions of African American students, Paul explained:

> No one ever talks good about [the] students. Lazy, disrespectful, apathetic… "Disrespectful." Well I heard this in… some [of the] newer teachers' classrooms that are having problems…And I think disrespect in the classroom, definitely in the hallways is crazy. So I would say the number two things are lazy and disrespectful. That's how they're characterized, which is horrible. But as teachers…It's just the lingo you

use. I guess the social norm. Which is bad because that kind of becomes your reality if you keep saying it over and over again.

Recognizing the negative representations of African American students by his colleagues as "the social norm," Paul, however maintained that these behaviors rarely occurred in his classroom. Simply dismissing contrasts between his understandings of African American students and the depictions of his colleagues, Paul proposed, "I guess my reality is different from … other people's experiences." Paul further implied that the different outcomes could be attributed to classroom structures and how he "sees" his students. He expounded:

> [L]azy, you know they're kids-I'm not going to write them off as you're a lazy person. I think its part like-who doesn't want to get away with, what you can? I'm trying to do that too as an adult on my job… So I don't think they're that lazy either. But part of its' been trial and error… I'll give them stuff and its due and you got 15 minutes to work on it in class. So you can't sit there, "Like oh I am going to do it at home." No, there's none of that. So I don't see a lot of laziness in class and disrespectful very, very seldom in the classroom.

Thus, Paul suggested teacher attitudes and instructional approaches not only influenced the work ethic and behaviors of their African American students but also adjustments of practice and regard may generate more productive learning

outcomes. Though all five effective teachers discussed the negative banter regarding students, Jackie expressed, "most teachers do love on them [the students]" and characterizations typically reflected grade levels such as "these 7th graders are disrespectful, unruly, and out of control." Interestingly, even though students did "not act out" in her classroom, Jackie adopted a similar stance as Paul, both accepted unfavorable generalizations of African American junior high students regardless of their truth. She explained, "I mean, I just don't hear anyone just talking negatively about them just for the sake of just bashing them…so when they say something negative it's the truth."

Conversely, Terri described her previous school located within a 10-mile radius known in BISD as "Sam Hood". Drawing from her experiences at Sam Ripple Junior High, Terri proffered teachers' perceptions of African American students at Prairie Junior High were "just skewed." While at SJRH, Terri discussed engaging students in conversations about "race and color." Terri introduced the importance of this dialogue in building trust and rapport in efforts to overcome "constant power battles." As students initially viewed Terri as just another "White teacher— What do you know? You can't teach me?" Comparing her "roughness with students," Terri disclosed this year having to "tone back her style" in attempts not to scare her students. She offered:

> Here I don't have that [discussing constant power struggles], but I have a little bit behavior – like, maybe I talk too much or I'm

> squirrely in the sense that I don't know when to be quiet, or I talk back but it's just a little bit and it's not even disrespectful; it's just me trying to get my point across. And some of the teachers here just view that as the most problematic child, and he needs to go to ISS [In-school suspension], and he needs to not be in the classroom, and this is horrible, and it's just like – you have no clue.

Alluding to the discretionary nature of teacher judgements and thus discipline, Terri advised her outlook on student behaviors contrasted with colleagues because "I don't think they've had the experiences that I have –experienced the same level of intensity of the kids that I'm coming from." Therefore, Terri's experiential understandings informed assessments of severity, as "there are some behaviors, but they're not that bad; almost to me where I would completely overlook that student's behaviors, because they're still here experiencing their emotions and still doing what they need to do." In short, as Paul and Kimetra both explicitly discussed avoiding pessimistic teacher exchanges due to their "draining" nature, Terri questioned if negative characterizations of African American students possibly affected instructional quality, "they talk poorly about these kids – like really poorly behind their back, and it's like – then how do you teach them effectively in front?" With this in mind, my findings specifically focus on themes found in the racialized understandings of the five effective teachers.

Effective Teachers' Perceptions of African American Junior High Students

Remaining central to the discourse of characteristics and learning needs of African American junior high students are also effective teacher opinions of Black life. Whether housed in determinations of behavior (i.e. ways of acting and living) or evaluations of knowledge (i.e. ways of knowing and being), effective teacher portrayals of African American students revealed racial and cultural understandings of themselves, their students, and also estimations of Black life—all ideologies brought into the instructional space in the form of pedagogy and practice.

Notably, the majority of the effective teachers' commentary on attributes that African American junior high students brought to the classroom as a group, focused on conduct. Yet, differences in depictions inferred racialized understandings, which either exposed deficit thinking or attitudes of cultural identification or appreciation. Distinctions between dispositions seemed to be conveyed through word choice. As effective teachers described similar features with differing connotations, annotated responses lent to contextual analysis in many instances revealing contrary orientations.

Orientations towards Culturally Congruent Behavior (*Verve*): Appreciation, Identification or Devaluation

When addressing the qualities that African American junior high students bring to the classroom, four of the five effective teachers identified a distinctive

cultural trait of communities of color referred to in the literature as verve—highly energetic expressions encompassing a spirited demeanor from speech patterns and gestures to manners of dress. Utilizing adjectives such as "colorful, spiritual, and kind" Terri not only constructively acknowledged features of verve but also endorsed a cultural appreciation relaying, "my African American babies bring color and cheer to my classroom…and my Hispanics babies do too but they are much more reserved (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Although, African Americans are not a monolithic group, Terri's portrayal of behavioral attributes revealed an orientation which validated and legitimized culturally congruent conduct as variances of expression rather than acts of nonconformity.

Likewise discussing verve as a cultural feature of her students of color, Jackie disclosed "Blacks and Hispanics bring style and attitude. A lot of times it can be a negative attitude. We bring that to the classroom. Sometimes more focused on dress and what we are wearing than about the education." Though Jackie could be perceived as possessing a negative perception of her African American students, closer examination of her narration disclosed a cultural insider critique. Embedded in the appraisal of perspectives and priorities "sometimes" held by students of color is her appreciation of cultural aspects (e.g. "style and attitude") as well as a cultural membership identification as Jackie offered, "we bring" those features to the instructional space. Additionally, contextual analysis frames Jackie's views of certain educational attitudes within a larger social

commentary on the generational shift of societal values and mores, hence affecting educational prioritization and ethics of hard work which "used to be taught in the home, with pride, especially in African American households."

Concurring with her colleagues, Kimetra also observed the lively, enthusiastic nature characteristic of many of her African American students. Kimetra's word choice which would conceivably bespeak to orientation, captured cultural aspects of verve brought by African American junior high students to her classroom as follows:

> Some spice, um, I think sometimes, um, they're a little bit more animated sometimes. I mean, not all. It's not a cookie cutter. It's not a stereotype but like if I can pick out some of my kids, you know, they might be the louder ones, they might be the chattier ones, they might be the ones, "Oh I got a story for you." You know, "Well my mama said" or "My grandma said." And I'm like, "Okay you have family involvement."

An analysis of descriptors employed by Kimetra (i.e. "spice," "animation," "chattier") initially advanced a favorable understanding, possibly an appreciation of the cultural traits expressed by her African American students. However, Kimetra's contextual remarks concerning students' deference to family in conversational exchanges immediately ensued an innuendo about familial relationships— "Okay you have family involvement"— which implied familial

support for African American students was likely an exception, hence exposing an underlying narrative of deficit thinking about Black families and home lives (personal communication, January 26, 2015).

On the contrary, Ann's predilections are consistently conveyed through word selection and overall tone in her portrayal of verve possessed by African American students. Whereas, Jackie, Kimetra, and Terri used modifiers with fairly positive connotations to describe temperaments, Ann proposed the later:

> The African American students that I have in my classroom are very boisterous, very loud, I mean they're like teacher volume loud with a lack of either understanding or use of volume control. Highly energetic. And either highly participative or not participative at all. There is very little middle ground.

In the excerpt above, Ann presented verve-like characteristics of her African American students as "very boisterous, very loud…highly energetic." More specifically, she issued judgments of behavior based on registries informed by her cultural norms and thus, delineated an implicit code of conduct. By the same token, amplified levels of volume, "loud[ness]," were observed throughout Ann's instructional delivery and easily characterized her own conversational tone. However, she deemed her volume befitting as she reserved a qualifier to distinguish characterizations, "they're like teacher volume loud." While seemingly contradictory, Ann's distinction between the acceptable loudness of

herself and "boisterous[ness]" nature of her African American students possibly hints to associations of volume levels with ranks of knowledge and power, or the lack thereof. Nevertheless, her outlook on qualities of verve exposed deficit thinking as she questioned whether African American students possessed "a lack of understanding or use of volume control." Ann's stance not only implied a deficiency in behavior, but also alluded to inadequacies within the knowledge-base and/or rearing of African American children which afforded deviant or undesirable behaviors—a theme which will be further explored in Ann's pedagogical understandings.

Moreover, dissenting from collective characterizations cited by his effective teacher colleagues, Paul proposed an individuality, which does not warrant generalizable depictions of his African American students. Instead, advancing categorizations by "type of student," he discussed the various personality traits African American students brought to his classroom. Paul explained:

> They are really so different. Each kid, there's no one generic...You have the talkative student, I have a talkative African American student. You got the nerdy type…You got the let me try and see what I can try and get away with before he calls on me or calls me out student. So, as a whole—No. Just your typical student

> population, that's the African Americans- there is just more of them. But they're all good.

Initially, Paul appeared to acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of his African American students by avoiding group classifications in favor of student personality-type distinctions. However, despite these attempts, Paul eventually surmised African Americans are "just your typical student population." Hence ironically defaulting to an even more generic non-distinct overall categorization of African American students through the exclusion of salient features of race and culture— tools of meaning-making essential in the learning process (Ndura, 2004). Additionally, Paul, advocating the ordinariness of his African American students, suggested Black students were comparable to any other student population but "there is just more of them." Even though, possibly addressing the school's predominately Black student demographic, approximately 41% African American with Hispanics following at about 34 %, it is important to note that the largest number of African Americans students in any of Paul's classes was seven.

Lastly, prompted by an earlier exchange, in which I asked about the number of Black students to determine class observations. Paul contemplated a connection between his abilities to make group characterizations and the number of African Americans he taught. He explained:

> Maybe I don't have enough African American students, because when you are asking me that [referring to protocol questions about

> group attributes and learning needs]—because those are my biggest class is like 6 or 7 of them. Maybe if I had a bigger population. I think it has changed over the years. Cause, I, I know I had more. Maybe that's why I think I teach a lot of African American students. Cause I traditionally do, but when I sat down to do the numbers. I thought "oh, that's weird." So that made me think I generally do, but this year may be a little bit lower than usual.

Much as Paul's assumption of thinking he taught "more" African American students than he did could be to a change in his class enrollment, this realization—"oh that's weird"—came almost mid-school year and only after being purposely elicited. While knowing the number of Black students he taught may seem irrelevant, disparities between the actual low numbers and Paul's thoughts of "teach[ing] a lot of African American students" arguably may not be inconsequential and perhaps even telling. Possibly alluding to Paul's perception of the educability and or work efforts exuded in his instruction of African American students in contrast to their peers.

Orientations towards Conceptions of Knowledge: Learning Needs

Similar to mindsets exposed from depictions of culturally congruent behaviors, the five effective teachers also exhibited orientations towards conceptions of knowledge held by African American students unveiled through

their portrayal of learning needs. As behavior maintained the primary distinguishing characteristic of African American junior high students, components of conduct were also found translated in identified learning needs—as conversations with a specific academic lens were often limited and vague. Due to this narrow scope, effective teacher understandings of African American junior high students' learning needs are thematically arranged under this category as follows: 1) Consistency, structure, and organization; 2) Broadening of perspectives (Survival vs. Academic); and 3) Social-Emotional learning needs. All themes were commonly held by two effective teachers. Albeit thematic findings are not rigid and may potentially overlap in discussions of pedagogical practice. Major themes represent effective teachers' ascriptions of African American junior high students' learning needs lending insight into pedagogies, including racialized understandings.

Consistency, structure, and organization: Paul & Jackie

Noting the heterogeneity of African American students and hence their academic demands, Paul described structure allowed through consistency as a learning need of African American junior high students. Paul, interpreted learning need as a necessary component to facilitate learning rather than an academic need demonstrated by his students. He explained the advantages of structure as the following:

> I would probably say just in the consistency of class, I think probably has helped my African American students in the past. Because I'll have some that say, "Well I have trouble with this kid in this class." I know there is not a lot of structure in that class. I know there is always structure in my class. I'm not the greatest disciplinarian. But I think what helps is I have a lot of structure and the kids know what to expect every day…So whereas other classes and stuff, there's not a lot of structure. To me that's crazy, I can't handle that- I need consistency.

In the following excerpt above, Paul attributed the rhythm of daily routines with upfront expectations as beneficial for African American students. He also cited the conduciveness of structure for "all students" —in fact deeming it a necessity for functional classroom operation. Though the consistency of structure reasonably accommodates academic benefits, in the example specific to African American students, Paul defaulted to structure as only a disciplinary aid to manage behavior. Thus, in the case of his African American students, management not only seems higher prioritized than instruction but also gauged as a benchmark of academic progress only a disciplinary aid to manage behavior. Thus, in the case of his African American students, management not only seems higher prioritized than instruction but also gauged as a benchmark of academic progress.

Moreover, Jackie also advocated structure as a learning need of her African American junior high students. As she pointed out the organization of only two Black students in her class, Jackie stated, "African American learners need organizational habits and study routines. They are largely organized and some don't care." Although, Jackie's assessment about the apathetic attitudes of "some" students could be challenged within the context of their individual experiences, her commentary addressed a particular observed need based on academic instruction. Furthermore, Jackie aligned the scholastic need of organizational routines and study habits to an applicable life skill, as she affirmed, "I want them to be able to know how to use their resources. They might not like it, or me right now, but they will appreciate me later." Hence, Jackie's identification organizational needs not only reflected current learning but was a skill deemed for future educational attainment. Even despite student opinions, she perceived the need as essential for her African American students.

Broadening of Perspectives (Survival vs. Academic): Kimetra & Ann

Kimetra characterized learning needs of her African American junior high students as the necessity of teacher provided exposure for the broadening of their perspectives. According to Kimetra, African American students "need to understand that there is a world outside of the current world they are currently in" and thus must be "made aware of choices and options and that their choices that they make now can affect future choices." Further, she emphasized that limited

options were particularly held by African American males as African American females showed a little more flexibility at least when it came to career aspirations. Kimetra's description is plausible and possibly relevant because of the maturity levels of early adolescents. However, she further reasoned, "and some of them, you know they're just coasting along day to day 'cause that's how their family lives, it's just day-to-day." With pre-supposed notions about the home lives of Black students, which she concluded, "was so different from her own," Kimetra still seemed to infer that inherently these African American children possibly to no fault of their own, were not receiving a vision of the future due to their parents living in survival mode. Thus, her orientation towards the conceptions of knowledge of her African American students seemed two-fold. While it seemed favorable towards her students, as she described all being "valuable contributing members of the learning community," it still fostered deficit thinking about the home lives and rearing of these students due to their imposed limitations.

Likewise, echoing the theme of survival versus academic, Ann asserted that a fundamental learning need of her African American students involved her obligation to broaden "narrowed views." Although Ann suggested African American students had the same basic learning needs, she divulged the challenge was understanding students' backgrounds and situations to determine "if they are still in survival mode" could she "get them to academic mode" so that "real

learning" could occur. Ann further described how the survival mode of her African American students influenced academic demands:

> I think they may need instructions repeated more than once. And I'm not sure if that is because there tends to be much more of a cacophony of sound that they have at home and that there's more distraction that everybody is fighting so hard to be heard that the voices are so loud…[S]o many students I think go unidentified that they need that clarification in directions or they need multiple examples of what the teacher means by it… And it may even need to be that they need a cultural reference for them to understand it and to put it in perspective for them to really get it, because they're view is so narrow and it's hard for them to see other viewpoints.

Ann qualified that repeated shorter instructions depended on the child as she had "some Caucasian students with the same issue." She still began to make assumptions about the home lives— even including conjectures pertaining to sound levels of African American households— to validate her survival mode associations to learning needs.

Moreover, Ann's deficit thinking is further revealed, as her claim shifted from the need to repeat directions due to Black students surviving loud home environments to the necessity of providing clarification through cultural references. Ann asserted multiple examples because of narrowed perspectives

was resultant of diminished cognitive abilities. Ann, indicating her background in special education, advanced the following:

> And so I think for them you have to say it in different ways or give different examples… And you can't get frustrated with it. You just need to understand that that one kid over there you know has a processing issue. I don't necessarily know that it's – that they're African American or that there's a higher identification of special education needs in African American children. I don't know if that's because women weren't taking care of themselves when they were in the pregnancy time period.

Therefore Ann cited the disproportionate classification of Black students in special education to justify her observed disparity of processing abilities. She further proposed a cyclical argument, which automatically found fault within the African American child rather than prompt an examination of institutional polices and practice which potentially leads to excessive identification. Furthermore, Ann consciously decided to bypass special education policies and implied blame rests with African American mothers' for not engaging proper pre-natal care. This additionally revealed racialized understandings embedded in deficit views of African American parents and child rearing.

Social-Emotional Learning Needs: Kimetra & Terri

Addressing components of social-emotional learning, Kimetra characterized the academic demands of her students of color as a need for affirmation. Depicting the need for expressions of concern as academic validation, Kimetra offered:

> It is crazy how much these kids need to be loved on or just given the, "Mrs. Wilson, is this right?" Were you following the directions? "Well, yeah." Well, then you're doing great. They just want that acknowledgement that they're on the right track. And, you know I used to fight, fight that… Like come on now, y'all are not in elementary school. But that's my issue. Because that's what they've grown up with. And so if I can tweak that just a little bit and if I can change my mindset - instead of the sexist language of stop being babyish… it's more of, okay, well, are you doing this? Kinda giving them a checklist. And just changing the way I phrase things, I have found myself growing more so.

Kimetra, potentially characterized an initial cultural conflict, as she described her "fight" with giving the affirmation needed by her students of color to complete tasks because she viewed this as "being babyish". However, Kimetra recognized distinctive cultural differences, which required her to adjust her mindset to better accommodate the academic social-emotional learning needs of her African

American and Hispanic students when she said that it was her "issue." Though Kimetra does not specify the cooperative, communal, and social aspects of many communities and thus students of color, she indicated the incorporation of instructional strategies (e.g. checklists and verbal confirmations) to help provide student guidance and assurances to complete individualized tasks. Hence, Kimetra employs a principal of culturally responsive teaching, legitimizing their cultural social-emotional learning needs, thus building the confidence of her students to reach academic goals. As a result, Kimetra illustrated a reciprocity of learning, also a tenant of culturally responsive teaching, as she found herself growing first as a person and then a teacher able to meet her students' learning needs.

By the same token, Terri also assigned social-emotional learning as an academic focus for her African American junior high students. While Terri remarked on respect, trust, and rapport as important social-emotional factors that must be "taken care of to be able to reach academic needs," she primarily ascribed social-emotional learning as equipping her students with the skills to address and manage emotions. Recalling student disagreements and classroom conversation on controversial topics such as Ferguson, Terri discussed the expressed anger of her African American students:

> Socially sometimes I have to calm them down more than my other students, especially my boys when they get all hot and bothered.

> "I'm gonna go fight him and I'm gonna take him out right now. "Honey, you can't act that way. You've gotta bring it down." So I am educating them on maybe how to value themselves, how to address their opinions successfully in a matter that's not going to make them look ignorant. Some of them are angry at that White man, and having to have that conversation – but at the same time, you can't go out in the world with all this anger. And I have it with all my students, but, again I think some of my Black students are more perceptive to socially what's going on than some of my other students. So you can have – I can have more depth with them in those conversation pieces.

In the excerpt above, Terri portrayed anger as a default reaction, whether prompted by personal conflict or social injustice. She further contended that the social-emotional learning of her African American students involved teaching them to channel and convey emotions through skill-sets that aid in effective articulation—further validating experiences, adding value to expressions. Moreover, Terri, recognizing the anger of some of her African American students "at that white man," depicted allowing forums for students to discuss topics of race but with guidelines to promote understanding, "intellectual versus [over]heard conversations." Therefore, Terri inferred to meet the social-emotional learning needs of her African American students she must engage in discussions

of race, regardless of her whiteness. She further states, due to her African American students' social perceptiveness, she was, "even able to go more in-depth with them in those conversation pieces." Critical discussions of race and culture, featured as a facet of the social-emotional learning of her African American students, reflected principles of culturally responsive teaching as a consciousness is fostered through a critique of the status quo. Cultural responsive teaching would further be actualized if learning opportunities were created to allow students to actively advocate for change.

Linking Pedagogy to Practice: What is Good Teaching?

While traditional definitions propose that pedagogy is the art and science of teaching, its ambiguous nature confounds teacher educators and teachers alike. Therefore, aligning pedagogy to more of an art form than a science, Murphy (2008) offers pedagogy is "about the interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment and learning tasks" (p.35). Further proposing that central to pedagogy is praxis, "the dialectical relationship between theory and practice in teaching—a form of reasoning informed by action" (Murphy, 2008, p.34). Correspondingly, as the ambiguity of pedagogy also surfaced in the understandings of our effective teachers, often viewing pedagogy and practice interchangeably. Their prior characterizations of African American attributes and learning needs revealed teacher orientations and racialisms embedded in theories of pedagogy. Moreover, knowledge of "good teaching" further lend insight into

the pedagogies of effective teachers, especially descriptions of teaching practices deemed particularly effective with their African American junior high students. However, it should be noted that effective instructional practices are primarily portrayals of general teaching practices which possibly substantiates the literature regarding the lack of cultural congruency or differentiation for African American students. As in any case, exceptions to this generality will be highlighted throughout this discussion, including pedagogical understandings and practices that vary in implementation or that exercise tenets of culturally responsive teaching.

Knowledge of Good Teaching: Pedagogies and Practice

When asked about pedagogies and practice, effective teachers illustrated key elements that remained fairly consistent with their understandings of the attributes and learning needs of African American students. Though orientations varied, one theme was commonly held as a capacitating factor of their effective instruction of African American junior high students: 1) Structure, Engagement, Assessment, and Real-world applicability. Subsequent themes of 2) Response to Student Needs were shared by three teachers. With the remaining theme of 3) Instructional Use of Black Mama reserved by one effective teacher. Lastly, these designated components of "good teaching" will be noted with examples of pedagogical practices, unless warranting explanations due to variations in agreement, awareness, or application.

Structure, Engagement, Assessment, and Real-word Applicability

Characteristics of effective pedagogical practices were commonly delineated as planning for the following: structure, consistency, methods of engagement, checks for understanding (assessment), and real-world applicability. Although, Kimetra was the only effective teacher that expressly addressed "a good teaching day" involved planning, "I have everything, resources that I need to in order for that to go properly… my basic outline of what I say, the opening question, a thought provoking idea or concept to get them thinking"; other teachers demonstrated a fluidity that also demonstrated prior planning. Planning evidenced in the classroom observations of all teachers included the aforementioned opening anticipatory set to hook their students to motivate learning. As anticipatory sets or hooks looked differently in classrooms due to choices of instructional presentations (e.g. bell-ringers with projected questions or images, or teacher initiated questions or solicitations of responses to short-stories or videos), all effective teachers displayed attempts to activate prior thinking by inviting the students into learning opportunities.

However, as practices such as anticipatory sets and learning activities are generally designed to engage, activate and apply thinking, teacher orientations toward their African American students' conceptions of knowledge, determined the nature of the observed learning that took place. For instance, effective teachers with positive or non-deficit orientations of their students' knowledge seemed to

view their role as “mining” or bringing out knowledge already possessed by their students as Kimetra voiced:

> So I try to get information out of them…I want to ask them questions. I want to have them think about things they already know and how to relate and grow from what it is we we’re learning and talking about. I want to engage them, I tell them from the beginning, this class will only be what you make it.

Conversely, effective teachers with deficit orientations regarding their African American students’ conceptions of knowledge, perceived their role as typically “banking” or depositing knowledge within their students, as Ann conveyed:

> I have to open their minds up to what else is out there in the world…Why do they need to see beyond their narrow focus?.. Why do they need to respect each other?...I feel really challenged sometimes when I am trying to open them up and see beyond this little box that they see themselves in and they have such a limited view… And so I think teachers of African American students need to be able to have that discussion to fill in their views and expand their thought process…And they may have to take more than just a standard discussion for that to be implanted.

As certain courses may lend themselves to different instructional methods; Ann, who taught a hands-on technology content with group projects as demonstrations

of student learning, focused primarily on disseminating information through a direct teach piece (a teacher-led power point) and solicited student responses to check for understanding, even though the topic was being reviewed. Whereas, Kimetra's review, featured a sorting mix-n-match small-group table activity were students relied on themselves and the knowledge of each other to complete the task, as she previously gave students a timed 5-minute study period to review class notes. Although activities and lessons will differ, the examples presented highlight differences in demonstrations of student ownership of knowledge fostered by teacher's mining or banking approaches to education embedded in their perceptions of African American students' attributes and or learning needs.

Moreover, practices of structure and engagement were also traced or mirrored in the effective teachers' orientations and pedagogical understandings. Paul's academic use of structure paralleled racialized attitudes towards African American behaviors resulting in priorities of control over instruction. From my observances, the "rhythm" of daily routines from timed bell-ringers (i.e. projected questions that must be answered as soon as students enter) to timed exit tickets (i.e. slips of paper with questions that must be answered and turned in before leaving) promoted an automaticity with very minimal down time. Paul primarily accredited these actions as a preventive discipline measure, which he felt instructionally benefitted his African American junior high students. He said:

> After that you know the quizzes are going to be on your desk and you can start. After that you pass it up and get your notes out and start taking notes. After notes, it's classwork…I think you are just more at ease when you know what's coming, you feel comfortable. I can't remember the last time I sent a kid to the office. So I think that would help African American students a lot… But just from what I've seen, consistent in your behavior management, consistent in your classroom structure.

In the excerpt above, Paul explained the instructional merits of student paraphrasing notes and the daily academic feedback provided from passed back corrected quizzes as methods for student-monitored learning. His chief concern for a well-controlled classroom also influenced choices of instructional delivery. For example, during my observations students remained seated in rows to a lecture-style power-point presentation with limited interactions. Paul remained the focal point—directing the flow of knowledge and engagement, offering learning opportunities largely dependent on personality and passion that showcased his knowledge of the content. Though less rigid and seemingly possessing more approachability in observed student rapport, Paul's orientation towards behaviors of his African American students informed instructional decisions. His observed manner aligned with Ann's explicitly expressed pedagogy, "good teaching actually begins with good classroom management

skills. A clear definition of expectations and rules in my classroom. A clear definition of manners and respect in my classroom. And then the last part of it is my content."

On the other hand, Jackie and Terri's use of structure derived from pedagogical knowledge entrenched in judgments of African American attributes and academic needs, also motivated instructional decisions that regulated engagement, including assessments and relatability through real world-applicability. Jackie, identifying organization as a "necessary life-skill" for the future attainment of her predominately African American students, utilized structure to facilitate learning outcomes that were less-restrictive, promoting student accountability. During observations, students worked in small groups with guided questions using a jig-saw method. The jig-saw method, which breaks content up into chunks and the pieces are then assigned to different groups, held student groups responsible for being experts on their part of the content to report out for whole group learning. Students also worked in peer editing circles demonstrating modeled academic feedback as Jackie individually conferenced with students about their writing in the classroom. Hence, Jackie's use of structure encouraged academic engagement by fostering student independence as valuable knowledge sources, through more culturally congruent modes of academic interdependence to teach skills for real-world applicability.

Similarly, Terri's disposition towards learning attributes and needs were also echoed in pedagogical understandings pedagogical understandings of "fun yet effective teaching". Incorporating the energetic, expressive nature of her African American students, Terri also indicated structure as a tool to aid the engagement of "interactive" learning opportunities as she "really enjoy[s] having the kids interested in the topic and engaged in the activity." From employing bright colors to different learning modalities that include hands-on experiences and learning through body movements (tactile and kinesthetic), Terri stressed the importance of highly visual environments that "check for mastery" in multiple ways. Terri explained, "So a good lesson is gonna be that-those gallery walks[76], and then the sorting activities on their desks, and holding up the white boards, checking for comprehension." Furthermore, Terri's application of storytelling— from my observances of her telling stories of related experiences to watching her solicit and integrate the stories of her students— functioned to connect content to her students' experiential and prior understandings. Her use of story-telling not only validated the knowledge of her students but also allowed for co-creation in the meaning-making process. Illustrating principles of culturally responsive teaching, Terri's pedagogical practices honored different modalities of learning, forms of expressions, and the diversity of her students' backgrounds. These

[76] Gallery walks are generally conducted by hanging large poster paper on the walls and as students walk by, as if in an art gallery, they read and contribute to the information on each sheet (i.e. writing a comment, answering a specific question, posing a questions, or even citing or drawing examples).

practices grant African American students and other ethnically diverse learners more equitable access to the curriculum as well as to the shared instructional space.

Response to Student Needs: Kimetra, Jackie, & Terri

Jackie, affirmed an orientation that culturally identifies with the ways of being and knowing of her African American students. Regardless of the socioeconomic status of the student, the resources of the school, or whether or not the student is on grade level, Jackie, reiterated good teachers "find different strategies and resources to meet the needs of your students, you just teach kids…and you are all about making your students succeed no matter what." Additionally, recognizing disparities in resources as well as teacher quality commonly associated with predominately black schools, Jackie expounded:

> African Americans have different experiences because they are perceived differently by the outside world. If it's predominately black it's a bad school. Teachers don't want to work at the bad schools or blame students for the lack of success—or come and won't work. If you are at a black school you have to work. The babies maybe low but you can raise them, you just have to work.

Thus, Jackie's pedagogical understandings holds herself as well as her students' accountable for "the work" of increased academic success. Repeating the notion of teacher responsibility for the academic growth of African American students,

Terri acknowledged "the work of teaching" as "trying different strategies and techniques in the classroom but being held accountable to use them and see the benefit of using them." Therefore, Jackie and Terri both infer, good teaching of African American students involves a high sense of self-efficacy, as teachers must not only try different teaching strategies but also hold themselves accountable for the academic outcomes. Additionally, Kimetra also expressed working to meet students' needs as "teaching is about what people need or what they need at that time." Further, suggesting that a "student need" branched beyond academics, Kimetra included climate and individual student learning considerations. Hence, Kimetra affirmed, "if a student needs more discipline, you provide more structure. If a student needs affirmation, you provide more love. If a student needs directions read to them, you slow down and read the directions." Though presenting her needs-based approach in a broader context, Kimetra does not communicate an accountability for students' learning results.

Instructional Use of Black Mama: Jackie

While Jackie was not the only effective teacher that mentioned taking on her mama persona during certain interactions with her African American students, she was the only teacher that engaged it for instructional use. As a "Black Mama," Jackie described inserting this personality into her instructional delivery so that Black students could associate her with their mother, thus identifying and accepting her role as a warm demander (Ware, 2006; Young, 2010). She

explained, “You won’t sit in my class and not work. That is an expectation, you will learn and grow…you will always give your best…I am firm but I care.” By asserting this authority, Jackie suggested, she “sets the tone” for the instructional demands placed on her students. She required them to not only academically perform, but also to, “exceed everyone’s expectations,” referring to stereotypical mainstream deficit views of African American students and learning potential. Finally, Jackie, offered being “Black Mama” pushed and encouraged her African American students to reach their potential. In addition, it allowed them to see themselves in the academic environment and interjected into the curriculum, even if only by “relatability through common understandings of experiences.”

Components of Classroom Management

The last section of this chapter focuses on the effective teachers’ understandings of competent classroom management. This study considered effective teachers’ knowledge of classroom management due to the literature’s documentation of significantly disproportionate discretionary discipline rates of African American students and its potential contribution to gaps in student academic achievement (Losen & Skiba, 2006; Skiba et. al., 2002; Skiba et al, 2011). Thus, major findings characterized by effective teachers as components of their classroom management may grant an understanding of teacher attitudes and or strategies that either alleviate or exacerbate disciplinary issues encountered by African American junior high students in the process of schooling. All five

effective teachers characterized components of classroom management as establishing respect by being firm, fair, and consistent. Moreover, similar to the relationship between teacher orientations and pedagogical practices, major findings indicate that racialized understandings previously discussed in teacher dispositions towards culturally congruent behaviors of verve also determinately influenced classroom management practices.

Firm, Fair, and Consistent

Possibly a campus or organizational motto, all effective teachers described their management practices as "firm, fair, and consistent" with the exception of Terri who added "fun." Generally, the five effective teachers remained consistent on elements of this theme, however, teacher orientation as well as timing of the year determined if levels of firmness or fairness was emphasized, as all highlighted the importance of consistency. For instance, at the beginning of the year, the effective teachers suggested clearly explaining rules with constant reiteration of routines and procedures. However, teachers with more positive understandings of verve-like characteristics seemed to establish rules and routines while simultaneously working to establish rapport. For instance, Terri relayed the first weeks of school while teaching "I come up and shake their hand, I pat them on the back, I lay a gentle hand on their shoulder …and then I provide a lot of academic social praise." Terri's rapport –oriented approach remained consistent

with Terri's ascription of social-emotional learning as an academic need of African American students.

Whereas teachers with more controlling or deficit attitudes of African American student behavior seemed to prioritize establishing themselves as the authority, often focusing on rules and routines in isolation. For example, Ann proposed her management practices changed expressly because of African American students "but to be equitable" she now utilized clear and specific expectations with all students. She offered the following:

> But I will laser focus on what is appropriate and what is not. And I am not one to always put a student out of a class and have a discussion [refers to pulling a student out in the hallway for a private conversation]. There are times when I will have that discussion with that student in front of the entire class, because every person in there needs to know where I stand.

Paul also described "being uncomfortable" the first three weeks of school as he has to pretend to be really strict which included, "jump[ing]" on student misbehaviors "in front of the class quickly [to] set the tone." In contrast, he then explained relaxing some to become more approachable "as he really genuinely tries to talk to them like normal" to build rapport. On the other hand, Ann's "consistency" dictated that she maintained her management stance all year. Even though, this approach resulted in the observed loss of instructional time as she

frequently stopped to point out minor misbehaviors during my two classroom observations.

Moreover, Kimetra established, that she will quickly address students' misbehaviors in a Mama "call-out" fashion. In these "call-outs", I observed Kimetra's intentional use of humor to provide redirection in a manner that did not embarrass the student. Kimetra also stated, she often "modeled back" the sass in a mock conversation to show students "how they sound" in efforts to project back behaviors so that students can see how the behavior is being perceived. Regardless, Kimetra advised that teachers should "not needle students" and pick and choose their battles when it comes to little things that can be overlooked. Finally, Kimetra recommended that if all else fails, "call home. They will cry, they will become your best friend, they will try to do what you ask them to do because they don't want you to call home." Interestingly, even though other effective teachers, including Kimetra, questioned the levels of parental engagement in child rearing, they did not seem to doubt the propensity for or abilities of African Americans parents or guardians to discipline.

Lastly, Jackie and Terri extended the classroom management discussion to include what may be considered as more culturally responsive practices. She alluded to the social-justice orientation of African American communities, illustrating the keen sense of fairness possessed by her students as they monitored teacher treatment through notions of consistency. Thus, she advocated teachers

be upfront with expectations not punishing students for breaking implied rules and to not "let things slide" despite the frequency of offenses as African American students "look for that fairness." Furthermore, her depiction of "Black Mama" as a management tool also brought culturally relevant practices into the classroom. Explaining the power of non-verbal cues, Jackie confirmed that she could just "give a look" to command desired student behaviors as her "kids" discerned its meaning and knew she "wasn't playing" as "Black kids don't disrespect [their] mama." So Jackie has standard rules and routines that the students understand, as a matter of fact, she attested, "my demeanor carries the rules…Kids know exactly what I expect. I don't have a lot of management issues in my classroom."

In like manner, Terri's cultural considerations were evident in management practices she described as "kid-speak" and "soulful Mama." Replicating speech patterns of her African American students, Terri characterized engaging in a lively playful banter that she referred to as "kid-speak." Terri, suggesting "kid-speak" was a display of personality that made "[her] more relatable" imitated, "Child, I will break you in half if you do that." Discerning her playfully sassy tone, Terri indicated that her African American students were not intimidated and usually responded in compliance, generally enjoying the less-formal exchange. However, when addressing real disciplinary issues, which according to Terri was an infrequent occurrence because of student rapport as

well as overlooking inconsequential behaviors, she recalled relying on a similar banter which now assumed a "mama tone":

> "Do not cross me. Don't you stick your tongue out at me. Don't you clack your teeth at me. Don't you roll your head at me or your eyes, 'cause I will snatch you bald-headed." And that's exactly what I tell them. So I'm laying it out for you, but I'm still gonna be a little fun and I'll tease you, but – no, really. I tell them I'm not in charge when you're disrespectful… this other person comes out, and I see red and I am not liable for anything that happens until me comes back.

Hence, Terri disclosed her management heavily depended on her student rapport, which yielded the flexibility to operate in these tones. Nevertheless, Terri warned when teachers are angered, they should manage their distance, avoid encroaching upon personal space as "nobody would like that anyhow," and don't yell. Terri further stated, "You almost get quieter, you get deeper" looking students in the eye "to make a connection…and give that momma soulful voice" to issue a directive. Referencing the flight or fight mode of the students she's taught, Terri advised "just watch your tone. Anybody would want that, but if you spend your whole life fighting for respect and then somebody blatantly is disrespectful to you, you're going to fight back." In short, Terri applied her cultural and racial knowledge to differentiate classroom management practices that are possibly

more congruent with the home cultures of her students. Thus, potentially reducing disciplinary infractions that further removed African American junior high students from learning opportunities.

Conclusion

The preceding portrayals are not a comprehensive description of how teacher orientations, emerging from racialized understandings of their African American students, influenced pedagogies and classroom management practices. However, they do provide insight on the effect of teacher understandings on instructional choice and decisions, thus fundamentally constructing the learning opportunities of African American students. Furthermore, these examples illustrate the power of teachers to grant or deny educational access. Therefore potentially creating unequal scholastic experiences for African American junior high students even while sharing the same classroom space.

Chapter 8

Discussion, Recommendations, and Implications

This chapter poses a discussion of the study's major findings including effective teacher recommendations for preparation as well as implications for teacher education, instructional best practices, and future research. In effort to provide context, I will begin with an overview of the study followed by the presentation of key findings. Moreover, the study's five key findings will organize and frame themes found in effective teachers' understandings of themselves, their practices, and their African American junior high students. Additionally, key findings will be ensued by implications for teacher education, educational policies and practices, and educational research including a dialogue of effective teacher recommendations. To conclude, this chapter will address limitations to the study as well as my final thoughts.

Overview of the study

Previous research argues that African American students are encountering strikingly different scholastic experiences than their white peers, even while in the same instructional space, because of disparities found on multiple measures of academic success, from persistent gaps in academic achievement to disproportionate disciplinary rates of expulsions and suspensions (Delpit 1995, Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009; Monroe, 2005; Parsons, 2005; Skiba et al., 2011). Widely documenting the implications of the cultural and

demographic divide between predominately White teachers and their ethnically diverse learners, the literature has called for the reform of teacher education to produce educators with the cultural competence to effectively teach this population (Bergeron, 2008; Bireda, 2010; Cross, 2003; Gay, 2010a; Gordon, 2005; Irvine, 1991, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2010; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Terwilliger, 2010; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Yeo, 1997). While the demand has been made for more culturally responsive instructional practices, scholars suggest that the gaps in academic achievement and discipline particularly sustained by African American students are potentially related, thus also warranting more culturally congruent management practices (Gregory, et al. 2010; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Monroe, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Skiba, et al., 2011). As African American students in the middles grades (6th-9th) are 3.86 times more likely to be suspended than their White counterparts for less serious discretionary offenses, offenses primarily based on teacher judgement of behaviors rather than clear violations of school code (Losen et al., 2012; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Skiba et al., 2011). Additionally, correlations were drawn between high discipline rates, retentions and drop-out rates, and the early disproportionate interactions of African Americans with the penal system (Balfanz et al., 2004; Losen et al., 2012; Losen & Skiba, 2006; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011).

Moreover, the convergence of academic and discipline gaps in the middle grades (6th-9th) and the achievement-loss associated with substantial declines in motivation because of incongruent environment-person fit during middle school (6th-8th) and junior high school (7th-8th) transitions highlight the necessity to examine the middle/junior high school experience for early adolescents (Eccles et al., 1991; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles et al., 2006; Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Holas & Hutson, 2012). However, the middle/junior high scholastic experience for African American students is further exacerbated by discriminatory practices derived from the prejudicial understandings of teachers and schools regarding culture and race (Eccles et al., 2006; Smalls et al., 2007; Wong et al., 2003). This being particularly troublesome for African American middle/junior high school students as research contends the significance of the middle grades in predicting future educational attainment, thus affecting life outcomes well beyond these events (Eccles et al., 1991; Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles et al., 2006; Gutman & Midgely, 2000; Holas & Hutson, 2012; Smalls et al., Wong et al., 2003). Despite these challenges, research remains generally limited on teacher preparation for the effective instruction of African American students, especially Black students in a grade level configuration that falls within the notably problematic middles grades—African American students in junior high school (7th-8th).

Correspondingly, the purpose of this study is to explore the preparation and pedagogies of five effective teachers of African American students in a junior

high school in North Texas. More specifically, the study aimed to learn the role of cultural and racial knowledge in the pedagogical understandings and practices of effective teachers, attributions of factors credited for preparing competent pedagogical practices, and delineations of best practices constituting effective instruction of African American junior high students. Furthermore, the theoretical lens of CRT allows preparatory and pedagogical perspectives to be probed for racialized understandings of themselves through educational and life histories and their African American students through characterization of attributes and learning needs. A collective case study, featuring qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations was utilized to address the following guiding research questions:

1. What role does race and culture play in the pedagogies of effective teachers of African American junior high students?
2. What factor(s) inform these pedagogies and how were they developed?
    a. What underlying theories drive their work?
    b. What are the educational and life histories that shape their perspectives?
3. What are their recommendations for teacher education and pedagogical practice?

Furthermore, the collective or multiple-case design was chosen for this study's research purposes because it allows for the exploration of preparation and pedagogies of each effective teacher encased in their unique individual realities—interconnecting past and present educational and life histories to instructional decisions and understandings concurrently engaged in interactions with their African American junior high students. Thereupon, analyzing participant perspective through the lens of their world to yield thematic understandings grounded in the analysis of each case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995). As implied, the collective case design also affords the examination of variances within and between cases, hence providing for case comparisons on parallel units of inquiry (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1984, 2009). Ergo, a junior high school campus (7th-8th) with a student enrollment of over 600 students was selected as the collective case study site for having one of the highest accountability ratings with a predominately African American student population located within of the largest, most diverse, highly rated school districts in Texas.

For the recruitment process, identified administrators and campus instructional leaders (with simultaneous formal teacher evaluative and instructional coaching responsibilities) nominated "their best teachers of African American students" using an electronic culturally responsive scale). The electronic form required administrator sign-in and allowed for multiple submissions resulting in 14 nominations of eight teachers. Though all nominated

teachers were contacted for participation, five of the eight teachers (1 African American female; 1 White male; and 3 White females) consented to the two tape-recorded semi-structured face-to face interviews which were followed by two classroom observations with accompanying field notes. While observations lent context and served as a method of triangulation, semi-structure interviews provided the major source of data. Additionally, member checking was also instrumental in granting clarity, affording opportunities for follow up as needed. Thus, major findings, derived from themes within participant perspectives will be summarized, especially considering correlations in existing literature with relative commentary in the subsequent section.

Key Findings

Guided by main constructs located in the study's research questions and consistent with the collective case study design, overarching key findings under each domain (preparation and pedagogy) will include a brief deliberation of themes collectively shared as well as those held by individual effective teachers. Further, the theoretical framework of CRT accommodates conversations of race and culture embedded in effective teachers' understandings captured in each case. Lastly, the five key findings will be arranged to facilitate this discussion as follows: 1) Factors of Preparation; 2) Facets of Pedagogical Development; 3) Pedagogical Best Practices; and 4) Components of Classroom Management.

Factors of Preparation

This study attempted to examine factors that effective teachers accredited as their source of preparation. In efforts to frame possible determinants, two intellectual constructs were created based on bodies of thought captured in the literature: formal educational factors (elements traditionally associated with teacher preparation, e.g. pre and post-secondary education, teacher education, and in-service professional development); and informal learning factors (more innate elements that influence dispositions and beliefs, e.g. familial upbringing, experiential knowledge, and life histories). Therefore the corresponding findings address the factors effective teachers associated with their preparation to effectively teach their African American junior high students. However, as expected, none of the five effective teachers attributed teacher education, traditional or alternative certification programs, with their preparation to teach Black junior high students.

Key finding #1: Informal learning factors, primarily ingrained in cultural understandings of self and others, were attributed as preparation for effectively teaching African American junior high students.

Corroborating a claim in the literature, the five effective teachers confirm the lack of specific teacher education for instructing their African American students (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Irvine, 1991, Ladson-Billings, 1989; 2000; 2009; Lynn, 2006; Yeo, 1997). These factors are: 1) Familial

upbringing as primary knowledge and mentorship; 2) Personal relatability through life experiences and counterstories; and 3) Learning on the job through trial and error; 4) Governance of faith; and 5) Cultural knowledge and appreciation. Specifically, most of the factors (i.e., all but "learning on the job") directly relate to teacher beliefs, dispositions, norms, and values entrenched in identity, experiences, and understandings of culture.

Even with the effective teachers' designation of cultural aspects as factors of preparation to teach African American students— fundamentally stated as inherited beliefs of equity and respect of cultural and racial differences— two of the four White teachers readily identified culturally, only one of them as White. Possibly due to the fact of customarily not having to identify ethnically, the literature affirms the luxury of not having to think about race. Thus, cultural identities or privileges of "whiteness" remain unexamined but these attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions still affect the instructional space (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010; Gordon, 2005; Ndura, 2004; Ullucci, 2010). For instance, Ann, who culturally identified as 25% Native American, uses her white privilege to racially and culturally assign herself an identity based on convenience. Ann explained she culturally identified as White growing up because of the prejudicial attitudes of her classmates towards "Indians", but now chooses to be recognized as Native American. Additionally, Ann's attitudes, norms, and dispositions reflected the privileges of growing up White, as she later offered a narrative of struggle as her

source of personal relatability to her African American students. Whereas, Jackie, this study's sole African American effective teacher unquestionably identified as a Black American having no other choices or opportunities for an alternative racial or cultural identification.

Furthermore, themes of familial upbringing as primary knowledge and mentorship, personal relatability through counterstories and life experiences, governance of faith, and cultural knowledge and appreciation, also derived from characterizations and understandings of cultural identity. Paul, stated "you primarily are what your parents are," surmised the thematic understanding of familial upbringing as well as its fundamental role in mentorship: forming knowledge of self and others, informing ways of being and knowing— all filtered and connected through culture. Consequently, the influential sphere of familial upbringing does not remain isolated in childhood, as Ann illustrated the values of manners from her childhood rearing are daily brought into her classroom in the form of explicit rule instruction of her African American students. Moreover, all effective teachers ascribed familial upbringing as instilling values that affected their teaching. These values, included treating everyone the same, which was most associated with their abilities of teaching their African American students. However, as Ladson-Billings (2008) suggested, the very notion of "equality as sameness" may actually be problematic as it disregards "the distinctive qualities of African American culture" and thrust Black students in a standardized white-

washed experience that does not reference who they are, where they start (socially and economically), nor designed to value their cultural attributes— ways of knowing, behaving, and learning, thus "applying the same "remedy" may actually increase educational disparities" (p. 208).

In addition, personal relatability through life experiences and counterstories were also engrained in depictions of cultural identity. As the only effective Black teacher included in this collective case study, Jackie's personal relatability through counterstory functioned differently than her White counterparts. Establishing herself as a cultural insider aligned with the cultural characteristics, experiences, and challenges of her African American students, Jackie's narrative functions as a traditional counterstory—one of 11 children, poor, and primarily raised by her mom, her grandmother, and later her stepdad; the only one of her siblings to graduate from college. Despite life's challenge Jackie not only graduated college but further obtained a Master's degree in reading. Thus, Jackie portrayed using her counterstory as story of success, using her community cultural wealth to navigate common struggle to achieve educational and life attainment (Yosso, 2005). Additionally, Jackie's counterstory confronts dominate narratives of black academic failure as well as negative depictions of black educational values, as she credits her momma's demands "to do [her] best" as academic motivation.

Whereas, the counterstories of Ann, Kimetra, and Terri, also anchored in their characterization of cultural identity serves in a different capacity to aid relatability to their African American junior high students. Substantiating the findings of Ndura's (2004) research on the cultural characterization of White in-service teachers; Ann, Kimetra, and Terri commonly belong to two of the eight categories; 1) assigned whiteness as simply typical or normal and 2) viewed whiteness as an evolving phenomenon, hence unveiling growth opportunities from glances of "hidden realities"(p. 14). As Ann, Kimetra, and Terri perceived privileges of whiteness as common, normal, "typical middle-class," and situations or signs of struggle as atypical, unusual, or uncommon, their realities challenged notions of normalcy. Therefore, their narratives provide relatability as counterstories of normalcy, normal lives either been interrupted or re-defined to incorporate, personal struggle as their connection to blackness (Ndura, 2004; Terwilliger, 2010).

Juxtaposing the counterstories of Jackie and her White colleagues, potentially prompts an interesting dialogue as one navigates struggle to attainment as the relational aspect of instruction while the others navigate an ordinary life of white privilege through struggle as their identifiable connection with their students. Regardless, the dominant narratives each story "counters" reveals perspectives and understandings of Black reality, as one connects to what her or she believes is the point of commonality. Lastly, as Paul's personal association

diverged from counterstory as relatability to observation of the struggle of others as part of his own life experiences. Paul, maintained the limiting nature of his typical middle-class background and present family life in understanding the struggles and experiences of his African American students— a characterization of white cultural identity— "whiteness" as a barrier to diversity (Ndura, 2004). Thus Paul, through observational power, discerned meaningful life lessons and acquired the appropriate experiential knowledge to inform him about the lives of his African American students as well as relatable points of connection.

Arguable, learning on the job through trial and error could be seen as a formal education factor due it occurring at the employment site (in-service training); however, the effective teachers imputed cultural knowledge and needs when discussing this theme, hence it represented an informal learning factor. Endorsing the literature's premise that teachers and their most diverse students act as foreigners bringing two totally different sets of knowledge, effective teachers s categorized on the job learning as either 1) instructional adjustments or 2) an initial disorientation dependent on cultural compatibility or congruence with the home cultures of their African American students (Bergeron, 2008; Gay 2010a; Irvine 1991, 2010; Milner, 2008). Notably this theme starkly divides along racial lines, as Jackie characterized learning on the job through a trial and error as lessons of instructional adjustments (i.e. determining best practices to meet student needs) while the White teachers spoke about being initially unsure of how

to work with their Black students. For instance, Ann, Paul, Kimetra, and Terri portray learning on the job through trial and error as shifts of acclimation from anxiety, fear, despair, and panic—a disorientation resultant from being placed in an unfamiliar setting without the proper tools to comprehend or mediate the situation. From frantic searches to seek mentorship of administrators, colleagues, African American parents, and the students themselves, to experimentation with instructional and classroom practices, our four effective White junior teachers explicitly expressed not knowing how to teach their African American students. Though all recalled being equipped with basic instructional pedagogical practices from their teacher preparation programs, Jackie and her effective peers depicted very different readiness levels in their preparation to teach their African American students. Nevertheless, Kohli (2009) and Milner (2008) caution that teachers of color, such as Jackie, may also have diversity development preparatory needs, however, their often first-hand experiential knowledge of race, racism, and the experiences of students of color, particularly in schools, may provide invaluable insight to teacher education programs possibly serving as a training tool of preparation.

Even though governance of faith could possibly belong to the intellectual bin of familial upbringing, it is presented as a separate construct due to the specific attribution of faith and its role in the capabilities of Jackie and Paul to teach their African American junior high students. While religion has not been

examined in the research pertaining to the preparation of teachers with competent pedagogies for ethnically diverse learners, it may be included in conversations about diversity development and the effect of faith-cultural identity on teacher dispositions. Nevertheless, with active subscriptions to Christianity Paul and Jackie view faith as a viable aspect of their familial upbringing and cultural identity. Though they credit faith for preparing them for the service of teaching, in certain instances governance of faith functioned in different capacities.

Commonly, faith governed the work ethic of Jackie and Paul as they associated teaching with a service unto God. A faith-governed work ethic for Paul monitored the integrity and quality in which he fulfilled the duties of teaching, for Jackie it symbolized the mission and obligation to her students to perform the work of teaching. Additionally, Christianity, for them, also established a code of conduct, a moral ethic that governed interactions. Moral ethics to Jackie translated into her own version of the golden rule, which described how to approach all interactions, including teacher-student exchanges: be honest, fair, and treat all people with respect. Whereas for Paul, Christianity, not only modeled a moral code of conduct, but instilled values which mediated how he perceived people. As all are equal in God's eyes, Paul "gives value" to people of "other" races and cultures through equitable treatment and respectful interactions. Thus, Paul also assigned governance of faith for his equitable and respectful treatment of his African American junior high students.

Key finding #2: Though culture is a significant factor of preparation. Teachers' cultural understandings remain largely unacknowledged and unexamined. Moreover, findings suggest proximity to African American culture determines relevancy.

Although cultural knowledge is traced throughout the narratives of all five educators, Jackie and Terri are the only effective teachers that attribute this factor as preparation for the competent instruction of their African American junior high students. This is possibly predicated on the premise that Jackie and Terri were the only effective teachers that viewed African Americans as possessing a distinct culture and had a clear indication of cultural attributes (Gay, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Moving beyond superficial associations of food, holidays, and knowledge of pop culture, Jackie and Terri referenced cultural differences of norms, styles of expression (e.g. mannerisms, behaviors, patterns of speech, and dress), beliefs and values, and ways of knowing which frequently differed from the either limited or more negative portrayals of their effective teacher counterparts (Bireda, 2010; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Webb Johnson, 2003).

Albeit, Jackie and Terri have different racial and cultural identifications, both exhibited similar cultural understandings evinced in their academic use of "Black Mama" in their classrooms. The characterization of Black Mama reflects Ware's (2006) "warm-demander" an insistence of excellence in an academically

rigorous environment requiring students to rise and meet challenges (academic press) within a nurturing environment of skill development, encouraging affirmations, and accountability resulting in the end goal of academic success. Though observances of Black mama were witnessed in the classroom visits of Jackie and Terri, their instructional use of Black Mama often differed in orientation. Jackie, as Black mama, used this technique as a tool of instructional presentation, delivery, and academic accountability, whereas Terri primarily utilized it as the medium to develop rapport and manage her classroom. Nonetheless, both engaged authentic demonstrations of their cultural understandings of Black Mama, generally resulting in a parent-child like compliance obtaining either the desired behaviors or expected student responses (Monroe & Obidah, 2004).

Lastly, major findings indicate the acknowledged centrality of culture was also dependent upon the teacher's perceived proximity to culture (Ndura 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Gomez & White, 2010; Gordon, 2005). Jackie, identifying as a Black woman, not only recognized herself as an ethnic being but defined her encounters, beliefs, and values within the context of a collective "Black experience." Thus, race and culture were central to her identity and provided a framework for interpretation. Through this experiential knowledge, Jackie called upon and connected to shared experiences of "blackness," which were also central to the cultural identity of her African American students.

Moreover, Terri alluded to cultural proximity as she referenced her familial upbringing in a racially "blended" family, and the observed differences between her white and black families. Hence, as a participant observer immersed in Black culture, Terri's proximity solidified a cultural understanding that most likely would not be gained from the role of white observational power.

Terri also maintained that it took relying on her cultural understandings to begin "speaking the language" of her "kids" as she appreciated the cultural attributes of her African American students through incorporating features in instructional interactions. However, despite Terri's wealth of cultural knowledge she still fell prey to notions of colorblindness, as did all the effective teachers excluding Jackie. However, during the semi-structured interviews, Terri communicated social issues raised by her Black students which also affected the larger Black community such as white police brutality as racism and the black lives matter movement. Therein, Terri offered a similar sentiment also expressed by Jackie, she does see skin color, "but I don't treat people differently because of it." Proponents of culturally responsive teaching would probably recommend that they should.

Facets of Pedagogical Development

Intrinsic to the discussion of effective teachers' pedagogies and practice is a deliberation on teachers' views of students. As a backdrop, all effective teachers were asked to provide general descriptions of their school and then their

African American students. Granted all had different depictions of the school environment, though mainly positive, student characterizations chiefly communicated in teacher exchanges remained consistently unfavorable. Paul summed it up with, "No one ever talks good about [African American] students." Effective teachers describing their colleagues' portrayal of African American students as apathetic, disrespectful, and lazy, remarked on the negative opinions held by many junior high teachers. Therefore it was fundamentally important to probe the thinking of our effective teachers for racialized deficit views of African American students, especially as it relates to pedagogical understandings principally revealed in their characterizations of attributes and learning needs (Milner, 2008).

Finding #3: Effective teachers' ascriptions of the attributes and learning needs of their African American student reflect teacher orientations towards cultural behaviors (verve) and conceptions of knowledge embedded in understandings of normalcy.

Essential to effective teacher designation of the cultural attributes and learning needs of their African American junior high students are their judgements of the adequacy of Black life as it pertains to behavior (ways of living) and conceptions of knowledge (ways of knowing and being). Effective teacher portrayals of attributes and learning needs exposed racialized ideas about themselves and the home cultures of their African American students, thus

unmasking orientations of cultural appreciation or deficit thinking, which are brought into the instructional space as pedagogy. Thus this section will discuss major themes regarding 1) Orientations towards culturally congruent behaviors (*Verve*): appreciation, identification, devaluation; and 2) Orientations towards conceptions of knowledge: learning needs. Since orientations towards conceptions of knowledge or designations of learning needs were more prescriptive, the following subthemes will also be briefly discussed: 1) Consistency, structure, and organization; 2) Broadening of perspectives (survival vs. academic); and 3) Social-emotional learning needs.

Orientation towards Culturally Congruent Behaviors (Verve)

The effective teachers supported previous research that the African American junior high students' behavior was the distinctive attribute that they brought into their classrooms (Webb-Johnson, 2003). Additionally, all effective teachers consistently depicted culturally congruent behaviors known as verve—a highly energetic and spirited demeanor, which features stylistic expressions (e.g. manners of speaking, dressing, gestures). Although, described traits were consistent with cultural congruency, effective teachers' orientations largely depended on their abilities to recognize vervistic qualities, designate them as components of culture, and make determinations of verve as a deficiency of behavior or a difference of expression. However, cultural determination could only be made if teachers first recognized their own cultural understandings of

appropriate behavior. Therefore, central to effective teacher orientations are perceptions of normalcy embedded in cultural identity. As whiteness retains its invisibility, lacking an ethnic identification; its norms, beliefs, and values lose a cultural connection and are regarded as normality. Thus cultural understandings are hidden by words like "appropriate" and "acceptable" and whiteness becomes the standard for normal (Blaisdell, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Webb-Johnson, 2003). As verve presents ethnic temperaments of expressions, deemed non-white or not normal, its inappropriateness, especially for academic and professional environments affects perceptions of educability.

Teachers with the power to decide different or deficit, based on perceptions of normality, thus engaged students based on their orientations of appreciation, identification, or devaluation. Word choice, including connotation, and contextual commentary were used to ascertain teacher orientations as either in isolation (word choice vs. contextual commentary) were potentially misleading. As implied, orientations of appreciation, embraced the animated, colorful, high energetic, soulful nature of students as expressions of difference, contributing to the diversity of the learning community as well as opportunities of learning. An orientation of identification, which is this case, belonged to Jackie, acknowledged the role and understandings of the cultural insider. As Jackie, perceived her students and herself as one, she embraced shared cultural attributes positively, but as an insider was empowered to give a constructive critique as well. Further,

identifying dispositions of devaluation, which especially required a contextual analysis of teacher commentary, unveiled deficit thinking in relation to African American students' abilities to exhibit control or knowledge of proper control, which attributed deficiencies to inadequate child rearing or lack of parental involvement. Additionally, dispositions that ignored or could not attribute a single cultural trait to African American students, as in the case of Paul, fell into the devaluation category due to the disregard—as silence or the lack of acknowledgement is also a definite action.

Orientations towards Conceptions of Knowledge: Learning Needs

Comparably, effective teachers' orientations towards their African American students' conceptions of knowledge also influenced designation of learning needs. Attributions of learning needs, though not specifically confined to an academic scope, were significantly influenced by resurfacing behavioral concerns. Three ensuing themes were found in effective teachers' orientations towards their students' conception of knowledge and assigning of scholastic needs: 1) Consistency, structure, and organization; 2) Broadening of perspectives (survival vs. academic); and 3) Social-Emotional learning needs. Moreover, since dispositions influence ascription of needs, effective teachers' portrayals of these needs were examined racialized understandings and or orientations.

Paul and Jackie assigned consistency, structure, and organization as perceived learning needs of their African American students. However

dissimilarities in their characterizations demonstrated differences in orientations attached to this learning need. Though Paul promoted the consistency of class as beneficial to his African American students due to being in a highly-regulated environment (e.g. students seated in rows, lecture-style presentation, timed lesson segments allowing very little down time), he dismissed the possible academic advantages and deferred to structure as a proactive disciplinary method. On the contrary, Jackie, ascribes consistency, structure, and organization as a direct response to a surveyed need of her students in context of current and future educational attainment. Accordingly for Paul consistency, structure, and, organization reinforced his prioritization of management, yet, for Jackie the same skill set supported a recognized academic need.

Moreover, Kimetra and Ann depicted the learning needs of their African American junior high students as the necessity of a teacher-lead exposure to broaden their perspectives. Ann and Kimetra blamed African American families for the lack of exposure that would broaden the knowledge of options and opportunities for their children. Although both espoused deficit orientations of African American children and families with entrenched judgements on the validity of knowledge and the value of knowledge types; Ann diverged into characterizations that extended the conversation beyond exposure to choice but to discussions of competency. Conversely, Ann launched an argument of suppositions that connected perceived limitations in student perspectives to

diminished cognitive abilities predicated upon the disproportionate identification of African American students in special education. This logic is further extended to include a conjecture about African American mother's lack of pre-natal care to explain reasons for excessive special education classifications. In short, Ann's exhibited deficit thinking as victim-blaming, which posits the blame within the African American students and their families without questioning systemic factors responsible for the failure (Valencia, 1997, 2010).

Kimetra and Terri represented the social-emotional learning needs of their African American junior high students as not only a precursor of instruction but as an academic learning need. For example, Kimetra initially viewed requests of reassurances as babyish because of her personal notions of task-independence, she described being required to look past her perceptions to recognize and meet a pattern of learning needs. Thus she demonstrated an orientation of appreciation as she planned to expressly support the cultural learning needs of her African American students, which equipped them to meet academic goals. However, Terri characterized the social-emotional learning as the need to equip her African American junior high students with the skills to address and mange emotions. From depictions of heated student exchanges to anger against white establishments of power, Terri reserved judgment but described providing tools to address and handle these emotions. Finally, Terri correlated the passions of her African American students to a social justice orientation and thus, encouraged

more in-depth discussions of topics including race and racism. Terri's recommendation and advocacy for deeper conversations, attributions of passions to social justice orientation, and willingness to engage critical conversations not only displays an appreciation of the knowledge set her African American students bring to the classroom but also embodied tenets of culturally responsive teaching, which validates and legitimizes the backgrounds of ethnically diverse learners (Gay, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009).

Fundamentals of Pedagogical Practice

Underscoring the ambiguity of pedagogy, effective teachers were also slightly confused concerning the nature of pedagogy and practice, more than not, viewing them interchangeably. Therefore, pedagogical understandings were explored within the context of instructional practice and teacher orientations, thus yielding a snapshot of instructional choices and theories that drive application. Furthermore, as all five effective teachers consistently portrayed four key elements of pedagogical practice—structure, engagement, assessment, and real world applicability—teacher orientations determined implementation.

Key finding #4: Effective teacher orientations towards their African American students' conceptions of knowledge and vervistic behaviors dictate the nature of classroom learning.

All effective teachers presented standard depictions of key elements of pedagogical practices: structure, engagement, assessment, and real world

applicability. Therefore the discussion explores variances in application of practice and types of students learning significantly influenced by teacher orientation towards student conceptions of knowledge and educability. As the findings indicated, effective teacher dispositions chiefly fell within two categories: 1) positive orientations fostering a mining approach to student knowledge or 2) deficit orientations that featured a banking approach to learning. Moreover, effective teachers with positive orientations created learning opportunities to mine or bring forth information. This instructional technique implies African American junior high students already possess knowledge and teachers facilitate learning opportunities to connect new learning to prior knowledge, hence a student-centered approach. For example, learning activities such as gallery walks, jig-saw method, academic scavenger hunts and stations[77], group or pair sorting activities feature a mining approach as students are required to build on connections and apply demonstrations of knowledge. On the contrary teachers with deficit orientations towards students' conception of knowledge offered a banking or deposit-oriented approach to student learning. The teacher constantly exercised expert power and focused mainly on providing or depositing information under the assumption that their African American students lacked

[77] Academic scavenger hunts feature posted problems around the room. Students solve the problem and then look around the room for the answer. The card with the posted answer is the next challenged that must be solved, thus relying on student application of knowledge while providing a self-check. Stations can work in the same fashion, which basically post questions on tables and students rotate to answer questions (could be a timed activity and or completed in groups of 2 or 3).

knowledge, which is a teacher-centered approach based on deficit thinking. For instance, learning opportunities that primarily depend upon lecture-style presentations and note-taking, activities regulated to identification and memorization, displays a banking method where focus is placed on students' receipt of knowledge and checks for accurate transmissions—limiting ownership and knowledge application. As aforementioned, note-taking and direct instruction, even lecture style are not ineffective instructional strategies. However, teachers should reflect on their chief reliance on any instructional choice in conjunction with their reasoning for implementation.

Lastly, due the relationship of teacher orientations towards verve (behavior) and perceptions of educability, a quasi-category was created and addressed. Teachers with deficit orientations towards student behaviors generally employed learning opportunities characterized as the banking-approach due to their prioritization of management. Thus, implementing teacher-centered approaches that restricted access and movement (Webb-Johnson, 2003). Contrastingly, teachers more positive towards vervistic behaviors utilized more mining-approaches as activities that best accommodated connecting, building and applying knowledge took precedence. In summation, teacher orientations towards students' conception of knowledge and educability dictated the learning environment determining teachers' use of the key elements of pedagogical

practice: structure, engagement, assessment, and real world applicability, thus influencing the nature of classroom learning.

Components of Classroom Management

Effective understandings of classroom management reveal aspects of climate and culture that not only define interpersonal interactions and communication but also control access and membership to the learning space. Hence, teachers through their management practices either grant students entry as a valued participant of the learning community, or restrict admittance through unexpressed rules and codes—cultural understandings masked as normal, proper or suitable behavior (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2009; Milner, 2008; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Respectively, effective teachers' knowledge(s) of competent classroom management were also examined for racialized understandings of themselves and their African American junior high students. Effective teachers' implementation of the sole shared theme: Establishing respect by being firm, fair, and consistent; yielded the study's fifth and final major finding.

Key finding # 5: Effective teacher orientations towards vervistic behaviors of their African American students, embedded in racialized understandings of culture, governed decisions of classroom management.

While all effective teachers agreed upon the components of classroom management as firm, fair, and consistent; teacher orientation towards the vervistic

behaviors of their African American students determined application. Drawing similar parallels from pedagogical instruction, teacher orientations towards the behaviors of their African American students principally aligned as follows: teachers with deficit orientations exhibited more control oriented approaches, whereas teachers with orientations more appreciative of vervistic qualities generally emphasized rapport-based approaches. For instance, teachers with deficit orientations were observed in classroom visits to be stricter about followings and more restrictive in choices of classroom arrangement and activity organization. The classroom was primarily set-up in rows and displayed very defined boundaries and means of interactions (e.g. raised hands to speak even when engaged in free-flowing conversations, regimented environments with very confined movements and student interactions).

On the other hand teachers with more vervistic-friendly dispositions were witnessed to interact with physical contact, stand in closer proximity, incorporated flexibility to manage more hands-on learning activity requiring less restriction of movement, and utilized humor in re-direction instead of more punitive response. As previously noted, effective teachers described shifts in management emphasis, depending on time of year and/or instructional need. For instance, all teachers referenced more rule oriented approaches during the first of the year as it suited instructional purposes of establishing routines; however deficit oriented teachers generally tried to maintain the same level of control throughout the year. Lastly,

similar to instructional practices, teacher's orientation towards cultural congruent behaviors were embedded in racialized understandings of normalcy. As Webb-Johnson (2003) suggested, it is often the misidentification of culturally congruent behaviors that leads to disproportionate punitive actions directed towards African American students. Thus teachers' racialized understandings of behavior determine the cultural climate, define interactional patterns, and regulate movement in the form of code of conduct as well as restricted space.

Implications and Recommendations for Teacher Education, Education, and Educational Research

Four of the five effective teachers echoed a widely documented critique concerning the inadequacy of teacher education programs to prepare educators for culturally competent instruction of African American students and other ethnically diverse learners (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cross, 2003; Gordon, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2009; Milner, 2010; Picower, 2009; Terwilliger, 2010; Van Hook, 2002; Yeo, 1997). Correspondingly, the effective teachers of this collective case study, on average attributed less than five percent of their teacher education to their preparation to teach African American students, mainly offering this percentage due to preparation courses on special education—as Black students are disproportionately represented in special education. In light of

initially felling ill-equipped[78] to teach their African American student, the effective teachers offered several recommendations for teacher education based on perceived preparatory needs.

Teacher Recommendation and Implications for Teacher Education

As all effective teachers offered or solicited practical advice in their recommendations for teacher education, four of the five suggestion requested more cultural information on African American students and their families for teaching considerations. Falling along racial lines, White effective teachers suggested preparation programs provide specific cultural background knowledge to include the following: possible situational scenarios for African American families (e.g. daddy just got out of jail and the effect on the family; welfare mother raising two kids how can she be assisted, etc.); videos of real-life classroom scenarios depicting interactions with African American students (especially males) and parents; and forums or panels that present effective teachers of African American junior high students so they can be probed for instructional and management techniques. Interestingly, the White effective teachers' proposal for teacher education to provide more cultural information, chiefly rested in wanting to know more about Black stereotypes. Jackie recommended teacher education programs should require teacher candidates to

[78] Jackie did not feel ill-prepared to teacher her African American students but is included because she advances a recommendation for teacher education.

learn extensive reading strategies with phonics and phonemic awareness to meet the varied reading levels of junior high students. Hence, with race as the line of demarcation, the implications are clear, teacher education must explicitly prepare educators with culturally competent knowledge and practices to meet the learning needs of African American junior high students, not restricted to but especially for White teachers.

Further Implications for Teacher Education

Moreover, as the most influential factors of teacher preparation were attributed to cultural understandings, teacher education programs must create more authentic opportunities for examination of cultural identities and diversity disposition development. These opportunities must go beyond traditional field experiences but grant closer proximity, participatory to ensure the engagement of deeper responses than white observational power (Baszile, 2008; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Picower, 2009). Further implications contend that teacher education programs examine their own diversity in terms of faculty, students, and curriculum— as White teacher educators predominately teach White teacher candidates in predominately White teacher education programs (Pope & Wilder, 2005). Potentially the recruitment of teacher educators and teacher candidates of color could lend greater diversity of curriculum and perspectives thus additionally challenging biases of Eurocentric ideas, beliefs, and behaviors as normalcy, not only equipping teachers with multiple perspective but probable access to authentic

experiences of race and racism in education and society at large. Lastly, in efforts not to ignore the diversity developmental needs of teacher candidates of color, teacher education must also challenge their understandings of racial and cultural identity, including their own for dominant constructs of whiteness resulting in beliefs of inferiority (Milner, 2010).

Implications for Education: Educational Debt vs. Achievement Gap

Attempting to illustrate the systemic inequitable educational outcomes experienced by African Americans and other ethnically diverse learners, the dialogue has centered on the achievement gap. However, as the findings of this study and other research indicates, culture, which plays a significant role in processes of teaching and learning, unduly impacts students of color due to the Eurocentric biases of schooling. Therefore these gaps in achievement and discipline, should not be viewed in the context of scholastic disparities in student performance but through the lens of educational inequities, resulting from incompatible and racist scholastic experiences. As Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests, academic indicators are not referencing an achievement gap but education's debt to its ethnically diverse learners for its failure to provide an education that meets the needs of all its students. However, educational equity cannot be achieved unless policies, practices, and organizational structures are examined for the functions of race and culture—in efforts to uproot conventions and ideologies that potentially impede learners that do not subscribe to or reflect

its dominant culture (Hyland, 2005; Milner, 2008; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Ullucci, 2010). Thus, culture and race must re-frame conversations about scholastic performance on academic indicators, including the "achievement gap" and gaps in racial discipline. Possibly reconceiving the notion of academic achievement by questioning the validity of academic indicators and what is actually measured.

Implications for Practice

With the growing popularity of culturally responsive practices, the pendulum has swung to educational environments that highlight the cultural backgrounds of students to facilitate academic success. However as the teacher workforce is 81.9% predominately White middle-class female, school are recognizing the need, more than ever, to prepare teachers for the classes of increasingly diverse students they are more than likely to encounter (The Condition of Education, 2015). Furthermore, as much as discussions of culture emerge so does awareness of the Eurocentric biases of school and its academic effect on ethnically diverse learners. Thus implications for practice, could extend to greater understanding of how teachers' cultural orientations affect the educational space, understanding of specific orientations that are academically beneficial for students of color, as well as identify training or activities to engender desired teacher behaviors and orientations through diversity development.

Lastly, cultural knowledge and understandings of orientation may be a powerful tool for teachers to examine their own instructional and management practices for culturally responsive teaching. For example, incorporating vervistic styles in lesson activities and in instructional presentation through voice inflection, type of response solicited (e.g. call and response), and animation in instructional delivery (bodily movement, use of color and visuals, etc.). Additionally, implications also challenge evaluations of learning to encompass learning indicators for multiple demonstrations of knowledge rather than relying on tests and quizzes as the primary modes of assessment. Further, as best practices promote culturally responsive teaching methods considerations should also extend to culturally responsive management techniques. Hence, teachers become consciously aware of verve as a culturally congruent behavior of African American students while exploring how vervistic behaviors possibly look in the classroom and ways it can be misinterpreted based on teachers' cultural orientations. By the same token implications of teacher orientations towards African American culture also has implications for educational policies such as disciplinary procedures and special education classifications. For instance, special education and discipline must involve more processes that are less dependent on teacher discretionary judgements of educability—chiefly ascertained through perceptions of conduct— and should rely on more culturally

inclusive understandings of their students' behaviors and conceptions of knowledge.

Implications for Educational Research

In general, more research is needed to address gaps in the literature regarding the unique experiences of African American students in junior high, especially due to the significance of this time frame in predicting future educational attainment. Further, as this collective case study attempted to indicate more research is needed to directly correlate main intellectual constructs that were only explored. For example, the relationship between the gaps in academic achievement and discipline to determine if the disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of African American junior high students contribute to the "achievement gap." As well as the significance of culturally responsive management practices and the disciple gap. Now, as it relates to teacher education, implications include future research on specific teacher preparation for the culturally competent instruction of African American students and effects on gaps in achievement and discipline. An examination of middle/junior high teacher education and certification requirements. Lastly, possibly research on preparation and disposition development as it specifically relates to African American students.

Limitations of Research

Limitations, or boundaries of the study deal primarily with recruitment method and approach, diversity of participants, and number of observations due to time constraints. While administrators were given a culturally responsive rubric as a guide to nominate their effective teachers of African American students, the interpretation of the guide was left to the sole discretion of the administrator. In hindsight, possibly meeting with administrators to go over the rubric/scale could have provided greater clarity and more intentional nomination based on cultural responsiveness. Additionally, although administrators have sufficient practice in evaluating teachers, the rubric was a different tool used to make their determinations. As this rubric presented indicators of teacher responsiveness to student culture as opposed to evaluations of traditional domains of instruction and classroom management. Furthermore, limitations also include resting on the sole judgement of nominators for candidate selection. Potentially another step in the research design could have been to observe administrator nominees for cultural responsiveness and then making a final selection to better ensure the participants were "effective" based on the researcher's understanding of the measures. Also, ideally the candidate pool should have been more diverse, however, teacher participants were not only reflective of the teacher demographics on the campus but also parallel national statistics. Lastly, even though time was a factor, it may have been beneficial for research purposes to spend more time in the classroom to

not only get a better feel for instructional and management styles but also to see the facilitation of different types of lessons and teacher-student interactional styles.

Concluding Final Thoughts

Seven years ago, I was sitting in class and was given a book to read, Ladson-Billings' *Dream-keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. It revolutionized my world, as it described the beauty of culture, the plight of black life –to be educated, appreciated and affirmed in an instructional space. I was determined to be a conductor, providing the vehicle through crafting learning experiences where my student and I traveled together, seeing new places and learning new things. The beauty of learning, where knowledge is co-created, reciprocated and all are appreciated by seeing YOU!—your life, your skin, your experiences.

I became passionate about the educational experiences, and consequently disparities experienced by African American students and other children of color. So I began to ask questions, particularly when transitioning from an elementary teacher to junior high. Why were African American junior high students persistently experiencing academic gaps in achievement? As the students I taught were genius, though you had to work with them to recognize it. Why were Black students in trouble more than any other students? Wouldn't an academic gap be expected if you were constantly disciplined by missing class? These questions

formed in my mind as I began to see alarming trends experienced by African American junior high students. Thus, after 15 years of teaching with notable success, I wanted to see if other teachers taught like me. As teachers of color are now an anomaly. I was curious to see their pedagogical understandings of practice. Did we share common understandings regarding the needs of African American students? What practices were employed for academic achievement and success? Armed with a million questions, I wanted to observe teachers that were effective with African American junior high students to basically note and observe "Good Teaching."

However many of my "effective" teachers were also problematic. As I saw the role of race and culture in their instructional and management practices. I experienced heartache too, to hear the deficit thinking, punitive orientation, and negative beliefs about the behaviors and abilities of the African American students they stand up in front of and teach. During interviews, I had to control facial expressions because I was horrified not only by the responses but by my worry that in the educational system, my "Black babies" don't even have a chance.

Before the study began, one of the Black administrators pulled me aside to apologize for her delayed response with her teacher nomination. She confided that she could not think of one teacher to nominate based on the culturally responsive rubric provided. It is imperative that we address race, racism, and

culture if we are going to change the inequitable outcomes that often plague students of color, particularly Black students. Teacher education must be held accountable for preparing culturally responsive educators. In these programs we must explore dominance of whiteness in teacher candidates' cultural understandings and how they are potentially incorporated in pedagogical practices. As educators, we should work together to make our educational system better so that children of color are affirmed and supported in a culturally responsive space.

Appendix A

Glossary of Key Terms

Glossary of Key Terms

Ethnically diverse learners: Students from different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds who possess an ethnic identify — norms, experiences, and perspectives formed from a shared heritage with racial, cultural, and often religions ties. Although White students also possess an ethnic identity, this reference is reserved for students of color, as it designates cultural ties that differ from Euro-centric American mainstream norms and epistemologies (ways of knowing). For the purpose of this study, ethnically diverse learners will reference the scholastic experiences and achievement patterns of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americas as a result of Asian Americans being regarded as the model minority (Gay, 2002b). Gay (2002b) references the work of Tong (1978) when describing the exceptionalities of some Asian Americans in achievement patterns due to cultural compatibilities and processes of socialization.

Discretionary discipline sanctions: School discipline sanctions based on subjective interpretation of behavior and or rule (e.g. talking excessively loud, being disrespectful, or a class distraction). It is not a clearly defined code violation such as fighting, bringing a gun, or smoking which are actions that automatically warrant suspension or expulsion

In-service: Indicates that teachers have completed all the requirements for employment and are gainfully employed. Thus trainings while in-service refers to

the education or support given to teachers while employed in the profession which includes course work, mentoring, professional development trainings/workshops, and teacher induction programs (offer first year teachers mentoring and support)..

Pedagogy: The art, science, and or profession of teaching (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Furthermore, the Encyclopedia Britannica (2013) adds that pedagogy is the study of teaching methods, including the aims of education and the ways in which such goals may be achieved. Additionally, deeming pedagogy as more of an art than a science, Murphy (2008) states, that pedagogy is "about the interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment and learning tasks" (p.35). Thus, Murphy (2008) expounds that central to pedagogy is praxis, "the dialectical relationship between theory and practice in teaching—a form of reasoning informed by action" (p.34).

Preparation: For this study, preparation encompasses factors that potentially inform teacher pedagogies in the instruction of African Americans junior high students. Hence preparation may result from formal education processes and or readiness learned from lived experiences. Therefore, preparation may include but not limited to the following factors: education (teacher education programs, alternative certification programs, in-service trainings, and or any other types of schooling); background (race, culture, ethnicity of reference); familial upbringing and experiences with race; community/cultural associations and affiliations; and beliefs (concerning culture, ethnicity, race, equity, and self-efficacy).

Pre-service: Refers to the education and training given to teacher candidates before he or she enters their teaching service or employment. Pre-service can describe standard teacher education programs and or programs for alternative certification.

Self-efficacy: The belief in one's capability to reach their intended goal. Those with higher self-efficacy are more likely intrinsically motivated, work harder and maintain stronger commitments in challenging situation, and attribute to failure to things under their control (insufficient effort or lack of knowledge)—instead of placing blame on factors out of their control (Gutman & Midgely, 2000).

Appendix B

Email Announcement: Gatekeeper Solicitation

Email Announcement (Gatekeeper Solicitation)

Greetings (Name of Email Recipient),

My name is Asha Gibson and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education and Health Professions, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies Department at the University of Texas at Arlington and the Collaborative Learning Leader at Forest Meadow, JH. Under the advisement of Dr. Ifeoma (*ee-foe-mah*), Assistant Professor, I am working on my dissertation, which explores the preparation and pedagogies of effective teachers of African American junior high school students. As Albertson ISD consistently remains one of the highest rated and largest diverse districts in Texas, I am asking your help to nominate effective teachers of African American students on your campus based on your observations of the following categories:

- Student Achievement Growth
- Classroom Management
- Teaching Skills
- Student Enthusiasm
- Other attributes of effective teaching ascribed by nominator.

Attached you will find a nomination form which is being sent to all instructional leaders on your campus. Feel free to make copies to nominate all teacher candidates that meet the aforementioned criteria. All nominations will remain confidential and will be used to invite teachers to participate in this study.

Participants will be asked to take part in an interview and two classroom observations. Interviews will be tape-recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing participant responses and should last no more than 2 hours. Subsequently, classroom observations will be scheduled at the discretion of the participant and documented using observer field notes, thus entailing no audio or video recording. Responses in interviews and observations will be completely anonymous. Participation in this study is voluntary and potential participants may choose not to answer question(s), stop or withdraw at any time without consequence.

Lastly, please return all nomination using the options noted on the form. If you have any question, feel free to contact me by email at asha.gibson@mavs.uta.edu or by phone at 469-593-1576 and/or or my doctoral advisor—Dr. Ifeoma Amah at iamah@uta.edu or by phone 817-272-0991. Thanks for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Asha S. Gibson, MAT
Doctoral Student
Collaborative Learning Leader, Sam Ripple Junior High
Albertson Independent School District
Doctoral Student
The University of Texas at Arlington
College of Education and Health Professions
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Appendix C

Email Announcement: Participation Solicitation

Email Announcement (Participant Solicitation)

Greetings (Name of Email Recipient),

My name is Asha Gibson and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Education and Health Professions, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies Department at the University of Texas at Arlington and the Collaborative Learning Leader at Forest Meadow, JH. Under the advisement of Dr. Ifeoma (*ee-foe-mah*), Assistant Professor, I am working on my dissertation, which explores the preparation and pedagogies of effective teachers of African American junior high school students. I would like to invite you to participate in this study because you were nominated by your instructional leadership as effective in your instruction of African American students based on observations of the following categories:

- Student Achievement Growth
- Classroom Management
- Teaching Skills
- Student Enthusiasm
- Other attributes of effective teaching ascribed by nominator.

For this study, you will be asked to take part in two interviews and two classroom observations. In the interview I would like to discuss your preparatory experiences and pedagogy (theories and teaching practices) which aid in your effective instruction of African American students. The interviews will be tape-recorded to ensure that I accurately capture your responses and should take no longer than 2 hours. All responses will remain completely anonymous. In addition, I would like to schedule two classroom visits to observe your practices in their natural setting, with your students. Remember this is not an evaluation and I have no expectations. I just want to see what you normally do in your classroom, as you have already been identified as an effective teacher. I will document observations only with my hand written notes and all responses and interactions will remain anonymous. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose not to answer question(s), stop or withdraw at any time without consequence.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please respond to this email as soon as possible so that we can schedule an interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by email at asha.gibson@mavs.uta.edu or

by phone at 469-593-1576; and/or my doctoral advisor Dr. Ifeoma Amah at iamah@uta.edu or by phone 817-272-0991. Thanks for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Asha S. Gibson, MAT
Collaborative Learning Leader, Sam Ripple Junior High
Albertson Independent School District
Doctoral Student
The University of Texas at Arlington
College of Education and Health Professions
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Appendix D

Nomination Form

Nomination Form (Google Form)

Please answer the following questions to nominate effective teachers of African American students on your campus. Nominations should specifically consider the candidates' teaching of African American students when responding to each question. Space has also been provided for additional comments or evidence. All correspondence will remain confidential. Please complete all forms by (deadline to be determined).

Please enter your name, position, and school campus. *

What is your email address?

Enter the name and position (grade level & subject) of the person you are nominating. *

What is the email address of your nominee? *

Using a scale of 1-10 (1=Not at all, to 10=Very High degree), rate the degree to which the nominee addresses each indicator.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

To what extent does the nominee...?

1) Demand, reinforce, and produce academic success with the African American students in her/his classroom?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

- **To what extent does the nominee...?**
- 2) Utilize the prior knowledge and skills of African American students to scaffold classroom instruction?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

- **To what extent does the nominee...?**
- 3) Incorporate African American cultural referents as learning tools in classroom instruction? (NOTE: Cultural referents include the achievements, contributions, and history of African Americans as well as the cultural attributes such as communications/interaction styles and learning styles/preferences).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

To what extent does the nominee...?

4) Provide high intellectual challenges to develop critical thinking skills of African American students?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

To what extent does the nominee...?

5) Encourage African American students to evaluate knowledge claims and frame issues within the context of class, gender, religion, and or race?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

To what extent does the nominee...?

6) Demonstrate care, commitment, and/or personal accountability for the academic success of African American students?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

To what extent is the nominee's...?

7) Classroom culture and management style compatible with the home lives and cultural characteristics of African American students?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high degree

Please add any additional comments for why you nominated this individual as an effective teacher of African American students.

:

Appendix E

Teacher Informed Consent Form

Informed Teacher Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Asha S. Gibson, MAT
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
asha.gibson@mavs.uta.edu /asha.gibson@risd.org

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Ifeoma Amah, Ph.D
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
iamah@uta.edu

TITLE OF PROJECT
The Schooling of African American Students in Junior High: Exploring the Preparation and Pedagogy of Effective Teachers

INTRODUCTION
You are being asked to participate in a study focused on exploring the preparation and pedagogies (theories of teaching and teaching practices) of effective teaching teachers of African American junior high students. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinuing your participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Please ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

PURPOSE
The purpose of this research is to discover the type of preparatory experiences, theories of teaching, and teaching practices that inform effective teachers' understandings of how to teach African American junior high students. The intent is to inform teacher education as well as broaden conversations of best practices for this specific student demographic.

DURATION
You will participate in two interviews lasting 1 to 2 hour each, and two classroom observations extending one class period each (approximately 100-120 minutes total).

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
The expected number of participants in this study is 4 to 6 teachers.

PROCEDURES
The procedures which involve your participation include:

1. Answering a series of questions about your effectiveness as a teacher of African American junior high students regarding teacher preparation, theories of teaching, and teaching practices (instruction and management).
2. Being observed twice in during classroom instruction.

During the interview, the principal investigator will be taking note and writing down observations. The interview will also be audio recorded. After the interview, the recording will be transcribed, typed

exactly as they were recorded, word-for-word by the principal investigator (Asha Gibson or a professional transcriber). Participants name will not be included in the transcription but given a number or pseudonym for transcription purposes. The audio tape will be kept with the transcription so that accuracy can be checked at any time. The tape and transcription will not be used for any other future research purposes not described here. During the observations, the principal investigator will use observation field note protocol to record observations and observer comments. After the observation, the field notes will be written in long hand (any codes transcribed) and summarized. Field notes will also not be used for any other future research purposes not described here. All tape and transcriptions will be destroyed 5 years after the research study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The possible benefits of this study is a greater understanding of pedagogies and pedagogical practices that are effective with African American junior high students. Furthermore, new insights on the type of preparatory experiences that foster these understandings may inform teacher education in the future.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

You should not experience any risks or discomforts during this study. If you are uncomfortable at any time, please inform the researcher. You comfort, safety, and anonymity are the highest priorities in the study. All sensitive information such as name, email, address, telephone number or any other identifiable information will not be revealed in this study. Upon consent of the first interview you will have the option of selecting a pseudonym (a fake name). If a pseudonym is chosen all tape recording proceedings and all transcripts will be de-identified and given this name. Clips or excerpts maybe used during presentations of this research and the chosen pseudonym, will also be used during that time. If a pseudonym is not chosen, one will be assigned to you. Only the primary investigator and faculty advisor will have access to identifying information related to this study, which will be locked in a file cabinet in the primary investigator's home.

COMPENSATION

There is no compensation offered for participation in this research.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

There are no alternative procedures offered for this study. However, you can elect not to participate in the study or quit at any time at no consequence.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to decline participation in any or all study procedures or quit at any time at no consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of this signed consent form and all data collected, including transcriptions, tapes, field notes, photographs and other documents will be stored in the home of the investigator in a locked file cabinet for at least five years after the end of the research. Your name will not be associated with the results in any fashion. Additional research studies could evolve from the information you have provided, but your information will not be linked to you in anyway; it will be anonymous. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UT Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB), and personnel particular to this research have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required

by law, or as noted above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this study and the information within this consent form. If in the unlikely event it becomes necessary for the IRB to review your research records, UT Arlington will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Questions about this study may be directed to Asha Gibson at 214-455-4974 or asha.gibson@mavs.uta.edu and Ifeoma Amah, Ph.D. at 817-272-0991 or iamah@uta.edu. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration, Regulatory Services at 817-272-2105 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

_____

Signature & printed name of principal investigator or person obtaining consent **Date**

CONSENT

By signing below, you confirm that you are 18 years of age or older and have read or had this document read to you. You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time.

You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

_____

PRINT NAME OF VOLUNTEER **DATE**

_____

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER **DATE**

PHONE: _____ **EMAIL:** _____

JUL 2 1 2015
APPROVED
JUL 2 1 2016
Institutional Review Board

Appendix F

Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences as an effective educator of African American junior high students at [INSERT NAME OF INSTITUTION] and I may ask you to elaborate or clarify your responses during our discussion. Also, if it is okay with you I am going to tape-record this interview to ensure that I am capturing your responses accurately.

Background Information	**A. Tell me something about yourself?** **Probes** • How old are you? • Tell me about your background. Where did you grow up? How would you describe your upbringing, your community (hometown, family, SES, race, culture, educational history). • {FOLLOW UP} **if they don't bring up race/culture:** How would you describe your cultural and or racial background? • {FOLLOW UP}, **if they don't bring up personal educational history:** • When and where were you educated? Describe your school. • Why did you become a teacher? Why did you choose to teach junior high school?
Preparation	**B. Let's talk about your teacher education program and other experiences that possibly prepared you to teach African American junior high students.** **Probes** • Tell me about your experiences in your teacher education program (overall impression of program, possibly a description of faculty, staff, and an indication of belonging). • How well did your teacher education program prepare you to teach African American junior high students?

	• {FOLLOW UP}, **if not well prepared**: In what ways could the program have better assisted you? **If prepared**: How has your diversity training assisted you in the classroom? • In the program, how were issues of diversity, race and culture addressed? • {FOLLOW UP}Did any of the viewpoints or experiences with race or culture challenge your perspectives? How so? • {FOLLOW UP}Did any of the viewpoints or experiences with race or culture represent, challenge, or conflict with pre-existing beliefs? How so? • How much of what you know about teaching African American junior high students do you attribute to teacher education, pre-service or in-service? Why? • {**FOLLOW UP**}; How much of what you know about teaching African American junior high students would you attribute to other factors? Tell me about these experiences and how influential they are to your pedagogy and practice. • If you could change teacher education so that teachers would be more effective with African American junior high students, what would be your recommendations?

Part 2: **Pedagogy & Practice**	**C. Now let's talk about your pedagogy and practices. Probes** • Tell me about your school and its neighboring community. What are your students like? • Describe your philosophy of teaching? What is "good teaching," what works in your classroom? (Pedagogical understandings, specific instructional practices, types of interactions, possibly management strategies & classroom climate). • Can you think of any characteristics that African American

	pre-adolescents bring as a group to the classroom? [Please describe.] • **[FOLLOW UP]: if so,** How do these characteristics inform or influence your instructional practices? (Possibly management strategies & classroom climate). • What types of things do you do in your classroom to facilitate the academic success of African American students? • Have you ever had a conflict with or diverged with teaching the curriculum the way the district or school wants you to teach? If so, tell why and how you handle these type of situations. • How would you characterize your classroom management style? How do you handle discipline in your classroom? Is there anything in particular that teachers of African American junior high teachers should know about discipline? • Describe the relationships you have with the parents of your African American students. How would you characterize the kind of roles African American parents play in the success of African American junior high students? • How do you think the schooling experiences of White middle class students differ from the African American students you teach? • What recommendations do you have for teaching African American junior high students? • Lastly, is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I greatly appreciate this opportunity.

Appendix G

Observation Protocols

Observation Protocol 1
(Social Dynamics: Classroom Climate, Teacher/Student Interactions, & Management)

School/Teacher:	Time In:	Time Out:
Date:	Period/Subject:	Grade level:

BEGINNING OF FIELDNOTES: ***CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT*** (draw the physical arrangement of the room)

(Teacher/Student demographics (race and gender) labeled on diagram, ex. Student = S, Teacher = T, Teacher's Aide=TA, Teaching Intern= TI, Parent= P; Black Male=BM; Black Female=BF; White Male WM; White Female =WF; Hispanic Male=HM; Hispanic Female=FM; Asian Male= AM; Asian Female= AF; Other Male=OM; Other Female=OF). Arrows & numbers indicate direction of conversation

Abstract:
[A brief paragraph about the main points/significant events captured in this fieldnote]
BODY OF FIELDNOTES

Narrative Summary and Reflective Notes:
Classroom Interactions: Teacher-Student Interaction (TS); Student-Student Interaction (SS)

Observations (Type of interaction; Student Race & Gender)	**Observer Comments**

Classroom Climate/Learning Environment (Expectations, Classroom Management, Rules & Routines, & Student Engagement/Representation)

Observations	**Observer Comments**

END OF FIELDNOTES

Enduring questions:

[These are questions that you might follow-up on in a memo or keep in mind for a future site visit.]

Observation Protocol 2
(Observation of Instruction)

School/Teacher:	Time In:	Time Out:
Date:	Period/Subject:	Grade level:

BEGINNING OF FIELDNOTES: ***CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT*****/SEATING DIAGRAM** (draw the physical arrangement of the room)

Scripted lesson. L1: Lower level; L2: Higher level questioning. Arrows or grid indicated flow of conversation (e.g. T to 1:2 (first row, 2nd student)

Abstract:
[A brief paragraph about the main points/significant events captured in this fieldnote]

BODY OF FIELDNOTES

Topic of Lesson:

Materials/Technology:

Teacher Presentation of Content: (instructional style; instructional methods used; Lesson pacing & structure; real-world & cultural connections). (*OC* designates observer comments)

Learning Environment & Student Engagement/Enthusiasm: (Classroom expectations & Academic Rigor, Management, Rules & Routines; Attentiveness to task; levels of academic press and engagement as evidenced in instructional timeframe). (*OC* designates observer comments).

END OF FIELDNOTES

Enduring questions:

[These are questions that you might follow-up on in a memo or keep in mind for a future site visit.]

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Biographical Information

As a member of Yvonne Ewell Townview Magnet Center's first senior class, Asha Gibson-Bell graduated in 1996, as salutatorian from Judge Barefoot Sanders Law Magnet Center. Recipient of a National Competitive Scholarship, she would matriculate into Howard University in Washington, DC to later earn a dual degree in History and Political Science with a specific focus in Pan African studies. In 2000, accepting a call to ministry, Asha attended Howard University School of Divinity in pursuit of a masters of divinity. However, in efforts to support herself through school, Mrs. Gibson-Bell interviewed and was selected as a member of DC Teaching Fellows' first cohort. While acquiring alternative certification, Asha quickly discovered that education was her ministry and attained a Master Degree in Teaching with a concentration in Elementary Education (MAT) from American University. With noted scholastic success with students often labeled "at-risk," including a photo exhibition featured in the Smithsonian, Asha began to see the transformative power of effective culturally responsive teaching. Currently, with 15 years in the field of education, from teaching elementary and secondary mathematics to instructional leadership and program development, Asha continues to champion the plight of educational equity to meet the needs of diverse learners. Lastly, Asha's proud affiliation with Delta Sigma Theta Inc., has further instilled an early orientation of community service and servant leadership which remains her guiding principles today.