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Educating the "Miseducated": A Case Study of Middle School Teachers' Experiences Providing Culturally Responsive Practices for Black Male Adolescents

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EDUCATING THE “MISEDUCATED”: A CASE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL
TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES PROVIDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES
FOR BLACK MALE ADOLESCENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University
And Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to my loving parents, Mr. Joe L. Dean and Mrs. Velsia Dean, whose lives are a beautiful reflection of love, compassion, and perseverance. It is because of your relentless prayers, understanding, encouragement, and gentle pushes that I am here today. Y'all will forever be an inspiration to my life. I did not pursue this degree for my own personal gain, but for you and the Dean Family, as you all represent a spirit of greatness and deserve this regard to extend the legacy of our name.

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Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

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NOMENCLATURE

NCES	National Center for Educational Statistics
CRP	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
CRT	Culturally Responsive Teaching
LSES	Low Socioeconomic Status
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
RTTT	Race to the Top
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
CDF	Child Defense Fund
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NPE	Network for Public Education
SFPE	Schott Foundation for Public Education

ABSTRACT

This case study explored eight middle school teachers' experiences working with Black adolescent males at different Louisiana schools. The selected participants represented various identities and shared their perceptions of their teaching and management practices. This case study also examined the teachers' mindsets and beliefs about teaching Black male students. Finally, the teachers discussed how they perceive their own racial identity, gender, socioeconomic class, and other identities when working with Black males. I explored their experiences by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews. A comparative within-case and cross-case analysis was used to review the data and connect it to the research questions that guided this study. Due to the dismal trajectory and discourse often linked to Black males, the findings of this study strived to offer effective and practical responsive teaching and management practices that may preclude negative experiences.

The contents of this case study presented information on the disregard of Black males in the educational system. The background provides context to the foundation and purpose of this research. However, the findings discussed in later chapters shed light to a different narrative, which consist of teachers' attempts of fostering pride in Black identity and valuing the lives of their Black males students through the integration of culturally responsive practices. In fellow educator and proclaimed freedom fighter, Tyson Amir's (2016) book entitled, *Black Boy Poems*, he asserted education as a pathway of learning about one's self and using the knowledge to extract from labels and generalizations. Furthermore, In Carter G. Woodson's (1933) work, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, he declared that Black students learn more about White history than their own history, thus often are miseducated in the sense of denying who they are through the

assimilation on Eurocentric culture. As the teachers in the case study discussed their experiences, their proclamations reflect their efforts in educating Black males in a way that promotes and affirms positive Black identity.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Redefining the marginalized narrative of Black students that continues to pervade U.S. schools generates a necessary demand to counter the bleak course of the disenfranchisement and criminalization of Black males (Howard, 2008). To challenge the disregard of their lives is to recognize and acknowledge their value and worth as a “noble embodiment of freedom and struggle” (Amir, p. 207). Those who persist in the fight to ensure that Black males hold an equitable place in society strive to uphold the value of their existence through education. In 1964 (speech at the Founding Rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity) the late Malcolm X, a notable Civil Rights activist, declared that “education is the passport to the future” and in order to provide a better future for Black males, schools must revamp ways it addresses the “crisis” (Jackson & Howard, 2004, p.155) of the Black male and provide a “more holistic and affirming account of Black males in schools” (Howard, 2013, p. 64).

The primary role of U.S. schools is to ensure all students are provided with a quality education that prepares them to be active participants in society (Ferguson & Mehta, 2004). The value of schools hold a long-standing place in American history, dating back to the Colonial America’s first school, Boston Latin School (1635), to Horace Mann’s ideas about common schools (1848). Common schools pursuit of educational equity for all students promoted high academic expectations and required assimilation of social norms by developing a shared identity and common loyalty through public education (Feinberg, 1998). However, because Blacks were denied the right to free public education and essentially left illiterate, these students were left behind compared to their White counterparts (Anderson, 1988). After slavery was abolished by the 13th amendment in 1865, over 200 years after the first school was established, Black families

struggled economically, but continued the pursuit of establishing an education system for their children (Anderson, 1988). Yet, Black students still missed opportunities for quality education and teachers still struggled to provide instruction to increase learning outcomes and positive educational experiences (Noguera, 2007).

Historically, U.S. schools were not designed for Black children, hence the repeated failed attempts to rectify a deeply rooted problem (Allen, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Ladson-Billings (2006) stated that the direct focus on the inequities only generates short-term solutions that are inadequate and do little to support Black students. Typically, one key word used in traditional discourse on educational inequity is *achievement gap*. The *achievement gap* (Horsford & Grosland, 2013; Milner, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006) a popular, but overused term (Horsford & Grosland, 2013), illustrates the academic disparities between Black students and other students of color and White students. The gap also exposes the divide between poor and more affluent students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2016) defined the *achievement gap* as “when one group of students (such as students grouped by race/ethnicity and/or gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (that is, larger than the margin of error)”. Horsford and Grosland (2013) suggested that discussing the *achievement gap* preserves the mainstream discourse depicting Black children as inferior. The inferiority status continues to be a stigma with Black students, as they are consistently subjected to stereotypes of being intellectually inferior (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Museus, 2008; Horsford & Grosland, 2013).

The total impact of the devastating state of education for Black students reflects long-term effects of poor education. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2014)

reported that Black students drop out of high school at a 7.3% rate compared to White students at a 5.2%. The graduation rate for Black students is 73% compared to 87% for White students. Furthermore, Black students enroll in a four-year institution of higher learning at a 32.6% rate compared to White students at a 42.2% rate. Moreover, academic disparities are more evident for Black males in K-12 schools (Howard, 2008). For example, Black males are enrolling in college at 28.5%, which is the lowest of the racial and gender groups.

Chiles (2013) declared that American public schools were designed to “ensure the gradual destruction of Black males” (p. 122). Black males typically are subjected to adverse school and life experiences that contribute to their premature exodus of school and early entry to juvenile justice programs (Davis, 2003). Alexander (2010) argued that the penal system is the new Jim Crow, which illuminates institutionalized racism in America targeting Blacks. Black males historically have been chronically criminalized and often victimized by “chronic, systemic levels of poor performance and behavior problems in school (Davis, 2003, p. 515). Perhaps more disturbing is the incarceration rates for Black males. Black males are incarcerated at a ratio of 1:15 compared to White men at a ratio of 1:106 (Alexander, 2010). In fact, Black males are 32% more likely to receive prison time to White males at 6% (Sentencing Project, 2012).

One of the causes for the mass incarceration of Black males is linked to discriminatory school policies, as Black male students are more likely to be referred to law enforcement (Heitzeg, 2009). Inequitable school practices, especially for Black males, have been referred to as a pipeline to prison. The term “school-to-prison” (p. 224) pipeline is used to describe the patterns of injustice in schools and its link to the juvenile justice system (Advancement Project, 2010; Fader, Lockwood, Schall & Stokes, 2014, p. 224). Furthermore, Black males are

disproportionately represented in common exclusionary practices such as overrepresentation in receiving suspensions and expulsions (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014; Howard, 2008). The Department of Education (2013) stated that 35% of Black students in grades 7-12 have been suspended or expelled during their school experience compared to 15% of White students. The correlation of poor education and the criminalization of Black males are normalized in U.S. schools and add to the need to find a significant resolution for better educational experiences.

It is important to highlight studies and literature that explore Black students', particularly males, experiences in school environments. Symonds and Hargreaves (1993) suggested that middle school presents a unique developmental transition for adolescents on the individual and social level. During adolescence, students are trying to establish a sense of identity, which is consistent with Erikson's (1959) psychosocial stages of development. The middle school experience is deemed difficult for most adolescents, yet Black males traditionally receive the burden of this fate, as they are attributed to encountering more negative experiences resulting in school failures (Simmons, Black, Zhou, 1991).

Research on Black males often focuses on teachers' deficit mindsets as a factor in how they experience school. One example includes the act of stereotyping. Black males are often the victim of racial biases and cultural assumptions (Kao, 2000). Particularly, Black males are expected to be athletes, which diminish the importance of academics, thus fostering an perceived apathetic attitude towards achievement. Hurst (1992) posited that teachers treat Black students differently and that shapes the way they interact with them, resulting in a negative relationship. According to Schwartz (2001), teachers consistently fail to recognize the unique intellectual

abilities, culture, and values of Black male students. As a result, Black males are unfairly associated with low achievement (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and disengagement from the school experience (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts & Boyd, 2000).

Steele (1992) declared that Black males quickly learn that school is not a place where they are valued. Being a Black male in middle school represents a pivotal time in their lives. Holcomb-McCoy (2007) suggested that middle school is a period where students face many developmental challenges, especially for Black males, who possibly encounter the brunt of educational challenges. In an effort to reverse this cycle, a review of teachers' experiences and perceptions in effectively teaching Black male middle school students provides insight to this matter.

In some pieces of literature, authors have suggested that teachers often hold negative and critical perceptions of Black male students (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015; Irvine 1990; Polite, 1994) and that typically, teachers of Black students rarely consider the value of the communities in which their students live (Delpit, 1995; Irvine 1990). Researchers have also concluded that schools and teachers lack cultural competency, resulting in invalidating cultural characteristics of Black students (Gay, 2000, Ladson-Billings, 2001; Ladson-Billings 2006). Teachers tend to control Black male students' experiences by devaluing the backgrounds and reprimanding cultural traits that are deemed valuable in the child's home, such as linguistic patterns and communication style preferences (Fordham, 1996). Additionally, Fine (1991) stated that school' policies often silence norms, values, and traditional practices of Black male students', thus creating adverse experiences. There is a perception that Black males in middle school do no value academic success and there is a need to challenge this concept. The literature

surrounding Black male students' negative experiences in schools have been documented for years and suggest teachers are key factors in producing an alternate path to promote better growth (Braun, Wang, Jenkins, Weinbaum, 2006; Ferguson, 2002; Hyland, 2005; Stewart, 2008).

Culturally responsive services offered to Black children provide a framework for decreasing negative experiences for students (Banks & Banks, 1995) and reversing the negative assumption about them. This strategy consists of considering students' cultural backgrounds and customs as priorities in delivering instructional and management practices. Typically, teachers who are culturally responsive incorporate aspects of students' homes, personalities, and communities into the classroom (Gay 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Monroe & Obidah, 2004). Furthermore, teachers include targeted pedagogical methods that are rooted in the culture of the student. Even though literature has illuminated the need of culturally responsive practices in schools (Gay, 2000), Black males continue to lag behind other peers and fail to meet academic expectations (Howard, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Despite years of research, there is a lack of attention given to culturally responsive practices that aid in academic and social success of Black males adolescents. The frequent documentation of Black male schooling experiences shed light to a nearing of "pandemic and life threatening proportions" (Howard, 2006, p. 956). One reason for the disparity in success include teachers' belief and perceptions about Black students and their efficacy in incorporating responsive practices that influence positive academic outcomes (Gay, 2000).

Even though disproportions exist for Black male students and can have crippling long-term effects, Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted that considering a comprehensive perspective of factors that contribute to the achievement gap provides a gateway to eliminate disparities for Black males. She posited that the educational system fails to recognize the historical, economical, sociopolitical and moral injustices that have plagued Black male students. Furthermore, Gay and Kirkland (2003) believed that incorporating culturally responsive practices in the classroom satisfies the need to critically assess consciousness about race, culture, and ethnicity, which then aides in teachers reflecting about their perceptions and behaviors when teaching Black males.

In the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade's (2015) study on culturally responsive practices in schools, they found that teachers must consider their ingrained biases about race and exercise critical reflection on instructional and management practices towards their students in order to address the gaps faced by Black students. Additionally, the authors posited that teachers may lack profound introspection on "personal practices and generally [do not] transcend to the larger social, economic, and political impact" (p. 15). Therefore, more attention is needed for teachers to be more reflective on the response to the systemic needs of Black males. If the focus shifts from the ugly reality of the achievement disparities for Black males to a focus on the experiences of teachers working with Black male students, particularly those who are responsive to their needs, schools can begin to progressively tackle the task of effectively educating this population. Hyland (2005) stated that teachers must learn not to perpetuate inequitable practices. Therefore, studying the experiences of teachers and uncovering culturally responsive services implemented for their Black males opens doors to thoughtfully and consciously designing reform policies that

target their unique needs and present them in a more positive light.

Significance of Study

Researchers have suggested that teachers' perceptions of working with Black male students often determine how successful Black students are in school (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Examining perceptions of teaching and management practices that preclude adverse experiences and their ability to promote positive experiences prompts attention, thus creating a different narrative illuminating the preponderance of potential that exist for Black males.

Hyland (2005) stated that even though teachers are not responsible for the origin of the achievement disparities among Black students, they are key factors in how Black males experience education in K-12 schools, especially during a critical time as middle school. Specifically, she argued that "teachers participate in the reproduction of racial inequality and that teachers can mitigate or exacerbate the racist effects of schooling for their students of color depending on their pedagogical orientation" (p. 429). Even though there is literature that explores the importance of teachers incorporating responsive services to diverse students, Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) asserted that the approaches actually did not integrate beliefs and perceptions of the teachers. This study explores the perceptions of teachers and how they view their instruction and management practices, which can address the missing link to the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) study.

Often when discussing matters of education, literature places Black males under one umbrella. This includes automatically identifying them as *at-risk*, *students of color*, *minority*, *disadvantage*, as well as associating negative experiences with other Black students. A specific

focus on middle school Black males warrants close attention because the charge of finding effective teachers who are culturally responsive is critical to identifying pedagogical and management practices that reduces adverse experiences. Ladson-Billings (1995) declared the need to examine successful teachers of Black male students, which reinforces the necessity of learning more from their experiences. By stating, “their unique perspectives and personal investment in good practice must not be overlooked,” Ladson-Billings argued that practitioners must to continue to challenge what responsive teaching means (p. 163).

The significance of this study also sheds light on information often missed in literature: a comparison of White and Black teachers’ various experiences and perceptions while working with Black males in middle school. These experiences can specifically highlight their perceptions, efficacies, and responsive practices that reduce negative experiences typically faced by Black males. There is inadequate literature on White teachers’ success in teaching Black males in middle school using responsive practices (Cooper, 2003) and insignificant literature on Black teachers’ success with teaching Black males that outlines practical responsive practices that can be incorporated today. The rationale for comparing White and Black teachers’ experiences in this case study is to provide a comprehensive perspective of varying responsive practices and compare what each has implemented in reducing adverse experiences for Black male students in middle school.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of middle school teachers who work or have worked with Black male students. I sought to examine their perceptions of their teaching and management practices of Black male students. I also examined the teachers’

mindsets and beliefs about teaching Black male students. Finally, I explored how they perceived their own racial identity, gender, socioeconomic class and other identities when working with Black males. Due to the dismal trajectory and discourse often linked to Black males, the findings of this study strived to offer effective and practical responsive teaching and management practices that may preclude negative experiences.

Research Questions

In order to explore teachers' experiences when working with Black male students with in middle school and discover effective and practice responsive practices, the primary question that guided this study is as follows: What are the perceptions of varying factors (teaching/instructional, management, cultural, racial, and social) that influences positive outcomes for Black male middle school students? Additionally, the subsequent sub questions are listed below:

- (1) How do middle school teachers perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to serving Black male students?
- (2) What are teachers' mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?
- (3) How do teachers perceive their own identity (ies) and the influence on teaching Black male students?

Theoretical Framework

The use of theory in qualitative research provides perspective to studying "questions of gender, class, and race (or other issues of marginalized groups)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 64). Because Black males, particularly those in middle school, are subjected to adverse experiences in school, a look into teachers' perceptions of their experiences illuminates the importance of responsive

practices to decrease those negative experiences. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks that best examine the problem discussed are Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2002; 2010; 2013).

Derived from the study of multicultural education, the two frameworks focus on teaching academic pedagogical practices and teaching practices, respectively (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). There are various frameworks for CRP and CRT that covers educational equity of diverse students (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015). This study focuses on teachers' beliefs and perceptions on their instructional and management practices working with Black males. Gay and Kirkland (2003) called for teachers to be self-reflective and culturally critical consciousness, which are "imperative to improving the educational opportunities and outcomes for students of color" (p. 182). Though these terms are used interchangeably, Aronson and Laughter (2016) stated there should be differentiations between the two in which "*pedagogy* affects attitude and disposition" and "*teaching* affects competence and practice" (p. 5). Furthermore, Gay (2000) described *pedagogy* as influencing attitudes and dispositions teachers must possess and *teaching* as actions teachers should be doing in the classroom to be culturally responsive.

Working with Blacks males requires careful examining of personal perceptions, instructional and management practices, and effective ways increase positive outcomes (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Researchers have concluded that teachers should be more reflective of their beliefs and practices because of ingrained damaging attitudes and perceptions about Black students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Over twenty years ago, Irvine (1990) used the term *cultural synchronization* to illustrate

the interpersonal interactions between teachers and Black students. Because schools have consistently failed Black students, *cultural synchronization* encourages teachers to not only understand, but also accept their students' language patterns and other cultural traditions, habits, and practices. Her work informed the work of Grace Ladson-Billings (1994), who is considered to be a leading theorist in effective responsive teaching practices for Black students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally responsive practices derive from Ladson-Billings' (1995) idea of culturally relevant pedagogy. She defined CRP as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 17). CRP emphasizes the commitment to collective empowerment, which rests on three propositions:

- (1) Students must experience academic success
- (2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence
- (3) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order

Culturally relevant pedagogy is framework employed to create equitable opportunities for Black students and marginalized students to succeed. It illuminates the need for teachers to reflect on personal experiences and the experiences of their students. Gay (2000) explained how CRP uses "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective [for students]... it teaches to and through strengths of these students and it is culturally validating and affirming" (p. 29).

Additionally, CRP promotes understanding that students of color bring cultural habits and traditions that are different than mainstream norms and the importance for teachers to consider their difference as a value, not a deficit. Howard (2003) discussed the significance of re-thinking pedagogical practices in order to bridge the cultural gap between teachers and their students. As schools become more diverse, teachers must be prepared to provide culturally responsive practices to ensure students' needs are met.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) rests on six tenets of effective teaching practices:

- 1) socially and academically empowering by setting high expectations for students
- 2) engage cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives
- 3) validate every student's culture
- 4) socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive as they seek to educate the whole child
- 5) transformative of schools and societies by using students' existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design
- 6) emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies. (Gay, 2010, p. 38)

CRP and CRT provide valuable perspectives to this study. Because of the disturbing trends of Black males in schools, the frameworks highlight a critical piece of the puzzle in changing the landscape of educational inequity, which includes addressing race, power, and privilege in the educational reform discourse. They both challenge traditional instructional methods and encourage teachers to reflect on race, social norms, class, students' learning and thinking styles in order to effectively address the patterns of injustices.

Definitions

Adolescence

Adolescence refers to the period between childhood and adulthood when a child is aged 10-18 and experiences substantial physical, cognitive, self-social, and emotional development changes (Bailey, 2004).

Adverse Educational Experiences

For Black males, they are more likely to be targeted for harsher discipline consequences such as being suspended and/or expelled. Additionally, Black males are more susceptible to victimization and academic underachievement in schools. Adverse educational experiences describes the discrimination faced and the disproportion of Black males in receiving suspension/expulsion consequences and special education referrals leading to low academic achievement (Lewis & Bonner, 2010; Howard, 2008; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000, Townsend, 2000).

Academic disparity/inequity

It is the difference in the learning results and/or efficacy typically experienced by students of color. It is measured by grades, grade point averages, test scores, dropout rates, college matriculation, and college completion rates (Murphy, 1981).

Cultural Synchronization

The term describes the parallels between school and home environments. It is the familiarity with students' cultural backgrounds that enables teachers to draw on shared knowledge that honors students' heritage and preexisting knowledge (Irvine, 1990).

Conclusion

In the book *Black Boy Poems*, Poet Prentice Powell described the experiences of a Black male as “whole pieces of broken. Some too shattered to care and some just trying to put the pieces back together” (as cited by Amir, p. 21, 2016). There is an unrelenting hope that the nation that has consistently failed Black males would soon recognize the intellect, the skill, the charisma, and the power they possess to lead a social movement that would shake the walls of injustice and inequality in the U.S. Black males have been tragically dismissed in so many ways and little is being done to affirm the quality of life for them. Men like James Meredith, a Black man who unashamedly broke social rules and walked the paths of a very segregated Ole Miss in 1962, making it possible for others, like myself, to do the same. He and others have fought and continue to fight to weave pieces of the broken back together. Fortunately, teachers hold a position to alleviate some of the burden of Black males’ predetermined plight. By incorporating culturally responsive practices that affirm the uniqueness of their needs, Black males can have an opportunity to shed negative perceptions and gain equitable treatment.

Summary

In Chapter I, I provided a background of educational inequities in regard to Black males. I also introduced the problem of their exposure to adverse school experiences and how teachers can play a role in reducing it through the integration of culturally responsive practices. I explain the purpose of my study and its significance to the existing body of research. In Chapter II, I present a review of literature and explain key studies that pertain to my purpose. In Chapter III, I outline my methods, including selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

I presented the findings of this multi-case study in three stages. In the first stage, outlined in Chapter IV, I presented the significant statements from the interviews that aligned with the research questions that guided this study. In the second stage, I addressed the findings from each of the eight single cases in Chapters V through XII. In the final stage, discussed in Chapter XIII, I present a cross-case analysis of all the cases by discussing overarching themes that were common for all participants and by comparing and contrasting the results of each case. Finally, in Chapter XIV, I summarized the study, discuss the findings, offer implications of the findings, and make recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of middle school teachers who work or have worked with Black male students. I sought to examine their perceptions of their teaching and management practices of Black male students. I also examined the teachers' mindsets and beliefs about teaching Black male students. Finally, I explored how they perceived their own racial identity, gender, socioeconomic class and other identities when working with Black males. Due to the dismal trajectory and discourse often linked to Black males, the findings of this study strived to offer effective and practical responsive teaching and management practices that may preclude negative experiences.

This chapter provides literature relating to Black males and teachers' role in their educational experiences. First, a historical perspective of race and class in the United States and its impact on the educational experiences of both teachers and Black students are reviewed. Next, federal and local policies are explored to highlight systemic influences on teachers' roles in schools and their impact on Black student experiences. Following that section, literature on teachers' experiences working with on Black students and Black males schooling experiences are reviewed. And in closing, the literature review examines the conceptual framework of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Infused throughout the section is extant literature that addresses Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching, two theoretical and conceptual frameworks that provides a critical lens in studying the problem stated in Chapter One. Furthermore, because of the historical context of race and class, Critical Race Theory will also be used as a lens to view

the problem. Additionally, it is important to note that the literature concerning Black students' experiences typically cluster all students of color. Terms such as *at-risk*, *diverse*, *disadvantaged*, *ethnically and racially diverse*, *traditionally marginalized populations*, *minority*, and *urban* are used interchangeably. However, the term *Black* will be used when the literature discuss Black students specifically.

Historical Perspective of Race and Class in the United States

Douglass-Horsford and Grosland (2013) declared, “without taking a serious look at race and the history of educational inequity in America, no gaps will be closed” (p. 161). Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a reference offers an analytic lens that sparks discourse on race and class as it relates to Black experiences in the U.S. Specifically, Solórzano & Yosso (2002) argued that it challenges dominant and racist ideologies while giving voice to individuals traditionally oppressed and silenced. Because the academic and social experiences of Black middle schools males have been consistently undermined, exploring the historical background of race and class elucidate gaps and injustices in systematic and institutionalized policies. The historical context of race and class in the United State indicates years of biased thoughts and injustices, reinforcing stereotypes of Black individuals (Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In education, the discrimination of Black students often resulted in negative interactions with their teachers, which ultimately led to unfavorable educational experiences (Hodge, Kozub, Dixon, Moore, & Kambon, 2008).

Education for Black students was forbidden during the years of slavery. In the 1700s, President Thomas Jefferson declared that every White child should receive public schooling (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Additionally, White male students could further their education by

attending college paid by tax paying citizens. Enslaved Blacks children constituted over 40% of Virginia's children population and provided much of the state's wealth (Anderson, 1988). Furthermore, Feagin (2006) asserted that the free labor of slaves also led to White prosperity, which resulted in assets passed down to later generations to the present day. Additionally, even though Blacks were enslaved and denied a right to pursue an education, their free labor profited many White owned industries. The free labor of slaves was considered the real source of wealth (Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, Blacks were deprived of the right to attain economic power and education and were essentially dehumanized, which exposed an extremely racist society that still exists.

After the Emancipation of Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln in January of 1863, many free Black families began educating themselves in hopes of equalizing with their White counterparts. However, even when the 13th amendment was ratified to officially abolish institutionalized slavery in 1865, Black families still could not escape years of enslavement and were subjected to economic and social oppression. Scholar and education historian, Anderson(1988), discussed how Black families were denied civil rights needed to function in society. He wrote:

Blacks were ruthlessly disfranchised; their civil and political subordination was fixed in southern law, and they were trapped by statutes and social customs in an agricultural economy that rested heavily on coercive control and allocation of labor. [Blacks were denied] citizenship, the right to vote, and the voluntary control of their labor power. They remained an oppressed people. Black education developed within the context of political and economic oppression. (p. 6)

Even though Blacks gained physical freedom, they were deprived of basic human rights needed to garner economic leverage to access power in the United States. The economic injustice

of Black families impacted their ability to form a public educational system that afforded Black students the opportunity to become literate. The educational system for Blacks was designed to extend their freedom and help them navigate through an existing unfair and oppressive social system. As Blacks were denied economic freedom that resulted in an inferiority status, schooling for Blacks students were second rate and established an impoverished classification, which resulted in poor education and poverty for Black families (Anderson, 1988).

In the field of education, the “badge of inferiority” still exists for Black students, labeling them with an identity that is unequal with their White peers (Horsford & Grosland, 2013, p. 154). Furthermore, discourse around the underachievement in schools as it pertains to Black students continues to perpetuate this inferiority label, thus shifting focus from the historical context of oppression to a more mainstream narrative that is the *achievement gap* discussed in Chapter One (Horsford & Grosland, 2013). Cross (2007) examined the narrative of *achievement gap* as:

An internal threat to the imminent, competitive advantage of the United States of America, and it resides in urban school districts. The threat is so large that it places the nation in danger of losing its leadership position more so than other educational gaps. This gap, no this threat, is one between the low educational achievement...of poor children in urban schools, many who are children of color...and their suburban White, middle class counterparts who are intelligent and high achieving. (p. 248)

Cross (2007) argued that the gap ultimately questioned the intelligence of Black students, instead of looking at how historically Blacks were marginalized and oppressed in society. The problem with the *achievement gap* narrative is the void of the historical considerations of its origin, thus putting policy makers in the position to create reforms that do not address the complexity of the problem (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Plessy v. Ferguson

A key tenet of Critical Race Theory condemns liberalism and argues that Whites are the primary beneficiaries of civil rights statutes (Crenshaw, 1988). Accordingly, Ladson-Billings (1998) discussed how Critical Race Theory criticizes “civil rights era’s most cherished legal victories and educational reform movements” (p. 7). Using Critical Race Theory as a reference point, a look into historical racial reforms illuminates adverse efforts to racial and equity. There were attempts to rectify the injustices projected on Black families and the poor education of Blacks. In May of 1976, the Supreme Court declared “separate but equal,” in the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case.

The case made claims that Black and White students could function separately with school facilities equal to that of White’s (Milner & Howard, 2004). However, Milner and Howard (2004) argued that the idea was not fully actualized, as Black students received second-class education. The Court upheld that racial segregation in schools and other entities did not equate to inequitable access to rights. Roche (1954) noted that the case was a “loudly announced slogan of the South” that celebrated White supremacy as its vindicator (p.44). He argued that this case was a push to “drive the Negro back into that political and social limbo” (p.45). Furthermore, the case is also viewed as an implicit statement that Whites were superior to Blacks and an endorsement of the notion Blacks and Whites did not need identical and equal treatment (Roche, 1954). After the Civil War, lawmakers made initiatives to guarantee free education for all students. However, the efforts hardly benefited Black students. The decision to enforce segregation only legalized what was practiced years before (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Brown v. The Board of Education

Another notable federal reform was the Supreme Court case, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). *Brown* marks one of the most influential decisions ever made in U.S. education history. Declaring that the segregation of schools was unconstitutional, schools reluctantly integrated. The case not only impacted the American people, but Black students in K-12 schools (Bell, 1990; Green, 2014; Jackson & Howard, 2004). It can be argued that the landmark case presented adverse experiences for Black students, as most Black students attended low performing schools (Bell, 1990; Zirkel & Cantor, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Scholars in the field have discussed how Black students have encountered many obstacles, thus resulting in a large disparity in achievement compared to more affluent and White students (Bell, 1990; Ferguson & Mehta, 2004; Jackson & Howard, 2004). One major effect of *Brown* elucidates how teachers perpetuated the inferior status of Black students. When schools began to integrate in the late 1950s, scholars explored non-Black teachers' perception of Black students (Douglas, Lewis, Douglass, Scott, Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Martin, 1998; Tyson, 2003). For example, Martin (1998) examined how Whites were "being taught to gain personal status in an unrealistic and nonadaptive way" (p. 144). Furthermore, Whites also built defense methods to avoid "essential injustice of their unrealistic fears and hatred of minority groups" (Martin, 1998, p. 145). Hurston (1954) discussed how sending Black students to schools was harmful because the White teachers did not want them there. Black students endured these experiences and encountered psychological effects (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002; Zirkel & Cantor, 1994). After *Brown*, their identity, motivation, and aspirations were challenge due to the negative perceptions (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004).

These racist attitudes towards Blacks have infiltrated in the educational system, which created negative experiences for Black students. Larke (1990) asserted that White educators feel discomfort when in contact with racially diverse populations. Due to this disconnect, teachers often conform to what they believe to be cultural traditions of students (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012). These misconceptions cause teachers to “ignore their students’ ethnic identities and their unique cultural beliefs, perceptions, values, and worldviews” (Irvine, 2003, p. xvii). Additionally, when associating low-income status with being Black, the perceptions are more negative (Milner, 2013). An article stated that teachers, typically White and female, perceived “ethnic minority children in underserved communities as lacking intelligence, unmotivated, difficult to work with and apt to cause discipline problems” (Amatea, Cholewa, & Mixon, 2012).

In the case of education of Black students, race still plays a role in how teachers perceive Black students and their ability to achieve academically in schools. Howard (2008) stated that race is one of the least understood, yet the most divisive and provocative component of teaching that still exist. Historically, race and class criminalized Black families and students and what remains are traces of negative perceptions that continue to infiltrate society and schools.

The desegregation of schools produced an unintended adverse effect for Black students. The literature focusing on the historical context of race and class reveals how the injustices of Blacks are established into the social fabric of the United States. Blacks were subjected to systemic racism and classism and it continues to pervade economical and educational institutions. To gain a deeper understanding of Black students’ experiences, a look at the legacy of educational inequities reveals how prevalent race and class influence are on social class structures, which exposes oppressive edifices in American society. Efforts have been employed

to remedy years of the denied justice for Blacks and restore equality for all people. Since *Plessy* and *Brown*, there has been educational reforms designed to decrease the disparity, yet failing to recognize years of oppression and injustice cannot be undone by implementing policies that are not suited for Black and low-income students (Anyon, 2005). Anyon (2005) argued that school reforms would continue to fail unless the government addresses public policies that are historically rooted in marginalizing people of color. The following section examines federal and state policies and their influence on teachers in schools.

Federal and State Policies

Milner and Howard (2004) declared that Black students were supposed to receive the most benefit from *Brown*, yet are “arguably the most underachieving group of students in the U.S. schools” (p.287). Since *Brown* (1954), educational reform policies were established, aimed to enhance the school experience for traditionally marginalized populations, particularly Black and impoverished students. Such policies may promote standardization, which aims to equalize the educational opportunities for all students. Ladson-Billings (2006) stated that the “standardization reform efforts advance a sameness agenda with the playing field for students of color...and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in urban environments are anything but even or level” (p. x). Additionally, she refuted the irrational belief that Black students, especially those identified as low socioeconomic status (LSES), function in a homogenous environment where there are equal and equitable opportunities (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Milner, 2008). Moreover, federal policies and initiatives, such as *No Child Left Behind* (2001), the *Race to the Top* grant (2009), and state initiatives such as standardized mandated testing and *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) are notable reforms that influence a teacher’s roles on Black

students' experiences in schools.

No Child Left Behind

In 2001, Former President George W. Bush, Jr. enacted the *No Child Left Behind* act (NCLB) to boldly move forward to close the disparities between “disadvantaged and minority students and their peers.” Conversely, sixteen years later, those disparities still exist. Researchers have indicated that not only are Black students graduation rates are lower than any other racial groups, but also they are disproportionately represented in Special Education services and have higher rates of suspensions and expulsions (Davis, 2003; Liaupsin, Jolivet, Scott, 2004). NCLB's (2001) goal was to provide high quality education to all students and states were required to create a set of rigorous standards for students to master. States were also required to give a test annually to gauge students' progress. If proficiency was met, states would receive federal funding. Schools that failed to meet the yearly progress criteria would be penalized. The penalization usually would fall on low-performing schools, which included a high percentage of Black students and students living poverty. NCLB (2001) was designed to increase accountability; however, it generated unintended effects that ultimately penalized both Black students, students living in poverty, and their teachers.

Cusick (2014) discussed how several reforms, such as NCLB, missed the needed effects to positively change the educational landscape. He stated that the reforms geared more toward “reduce[ing] teachers' autonomy, limit[ing] their discretion, tighten[ing] supervision, and more closely connect[ing] teaching to curriculum and evaluation” rather than comprehensively meeting students' needs (p. 181). Additionally, Cusick (2014) argued that teachers leave the classroom within five years because they no longer have the intellectual freedom and closeness

to the students due to the pressure of producing high performance scores on state tests and the fear of poor evaluations. In one article, teachers reported that the sanctions given to underperforming, high poverty schools are reasons why they transfer out of the schools, especially high poverty schools. NCLB's focus on student outcomes deviated from high and low performing students and shift attention to "bubble kids" (Dee & Jacob, 2001, p. 420). Dee and Jacob (2011) defined bubble kids as the students who will most likely meet proficiency standards if teachers focus on them more (p. 420). Because of the added pressure of federal reform policies, teachers spend less time supporting students, especially Black males.

Critics of NCLB indicated that the policy did not address more pressing matters in education and specifically did not resolve educational injustices for impoverished students and Black students that are historically rooted in the social fabric of the United States (McGuinn, 2016; Harteny & Flavin 2011). The implementation of NCLB reveals the tendency to remove the salience of race, class, and power from conversations in education and eradicate any opportunities to resolve a much needed problem in K-12 schools.

Race to the Top and Common Core State Standards

In a concerted effort to produce a more effective reform, the Obama Administration formed the *Race to the Top* (RTTT) competitive grant. The RTTT initiative incentivized states that created and implemented instructional state standards and aligned mandated tests to gauge schools' performances. RTTT also encouraged the expansion of charter schools and the revamping teacher accountability. Perhaps the most controversial notion from the RTTT grant is the adoption of the Common Core academic standards (McGuinn, 2016). *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) was designed to enhance educational opportunities for all students, thus

decreasing disparities among disadvantaged students. CCSS specified what students should know and able to do in both math and English language arts at each grade level (McGuinn, 2016).

The uniformity of the CCSS was praised by some and criticized by others. CCSS was not a federal mandate, however, the implementation was heavily influenced by federal initiatives, such as RTTT and NCLB. The implementation of CCSS elucidated a flaw consisting of the provision of monetary support and resources to states that adopted CCSS. This left some states that did not use CCSS to support themselves (McGuinn, 2016). Common Core was another attempt to rectify educational problems ingrained in historical injustices. Teacher advocate groups complained that CCSS focused too much on standardized tests, potentially over testing students in order to prepare them to be successful (McGuinn, 2016). Teachers also argued that the implementation of CCSS would lead schools to make unfair personnel decisions. Lastly, and perhaps the most overlooked criticism of standardized standards, is that it does not “address the core underlying social inequities that are at the root of educational performance gaps” (McGuinn, 2016, p. 403).

Governments should focus more on resolving other social issues, such as poverty, quality health care for disadvantaged families, and other external factors impacting student achievement (Irvine, 2010). Therefore, reform policies would be more beneficial and directly address the educational needs of students, particularly Black students. Literature on federal mandated policies found that systems that reward or sanction schools based on students’ test scores provide justification of school staff to channel low-scorers, typically Black students, into special education so that their scores won’t count in school reports (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1992;

Figlio & Getzler, 2002). Additionally, researchers have argued that other ways to avoid being sanctioned include: keeping students in the same grade, thus making their grade-level look better (Haney, 2002; Jacob, 2002), creating selective enrollment policies, which keeps low- scoring students from admissions (Darling-Hammond, 1991) and encouraging problematic students to drop out (Haney, 2002).

Despite efforts to reduce inequalities in education for Black students, disparities continue to plague their experiences. These injustices are continually reinforced when educational reform policies are created to resolve a pervasive matter rooted in years of discrimination. Cusick (2014) made a worthwhile point in summarizing the educational structure in the United States:

Inequalities are built into the American economic system...a meritocratic, test-based, educational system serves best to cement the privileges of the already-ruling class, who prime their children to do well; their children do well, making it appear that they, the children, deserve their inherited and elevated social status, which serves to further an already unequal social/economic system. (p. 182)

The notion that current and future implemented reforms will reduce inequalities clouds lawmakers' judgment, and continually victimizes Black male students. Teachers who are not equipped to culturally teach Black students, possibly perpetuating the inferiority status of Black middle school male, cause a high percentage to fall through the cracks.

The next section provides context of teachers' experiences working with Black students and the impact on their educational experiences.

Teachers and the Schooling Experiences of Black Students

Some scholars suggest that the schooling experiences for Black students often include teachers foregoing academic achievement to teach them social and cultural skills to ensure they are able to assimilate into a mainstream and white society (Anyon, 1980; Delpit, 1996; Douglass-

Horsford & Grosland, 2013; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Douglass-Horsford and Grosland (2013) suggested that teachers enforce a new badge of inferiority that reflects a culture of compliance, simultaneously undermining the cultural habits, aptitude, and behaviors of Black males. In Tyson's (2003) study on the schooling experiences of Black students, she found that instilling a positive and affirming learning environment was crucial to building self-esteem and positive Black identity for students, which also increased academic achievement. However, the commitment to building strong Black identity was reduced, as teachers cultivated a culture of conformity that expected their students to learn cultural norms that fit into "mainstream white middle class society" (p.327). Tyson (2003) asserted that teachers' expectation to conform conveyed a message to Black students that their cultural behaviors and habits are not accepted in society and that they must learn to assimilate to Eurocentric ways, thus being able to assume an equitable position in a higher socioeconomic class.

Identifying *cultural socialization* as the source, Tyson (2003) described the teachers' acceptance of this traditional practice as placing acculturation above fostering positive self-identity of the Black students. As a result, the students in the study received racialized messages that invoke a sense of inferiority. Accordingly, the constant reminders that Black male students are different and that their difference is not adequate expose a common teaching practice: integrating oppressive instructional methods that inhibit positive schooling experiences of Black males

Teachers' Role in Perpetuating the "Burden of Acting White"

Culturally responsive teachers' are charged with liberating themselves from "oppressive educational practices and ideologies" (Gay, 2010, p. 38) that typically devalue Black identity and

reinforce the inferior, underachieving status and negative stereotypes of Black males (Douglass-Horsford & Grosland, 2013). Teachers must critically assess their beliefs and attitudes or they fall into practice of unintentionally undermining their Black males, thus minimizing their esteem and worth in the schooling experience. There is literature that suggests that traditional educational practices reproduce social inequality, thus emphasizing a system of racial and gender stratification that exists in the U.S schools (Bowles and Gintis, 1876; Douglass-Horsford & Grosland, 2013; Tyson, 2003).

In educational discourse about perceived deficits of Black students, particularly males, behaviors of high achievement is usually equated to White students, leaving Black students feeling the burden of obtaining the characteristics of the “other” (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010, p. 600) at the expense of giving up their race, which is typically assigned to being “lazy” and “unwilling to work hard” (p. 313). Tyson and Castellino (2005) stated that “the charge of acting White directed toward Black students” (p. 600) was less pervasive in creating a resistance or opposition towards academic success. However, the authors found that for Black students, “academic achievement becomes yet another characteristic delineating the boundaries of Whiteness” (Tyson & Castellino, 2005, p. 600).

Teachers and Literacy: Performance of Race and Gender in Schools

Howard (2008) suggested that Black males’ are typically ascribed deficit and defaming characteristics in school while the real problem rests in the notion of the “racist practices and ideologies that are institutionalized and normalized within school” (p. 968). Specifically, teachers’ innate beliefs about Black male students’ and their linguistic habits are manifested through their participation in instructional and management practices that forces students to

relinquish their language or Black vernacular, thus allegedly increasing academic achievement. While teachers typically express positive thoughts about Black males, Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, and Jennings (2010) conducted a study that described how Black teachers tend to demoralized Black males' language patterns and low academic achievement when they failed to meet socially constructed norms. As a result, Black males possibly carry the burden of Blackness by struggling with embracing their Black and masculine identity while "matriculat [ing] in an atmosphere that feels hostile" (Steele, 1992, p. 75) and is invalidating to their identity. Young's (2007) book titled, *Your Average Nigga Performing Race Literacy and Masculinity*, describes the socially imposed conflict of Black males' as they negotiate their race and gender in schools. Asserting that "these racial performances are most often carried out through language, the way we communicate" (p. xiii), Young (2007) draws from his experiences to conclude that schools teach Black males to alter not only their skin color, but also their masculinity for the sake of reaching academic success.

A Glimpse of Responsivess: Black Males and Self-Determination

Despite the literature that labels Black males as low achieving and how teachers' aid in devaluing their identity, there is research to suggest Black males are indeed academically inclined when exposed to the right factors. Specifically, teachers who are culturally responsive are urged to prioritize building and affirming their Black males' identity and cultivate a sense of self. Cokley (2003) challenged the inferior myth of Black males by exploring factors that motivate them in school. He highlighted how self-determination is an aspect of motivation that yields positive results for Black males. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) states that individuals must have a drive to navigate successfully in social entities, including schools (Deci & Ryan,

2008). According to Deci and Ryan (2002), in order to be self-determined to achieve success, three factors must exist: a) competence, b) autonomy and c) relatedness. Competence refers to high efficacy and self-assurance in achieving a goal. Autonomy refers to recognizing how personal interests and values guide decision-making. Relatedness refers to feeling a sense of belonging and feeling cared for in social environments.

Harrison, Martin, and Fuller (2015) conducted a survey that elucidated factors that contributed to Black male student athletes academic success in higher education. The study could offer implications for teachers in developing self-determination and a strong sense of self in their Black male students. The results from the study indicated that self-determination played a role in Black males achieving success in schools, but also illuminated how schools could impede that motivation. The authors suggested that Black males thrive in environments where they feel connected, cared for, and a sense of relatedness. Consistent with CRP and CRT factors, Black males' intrinsic motivation to achieve academically (Deci & Ryan, 2002) is enhanced when they are in settings that are supportive and provide opportunities for them to be successful.

Ladson-Billings (1995) postulated that Black students need to achieve academic success through the use of culturally relevant material in order to feel confident. Similarly, the Black males in the study (Harrison et al, 2015) reported that when they felt competent, they were more motivated to pursue high achievement. Citing that having a strong support system and peers with similar goals were among factors that also contributed to them being highly motivated in school. Lastly, the Black males in the study discussed the importance of knowing their life aspirations as a means of developing motivation to succeed. Harrison et al (2015) asserted that Black males' desire to succeed largely depends on how they see themselves interacting in the larger culture.

Not bound by their athletic identity, the boys in the study aspired to live autonomously and not as a label or generalization like much of the literature ascribe to them. Finding it difficult to navigate through negative perceptions of achievement and stereotypes, the males did experience moments of self-doubt due to negative feedback, poor grades, and lack of supportive people in their corner. Nevertheless, they persisted and continued to be self-determined to achieve academically.

This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with Black male students in hopes of highlighting effective responsive practices that counter the disparaging narrative of Black males. The following section provides literature on teachers' successful experiences working with Black students and offer culturally responsive practices that aide in their success.

Black and White Teachers' Experiences with Black Students

Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted the importance of research that directs focus to teachers' experiences and beliefs of working with various diverse populations, specifically Black males. Additionally, Milner and Laughter (2015) suggested that teachers might not understand the impact of racist and classist systems in education, which inevitably influences their teaching practices. With the teaching force representing 84% White, female, and/or majority middle class, teachers are more likely to implement ineffective practices that continually marginalize Black male students. Furthermore, teachers should engage in more reflective practices that include pondering their personal attitudes in order to navigate their instructional practices to be inclusive of Black adolescent males, as most traditional methods have failed (Davis, 2003).

Although there is some literature pertaining to Black students' experiences with White

teachers and Black teachers (Cooper, 2003; Douglas, et al, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2006; Milner, 2012, Tyson, 2013), there is limited information on comparing the experiences of White and Black teachers in order to determine a comprehensive list of responsive practices that reduce adverse experiences for Black male students. The following section will review literature that sheds light on this particular subject matter.

Ladson-Billing's (1995) study on "good teaching" focused on the success of White teachers working with Black students (p. 159). In that study, Ladson-Billings' discussed how those teachers understood that a student's culture was a vehicle to learning, thus leveraging a high percentage of academic success and cultural affirmations to inspire Black students (1995). A teacher's belief that his or her students were capable of achieving success counters the inferiority narrative that typically labels Black students. Additionally, the teachers who deem themselves as part of the community will seek opportunities to immerse themselves by attending community functions and establish relationships with stakeholders and parents.

In another study, the experiences of three White teachers are examined and are shown to have demonstrated good teaching in working with Black students (Cooper, 2003). The teachers were nominated by their principal and assistant principal as being effective teachers of Black students based on qualitative and quantitative data, which ensured the participants were a good fit for the study. Using Ladson-Billing's (1994) Culturally Relevant Teaching and Irvine's (1990) cultural synchronization as a framework for the study, Cooper (2003) focused on the culturally responsive perceptions of the teachers pertaining to Black students, which illuminated four themes of practical effective practices.

The four themes included: mastery of reading and writing with a focus on sub skills, authoritative discipline style, view of self as a second mother, and racial consciousness.

Mastery of Reading and Writing

Teachers from this study viewed reading and writing as critical to the academic success of Black students. The focus on foundational skills in phonics, spelling, and vocabulary provided students with a direct focus on filling the gaps in students' conceptual knowledge. The study, however, did not indicate the incorporation of culturally relevant content to teaching reading and writing.

Authoritative Discipline Style

The study reviewed the styles of discipline the teachers used in classroom management. The teachers employed an overt classroom management style, in which the author identified as authoritative citing its emphasis of the use of "power for the student's good" (Cooper, 2003, p.). The researcher stated that this form of classroom management was employed to "increase student achievement, self-efficacy, self-respect, and group membership for the sake of both individual and group development. The teachers used a firm, perceivably loud tone throughout various parts of the day. In the study, the students did not seem to take offense to this level of authority, nor did the teachers indulged in their authority. In fact, the researcher stated that the teachers resumed a friendly tone to tend to the business of the classroom.

View as a Second Mother

The study's findings suggested that the reason teachers assumed the role of a mother was because they were grounded in the emotional welfare of the students. They balanced their authority position, with a caring and nurturing disposition that cultivated positive relationships

with the student. They viewed the students as people and genuinely cared about their nutritional, physical, and emotional needs. Part of this theme not only included maternal instincts of their safety needs, but the use of inclusive, familial terms of endearment, such as “my kids,” “sweetie,” and “baby” (p. 423.) Additionally, the teachers employed subtle ways to make the students feel special, such as using affirmations and compliments and acknowledging the students’ contributions in class. This practice is consistent with culturally relevant teaching of Black students, reflecting the personal attributes of students to build their self-worth and value when viewing of students as extended family members (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128).

Racial Consciousness

Irvine’s cultural synchronization states the importance of teachers connecting with the students’ culture, therefore being proactive in including references in instruction. In the study, each teacher discussed their identity and their development while teaching Black students, yet did not overtly talk about race in their class. The teachers explained their realization of racism in America and how it impacts their students, but they felt the need, however, to assume a position to remain color blind, which indicated a safe and comfortable place for them. With a dedication to the community they taught, they believed they were able to pursue equitable opportunities and be responsive to their Black students without discussing race.

Exploring Black teachers’ successful work with Black students offers a sense of hope to better support their success in schools. Milner (2006) suggested that there is value to exploring Black teachers’ experiences, yet cautioning the misinterpretation of the work as “professional racism” (Gay, 2002). Gay (2002) argued that:

By underscoring the need for more teachers of color, the need for more Latino, Asian,

Native, and African American teachers in U.S. schools is unquestionable. But to make improving the achievement of students of color contingent upon fulfilling this need is based on a very fallacious and dangerous assumption. It presumes that membership in an ethnic group is necessary or sufficient to enable teachers to [execute] culturally competent pedagogy. This is as ludicrous as assuming that one automatically knows how to teach English to others simply because one is a native speaker. (p. 205)

Furthermore, Ferguson (1995) and Tyson (2003) made a similar argument, stating that Black teachers who teach Black students does not eliminate or reduce problems they face, especially if their socioeconomic status differs from that of the students. When teachers of any race lack cultural synchronization, it produces adverse experiences for Black students. The follow cases provide examples of effective teaching of Black students from Black teachers.

Monroe and Obidah's (2004) study explored the influence of cultural synchronization in a Black teacher's experience in working with Black students. Specifically, the researchers focused on the unique behavioral and linguistic patterns the teacher utilized in the classroom. In the study, the teacher incorporated dialectical and grammatical forms that reflected the home language and culture of the students. Gilbert and Gay (1989) stated that the language norms expected in schools and the students' home language differ, thus contributing to the cultural discontinuity between teachers and students. The major themes found in this study included patterns of cultural humor and demonstrations of affect and emotion.

Patterns of Cultural Humor

The study found that the teacher used a culturally responsive and unique form of humor as an effective classroom management practice. Engaging in playful banter was used to control behavior in the class. The use of humor deescalated disruptions that provided context to the importance of understanding behaviors that may be culturally based (Gay, 2000).

Additionally, Goulder (1978) explored how teachers often misperceive disruptive behaviors when the actions are not intended to be disruptive from the student's perspective. The study illuminated how the presence of cultural synchronization aided in the teacher's overall success with her Black students. She aligned her professional practice to the students' culture, which allowed her to "build cultural bridges between students' home and school lives" (Monroe & Obidah, 2004, p. 263).

Demonstrations of Affect and Emotion

The second theme found in the study relates to the teacher's emotion and affect as a management technique. The authors described the use of the teacher's "tough and no-nonsense style" to express disapproval of certain behaviors (p. 265). This direct form of communication mirrors a "blunt" type of disciplinary action often used in Black families. In this role, the teacher assumed the role of a mother, chastising the students in a maternal way (Monroe & Obidah, 2004, p. 265). Included in this description is the use of rhetorical questions and short, sharp directives when students were not meeting expectations.

In a similar study, Mitchell (1998), stated that Black teachers are able to connect with Black students because their ability to understand their behaviors and leverage culturally responsive practices when addressing those behaviors. Similarly, both studies shed light on the importance of understanding the cultural norms of the students and using the knowledge to build relationships and develop synchronization, which in turn reduce adverse experiences.

The Possibility for Equity: A Look into Freedom Schools

There are scholars who have challenged the negative discourse about Black males (Davis, 2003; Horsford & Grosland, 2013; Jackson and Howard, 2014). Jackson and Howard (2014)

argued that Black students must be exposed to positive cultural identities and to affirm their intellectual abilities. When discussing counter narratives about Black students, Jackson and Howard (2014) reasoned that Freedom Schools offer a different perspective that may inform teachers about effective culturally responsive practices. Freedom Schools rose during the summer of 1964 as part of the initiative Mississippi Freedom Summer (Jackson and Howard, 2014). Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), spearheaded by Charlie Cobb, used the summer to empower the Black community and ultimately restructure the poor education Black students received. Cobb proclaimed that Freedom Schools would “do something to address the impoverished nature of the education typically offered Black students in Mississippi” (Payne, 1997, p. 4). He argued that Black students’ experiences indicated inferiority and that they were victims of social and educational oppression (Jackson & Howard, 2014). Therefore, Freedom Schools were designed to transform Blacks students into active and progressive citizens that would represent a different, more positive perspective (Chilcoat & Ligon, 1999; Rothschild, 1982).

The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) is a child advocacy group that partners with local community stakeholders to create freedom summers for students that are similar to that of 1964. CDF Freedom Schools provide students weeks of integrated reading, conflict resolution, and an activity-based curriculum infused with social, cultural, and historical references. Furthermore, Green (2014) investigated and concluded that the promise of Freedom Schools build self-esteem and cultural pride for Black students. Edelman (2014) stated that the primary function of

Freedom Schools consisted of:

- 1) seeing the school as an agent of change, 2) students knowing their own history, 3) the academic curriculum linked to student's experiences, 4) asking open-ended questions, and 5) stressing the necessity of developing academic skills. (as cited in Green, 2014, p. 166)

The implications of Freedom Schools provide framework for teachers to incorporate culturally responsive practices when working with Black students. Because Culturally Relevant/Responsive Pedagogy suggests the cultural discontinuity between school and home by Black students is a factor in their achievement in schools, teachers must demonstrate responsive practices that consistently promote cultural, social, and historical awareness (Jackson & Howard, 2014).

Green (2014) conducted a study on a Freedom School program in Baton Rouge, LA. She stated that students “developed a social consciousness and turned away from street activities, leaning more towards education” (p. 173). In the study, Yosso's (2005) model of community cultural wealth was used to illuminate the practices that aided in the students' growth and development. Cultural wealth (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995) demonstrates the following forms as a mean for people of color to navigate oppression and racial hostility: *aspirational capital*, *linguistic capital*, *familial capital*, *social capital*, *navigational capital*, and *resistance capital*. These forms were referenced and provided context to responsive practices. Table 2.1 outlines the findings for each tenet and the associated responsive practices (indicated by bullets).

Table 1. Cultural Wealth

Aspirational Capital	Ability to maintain hope during perceived racial tensions (Yosso, 2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help students identify a purpose to avoid adverse social behaviors (gangs, drugs, etc.)• Facilitate skills and behaviors to pursue dreams
Linguistic Capital	Social skills that are attained through various communication styles (Yosso, 2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of raps, poetry, and plays as a form of expression• Affirm Black vernacular• Positively facilitate code switching to Standard English• Challenge the content of songs without devaluing interest
Familial Capital	Ability to use to cultural knowledge that nurtures a kinship amongst a group of people (Yosso, 2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide opportunities for form lasting bonds• Recognize family structures as an important structure for Black students and assume a surrogate role in the lives of children
Social Capital	Networks of people and community resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strive to build trust and strong relationships with students• Incorporate community members• Leverage resources and share with parents
Navigational Capital	Skills used to navigate through various social institutions rooted in historical injustices (Yosso, 2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeing teacher/student relationships as transactional• Get parents involved
Resistance Capital	Skills and knowledge fostered through behavior that challenges inequities (Yosso, 2005) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate daily motivational chants and songs• Understand stereotypes of Black students and proactively combat it• Address street culture and avoid labels• Incorporate literature that explore resistance experiences of Blacks

Individuals involved with Freedom Schools and Freedom School programs used responsive practices that positively impacted the lives of Black students. Teachers' experiences with Black males do not have to embrace or sustain traditional rhetoric about them, but can

provide optimal learning environment that will help to reduce typical negative experiences.

Culturally Responsive Practices

For many years, researchers have studied effective teaching practices as it relates to students of color, specifically Blacks students (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015). Even though culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and responsive practices are popular terms that frequent educational discourses on effective teaching practices, Gorski (2006) asserted that there are still discrepancies and gaps in the practice of such frameworks. One reason why it has been difficult to put frameworks into practice is partially due to the lack of considering the historical and social context of race and class. Osborne (1996) stated that CRP frameworks must avoid “victim blaming...[but consider] the social context of both schooling and family life, and informs classroom processes designed to maximize learning for all our nations’ children” (p.285).

Multiculturalism

Gay (2010) declared that teachers must be committed to cultural diversity at “levels of intensity, depth, and magnitude that far exceed anything before” (p. 143). Gorski (2009) suggested that the review of multicultural education sets a foundation for cultural responsiveness in schools.

The defining principles, based on historical conceptions of multicultural education suggest that it is:

a political movement and process that attempts to secure social justice for historically and presently underserved and disenfranchised students; recognizes that....social justice is an institutionalized matter, and as such, can be secured only through comprehensive school reform; insists that comprehensive school reform can be achieved only through a critical analysis of systems of power and privilege; underlying goal...is the elimination of

educational inequities; good education for all students. (p. 311)

The theoretical framework for multicultural education includes works by Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol (2001). The scholars discussed three frameworks typical of teacher education programs: *conservative multiculturalism*, *liberal multiculturalism* and *critical multiculturalism*. Jenks et al. (2001) explained how conservative multiculturalism centers on the commitment of equality and inclusion, but rather as it relates to maintaining “mainstream culture...and values and norms” (p. 90). This belief system continues to exist in education, as teachers’ attitudes about students of color, specifically Black students, shape their teaching practices (Gay, 2010).

Secondly, liberal multiculturalism focuses on the acknowledgement of difference, yet does not “pay insufficient attention to power, privilege, and control” (p. 313). Thirdly, critical multiculturalism states that educational equity for all students is actualized when individuals critically reflect on socially constructed thoughts on race, power, and privilege. Additionally, Gorski (2008) asserted that critical multiculturalism acknowledges how the dominant culture historically defined equity in America (Jenks et al, 2001, p. 93). The last framework resembles the magnitude of depth Gay (2010) discussed in which teachers are prepared to work with Black students. This framework pushes educators to consider their work “within a large sociopolitical context that is dominated by free-market competition and controlled by and for the benefit of the powerful” (Gorski, 2009, p. 313). Gay (2013) noted that teachers must critique not only their own beliefs about students of color, but question how their identity affects their instructional behaviors. She argued that the following points are key questions to consider:

1) What do I believe are the underlying causes of achievement difficulties of various culturally diverse students? 2) Am I able and willing to articulate and scrutinize my beliefs about cultural diversity in general and about particular ethnic groups? 3) Can I

discern how specific beliefs about different ethnic populations are embedded in particular instructional decisions and behaviors? 4) I willing to consider making significant changes in my attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and if so, do I know how to proceed? (Gay, 2010, p.144)

The critical multiculturalism framework provides a base for reviewing the importance of implementing culturally responsive practices in classrooms. Ladson-Billings (1995) posited that Black students need opportunities to engage in culturally relevant material in order to increase positive learning outcomes. Because Black students are not part of the White, middle class population, reasons to infuse cultural referents provides rationale as to why it should be considered in all schools. Studies have illuminated the discontinuity between a student's home life and what they actually experience in mainstream schooling (Au & Jordan, 1981; Gay, 2000 Jordan, 1985). There has been a push to incorporate pedagogical practices that enhance Black student educational experiences. Bartolome (1994) asserted that teaching strategies should include "humanizing pedagogy that respects and uses the reality, history, and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice (p.173).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) coined the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* and recommended three principles: students must experience academic success, develop personal cultural competence, and challenge traditional practices of inequity and oppression. Scholars have extended CRP to include cultural responsiveness teaching practices (Gay, 2000; Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015). Additionally, Gay (2010) stated culturally responsive teaching promotes prior experiences, performance styles, and cultural heritage. Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) defined cultural responsiveness as:

behavioral and policy actions that acknowledge stakeholders' cultures and utilize that knowledge to create an optimal learning environment where personal beliefs and assumptions are regularly examined, cultural identities are nurtured, institutional policies and procedures are interrogated for bias, cultural competency is developed, and social justice is a transformative imperative. (p. 3)

When teachers are culturally responsive, they facilitate discussions that dismantle institutions of injustice emphasizes this point. In a critical conscious classroom, students challenge the text in outdated books and become community problem-solvers on prevalent issues in their communities. Ladson-Billings used her studies on CRP to lay the foundation for cultural responsiveness. Furthermore, a look into some of the difficulties teachers face outlines barriers that prohibit effective implementation. These challenges include reviewing the historical context of race in schools, the perplexing perception of CRP and the link from theory to practice, and lastly, the teachers' not self-reflecting on their teaching and management practices.

Summary

This chapter presented related literature on teachers' experiences working with Black students. First, a historical context is provided to shed light to the implications of history and federal policies on current adverse experiences for Black students. Next, a review of literature focused on teachers' role in the schooling experiences of Black students. Afterward, literature is provided on studies conducted on White and Black teachers' success in working with Black students, including practical responsive techniques that aid in positive outcomes. Lastly, a review of culturally responsive practices is provided. The next chapter presents methodology that was used to gather data on teachers' perceptions when working with Black students.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods that guided this study. The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of middle school teachers who work with Black male students. I sought to examine their perceptions of their teaching and management practices of Black male students. I also examined the teachers' mindsets and beliefs about teaching Black male students. Finally, I explored how they perceive their own racial identity, gender, and socioeconomic class, and other identity markers when working with Black males. The knowledge gleaned can be used to inform teaching practices that promote positive and equitable learning outcomes for Black male students in middle school, thus reducing adverse educational experiences.

Research Design

Due to interpersonal nature of exploring teachers' experiences working with Black males in middle school, I employed a qualitative case study to gather information about the topic. Case study is defined by Yin (2003) as a process of inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" and answers "how" and "why" questions (p. 1). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) explained case studies as an attempt to reflect the personal perspective of participants in one or multiple instances of a specific phenomenon in a real-life situation. A case study typically involves single or multiple cases (Yin, 2003). For this study, I used eight participants in Louisiana, therefore a multiple case study will be used due to its ability to provide rich, detail information and to emphasize comparison across context (Goodrick, 2014). Each

participant was considered as one case, therefore I selected multiple cases to explore different teachers' perspectives on working with Black boys in middle school (Yin, 2009)

Additionally, comparison case studies “involve the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences, and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal” (Goodrick, 2014, p. 1). Multiple case designs have commonalities “categorically bound,” while serving participants in a specific group or as “examples of a phenomenon” (Stake, 2013, p. 6). This multi-case was designed as an instrumental case study, which focused on a specific issue (teachers' perceptions of responsive practices that preclude adverse educational experiences of Black males in middle school) and used cases (teachers) as a vehicle to better comprehend the matter (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011). Exploring the similarities and differences in the teachers' experiences provided the researcher with information on responsive ways to support Black males in middle school.

Context

This case study investigates Louisiana teacher experiences' working with Black males in middle school. Even though Louisiana ranks low in education success along with Mississippi, Alabama, and New Mexico (National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013), the state offers a unique perspective of the educational landscape. In the fall of 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed the public education sector in New Orleans, Louisiana (Kiel, 2010). A report indicated that the storm provided Louisiana Department of Education the opportunity to experiment with charter schools in lieu of traditional public schools (Kiel, 2010). Since Katrina, the number of charter schools in Louisiana increased, majority in New Orleans, with the hopes of transforming a failing school system. The pertinence of this study in exploring Louisiana

teachers' experiences working with Black males post-Katrina sheds light to question if charters schools are best or worst for students, as the state still ranks at the bottom in education, especially when educating Black males.

Charters offer parents of Louisiana students a choice to enroll their child in a school that could be more responsive to their need for quality an equitable education (Kiel, 2010). The Network for Public Education (NPE) conducted a study comparing charter school and traditional public school's NAEP math and reading scores pre and post Katrina. The data in the report indicated that traditional public schools outperformed charter schools (NAEP, 2013). The gap between charter and traditional public schools in Louisiana is largest of any of the state in the country. In the report, the authors also revealed that despite the increase in charter schools, Louisiana still ranks low in graduation rates, dropout rates, and average ACT scores. The education system as a whole has undergone a complete reform that has trickled over the state of Louisiana. However, the disparities that exist since the celebrated reform of education and increase of charter schools in Louisiana presents compelling logic of studying the experiences of teachers who teach Black males under the current education system post Katrina.

The disparities between Black males and other students in Louisiana provide additional rationale for conducting this study. Louisiana ranks as the one of the lowest in graduation rates at 53% (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Specifically, for the 2012-2013 school year in Louisiana, the graduation rate for Black male students was 53%, which is lower than the 69% graduation rate of White male students (SFPE, 2015). Also included in the report were the NAEP proficiency percentages in reading and math for Black males in Louisiana, which were also significantly lower than White males. This information is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. NAEP Scores

Race	Reading	Math
Black	9.3	9.8
White	29.2	29

The report also indicated that Black males taking advanced placement courses were 0.92% compared to 1.73% of White males. Lastly, the suspensions rates for Black males in Louisiana were 13% compared to White males at 6%.

Population and Sample

In order to obtain data deemed useful to the literature of effective responsive strategies of working with Black males in middle school, participants were selected using both snowball sampling and purposive criterion sampling. Snowball sampling is a process that requires asking key informants about probable participants that are able to provide information about what is studied (Gelo et al, 1998; Groenewald, 2004).

I asked individuals in my professional network who work in the field to refer someone who would be able to provide context to my study. I sent an email (Appendix A) to those referred for them to complete pre-screening survey (Appendix B). The pre-screening survey also allowed them to refer additional people who would be able to share information about their experiences working with Black males. Using purposive criterion sampling, participants were selected based on a pre-determined criteria that I used to determine if they could fit the following criteria and provide relevant information about the topic (Patten, 2017; Yin, 2011).

Patten (2017) stated qualitative researchers seek diversity when sampling, therefore I used a number of criteria to provide variables that need to be considered during the analysis of

the participants' responses.

The targets for this study were teachers who teach or taught Black boys in middle school.

Participants are selected based on the following criteria:

1. Black male
2. Black female
3. White male
4. White female
5. Teach/taught a core class (ELA, Math, Science, or Social Studies)
7. Teach/taught Black middle school males
8. Self-reported evidence of effectiveness in supporting Black males in middle school.

Data Collection

Because the quality of qualitative data requires extensive information, collecting data from multiple cases further elucidated the methodological functions for this case study. The function of data collection in qualitative studies engages in “interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging questions” (Creswell, 2013, p. 146). Interviews are primary ways to obtain information (Yin, 1994). In this study, I collected data by conducting one interview per participant.

Data was collected using individual semi-structured interviews with the teachers that were either face to face or via telephone. Yin (2009) described interviews as a source that best captures the richness of data. I used direct quotations about the participants' experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge, as they are primary sources of data yielded from interviews (Patton, 2002). The interviews was taped and transcribed. The questions was aligned to the

participant’s “feelings, beliefs, and convictions,” about their experiences teaching Black boys adolescents in middle school (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 196). I used the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (Siwatu, 2007) and the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (Siwatu, Putman, Starker-Glass, Lewis, 2015) as foundation for the questions. The scales can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D. I requested to use the scales and modify the questions to fit the purpose of my research. An interview protocol guided the conversation, which is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Interview Protocol

Research Questions	Interview Protocol
1. How do middle school teachers’ perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to working with Black male students?	1. How do you develop instruction that matches your students’ developmental needs? 2. How do you use the interest of your students to make learning meaningful for them? 3. How do you incorporate examples taken from students’ everyday lives to explain new concepts? 4. How do you use your students’ cultural background to help make learning meaningful? 5. How do you help your students develop positive relationships with others, including their classmates?
2. What are teachers’ mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?	6. How do you consider the ways the school culture (values, norms, and practices) is different from your students’ home culture? 7. How do you critically examine pedagogical practices (tests, curriculum) for biases and mismatches?
(Table 3 Continued)	8. How do you feel about the difference between your students’ communication and verbal styles used at home versus school and your personal communication and verbal norms? 9. How do you obtain and perceive the home life

Table 3. Interview Protocol

3) How do teachers' perceive their own identity (ies) working with Black male student?

(Table 3 Continued)

- of your students?
10. What strategies do you implement to minimize the effects of the mismatch between students' home culture and the school culture?
 11. How do implement various teaching methods to incorporate student learning styles?
 12. How do you incorporate instructional material that represents various cultural backgrounds?
 13. How do you assess students' behaviors with the knowledge that acceptable school behaviors may not match those that are acceptable within a student's home culture?
 14. How do you establish high behavioral expectations that encourage students to produce high-quality work?
 15. How do you address inappropriate behavior without relying on traditional methods of discipline such as office referrals?
 16. How do you critically analyze students' classroom behavior from a cross-cultural perspective?
 17. How do you modify lesson plans so that students remain actively engaged throughout the entire class period or lesson?
 18. What ways do you redirect students' behavior without the use of coercive means (i.e. consequences or verbal reprimand)?
 19. What identity (race, sex, gender, other) have the most impact on establishing a relationship with your students? Why?
 20. What identity (race, gender, class, other) pose the most challenge in establishing a relationship with your students? Why?
 21. How comfortable to do you feel fostering meaningful and supportive relationships with parents and families and involve them in your students' learning?
 22. How does your identity enhance or inhibit your ability to use non-traditional discourse styles?

Table 3. Interview Protocol

23. Why exploring your identity is important when working with Black male students?

The questions were modified to fit a qualitative case study and solicit open-ended answers to how and why questions. It was aligned to the research questions that guide this study. Prior to the interview, I discussed the purpose of the interview, assured the participant of confidentiality, and obtain written consent (Appendix E) for participating in the study. Pseudonyms were used to honor confidentiality and each participant was allowed to choose their own pseudonym. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The location was required to have limited disruptions and background noise. Because the interview included discussing students, I requested the participant not use real names. At any time, the participant could have refused to answer any question or withdraw from the study, which is stated on the consent.

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis by organizing the data from the interviews. Due to the large amount of data collected in qualitative studies, Patton (2002) concluded that the “voluminous raw data...are organized into readable narrative descriptions, with major themes, categories, and illustrative case examples extracted through content analysis” (p. 5). Even though there is not a standard way to organize data, Creswell (2013) suggested the researcher should begin by reading and making notes or memos to get a sense of the information before breaking it into parts. To familiarize myself with the data, I loosely employed Yin’s (2011) five step cycle in the analyzing process for each of the interviews, which included:

- Compiling
- Disassembling

- Reassembling
- Interpreting
- Concluding

In the *compiling* stage, I read through the transcriptions several times and made general notes. Then moved towards the *disassembling* stage, which involved “describing, classifying, and interpreting the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). During this process, I segregated the information from each interview into fragments and assigned to codes (Yin, 2011). Coding data is a common method used in qualitative studies that consists of a short word or phrase that captures the essence or attribute for a portion of textual data (Saldana, 2008). During this stage, I used memos as a method to capture my preliminary thoughts about the information. Saldana (2009) stated that researchers should annotate “anything related to and significant about the coding or analysis of the data...and write a memo about it immediately” (p. 33). This stage proved to be vital, as I began to get a sense of each participants’ experiences. It was also in this stage I honed in on various significant statements from the interviews.

After the compiling stage, I began the *reassembling* stage, I assigned the significant statements to the three research questions to get an idea of how their responses aligned to the focus of the study. Additionally, I analyzed each single case during this process to determine patterns or themes for each participant (Creswell, 2013; Tesch, 1990; Yin, 2011). Finally, the *interpreting stage* “involves using the reassembling material to create a new narratives, with accompanying tables and graphics where relevant” (p. 179). This stage took some time, as I began the process of comparing the information to identify common themes amongst all cases.

Furthermore, the cases were analyzed using a comparative method for both within-case and cross-case analysis. In utilizing this method, the data was conceptualized to extract patterns within individual cases (each of the participants), in which I discovered similarities and differences among cases (Tesch, 1990; Yin, 2009). It was imperative to determine if information collected indicated relevance to all participants or just exclusive to one participant (Ayers, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). For this study, I used my notes and analysis from the individual cases to determine commonalities and connections across cases. Ayers, Kavanaugh, and Knafl (2003) described this process as:

Insights from one account sensitize the investigator to similar information as it occurs in other accounts. As an idea occurs repeatedly in multiple contexts, the investigator instantiates the idea as a theme. Those themes that have explanatory force both in individual accounts and across the sample are most likely to apply beyond the sample. (p. 872)

Tesch (1990) examined data within-case and cross-case analysis and used the terms *decontextualizing* to describe sorting and coding and *recontextualizing* to describe when the data is “reintegrated into themes that combine units of like meaning taken from the accounts of multiple research respondents” (Ayers et al., 2003, p. 87). The within-case and cross-case analysis followed the individual case analysis for each participant. During this phase, I found commonalities and differences as it related to the intersections of race and gender and use data from the interviews to provide context.

Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, establishing credibility is a critical piece that ensures the accuracy

or the trustworthiness of the outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2013) stated that the researcher should actively infuse credibility techniques throughout the analysis process.

For this study, I utilized triangulation and member checking to guarantee credibility of the findings.

Triangulation involves examining different data sources and using it to construct themes. The most common form is triangulation of data, which “combines data drawn from different sources and at different times in different places or from different people” (Flick, 2000, p.178). Triangulation occurred in this study through the use of multiple participants and by analyzing the data using within-case and cross-case analysis to gain various perspectives on the experiences working with Black male students.

Member checking consists of allowing the participants to review the final descriptions of the findings and provide them with the opportunity to evaluate the report (Yilmaz, 2013). This allows them to determine if the descriptions reflect their perspectives. Researchers then use the feedback to modify, thus validating the accuracy of the case analysis (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln and Guba, 1995). I allowed the participants to review the outcomes of my analysis and all participants agreed that the information met their approval.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher serves as the main instrument in data collection and analysis, therefore requiring the need to address “personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 207) Specifically, researchers should be mindful of “ conditions arising from [their] personal background, motives for doing the research, and categories or filters that might influence [their] understanding of field events and actions” (Yin, 2011, p. 123)

As Black women in education, I'm keenly aware of my identity and consider it a key influence in how I see the world. I've worked with predominantly Black students through my 10-year career as a teacher and currently as a counselor. I recognize I bring bias and personal perspective to this study. Everyday I encounter the same experiences most teachers have working with Black male students and face a conflict as I research culturally responsive practices that reduce negative experiences. I acknowledge that I'm aware of what the research says about the state of education for Black boys, yet I'm wary of the fact the crisis is so far gone that the problem cannot be resolved. Middle school teachers solicit my help and experiences as it relate to their most difficult students, many whom are Black. I commit to constantly checking my biases as I conduct the research, but also find ways to bring my voice this qualitative study.

Throughout the research process, I was reminded of my biases regarding the subject manner. It is important to reduce bias in qualitative research, as Denzin (1994) refers to it as "interpretive crisis" (p. 501). I aimed to reduce bias by utilizing the validation methods mentioned in this chapter, but also through reflective journaling. The practice of reflective journaling throughout the data collection and analysis process is designed to keep the researcher honest about values, attitudes, subjectivity, and orientation towards constructing knowledge (Mruck & Breuer, 2003).

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology that guided the data collection and data analysis of this study. I provided context of using Louisiana teachers in exploring their experiences working with Black male adolescents. A multiple case study was employed, as each of the eight participants served as one case. The participants included experienced teachers who

identified either as a Black male, Black female, White male and White female and work or have worked with Black males at a middle school in Louisiana. Data was collected using a pre-screening survey and interviews. The data was analyzed using a comparative within-case and cross-case analysis to find major themes.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This case study explored the experiences of eight middle school teachers who work with Black male students. In order to explore teachers' experiences when working with Black male students in middle school and discover effective and practice responsive practices, the primary question that guided this study is as follows: What are the perceptions of varying factors (teaching/instructional, management, cultural, racial, and social) that influences positive outcomes for Black male middle school students? Additionally, the subsequent sub questions are listed below:

- (1) How do middle school teachers perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to serving Black male students?
- (2) What are teachers' mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?
- (3) How do teachers perceive their own identity (ies) and the influence on teaching Black male students?

The foundation of this study was to explore responsive practices that specifically reduce adverse experiences for Black males in middle school. In this chapter, I discuss the findings that were derived from the participants' personal perceptions of their experiences working Black males. I utilized a qualitative multi-case research design to explore the participants' stories working with Black males. To garner participation, I used snowball sampling and purposive criterion. I asked 18 individuals in my professional network to refer middle school teachers who would be able to offer insight of their experiences. I received names of 11 teachers. I sent an

open-ended survey that was designed to gather possible participants' demographic information that passed the pre-determined criteria listed in Chapter Three. The survey was sent to those 11 teachers and I received four. However, of those four received, seven more teachers were referred. I sent the open-ended survey to those seven teachers and three of those teachers responded. I was referred nine more teachers and sent an open-ended survey those individuals. I received a response from one individual. Of the surveys I sent, I received a total nine responses. Of the nine, I used a pre-determined criterion to select participants. I selected eight to participate in a follow-up semi structured interview. Table 4.1 presents demographic information of the selected participants.

Table 4. Participants' Demographic Information

Participants	Gender	Race	Years of Experience	Subject
Grace	F	White	10	Social Studies
Sarah	F	White	1	ELA
Trinity	F	Black	3	Social Studies
Denise	F	Black	10	Math
Mark	M	Black	1	Math
John	M	Black	2	Math
Ron	M	White	2	ELA
Michael	M	White	5	Math

Discussion of Findings

I present the findings of this multi-case study in three stages. In the first stage, outlined in Chapter IV, I present the significant statements from the interviews that aligned with the research questions that guided this study. In the second stage, I address the findings from each of the eight single cases in Chapters V through XII. In the final stage, discussed in Chapter XIII, I present a cross-case analysis of all the cases by discussing overarching themes that were common for all participants and by comparing and contrasting the results of each case.

Stage I

Based on the participants' responses from the semi-structured interview, I selected significant phrases that aligned with the research questions. In the interview, 14 main questions were used to frame the discussion, which was outlined in the interview protocol in the previous chapter. However, I asked a collection of follow-up and clarifying questions to honor the authenticity of the responses.

During the first stage of analysis, I immersed myself in the data and read and reread through the transcripts, which helped me gain a deeper understanding of how the participants' responses related to the research questions. Because of the depth and richness of the information, I needed to essentially live through the experiences working with Black males. I wanted to discover how their experiences would reveal responsive practices that promoted positive experiences for their Black males.

In order to make meaning of the robust data collected, I sorted through each interview and segregated significant statements as it related to the three research questions. The purpose of this analytic task was to examine different aspects of the teachers' experiences working with

Black males. Tesch (1990) described this task as *decontextualizing*, which is when data is separated into specific units of meaning through sorting. Thinking through the research questions and examining selected significant statements allowed me to become acclimated to the participants' stories, which helped during the second stage of analysis of the individual cases and gain understanding of their collective experiences.

Tables 5 through 7 present the significant statements and their connection to the research questions. After each table, I explained the importance of the presented data and its meaning within the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) discussed in Chapter One.

Table 5. Significant Statements of Teachers' Perception of their Teaching and Management Practices

Question 1. How do middle school teachers' perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to working with Black male students?

1. Honestly, it has to do with the level of the class.
2. [Adding cultural references] definitely allows me to interact with the kids in a way that I wouldn't have before.
3. It's honestly a little bit harder because the world history curriculum is very Eurocentric.
4. For my Black male students, I felt I was the most effective in management when I led with love.
5. I'm like the momma and the enforcer. But I'm the momma who can get down on your level.
6. I feel like I'm wearing a cape at times, but imma do what I got to do for those Black boys.
7. I value relationships.
8. It takes more effort, but in building relationships with my Black male students, that was much more effective.
9. I try to inspire them.
10. I have to make sure [Black males] have that [real life application] so that [they] can apply. I feel like a lot of times, it takes so much time to get the basics down that we never get past the hypothetical situations.
11. I can't do everything that I want to do because I spend so much time correcting behaviors.

Table 5 Continued

12. I spend a lot of time not only trying to teach material but teach [the] how to just prioritize the real world.
13. I'm really big on acting things out, so if they can even take on a like, role-play for certain things, I think that makes it fun.
14. I give them choice.
15. I allow the students to write the rules.
16. [I] have to tie it into what they actually like and what they're interested in.
17. I let them be leaders sometimes. You let them take control. Let them be the group leaders. Let them take the role. Because if not, I feel they'll shy to the back and they'll try to just coast through school.
18. We all have a good rapport. We all can laugh with each other.
19. I don't think Teach Like a Champion is really adaptive as is for the young Black males...so I have to introduce curriculum that is attainable or relatable to their lives.
20. I would like to think that my teaching practices are fair to all the kids that I teach.
21. There needs to be lot of structure.
22. I'm gonna find a way to get you to where everybody else is because you're gonna be the behind kid. I don't want you to be the behind kid.
23. Every child regardless deserves a chance...And Ray has done something, I'm supposed to start over with Ray on Tuesday. I'm supposed to constantly refresh and not hold anything against Ray.
24. From the management portion, I see it as what did my parents do for me and what worked. Adjusting as needed.
25. Then from an instruction standpoint, wondering what my students should know and then what they actually know and how what they actually know affects how they behave.
26. I mean I have always been on the instructional side that it all comes down to backwards planning and backwards design. Starting with the standards and what students are expected to do, kind of unpacking that. I think then where the personalization piece comes in is then matching that up with what I know that they know. If there are gaps that need to be filled in order for them to be ready to do that, of course that comes into play.
27. The personalization is thinking about how to make it interesting to them, because if I use some dry example that has nothing to do with anything that they've ever experienced, it's just not as engaging.
28. I mean I think being culturally responsive and being a culturally aware teacher means as much as know what to take and capitalize on from students' background.
29. One thing that I try to do in terms of specifically my instruction, would be trying to make it realistic as well as important to them.
30. Talking about the big picture and making it meaningful to them rather than it just being like, you need to do this math problem because you have to do this math problem.
31. Trying to make the content as culturally relevant as possible. Using their names or bring in pop culture references or something just to make it more attainable by them.

Table 5 Continued

32. Trying to give them a concept of their lives in the community and how things they experience everyday are related to the things we were learning in class.
 33. To empower them to understand that they have a lot of opportunities. Empowering them to know that they already have grit and how they can maximize that and how they use that.
-

Discussion of the Theoretical Framework for Research Question One

In table 5, the participants shared perspectives of either their instructional and management practices in the classroom as it relates to working with Black males. Of the 33 responses, 19 responses reflected instructional practices and 14 responses reflected management practices.

Instructional and Teaching Practices

Of the 19 responses reflecting the teachers' perception of their instructional practices, 12 of the responses revealed the importance of making the material and lessons meaningful and relevant for their Black males. In the CRT framework (Gay, 2000), one of the components highlights the need for infusing cultural references, experiences, and perspectives of Black males in order to effectively teach them content. Gay (2000) stated that when "academic knowledge and skills are situated within lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful [and] have higher interest appeal" (p. 106) Similarly, many of the participants had to supplement the material by adding interests, cultural topics, and other personalization pieces to cultivate purposeful learning for their Black male students. For example, one participant stated that her teaching practices must include making the content meaningful for her Black males. She shared, "talking about the big picture and making it meaningful to them rather than it just being like, you need to do this math problem because you

have to do this math problem.” As the teachers shared their perception of their instructional practices, a collective experience indicated the need to include aspects of their Black males culture and connecting it to something purposeful.

Additionally, some responses indicated an issue when considering instructional practices for Black males. One participant cited that her school uses *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010) and how she did not believe it was relevant to her Black males’ unique needs. Additionally, another teacher discussed her frustration with the Social Studies curriculum, as it did not allow her to infuse Black history into her lessons, which affected her instructional practice at times. She stated, “it’s honestly a little bit harder because the world history curriculum is very Eurocentric.” Gay (2002) suggested that culturally responsive teachers should be able to use their subject matter to link contributions other ethnic groups have made to that area. Though the teachers shared frustrations with the constraints of the curriculum as it related to their instructional practices, they still felt inclined to supplement the material to include contributions of Black people. One participant noted, “I do try to incorporate African American history that isn’t just, “hey, guys, there are slaves.” They get that. I try to talk about Benjamin Banneker was helping build the White House. I try to show them the positive without ignoring anything else.”

Management Practices

Based on the participants’ responses, nine responses reflected a relational approach to management and four responses reflected an autonomous approach to management practices. Brown’s (1999) study on Black middle school students suggested that students of color desired more personal and meaningful relationships with their teachers. In this case study, most

responses indicated this concept. One teacher described her management practice as leading “with love,” and another stated that she “value relationships” and try to “inspire [their Black males]” These statements indicate a key factor in adding culturally responsiveness in the classroom. As Ladson-Billings (1994) explored CRP as it relates to students of color, she discussed how providing psychological safety through caring and supportive relationships aides in ensuring students are successful in the class. Howard (2001) described the importance of teachers displaying “caring bonds and attitudes towards them and teachers who establish community and family type classroom environments” (p. 131). As the teachers reflected on their management practices, they demonstrated care and nurturing relationships in different ways, especially when it came to discipline. For example, another participant stated the importance of giving her Black males another chance, even when school policies failed to do so. She stated, “every child regardless deserves a chance...And [if] Ray has done something, I’m supposed to start over with Ray on Tuesday. I’m supposed to constantly refresh and not hold anything against Ray.” This concept of starting over aligns with culturally responsiveness, as this teacher did not agree with harsh discipline practices. Gay (2010) stated that a key culturally responsive practice includes dismantling oppression policies such as zero tolerance and high suspension rates, which perpetuates injustice for Black males. The next section explores the teachers’ mindsets and beliefs of their Black males.

Table 6. Significant Statements of Teachers’ Mindsets and Beliefs Teaching Black Male Students

Question 2. What are teachers’ mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?

1. I was just getting involved in their conversations and they appreciated it. It’s just a little bit a way to connect outside of the classroom.
2. I expect excellent things from my students.
3. They need people who are willing to look past a lot of things and try to dig deeper because of stereotypes. Stereotypes that also the [Black males] might have absorb.
4. I guess I can only make an assumption about those boys’ home lives. It usually is I guess, unfortunately, a negative assumption.
5. Maybe that’s why they’re not buying into the core values of our school, because they are taught something completely different [at home].
6. But Black boys have responded a little more aggressively because maybe they feel like I’m not respecting them.
7. They kind of shut down when they think maybe they’re being disrespected
8. I hate to make an assumption or to generalize, but for the students I do know, I know that their parents adore them. They want nothing but the best for them, but extenuating circumstances like working nontraditional work hours like night shifts or longer. Takes them away from the home or takes them away from being able to attend extracurricular activities and stuff like that. It’s no fault to a parent. They’re doing the best they can for their children. That’s where I feel like my school has been able step in with the extra support that we’re able to give our kids to help fill the gap for parents.
9. But having those conversations like, “no you can do this. You are so smart and so capable,” kind of showing them I believe in them and that I am just telling them every single day that I love them and that they could do this. Just seeing how hard they worked once they became reinvested and once they know people believed in them and once they had that support system at school, they had a complete transformation.
10. So once I...[met] young Black boys where they were by getting to know them or their experiences, I was really able to tap into their potential but really meet them where they were and moved forward.
11. I had to do more work to build a relationship with them. I had to let them know about my experiences and I had to let them know why I’m doing this.
12. Most of them have single mothers. I don’t know if they see me as another single mother and some of them would say, “you my momma,” and I think honestly it’s because I care.
13. My boys have colorism issues in that my dark skin boys don’t like being dark and my light skin boys swear they are mixed and they are the pretty boys.
14. They are shut out of the world.

Table 6 Continued

15. A lot of times they were on second/first grade beginning reading level for sixth grade. I know that has a problem with some of them are...they don't want to be in embarrassed. So a lot of them try to be cool and they don't want to be that kid that can't read the right words. I think it is a cool factor in sixth grade, you got to be cute, you gotta be cool and the it's not skill versus will. It's kind of I think it's more enjoying the cool factor.
 16. You have a lot of Black males who they are smart, they don't want to be perceived as smart. They're okay if they're middle of the road, you know, cause succeeding and excelling is just not cool enough.
 17. I make them understand that you are this color and this is what the world expects of you. Always be better than that. Always strive to do better and be better than that. I feel that's in one ear and other the other with this group.
 18. I don't know if it's the home life. I don't know if it's the fact that they're between the ages of 11 and 14. I think it's very hard for them to see the world beyond the world that they have.
 19. I think we can blame society for a lot of things. At the end of the day, that home life carries so much weight. That's your environment. From the teaching perspective, when I'm trying to get you to be at an A/B level, but people at home are okay with you getting D's and F's, it's always a tug of war.
 20. I think with Black males, we need to really figure out where their influences like.
 21. I think one factor may be just their exposure to what people expect of them and how that pretty much is becoming like a self-fulfilling prophecy 'cause they begin to fulfill it as well.
 22. They act as if they're hard, they'll act as if they're really cool. They'll act [that it's] not okay to be smart. They typically shun the difference of how you speak or the different of what you value.
 23. It's like a light switch goes off where it's like [Black boys] are not longer interested in school .
 24. I mean a lot of them were required to be very independent at home.
-

Discussion of the Theoretical Framework for Research Question Two

In Table 6, the participants expressed their mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students. Of the 24 responses, seven responses related to their perceptions of the home life of their Black males and shed light to incongruences between school's expectations and the reality their students faced at home. Based on the responses, the participants held negative beliefs about their Black males' home life and how it potentially impacted their

academic success at school. Honest with their assumptions and beliefs about the home life, the teachers' did not want to generalize experiences, but believed that their Black males' home life reinforce negative attitudes towards school. One participant stated, "maybe that's why they're not buying into the core values of our school, because they are taught something completely different [at home]." Sharing a similar mindset, another participant shared:

I think we can blame society for a lot of things. At the end of the day, that home life carries so much weight. That's your environment. From the teaching perspective, when I'm trying to get you to be at an A/B level, but people at home are okay with you getting D's and F's, it's always a tug of war.

Brown (2003) conducted a qualitative study on teachers' use of culturally responsive strategies and asserted that teachers typically face challenges when caretakers do not address negative attitudes about school. He stated that issues that should be handled at home fall on the teachers (Brown, 2003). The teachers in this case discussed the responsibility of motivating their Black males to do well in school and perceived the home life as the main antagonist to this effort.

Exploring the teachers' mindsets about their students was critical in analyzing their effectiveness in CRT. Gay (2013) asserted that recognizing and discussing deficit perspectives typically assigned to Black students was essential in implementing CRT. It was difficult to determine if their perception of home life was a deficit or observation of the reality, but the participants were transparent in understanding the home life was critical in being responsive to their students' needs. Describing the role of the school, one teacher stated, "that's where I feel like my school has been able step in with the extra support that we're able to give our kids to help fill the gap for parents."

From the significant statements listed in Table 6, of the 24 responses, 10 responses revealed the participants' mindsets regarding Black male stereotypes. A common opinion from all participants revealed their belief that their students often displayed stereotypical behaviors and spoke on how it manifested in the classroom. Citing quotes from their Black males, the participants discussed how they had to work to dismantle the unconstructive and inferior thoughts they perceived their students had of themselves and schools. The participants believed that the negative self-image their Black male possessed prompted them to spend time building their esteem and discouraging the inferior mindset. One participant shared, "I make them understand that you are this color and this is what the world expects of you. Always be better than that. Always strive to do better and be better than that."

As the teachers reflected on the lack of motivation and persistence of their Black males students, they demonstrated various levels of care in order to motivate them (Deci & Ryan, 2002) Polite, 1994). Brown (2003) suggested that in order for teachers to effectively implement culturally responsive practices, they must demonstrate care for students and think about their needs that affirm their identity. Throughout the interview, the teachers discussed ways they uplifted their Black males to counter the stereotype.

The teachers' solution to their students' negative mindsets depict aspects of the self-determination theory (SDT) discussed in the literature review (Harrison et al, 2015). Consistent with SDT, cultivating a nurturing and supportive environment along with instilling a strong sense of self and competence in academic settings is crucial for motivating Black males (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Because Black males typically experience bouts of a lack of motivation (Harrison et al, 2015, Polite, 1994), CRT encourages teachers to facilitate learning experience for Black males

that is inclusive of their social and psychological needs, while seeking to educate and motivate the whole child (Gay, 2010). For example, one participant spoke about meeting her Black males where they were, even if it was confronting their negative mindsets about themselves. She reported, “so once I...[met] young Black boys where they were by getting to know them or their experiences, I was really able to tap into their potential but really meet them where they were and moved forward.” Through one-on-one time with their Black male students, presenting positive Black images, and affirming their value and worth daily, the teachers sought to address the inferiority and negative mindset. Even though the participants discussed the negative consequences of their Black males embracing negative attitudes about school, they also believed in having conversations with them to motivate them and instill a sense of excellence and drive for success. For instance, one participant stated:

But having those conversations like, “no you can do this. You are so smart and so capable,” kind of showing them I believe in them and that I am just telling them every single day that I love them and that they could do this. Just seeing how hard they worked once they became reinvested and once they know people believed in them and once they had that support system at school, they had a complete transformation.

They participants spoke about how they would work to inspire their Black males and affirm how intelligent and capable they were of learning. They found ways to connect with them outside of the classroom and motivate them to see their own potential. Consistent with Cokley’s (2003) study debunking the myth that Black males are anti-intellectual, the teachers in the study wanted their Black males to see themselves in a different light and reach their academic potential. Therefore, the teachers believed they provided their Black males a space for them to feel motivated and affirmed, through fostering an environment of relatedness, positive identity, and support.

Table 7. Significant Statements of Teachers' Perceptions of their Identity working with Black Male Students

Question 3. How do teachers' perceive their own identity (ies) working with Black male students?

1. Even before the first day, the principal sat me down and explained that there were going to be some cultural references that I would not understand. He told me to try to listen to what the kids were talking about and if it was something that really caught their interest to look into it as well. I didn't really think it was necessary.
2. I just need to accept that and sometimes say I don't understand but that I will try to.
3. I'm definitely more aware of it now because I have been caught off guard in the past by saying something I thought was just authoritative and the student really didn't appreciate it.
4. I'm a small female and not very imposing. Half of my sixth graders are already taller than me. But I like to tell them that I have a tall personality and that they can't push me around. I honestly did not think that because I view myself as non-threatening that this child would have thought that I was trying to threaten him. But it wasn't I guess about feeling threatened. He felt disrespected.
5. Just because I don't feel like I'm being imposing doesn't mean I'm not bothering somebody else in some way.
6. [As a White woman] whatever they teach you about in college does not prepare you in any way for what you are going to, especially as far as teaching a diverse population. They try to gloss over stuff like that and tell you that if you stick with certain strategies it's going to work no matter what. You definitely have to learn on the job.
7. I don't really know how to define my identity. I'm a white lady. I don't really think that that necessarily is a reflection of my relationship with my students. Maybe with some of them.
8. I didn't want to whitewash my classroom as a White teacher. I didn't want to push these standards of my own education experience or what I thought to be true for education on my students.
9. I definitely think that my identity as a White person was a source of tension at the beginning of the year. I think my kids didn't necessarily trust me at first, but I recognized that they needed to know who I was as a person. I was very open with my students, letting them understand who I am, what my intentions were, my background, what I care about.
10. I'm 23. I'm younger and I think, my brother is 15, so I'm very used to middle schoolers and that age range. I think I was able to, because I'm younger, kind of relate or be more understanding of their experiences and what their interests are.

Table 7 Continued

11. I don't have a family of my own so I was really able to give my all into my students this year and do more for them than maybe some older teachers who have families and kids of their own.
 12. I leverage my own socioeconomics status and I noticed what makes me rough around the edges and able to relate to their circumstances.
 13. I was able to connect with them and I understand some of the behaviors that they exhibit because I would live in the same environment.
 14. It had to be having a nephew the same age like being an aunt as an identity marker that I bring into it. Because when I see the Black boys I see my nephew.
 15. I'm someone closer to their mom's age, so that sometimes works in my favor. I think they perceive me as somebody who really doesn't play, but I'm also not the drill sergeant.
 16. Cause I'm a mom. I have a 13-year-old Black boy, so trust me, I understand. I think I'm able to joke with my kids because I have a child that's exactly their age. I'm able to understand what they're going through a little bit.
 17. I grew up just like them. I grew up in the same neighborhoods. I grew up the same way they did. Not having the best of everything. Experiencing the worst at times.
 18. I would say it's me being Black and I say that because I'm oftentimes consider like a different type of Black and it's not a bad thing, but it's a different thing.
 19. Just because I'm Black doesn't mean I'm your people.
 20. I'm a different type of Black male.
 21. Race. Because at time, at the beginning of the year, they would think we were friend.
 22. In some ways I think race and class are so intertwined in our society. I just feel like, especially coming from an upper middle class White background. I remember being suddenly aware that I had never, until I walked into a classroom at X, been in a room where I was the only White person before. Ever. Then with that came a whole avalanche of other things relating to me realizing my own privilege. I think that that was an added layer of...I need to work even harder to be her for [my Black males], consistently and show you that I care.
 23. First it was becoming aware of what the differences were.
 24. Part of me feels that my experience growing up as gay and feeling like a fish out of water for 90% of my youth, I think that have been a large part of what has allowed me to approach situations with more empathy.
 25. I think I name that I'm a White male. I understand what ramifications and what perceptions exist when young men of color see me. So I think owning my identity and also showing them the true authentic me, it allows the to see me as a person and not as a man, or as a White person.
 26. I was an outsider in that community. There was a lot of perception about who I was and what my intentions were based off of my identity. So having to build those relationships with their parents, allowed me to then have credibility with their children.
-

Discussion of the Theoretical Framework for Research Question Three

In Table 7, the participants shared reflections on how identity influences their work with Black male students. Various intersections of race, class, gender, age, and sexuality revealed the complexities of how their identities shaped their experience. Of the 26 responses, half of the responses reflected the context of race and gender. Majority of the responses revealed how the White participants were cognizant of their identity and White privilege. Additionally, they had to negotiate those pieces in order to build strong and trusting relationships with their students. They cited that their perceptions of themselves were challenged when interacting with their Black male students. One teacher exclaimed that she did not consider her identity an issue until her experiences with her Black males challenged her preconceived assumptions about her gender.

She stated:

I'm a small female and not very imposing. Half of my sixth graders are already taller than me. But I like to tell them that I have a tall personality and that they can't push me around. I honestly did not think that because I view myself as non-threatening that this child would have thought that I was trying to threaten him. But it wasn't I guess about feeling threatened. He felt disrespected.

Another participant spoke about her race caused her to reflect on her experiences and counter "dominate and cultural assumptions" (Yosso, 2002, p. 98). For example, she shared, "I didn't want to whitewash my classroom as a White teacher. I didn't want to push these standards of my own education experience or what I thought to be true for education on my students." She later discussed:

I definitely think that my identity as a White person was a source of tension at the beginning of the year. I think my kids didn't necessarily trust me at first, but I recognized that they needed to know who I was as a person. I was very open with my students, letting them understand who I am, what my intentions were, my background, what I care about.

Both White males and White females discussed how they had to learn responsive ways to work with Black males because of the difference their lived experiences. They spoke about how their understanding of differences illuminated a privilege they had to confront. One participant shared:

I just feel like, especially coming from an upper middle class White background. I remember being suddenly aware that I had never, until I walked into a classroom at X, been in a room where I was the only White person before. Ever. Then with that came a whole avalanche of other things relating to me realizing my own privilege. I think that that was an added layer of...I need to work even harder to be here for [my Black males], consistently and show you that I care.

Kailin (2002) posited that when teachers have an understanding of their own identities, they are able to shape their perceptions of Black students in a positive light and seek to incorporate practices that value them. As one participant reflected on his identity, he recognized that he had to work hard to build a relationship with his Black males. He stated:

I was an outsider in that community. There was a lot of perception about who I was and what my intentions were based off of my identity. So having to build those relationships with their parents, allowed me to then have credibility with their children

As the participants discussed various aspects of their identity, it was clear that all eight participants considered its importance when working with Black males students. Some participants were able to leverage parts their identity to connect with their students and other participants had to negotiate parts of their identity to be more inclusive of the needs their Black males.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I selected significant statements and aligned them to the research questions, which helped me identify both the commonality and uniqueness of each case. There were repeated words I observed and made a memo to search for a deeper meaning during the individual case analysis, which are outlined in the next eight chapters. As Ayres, Kavanaugh, and Knafl (2003) asserted, when information repeatedly occurs in text, it prompts the investigator to look for patterns in all cases. However, there were variances in responses that sparked curiosity of how the information would be connected to individual stories. In stage II, presented in Chapters V through XII, I revisit each case separately to gain greater insight into the participants' experiences.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS: GRACE

Introduction

In the second stage of this study, I explored the experiences of eight middle school teachers in Louisiana teaching Black male students. Using a series of questions, the participants participated in a semi-structured interview and provided insight on their instructional and management practices, their perceptions of Black male students, and perceptions of their identity as it relates working with Black male students.

This chapter is the first of eight cases of the middle school teachers. In each chapter, I present the demographics and background information for each participant and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. I spent a considerable amount of time on each single case, as Stake (2006) asserted that researchers “work vigorously to understand each particular case (one at a time) (p. 6). This analysis describes how Grace perceived her experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Grace is in her mid-thirties and identifies as a White female. She teaches Social Studies at a public urban middle school in Louisiana. Grace has close to 10 years of teaching experience, but has taught at her current school for four years. She teaches around 50 Black males and self-reported as being able to provide information about her experiences working with Black male students in middle school.

Individual Case Analysis

Grace was interviewed by phone, which I sensed an easiness to how she answered the questions. Transparent and reflective in her responses, three themes emerged from her responses. The analysis describes how Grace perceived her experiences working with Black males.

Communication Styles and Preferences

As Grace responded to each of the questions from the interview, the theme communication styles and preferences indicated management strategies used to support her Black male students. Irvin (1990) discussed the importance of *cultural synchronization* describing the interactions between teachers and students of color. Throughout the interview, Grace was introspective of her experiences in learning best ways to interact with her Black male students. Specifically, she discussed how her communication style differed from her Black boys and how it initially interfered with her interactions with them. She explained:

I like my voices quiet, and just some of the boys just naturally get louder and they like to talk on top of each other. I tell them to stop screaming and they look me in the eye, they're very serious, and go, "I'm not screaming."

However, she expressed how her realization of the variances in styles and preferences impacted her relationship with her Black male students:

There have been times when I've said something to child and something that I would to any of my kids, but Black boys have responded a little bit more aggressively because maybe they feel like I'm not respecting them. But I've learned so much. I don't speak to kids the same way I did then. I just know better.

Through experience and making mistakes, Grace understood how she perceived her communication style and preference was not how her Black boys perceived it, therefore she made adjustments to build a non-confrontational relationship with her students. Aligned to the

literature of culturally responsive practices, *cultural synchronization* not only promotes a mutual understanding of cultural habits and practices of Black students (Irvine, 1990), but a proactive approach to adjusting to those cultural patterns in order to support Black males. Grace noted:

I'm definitely more aware of it now because I have been caught off guard in the past by saying something I thought was just authoritative and the student really didn't appreciate it. They kind of shut down when they think maybe they're being disrespected. You know what? I think it was a personal space thing.

Grace acknowledged the behavioral and communication patterns of her Black males contrasted with her communication style, therefore the presence of *cultural synchronization* nurtured a safer and inclusive space for her and her students. She stated that her Black males felt more relaxed when she adjusted her communication style. She said, "they appreciate that I'm able to get on their level...I think that they think it's easier to carry on a conversation with me." Much like the literature on culturally responsive practices, which encourages teachers to consider Black boys' personalities, cultural habits and perceptions of communication styles (Gay 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Monroe & Obidah, 2004), Grace had to learn how to effectively communicate in way that demonstrated she valued their space and their perception of respect. She noted:

I honestly did not think that because I view myself as nonthreatening that this child would have thought that I was trying to threaten him. But it wasn't I guess about feeling threatened. He felt disrespected.

Monroe and Obidah (2004) asserted that when teachers are able to bridge cultural gaps, much like communication styles and preferences, negative school experiences are more likely reduced for Black males.

Cultural Codes and Interests

The second theme that emerged from our conversation revealed the importance of considering cultural codes and interests of her Black male students. Grace discussed her experiences with showing value of cultural norms and the interest of her Black male students by learning about things that was important to them and incorporating them into the lessons. She made a comment about valuing Black vernacular, which is commonly used in the Black community. She noted:

I do try to use slang or vernacular. They laugh at me and then they want me to say it again and they think it's the best thing ever. They know that I'm not joking necessarily. I'm not making fun of anything, but I'm being playful with them and they know that I'm trying to connect with them.

The way Grace described her desire to connect with students aligned with CRT tenant where teachers incorporate aspects of the students' personalities and background into the classroom (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Grace was very passionate about her valuing the language of her Black male students, as she deemed it necessary for building a relationship. She saw the boys' language as a skill and did not view it as a deficit. Grace noted, "I expect excellent things from my students...and tell them that that's how I see them." Her use of slang indicated her willingness to acknowledge the culturally uniqueness of the vernacular. Consistent with Gay's (2010) description of CRT, Grace validated her Black males and engaged in cultural cues that were important to them. Additionally, Grace was adamant about not allowing inappropriate words used in her classroom. She spoke about her wanting her Black males students to see themselves positively and honor the classroom space as nontoxic and inclusive for everyone. She explained:

I don't like it when they throw the N-word around each other in my class like it's no big deal. I'm like "no, we don't say that here." I tell them certain things, "you can talk that way, just not in my classroom or not in any professional setting."

Grace's explanation of this demonstrates her commitment to honoring the cultural codes, while maintaining a safe space for all her students. She also proactively valued other interests of her Black males and worked to deepen her understanding of things they found important. She shared a story about how she would listen to students' conversations and get involved by asking questions and reported that the students appreciated this approach. Grace shared, "everything I do is kind of playful in the classroom because I just think it keeps the kids a little more interested." She felt like it was a way to connect with them on a more personal level, but also build a solid rapport with her Black male boys. Grace reflected,

I don't know what they were talking about the other day, Blac Chyna and Rob Kardashian. I was just getting involved in their conversations, and they appreciated it. It's just a little bit a way to connect outside of the classroom, I guess.

Academically, Grace spoke about her frustration with the curriculum and the realization of how bias standardized tests were in Louisiana, which reflected her belief and perceptions of teaching her Black males in accordance to what was state mandated. She stated, "standardized tests are biased because they are written by White men in the Northeastern part of the United States. I do try to bring African American history into [my lessons]." Grace indicated that the traditional curriculum and test prohibited a lot of conversation and opportunities for her to incorporate interest and other cultural references. However, she spoke a little about how she overcame those obstacles. She reported:

I think that if it's done in an appropriate way, talking about race in history, and then obviously bridge into what's happening today, it helps them. Especially with what they see in the news. They can get a better historical understanding of what they hear and

what they hear other people say on TV and in the movies.

Indicating another way she overcame obstacles, Grace made a point to discuss how she wanted her Black males to see positive contributions of Black individuals. She discussed Benjamin Banneker and encouraged them to explore different people with a bonus project. She shared:

I do try to incorporate when I can African American history that isn't just, "hey guys. There were slaves" They get that. They know that. I try to talk about Benjamin Banneker. I try to show them the positive but without ignoring anything else.

Another way of overcoming obstacles with the curriculum was through enrichment activities. Grace noted, "I encourage my students to do a bonus project about someone who we will not study this year [and] who they've always wanted to learn more about. Then I let them present." Stating that her Black males enjoy the enrichment bonus project, Grace saw the importance of trying to make time to teach them about African American history even when the curriculum did not allow opportunities for her to incorporate it into her lessons.

Race and Gender

The last theme that surfaced was racial and gender identity and its influence on Grace's perception working with Black males. She first discussed how she initially perceived her gender identity, "I'm a small female. I'm not very imposing. Half of my sixth graders are already taller than me. I honestly did not view myself as nonthreatening."

However, Grace's transparency illuminated her willingness to consider how her perception of race and gender differed from how her Black boys perceived her race and gender. She stated:

I think I just trying to make myself make them listen to me. I don't feel like I'm being

imposing doesn't mean I'm not bothering somebody else in someway. Maybe I was trying to assert it more than I needed.

Consistent with Gay and Kirkland's (2003) assertion on CRT in the classroom, Grace's ability to examine her own beliefs and identity created a critical reflection in which she was able to foster a more inclusive learning environment for her Black males and implement effective management strategies. She discussed how her race and assumptions may have interfered with building a relationship with her Black boys at first and was honest with her thought process in challenging those assumptions. She reflected:

In the beginning it was definitely was race. It was something that they knew and they...they kind of made fun of me. I was called racist a lot of times by the students and I didn't understand.

However, Grace attributed her growing in that experience made her a better teacher. She noted, "over time I guess just with experience in how to respond to those types of situations and questions." Reflecting on her experiences, as Gay and Kirkland (2003) stated an effective responsive practice for teachers, Grace realized that Black males are traditionally subjected to stereotypes and they are often seen as problematic, which changed her mindsets and beliefs. She shared how understanding her identity is vital in her working with Black students. She noted:

I guess because [Black males are] such a vulnerable population right now and always. In teaching, not just anybody should be with these kids. They need people who are willing to look past a lot of things and try to dig deeper because of stereotypes, but stereotypes that also the kids themselves might have absorbed. They need people willing to look past that.

Grace also stated how parents perceived her teaching Black boys. She commented on how one father assumed she thought his son was a thug and how she was offended at the statement. She shared, "it kind of offended me for the child that his father would describe him

that way.” Yet, the comment made her ponder if all her Black parents perceived her as a White woman who saw Black boys as problems and thugs. Grace reported:

I never thought about his son that way. I don’t know if he thought just that I thought all Black boys were thugs. His son was one of the smartest kids in my class. I guess that made me put things into perspective that maybe that’s what some parents think when I am calling them about behavior.

She then changed her approach whenever she called parents about their behavior.

Grace started begin the conversations with something positive and articulated a strength before addressing their behavior. She shared her way of debunking negative stereotypes, “I try to let the kid and the parents know that that’s not what I think. That’s not what I expect.”

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

Analyzing Grace’s case illuminated consistencies with the literature in CRP and CRT in regards to teaching Black males. It reiterated the importance of responsive practices in order to reduce adverse experiences commonly experienced. Grace spoke about how it was her experiences that compelled her to change into a more culturally responsive teacher. Through adjusting her communication styles to considering her race as a factor in her experiences, Grace pushed her thinking on how she perceived her instructional and management practices. Grace seemed to utilize her experiences to understand communication styles, cultural codes, and identity as important factors to examine when implementing responsive methods.

In the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade’s (2015) study on culturally responsive practices in schools, they found that teachers must critically reflect on instructional and management, practices, assumptions made about Black males, and their personal identity in order to address the gaps faced by Black students. Grace’s responses in the interview unveiled a thorough

introspection of her experiences and documented responsive ways to reduce negative experiences for her Black males. As Hyland (2005) suggested, teachers who reflect on their practices are more unlikely to perpetuate inequitable practices. Grace's perspective on her experiences sheds light to not only responsive practices, but also a reflection of how she learned from her mistakes. Grace mentioned that it was not school, but her experiences that eventually placed her in the position to provide responsive practices for her Black males.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH FINDINGS: SARAH

Introduction

This chapter is the second of eight case studies of the middle school teachers' experiences working with Black males in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for Sarah and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how Sarah perceived her experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Sarah is in her early twenties and identifies as a White female. She teaches English Language Arts at an urban charter middle school in Louisiana. She has been teaching for a year and estimates the number of Black males she teaches at 40. Sarah self-reported and was referred to being able to provide information about her experiences working with Black male students.

Individual Case Analysis

Sarah was interviewed via telephone due to scheduling conflicts. During the interview, she was very honest and reflective of her experiences, as she was highly recommended as being able to provide culturally responsive services to the Black males she teach. Based her responses in the interview, four themes emerged in my analysis.

Communication Styles and Preferences

The theme communication styles and preferences reveal Sarah's recognition that her Black males connected to the educational experience through validation of their communication

styles. Reflecting on her management practices, Sarah perceived her classroom management as weak, especially regarding her Black males, until she learned how to adjust to their communication style and preferences. She stated, “making sure that when I do correct or redirect behavior, I’m not taking the easy way out or making an assumption that their conversation is off task.” From her experience, Sarah understood that her Black males did not like to be embarrassed, especially in front of their friends. Part of an effective culturally responsive practice, she learned not to publically shame her students for misbehaviors. Sarah faced adverse reactions when she would call their name in front of the whole class versus a more calm response when she discreetly pulled them aside. Sarah further described her experience:

I found that if I were to just call out their name in front to everybody or make the assumption what their conversation wasn’t necessarily about what we were doing, I was met with...I wouldn’t say hostility, but kind of that “why are you always picking on me” attitude.

Sarah’s non-confrontational approach helped her regulate her Black males behavior. She stated:

In that redirection, instead of yelling or raising voice, having one-on-one conversations with them about their behavior to correct, rather than like a whole group redirection and putting them on blast in front of the class. [This] was a much more effective way of getting them back on task.

Irvine (1990) coined the term *cultural synchronization* to describe the interactions between teachers and students and color. Furthermore, Brown (2003) asserted that culturally responsive teachers must implement culturally responsive communication styles. Based on Sarah’s responses, she was able to understand cultural habits and communication preferences of her Black male students, thus establishing a position to truly create positive interactions. She stated, “it takes more time, it take more effort, but in building relationships with my Black male

students, that was much more effective.”

Context to Content

The theme context to content refers to how Sarah infused cultural references in her lessons to ensure her Black males learned quality, but culturally relevant material they connected with in class. Sarah felt that the her school’s curriculum and Louisiana state standards did not allow her Black boys to experience material that invested them in learning. She stated, “it was difficult because the benchmark testing and unit testing were used was based on those materials that were not culturally relevant.” Consistent with CRT’s component of rejecting irrelevant and oppressive traditional practices, she supplemented the material with things that interested her students. She provided context that was responsive to their identity, to the community, and interest. She reported, “I would try to teach a concept or standard, I would try to pull articles or materials about Baton Rouge, about sports, about musicians.”

Secondly, As Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) asserted, teachers who are culturally responsive empower their students academically and socially, developing critical consciousness to address issues in their community. Sarah found ways to empower her students and evoke civic consciousness. She shared:

We did a project on student activism, where we look at a lot at youth who led protests in Baton Rouge following Alton Sterling shooting. The kids were super engaged, and they can kind of see how students their own age making such a difference in their community.

Sarah’s activism project, not only fulfilled that criteria, but she reported that her Black males still reference that project as being impactful to them and their learning experience. She shared, “to this day, so that was the beginning of the year, but to this day at the end of the school year, the kids still bring up that assignment and how much that showed them what they're

capable of.” Sarah believed that it was important that her Black male students connect their learning to their own experiences and share it with the class. She was big on incorporating student voice and allowing students to lead discussions about the material. In her class, Sarah wanted her students to own their learning and provide them with a platform to discuss their ideas openly. Indicating that:

My kids become stronger speakers and they’re allowed to verbally process their own thoughts, which then when they would go to write, I could see that thought process put down on paper. I think that was a really good way for them to develop that self-confidence in themselves as learners.

Sarah stated that when she provided quality and culturally relevant context to the content, her Black males participated more and communicated their ideas, which in turn, made a huge impact on their writing and overall experience in class. She stated, “my students connect[ed] whatever we were studying to their own experiences and then [I] allow[ed] them to share that.” She also realized the importance of incorporating literature of Black men and other Black figures and how it sparked the interest of her students. She wanted to infuse the work of men that provided contributions to society and created opportunities for her Black boys to connect the lesson with their experiences. She shared:

We studied Malcolm X. We read poetry by Tupac. Especially in English, you could hit all those standards. It’s just finding the material that kids are going to be more willing to engage with.

Throughout the interview, Sarah also shared her reflection with providing context to her lessons. She expressed her frustration with Louisiana’s mandate of implementing Common Core and all students taking the Leap test. She also felt that along with those items, benchmark tests were typically based off material that was not culturally aligned to her students’, especially her

Black boys' interest. She noted:

You can supplement culturally relevant materials and to teach the standards for when it comes time to testing time when they're being asked about something that is not culturally relevant, not engaging, the kids feel like they hit a wall. For a teacher, it creates this tension of, "I need my kids to be successful on the tests so I teach them...Do I teach them the type of material that's on the test, or do I teach them about Tupac?" It draws this tension.

This tension reflected the literature relating to the adoption Common Core and Louisiana's mandate of standardized test. Joining the criticisms of the flaws of Common Core, Sarah recognized how bias and unfair the curriculum and testing expectations was to her Black students, particularly Black males. Sarah faced a dilemma in using culturally responsive material. She desired to provide information that her Black males connect with, it collided with her struggle with how it was a disservice to set her students to fail when the state did not honor the cultural codes and norms of Black people. Sarah remarked, "this school year we were tasked with [teaching] a set of books and short stories that were not culturally relevant...I knew this was going to be an uphill battle of challenge for me." The way her Black boys learned was not how they were tested and she did not always know how to reconcile the two. For example, she was observed teaching and was told she accepted her too many answers from her students. She reflected:

I think it's so subjective to synthesize what the theme of a text is. When you're drawing from your own life experiences, as a Black male, you may think the theme of a story is something completely different than a white female based off her life experiences and to be asked that on a multiple choice test what the theme is. I just think it's so wrong. If they can justify their evidence, then I can't say that their idea of what theme of the life lesson of the story is wrong because their idea is coming based off of their own experiences and what they perceive this to be. Who am I to tell them they're wrong?

Sarah firmly believes that in order to teach English, a teacher has to teach reading and

writing in a way that allow integration of life experiences and voice when interpreting and analyzing the materials they have to teach. Because of the uniformity of the curriculum and tests, which privileged White ideals and norms (Cusick, 2014), Sarah faced obstacles with balancing the expectation and meeting the needs of her Black males. Stating that the tension is the most challenging part of teaching, Sarah felt passionate about ensuring her Black males were not just being prepared for a test, but for full entry in society that did not always welcome them. She shared, “ I need my kids to be successful...[but] to teach reading and writing doesn’t allow for that integration of life experience.”

Extended Family

The theme extended family depicted Sarah’s perceived role in teaching her Black boys. She felt her most effective teaching and management style was leading with love and allowing that to authentically build relationships with her students. Evident in how she adjusted her communication style to value her Black males and how she proactively added relevant context to her lessons, Sarah also spoke highly of her relationship with her students, particularly her Black males. Adding that she felt part of their family and community, Sarah stated:

I don’t have a family of my own [here] so I was really able to give my all into students this year...that created some super strong relationships with my students and their families and I feel like part of their community, which has been incredible. I know cousins and aunts and uncles and everybody in some of my kids’ families.

Sarah shared that she loves going to all her Black males sporting events because she realize 1) how sports is important to their social development 2) how attending those activities provided many opportunities to chat with the family. She reported:

Having meaningful conversations with family members and using that time to leverage those relationships and kind of have mini parent-teacher conferences whenever there was

a basketball game or a football game, kind of checking. [Also] going to their community games, which would actually be in their community. I was happy to be introduced to a whole 'nother part of their community, a whole 'nother part of their family. I've been invited to family functions like baby showers, engagements, wedding stuff. All these things and just showing up and being there I think made a difference.

Sarah valued relationships and her role as an extended family member. In a qualitative study of Black students' perceptions of teachers, Howard (2011) found that positive and nurturing relationships between teachers and students increases academic outcomes. The theme, extended family member, is consistent with the literature reflecting cultural values and teachers' role in providing emotional nurturing to Black students (Brown, 2004; Cooper, 2003). Additionally, understanding that her Black male students appreciated a climate of care and encouragement (Harrison et al, 2015), Sarah attributed that piece as being a key indicator of her ability to teach them in the classroom. She stated, "I think they appreciate it. I think they would say that they love the support." The appreciation of her showing up to the games and cheering them on proved to them that Sarah truly wanted them to be successful. She remarked,

I think that to them, me showing up for them and supporting them, I think it just re-instilled that belief that there are people out there that really care about you and really want you to be successfully in everything you do.

Affirming her extended family status, Sarah stated:

That's how it really feels for a handful of my [Black boys]. I've grown super close with over the course of this year. I view them as my own kids or little brothers, little sisters. I feel like...The way that their family treats me, I definitely feel very part of their lives, but not just they're my student, the whole family.

Validation

The last theme that surfaced during the interview was validation. Validation was infused through the conversation and reflected Sarah's skill in ensuring her Black boys felt valued in

their identity, but also affirmed who they were as Black males. Typically seen as a distraction, rapping and sports are ascribed to Black males as a deficit or token asset. However, Sarah spoke of how she used those interests as a motivator to invest her students in learning. Consistent with CRT, Sarah utilized a strengths-based approach to ensure she demonstrated value. (Kae & Trent, 2013). She didn't deny that it was very much a part of Black identity, instead of dismissing it she leverage those things. She exclaimed:

A lot of my boys really want to be rappers. That is the dream. As an English teacher, I have allowed them to have the opportunity to create raps in class and relate it to what we're studying in class, so content specific raps. To me I was able to say that identity, if you want to be a musician, that's valued and that you have a talent. That can be used in a classroom, but also that this passion or desire to be a rapper can be a positive thing. You don't need to drop out of school to be a rapper. You can stay in school to be a rapper.

Sarah spoke about how she wanted her boys to understand that it was nothing wrong with being a rapper, but encouraged them that staying in school and taking high school English would help them perfect their skills. Describing a conversation she had with her Black males, Sarah shared, "staying in school is actually going to make you even better at what you're trying to do." Her conversations with some of her Black males indicated that they didn't feel confident in school and wanted to drop out, but Sarah chose to validate her Black males interest of being a rapper, but also encourage them that "graduating high school and taking 12th grade English is only going to make you a better rapper...going to college and learning and reading more is going to make you a better rapper."

Additionally, Sarah also shared how sometimes her Black male students would be discouraged and not feel successful in their other classes. She noted that at the beginning of the school year most of her boys had negative mindsets about school. Sarah stated, "they may have

that disconnect because they feel like people have given up on them at school or they feel like they can't be successful." However, she stated that through multiple conversations, she felt that her validation proved to build their confidence. Sarah stated:

Having those conversations with them like, "no, you can do this. You are so smart and so capable," kind of showing them I believe in them and that I am just them every single day that I love them and that they could do this. For those two students, seeing their reactions and seeing how hard they worked once they became reinvested and once they knew people believed in them and once they had that support system at school, they had a complete transformation.

Sarah discussed how her identity as a White teacher also made her cognizant of the difference between what was normed in her life and in the lives of her Black male students'. She believed part of validating their culture; included acknowledging how language played a role in her effectiveness as a teacher. She reported:

I didn't want to whitewash my classroom as a white teacher. I didn't want to push these standards of my own education experience or what I thought to be true for education on my students. I wanted to create an environment where kids felt they could be their authentic selves. When my Black male students, I wouldn't necessarily correct the way they talked because the way they talk isn't wrong. It's the way they talk.

Sarah also spoke of the tension of validating Black boys' language, but also preparing them to address a formal writing prompt. Sharing a bit about the conflict, she expressed:

I want my Black males to be themselves. I want them to feel that their voices to be heard and that they're not wrong for speaking, " but also when they're communicating formally through writing, they need to know the audience. That kind of requires navigation on my part to reflect upon. "Am I preparing my students to be successful in the real world?" Am I preparing them to be successful in a White man's world" was also a tension I felt because I don't want to teach them that they write, the way they talk is incorrect because a white man says it's incorrect, but I want to related it to, "okay, you want to go to college You need to be able to write a college essay. This is the style of writing. This is academic language.

Audibly emotional as she speaks about this tension, Sarah stated that she is still trying to

figure it out and that she knows it will take many more years of experience to learn to navigate that tension.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

This analysis shed light to literature that reflects key factors of CRP and CRT, such as cultural references, extending care and fostering familial bonds, and validating her Black males' culture. Contrary to many negative perceptions held by teachers, Sarah embodied teacher characteristics that enabled her to incorporate responsive practices that could enhance the educational experiences of her Black male students. Communication styles, supplemental relevant material, forming a kinship, and validation were vital components that aided in incorporating culturally responsive practices in the classroom. Upon analysis of instructional and management practices, a clear factor consisted of Sarah not only acknowledging Black males' culture as valuable, but recognizing and making necessary adjustments in ensuring cultural gaps were bridged in the lessons through her interactions with them and through lesson implementation.

Perhaps the most evident piece of cultural responsiveness lends itself to Sarah's mindset and beliefs about her students. Gay's (2013) assertion that teachers must replace deficit perspectives of Black students and through analysis, Sarah's responses indicated that she saw her students' strengths and actively worked to incorporate their perspectives in her class. Her belief that her Black boys were valued members of her classroom, which in turn, helped her design her lessons to include their voice and insights (Gay, 2010).

CHAPTER VII

RESEARCH FINDINGS: TRINITY

Introduction

This chapter is the third of eight case studies of the middle school teachers' experiences working with Black males in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for Trinity and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how Trinity perceived her experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Trinity is in her late twenties and identifies as a Black female. She teaches Social Studies at a public charter school in Louisiana. She has a total of three years of teaching experiences and has been at her current school for one year. She teaches roughly around 50 Black males and was referred and self-reported to being able to provide information about her experiences working with Black males.

Individual Case Analysis

Trinity was interviewed at my residence per her request. Very thorough in sharing her experiences working with Black males, she provided rich and detailed answers to the questions in the interview protocol and any follow-up questions I had. I identified five major themes from her responses.

Validation

The theme validation refers to Trinity's mindsets and beliefs about her Black males and

responsive practices she uses to encourage them. Trinity spoke highly of her Black males, but was transparent about how many of them lack confidence and felt inadequate at times. She shared, “I’ve been teaching them to have pride in themselves...a lot of my boys have colorism issues. I’m like no matter what shade you are, have pride in yourselves and like, Black is beautiful.” She mentioned that how this mindset hinders their academic potential, especially in reading. Speaking about how her Black male students adopt the attitude that school is not cool, Trinity discussed how she tries to inspire her boys and tap into their potential in order to propel them forward.

[I call] them young kings and princes. That’s all I can do. No matter what a home situation is like, your focus is school. You can be the next president and all I can do is affirm them and give them pride.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) proposed that Black students typically damage their educational experience by denying academic excellence and behavior that aide in optimal learning by assuming an oppositional stance. As Trinity reflected on getting her Black boys to engage in school, the literature pertaining to “acting white” (Tyson (2005, p. 582) alludes to the fact that Black students feel a burden in engaging in activities deemed as White cultural norms (Perry, 2002; Tatum, 1997), thus assuming a position of inferiority. Trinity did not understand why her Black males opted out of working hard in school and the oppositional theory in Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) study affirms this experience. However, combating the opposition, Trinity reflects, “They are shut out of the world. I try to tell them about that Black boys who made it [but] struggled [like them]. Sometimes it may be exaggerated, but...whatever it takes to connect.”

Trinity spoke about how challenging it was to get her Black males invested in school. She

stated, “I think it is a cool factor in 6th grade. You got to be cute, you gotta be cool. I had to coax them it is cool to read [and] readers are leaders.” Despite the difficulty, Trinity worked hard to validate her boys in way that redefined Black identity.

She shared:

I think about culture images on the wall, showing pride in the community, representation of people who have come from the community and made it and [having] people who look like [them] come into the building to be role models outside of [their] teacher.

Trinity also spoke about how she often is shocked at how much effort goes into reaching her young Black males. Sharing that she has many conversations with her Black boys, she explained why she does not write referrals for her Black boys, as it perpetuate common inequitable consequences for Black students. As a former worker in the penal system, Trinity understands first how many Black boys are funneled in prison, especially when they have multiple suspensions. She stated, I’ve worked at the other end (prison) so coming [to Louisiana] to prevent that...[and if you don’t] you are re-entering [back] into society. As a way to counter the cycle, She often takes time to provide restorative services for problematic behaviors so that her boys understand the consequences of the choices they make. Trinity reported

If you look at my data I don’t suspend [my Black boys]. Instead getting a referral I take the time to get [them] together and breakdown [the presenting issue]. I value relationships and teaching. I take the time to teach them why that is wrong and if I just did referrals the same behaviors will circle back.

Trinity discussed how her experiences as a peer mediator in middle school and high school helped her value relationships and value dialogues about behavior, instead of punishments. She said, “punitive consequences did not fix behaviors,” but providing her Black boys with an outlet to discuss conflict in a positive manner was more beneficial. Gay (2010)

defined culturally responsive teacher as active agents in dismantling oppressive practices, and Trinity embodied that characteristic as she reflected on her experiences with her Black boys, especially regarding management. Trinity spoke passionately about how certain behaviors take time to unlearn and that sending student home only perpetuate the problem that exists. Trinity reported:

I was a peer mediator in middle school and high school and I think like going through that training it makes me view discipline an unlearning and unlearning bad behaviors in school differently cuz we don't have anything restorative so I'm not just gonna send you out, I don't believe in and I don't believe in automatic suspensions for certain behaviors that we are not take the time to teach them differently.

Trinity takes the time to teach them differently so that they are successful, both at home and at school, which is also consisted with CRP's component of ensuring Black students have access to skills they can use to navigate in society (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Storytelling

The theme storytelling reflects Trinity's method of redefining the narrative of Black males in a way that develops positive self-identity and motivation to excel in school. She discussed how she used stories to share her 1) personal experiences, 2) reasons for doing the work she does and 3) make relatable connections for her Black males. Trinity admitted to struggling in building relationships with her boys. She noted:

I have to be honest. I had to do more work to build a relationship with them. I had to let them know about my experiences and I had to let them know why I'm doing this. I do soapbox speeches everyday to make them understand it's something bigger in your life now in sixth grade and throughout your life.

One advantage Trinity mentioned that aids in her connecting with her Black male students is sharing her story about growing up in the same neighborhood as her students. She

spoke about her ability to understand the behaviors her Black boys exhibit and how it links to their environment and personal mindsets. Trinity discussed, “I know what’s it's like to live in neighborhoods [and] the behaviors you have to survive through are not accepted at school. Especially if you are at a school where I am at in the middle of the neighborhood.” Disgusted with how schools treat Black boys, Trinity builds up her Black boys by sharing her experiences. She shared, “this is my old community. I know what is going on in the community.”

Trinity also discussed how she preferred to share stories about other Black males in her circle who have come from similar backgrounds. She felt that her Black boys did not have a lot of exposure to different experiences and different versions of Black males. Trinity shared her belief in providing a counter narrative of Black male identity. She reflected:

They want to know more about when they are interested in something they actually crave it they actually crave the info because it is like a light bulb...I’m big on telling stories like, I have a friend that does this and I have a friend who is male and who is an engineer and went to law school as well. I just use first hand narrative to make that connect. Like Ms. Williams here in the flesh know this about other people. I try to just put a bug in their ear about other people because we don’t have that Black male presence in the school.

Mother Figure

The theme mother figure refers to how Trinity sees herself and the role she often assumes when working with her Black male students. Trinity explained how many of her Black males have seen Black female teachers before, but she always strives to do things differently. She stated, they’ve seen multiple Black teachers or Black women that come by. It’s not like I’m a rare form of the teacher. I mean, teachers have screwed them over.”

Part of her identity as a mother figure, Trinity said that there is a certain amount of care one must possess in order to build a solid relationship with Black males. Discussing that majority

of her Black males have single mothers, she added how her students have said, “you my momma.” Trinity reflected, “I think honestly, it’s because I care.

Further explaining how she demonstrated care, Trinity noted:

I ask them how they are doing and I find out about their lives...what their triggers. If don’t meet them where they are if you don’t you are not going get far with our young Black males. At least for me, I’ve seen a world of difference. I’m like momma and the enforcer, but I’m the momma who can get down on your level and can talk to you.

Consistent with Cooper’s (2003) article on culturally responsive habits of effective teachers by demonstrating care, Trinity’s Black male students call her momma and she contributes it to the fact that she cared about them. Sharing, “once they found I care” and “understand [their] life, Trinity attributes the trait of caring as an key factor of connecting with her Black males. She takes time to teach them things about life like a mother would and know when to prioritize those conversations. Additionally, she spoke about her nephew, who is the same age as her Black males. This identity adds another level of motherly care and relatability to her Black students.

Trinity also displayed transparency as she talked about her role as a mother figure. Explaining that the role can get tiresome and frustrating, Trinity discussed the burden that comes with being a Black female teacher and being seen as the mother figure when working with Black boys. She stated:

I think the mother thing is a gift and a curse because what I’m seeing. I go picked to go on a field trip and the White teacher, the young White teacher said I want you to go because I know you can keep the kids in line. So it’s like I feel like a mule because I’m doing this because I care. But because I care I don’t get a break and because I care I’m seen as the one who is gonna shake it up. I’m like, I’m tired. Black women get tired. Sometimes I feel like I’m wearing a cape at times. But imma do what I got to do for those Black boys.

Context to Content

The next themed is context to content, which addresses how Trinity bridge the learning gap by adding contextual and cultural references that interested her Black boys. Trinity shared how her school promotes *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010), which is a staple for many charter schools. However, she revealed her dissatisfaction stating, “I don’t think Teach Like a Champion is really adaptive as is for the young Black males in the classroom. She discussed how she always has to provide alternative resources that value her Black male students. She noted:

I always have to introduce curriculum that is attainable or relatable to their lives. I’ll put things like street names that they know or Love & Hip Hop names. Anything that is like pop culture that is interesting to young Black males. I don’t think Teach Like a Champion is designed for the population we actually serve sometimes.

Trinity spoke candidly about how her boys need specialized curriculum and management strategies that does not demoralize them and force them to be compliant. Emphasizing the importance of supplemental material, she stated, “once I started to withdrew from some of those things and meet young Black boys where they were...I was really able to trap into their potential but really meet them where they were and move forward.” This notion aligns with CRT’s component of “emancipating and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies (Gay, 2010, p. 38). Stating that most behavior methods that she is forced to use are punitive and does not meet her Black males where they are, so she develops her own. She feels that in order to reach them, a teacher has to consistently provide culturally relevant things into the classroom and engage them in critical dialogue.

Trinity also spoke about how her Black males seem to be disconnected from real issues and Black history, so she often has to use supplemental sources to get them invested. Being eager

to provide her males exposure, she stated:

I screen everything. I wasn't gonna teach them anything wrong. We were [discussing] Africa today and [I] was showing them what the cities look like. What does White South Africans look like and Black South Africans. [I] had to tell them like that everybody there is not poor. When I can, I've [taught] Greece and ancient Egypt. A lot of kids didn't believe Egypt was in Africa and I had to bring in supplemental sources to teach them about Egypt and all these great things that were done. I try to inspire them and teach them about other people.

Again, she mentioned how her Black boys do not think it is cool to read, but when she brings in material that they like or expose them to people who look like them, they are more willing to learn, thus countering the oppositional stance they sometime take.

Authenticity

The last theme that emerged from the interview was authenticity. Trinity's was aware how parts of her identity played a role in her connecting with her Black male students. She identified her growing up with low socioeconomic status as key indicator in working with her Black male students. She revealed:

I leverage my own socioeconomic status and I noticed what makes me rough around the edges. [I'm] able to relate to their circumstances because like I said before, they have seen plenty Black teachers. That is nothing new and a lot of them have screwed them over. I'm able to connect with them and I understand some of the behaviors they exhibit because I loved in the same environment.

Trinity said that her being "rough around the edges" made her relatable to the boys and able to build a solid relationship. She uses these relationships to have tough conversations with her boys, even when discussing sensitive issues. Recalling a moment when she had correct them on LGBT prejudices, Trinity stated that she does not let her boys get away with saying homophobic slurs. She tries to teach them to have pride in themselves, but respect others as well. Understanding that some of their language is cultural, she often times has redefine that

image if it is hurtful to other groups and communities. She reported, “I don’t like when my boys [say] homophobic things. I’m really hard on them about that and carrying themselves like a young man.” Her authenticity in being herself, yet being seen as a respected authority figure has helped her work with Black males. Brown (2003) discussed culturally responsive strategies that support Black males in an educational space and stated that teachers who consistently display assertiveness and authenticity in addressing negative behaviors and lack of effort are more incline to increase academic success. Similarly to this concept, Trinity also discussed her ability to be vulnerable around her Black males has also been beneficial in guiding and support her students. She stated:

Yes, I’m strict, but I have to be vulnerable. I will never break through with my students if I was not vulnerable and didn’t share my story. It won’t work. I don’t think I’ll be satisfied as a teacher and I’m the one valuing relationships over anything. If I’m not vulnerable, you don’t know me and I’m not being my true self.

Additionally, in discussing her level of comfort with fostering strong and positive relationships with parents, she indicated that she feels comfortable, but because her school climate is not welcoming to parents, she has to do a lot of phone conversations. She stated that she always starts off with something positive to say about her Black males. She noted:

I try to come in like a professional teacher, but I also come in real relaxed. I feel like I didn’t know I did that until I started having longer conversations with the parents. I’m like, yall kinda like me, huh? Because [they] started talking to me about all kinds of stuff. I’m like, okay I’m real chilled with this parent.

Trinity explained how this approach helps her when communicating with parents. She shared that she did not want her parents to feel like she was a stuck up state official, but wanted to exude genuine care and authenticity. She stated that as a Black woman who grew up similarly to her kids, she knows the language and culture of her students and keeping it casual and

authentic enhances the relationship.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

In my analysis of Trinity's case, I found her genuine desire to help her Black male students consistent with CRP and CRT. Reporting that she was culturally responsive to her students, Trinity's ability to validate her Black males' unique cultural habits, while establishing a culture of empowering them to believe in themselves and excel was evident in her responses. A primary strand of culturally responsiveness includes validating every students' culture and working diligently bridging gaps through various instructional and management strategies (Gay, 2010). As Trinity reflected on her experiences, she spoke about supplementing material in order for her Black males to connect with the material and encouraging dialogue that help her students recognize themselves in the context of the world and how they can challenge stereotypes and labels.

In the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade study (2015), they spoke about the necessity of teachers reflecting on their own experiences and identity as they work with diverse populations. True to this component, Trinity cited her authenticity cultivated the best response from her Black males. Leveraging her identity as a Black woman, aunt, socioeconomic status, and growing up in the same neighborhood as her students, Trinity found ways for her students to not only understand the inequities around them, but the essence of defining their own trajectory through education and pride in themselves (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

CHAPTER VIII

RESEARCH FINDINGS: DENISE

Introduction

This chapter is the fourth of eight case studies of the middle school teachers' experiences working with Black males in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for Denise and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how Denise perceived her experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Denise is in her early thirties and teaches mathematics at a public urban middle school in Louisiana. She identifies as a Black female. Denise has been teaching for over 10 years and has been at her current school nine years. She also serves as an assistant math coach for her school. She teaches around 20 Black male students, was referred and self-reported to being able to provide information on her experiences working with Black males in middle school.

Individual Case Analysis

Denise was interviewed at the local library in a private meeting room. She seemed very relaxed and eager to participate in the interview. Three themes emerged from her responses.

Context to Content

The theme context to content reflects Denise's commitment in ensuring her Black males relate to the content in a way that was meaningful. She perceived her teaching practices as fair to

all her kids, but majority of her class were Black and low socioeconomic. Stating, “my teaching practices are fair,” and “there needs to be a lot of structure. [But] I make everyone feel that they matter in the room.” Denise felt there’s a need for her Black male students to understand the world around them. One way she makes that connection is by including her boys in the content as well. She noted:

I teach mathematics so I can I can have the real world situation and I can present it in that way. I rewrite world problems to include them. I make projects centered around them. [They] automatically be interested because it’s all about [them]. Something as small as that helps out. I try to get them to think about the problems in terms of themselves and sometimes that work.

Secondly, consistent to culturally responsive frameworks discussing in Chapter One, Denise displayed cultural competence by considering the learning habits and perspectives of her students. She shared, “I’m really big on acting things out, so if they can even take on a like a role-play for certain things, I think that makes it fun.” Understanding that her Black boys learn best kinesthetically, she spoke about how she had to bring context and personalization to her teaching styles to invest her boys.

Mother Figure

The theme mother figure reflects Denise’s perceptions of the role she assumes when working with her Black males students. Commenting on her role as mother figure, Denise shared, “I think my Black boys probably see me as someone closer to their mom’s age, so that sometimes works in my favor.” She considered her identity as mother of a 13-year old Black son as a factor in being able to demonstrate care and understanding for her students. She stated, “I care about [their] learning,” and expressed the importance of forming relationships in order to invest them in learning. Demonstrating a level of care and value for her Black males, Denise

shared, “I want to know who you are. I want to know what you like, what you don’t like. I want to know everything about you.” Howard (2001) conducted a similar case study and revealed that when teachers displayed caring attitudes towards students, they tend to establish a culture of respect and community in the class. Aligning to this study, Denise spoke about how showing care for her Black males earned respect from them. She shared, “I think they’re all happy to be in my room versus someone else’s. I think there is always going to be certain level of respect that my boys have for me”.

Additionally, Denise discussed how showing care for her Black males formed a positive environment in her class. She noted, “for the environment to be positive and not toxic, there has to be room to be you. That’s what I’ve always been about with my kids.” Because Denise strongly identified with being a mother, she stated that part of her expressing caring for her Black males was also modeling manners and showing value for them as people. She firmly believed that her Black males respected her as a teacher and authority figure because she focused on the small things such as going to their sporting events, pulling them out for extra practice, and asking about their lives. Denise felt her authenticity, fairness, and ability to see the potential of her Black males beyond the classroom was recognized by them, therefore the same respect was reciprocated. Denise reported:

If they feel like [a teacher is] just here for the time being, you don’t care about me beyond when I leave this 90 minutes, then I think you get the same attitude from them. It goes back and forth. What you give out is what you’re going to get. If you talk to them any kind of way and this and that, they are liable to talk to you any kind of way. I show them if you do something simple for me, [I say] thank you, please. Something small.

Secondly, Denise also shared that part of her identity as a mother is also relaxing and being comfortable to joke around her Black boys and appreciate the things that interest them. She

said humor and that level of connection play a huge role in keeping things fun in her classroom.

She noted:

I'm very big on if you give a jab, and I hear it, please expect me to give one back. That creates a culture of "we all have a culture good rapport." We all can laugh with each other. I think I'm able to joke with my kids because I have a child that's exactly their age. I'm able to understand what they're going through a little bit. I just think I'm still being just enough to understand them, and just young enough to know the artists that they like, or the types of clothes they like to wear, or who's the most popular when it comes to sports, right now. I think those types of things help.

In the Monroe and Obidah (2004) study on *cultural synchronization* as a component of effective culturally responsive practices, humor and care revealed common themes that showed up in the interview with Denise. Through the interview, Denise demonstrated these two pieces of responsiveness as she assumed the role of mother figure.

Accountability

The theme accountability reflected Denise's thoughts about her Black boys and how they perceived themselves in her class. Fully aware of how the world depicts about Black males, Denise's classroom and teaching style embodies a validating culture where their unique personality is valued, but also molds them to be responsible and accountable.

Denise discussed how her Black boys are typically perceived and how she works to do things differently, illuminating the concept of dismantling deficit perceptions of Black students. One of the things Denise noticed about her Black male students is how they perceive themselves. For example, she shared, "they are smart, but they don't want to be perceived as smart. They're okay if they're middle of the road." Denise believed her Black males lack confidence and positive self-value, thus resulting in inappropriate behaviors. She further explained, "I've found that although they may be good students and they're smart, they also succumb to peer pressure

more often in terms of immature behavior.”

Stating the frustration of having to build them up to believe in themselves, but also dealing with their avoiding and attention seeking behaviors, Denise dedicates a lot of time validating their worth by conversations about Black male stereotypes. She describes this process, “I feel like I’m always fighting with my Black males to get them to care and be concerned.” She further noted:

With [Black boys] it’s a struggle at the grade level I teach. I make them understand that you are this color, and this is what the world expects of you. Always be better than that. Always strive to do better and to be better than that.

Denise also perceived the home life being a reason why her Black males do not feel successful in school. Believing that it carries a lot of weight, she finds herself in a game of tug of war, where she is trying to bring her boys up socially and academically. She stated, “home life carries so much weight...when I’m trying to get you to be at a A/B level, but people at home are okay with you getting D’s and F’s. It’s always a tug of war.” It may not always be the parental unit, but Denise pondered if other influences, such as kids in the neighborhood or just the pressures of societal expectations make her Black boys impressionable. She stated:

I think with Black males, we need to really figure out where their influences like. This is that transition time when they go from being a little kid to what they think is adulthood and everything is conflicting. The attitudes, the responsibilities, the priorities--- everything is in disarray.

However, despite the negative perception of the home life, one way Denise validates and holds her Black males accountable is through real-world preparation. Content matters and getting them academically ready, but Denise desires for her Black male students includes preparing them to navigate through society. She believes that holding Black male students accountable, instilling

responsibility, and also providing opportunities for them to learn from their mistakes are key factors in validating their worth. She asserted:

I have to teach that part. I think it's very important for any classroom to reflect [the] real world. I feel like I spend a lot of time not only trying to teach material but teach [them] how to just prioritize in the real world. They like being with their friends, but when you put the responsibility back on them, they work a little bit harder. [I'm] not gonna let you get away with the small stuff because in the real world, when [they] are no longer in school, the law doesn't care. They need to be accountable for all actions. Somebody has to have a real conversation with them.

Denise also reflected how even though her Black males need to be held accountable for their actions, she also recognizes the stigma of being Black. In her class, she finds ways to have open dialogue about their behavior and that their behaviors should not be indicative of how they are treated in the world. She noted:

What [they] do has to always be addressed because over here in the real world [they] have a stigma and a target on [their] back. A lot of people like to believe [they] are seen as aggressive. [They] are gonna be the one seen like [they're] likely to steal from somebody. [They're] likely to pop off on somebody. Unfortunately, it is just the way the world is.

Even though Denise thinks Black males need to be held accountable, being punitive is not the answer. Black boys are typically funneled out of school, so Denise adopted the principle of redemption. She shared:

They have done things that have got them in trouble, and I don't think that helps. I also feel like every child regardless deserves a chance. Every new year is a new year. If something goes on in your classroom on Monday, I'm supposed to start over on Tuesday. I'm supposed to constantly refresh and refresh and refresh to not hold anything against [my Black male students], to not take things that he's done to make me upset and take it out on his instruction, take it out on his grade or do any of these things. [I've become] this one and only champion to [my Black male students].

Denise spoke about pushing her Black males to believe in themselves and to use their educational experiences as a means of learning how to navigate through an unfair system. This

concept reflects Ladson-Billings' (2006) thoughts about CRP, in that teachers should always prioritize making the wider culture and societal views accessible for students and provide them with ways to learn how to make informed decisions. Her background is similar to her Black males, but she often uses that experience and her educational journey to motivate and promote accountability her boys. She stated:

[I tell them], 'try to be the best because you're in constant competition. No matter if you see it, don't see it. There's always a race and we're all running in it. Were all trying to somehow get what we really want out of life. I need [my Black boys] to want something out of life. What I'm saying is getting an education and actively pursuing your education and actually wanting it and getting it is your equalizer.

Denise seemed very no nonsense, but also nurturing in her working with Black males. She was transparent with some of the tensions and frustrations of working with them, but also provided examples of how she balanced those conflicts, such as instilling accountability and sharing her journey. Denise spoke about how at the end of it all, she wants her Black boys to appreciate their uniqueness, value themselves, and be prepared for the real world. She also wanted them see the world for what it is, meaning they are typically seen as problems, therefore they should always strive to exceed those perceptions.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

Analyzing Denise's case documented her experiences working with Black males and highlighted consistencies with the literature in CRP and CRT discussed in Chapter One. According to Gay and Kirkland (2003), when teachers incorporate culturally responsive practices, it often is accompanied by critical reflections about their perceptions and behaviors when working with Black males. Even though Denise negatively perceived the home life of her students, she was transparent in her reflection and also considered ways to reconcile the tension.

Adding student interests to her lessons, demonstrating care, and instilling accountability were ways Denise used to inspire and cultivate positive identity of her Black male students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). As Denise shared her responses, it revealed responsive practices that could help to reduce adverse experiences commonly experienced by Black male students. From being responsive to their learning styles through role-playing to inspiring her students to exceed societal expectations, Denise expected excellence. Ladson-Billings (1994) would possibly describe Denise a dreamkeeper, who is a teacher with an unrelenting belief that Black students could be successful. Traditionally, Black males encounter negative experiences, especially in middle school (Hurst, 1992; Kao, 2000, Schwartz, 2001). For culturally responsive teachers, they spend a considerable amount of time dismantling those negative mindsets. Much like Denise, she worked to evoke critical consciousness and a positive self worth for Black students by having conversations about stereotypes and how to use education to dismantle negative images (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

As Brown (2004) stated, teachers are charged with creating a class culture that address student's cultural, social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Similarly, Denise strived to balance between academics and social and personal growth, illuminating her understanding that Black must learn to successfully journey through society. Through a thorough analysis of Denise's responses, her instructional and management practices supported her Black males through the incorporations of cultural referents and interest. Also by integrating culturally appropriate ways to manage behavior, Denise did not use punitive consequences, but instilled measures of accountability by cultivating a class of respect, care, where her Black males felt comfortable to be themselves. For example, Denise fostered a culture of humor in her class. She felt that this

balanced her typically structured class, as humor is a culturally unique tradition among Black students (Monroe & Obidah, 2004). From the lens of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching, Denise incorporated opportunities for her Black males to achieve academic success by infusing content relevant to their lives and integrating life lessons that instill a sense of positive self-worth.

CHAPTER IX

RESEARCH FINDINGS: MARK

Introduction

This chapter is the fifth of eight case studies of the middle school teachers working with Black males in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for Mark and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how Mark perceived his experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Mark is in his early twenties and identifies as an African American male. He teaches mathematics at a public traditional school in Louisiana. Mark has been at current school for one year and been teaching for a year. He teaches approximately 22 Black males and was referred and self-reported to being able to provide information about his experience working with Black males.

Individual Case Analysis

Mark was interview at a local restaurant in a private room to ensure discretion. He seemed a little nervous, as his answers were initially mechanical and rehearsed. However, as the interview proceeded, he became noticeably comfortable with answering questions about his experiences with Black males. Two themes emerged from the interview.

Context to Content and Culture.

The theme context to content and culture related to Mark's methods of adding context to

his class to enhanced the learning for his Black male students. For management, Mark discussed how he allowed his Black males a voice and choice in the classroom. Understanding the need for his Black males to fully engage the class, Mark knew they must be heard. For example, Mark provided the opportunity for them to write the rules of the class. He noted:

I allow the students to write the rules. [They] keep it short and simple, and we come to an agreement on maybe three to five rules that the whole class agrees upon. I do that because [my Black males] know what they're suppose and what not they're supposed to do in the classroom setting.

Additionally, Mark also discussed how his Black boys' interest and connection to the real world were factors in how perceived his instructional practices, stating that, "[I] have to tie it into what they actually like and what they're interested in." Sport was a common thread that he used to connect material to his boy's interest. However, he added real life application, such as bringing grade point averages to add a layer of substance while he taught specific math skills. He reported:

For example, I have a young male who loves basketball. I played basketball growing up. I tell him, you have to have this 2.5 grade average, because if not you will not be able to play. He didn't believe me at first, so he played around for the first few weeks of school and saw his grades drop. Then it was time to try out for the basketball team, he couldn't try out due to his grade point average. [Then] he got with the program and now he's focused on bringing his grades up.

Not only did Mark provide context to his lessons by connecting it to his Black males' interests, he also used other things such as cars and money to teach math concepts. He noted:

One time we worked with decimals. I asked all the kids, "what's their favorite cars?" The boys was saying the exotic cars. I told them, "now let's do research on how big the tank in that car." That worked on their comprehension to understand [the math concepts], but also worked on their decimal operation, multiplying that decimal, dealing with money times the amount of gallons their car can hold of gas.

Validation

The theme validation reflected Mark's perception of his Black male students. Mark spent time discussing how he validated his boys and affirm their Black identity, which is consisted with Gay's (2010) definition of culturally responsive teaching. He noticed that many of them ascribed to societal expectations, which left them feeling inadequate at times. Mark shared:

They feel they're not smart as other kids, as the other races. Kids of the other races usually catch on quicker, they raise their hand, and they're more outspoken than the African American males. We had a situation where a Caucasian female scored the highest in the class. A Black boy made a comment, "she's Caucasian, that's how she know everything."

Mark often affirmed and encouraged his Black males that they too are smart, even when others have a different perspective. He shared, "but when [I] let [my] African American males know, "you can do this. You're just as smart as everybody else." He would spend time pulling them after class, uplifting them, sharing his experience as a Black male and challenging their lack of confidence and inferior mindset. He discussed how he provided an alternative perspective for his Black male students:

[I] have to keep letting them know, man, they can be great. They can be great, no matter where they come from or their living situations. I think [I] have to keep reminding them because of what they see a lot.

Mark articulated his frustrations with how his Black males saw themselves as inadequate. He stated that oftentimes they are not affirmed at home and that their negative perceptions of themselves are reinforced at home. He shared a story how one of his Black males who struggled received a D the first nine weeks of school. He reported that the mom said, "well, I knew he was gon' be dumb because his father didn't finish school." The meeting with the boys' mom prompted Mark to see first hand of what he was up against.

Mark reflected:

I just sat there, like, “how could you say that about your child?” How am I supposed to tell him, “you can make it, you can be successful,” if constantly at home, that’s what he’s hearing? How can I win that situation?

Mark’ believed that part of his role, not only as a teacher, but Black male teacher, was to continue to validate the value of Black identity and encourage them to see themselves positively. He spoke candidly about incorporating images of Black males that are not often portrayed. Mark stated, “we have successful African American’ pictures in [the class] some of them they knew, some of them they didn’t know. They did their research and found out who people were.” Mark teaches math, but he felt the importance of meeting with his Black males one-on-one or in smaller groups to discuss Black history and discuss the legacy of their cultural uniqueness. He does not want them to succumb to the negative images. Mark recognized that Black identity is a spectrum of masculinity and Blackness and he wanted to share that with his students. He reflected:

For the young males, all [they see] on TV is a lot of violent, cursing and they feel as if that’s the way they have to behave now. I’m the teacher who constantly reminds them that’s not the only way African Americans live. That’s not the only way we are seen. They might show the bad on TV, but they’re not going to show the positive as much.

Balancing the Black identity of his students with providing different aspects, Mark uses his own experiences to bridge the gap. He spoke about how his age and his success helped his Black males see a different aspect of Black identity. He understands his role as a role model and he leverages that to build and affirm his students. Language is a big piece of how he validate their identity, but he also teaches them about conducting themselves with dignity and how it’s

important to balance the two in a world that only criminalize one type of Black male. He shared:

[I don't want them] to fall into the trap that most people say...African American males are going to end up dead or in jail. When I go to work, I wear the dress pants, I wear a dress shirt and necktie or bow tie. I want these guys to see that positive image versus when they go home, all they may see is somebody with their pants down. I want them to see the other sides. I want them to see the world is bigger than what you see in front of you. I feel as if my image and the way I carry myself goes a long way.

Mark spends time after class showing them to tie a necktie and how to wear cuff links.

He is passionate about showing them a different standard. He spends extra time with his Black males because they need the affirmation and validation of their worth. He felt the obligation of supporting them in their development and saw that as beneficial in the classroom.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

Analyzing Mark's case unveiled patterns of CRT and CRP, as discussed in Chapter One. One of the more evident pieces consisted of Mark's used of cultural references to connect math concepts. Recognizing that many of his Black male students exhibited low self-esteem and confidence to perform academic, Mark's role as a teacher extended beyond the content. Embodying an ethic of care, Mark devoted time to validate his students. He discussed how his boys saw themselves from a deficit perspective, therefore Mark intentionally displayed alternative images to dismantle stereotypes which demonstrated an urgent, yet responsive to the needs of his Black students.

Additionally, Mark used validation to motivate his Black males and foster a greater confidence in their academic potential. As discussed in the review of literature, self-determination theory describes competence as a key indicator to success. However, competence is decreased with negative environmental factors, such as home life. As Mark discussed his

perception of the home life of his Black males, he identified that as a reason his students did not always feel confident in their potential. However, he still worked to affirm a positive Black identity.

CHAPTER X

RESEARC FINDINGS: JOHN

Introduction

This chapter is the fifth of eight case studies of the middle school teachers in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for John and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how John perceived his experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

John is in his early twenties and identifies as an African American male. He teaches mathematics at a public charter school in Louisiana. John has been at current school for two years and been teaching two years. He teaches approximately 50 Black males and was referred and self-reported to being able to provide information about his experience working with Black males.

Individual Case Analysis

John was interviewed at private office in town at a designated location we both agreed to. He seemed comfortable, yet pensive as he shared his experiences working with Black males. He spoke earnestly about how reflection of his teaching and management practices really challenged his mindsets and how he has evolved as a teacher. Three themes emerged from the interview.

Context to Content

The theme context to content refers to John's culturally responsive ways his instructional

methods connect material to his Black male' interest. John learned to bridge the gap between what his students need to know and what they actually knew. Understanding that most Black boys are interested in sports, he used sports in a lot of his lessons. He shared, "I feel that it's oftentimes seen as sports. [We] talk about yardage on the football field." However, not just catering to just that specific interest, he also used those opportunities to discuss other non-content related attributes to ensure his lessons were meaningful. He stated that those conversations lead to his Black boys revealing other aspirations as well. He shared:

[But we also] talk about being a part of a team and working together--collaborating. I'm realizing that by talking to them about what they want to actually be when they grow up, such as some of the want to be engineers, some of them want to be musicians, some of them want to be entrepreneurs and fashion designers. So when you talk about that, just trying to get them to understand that everything they do relate to the subject in some aspect.

John valued his boys' natural interest in sports, but it provided an avenue to discover other interest they may have. He then used those interests to bring context to mathematical concepts and connected it to something relevant and meaningful for them. John believed his classroom was an opportunity for his Black males not only to learn content but engage in social learning activities as well. He reported, "even the content starts here, to how you cooperate with people and talk to people starts here. So it's like a training ground."

Extending the conversation, John also used money as a way to provide context to his lessons. He found that many of his Black boys had dreams and the potential to be entrepreneurs, so John adds that piece to his lessons as well. He used community and local references to spark the interest of his Black males that cultivate a sense of belonging and pride. He noted:

Now, that we're doing this project, trying to get them to understand Baton Rouge and how everything is located and then pinpointing "hey this is Scotlandville, this is Gardere"

and talking about where it's located in reference to downtown or the entertainment district.

John described how his Black boys' engagement when he brought local markers into his lesson. He said, "they always perk up" when they hear their city or neighborhood in class and shared, "so it goes from them either being really docile or being real quiet or putting their head down... [to] they begin to wake up and they start talking to one another. John said that a lot of their work avoiding behaviors decrease when he makes those contextual references. He also discussed how pop culture is another unavoidable way to spark the interest for his students. He stated, it's generally seem through that verbal references, such as using popular quotes that I know the know or its more superficial but with television shows" John also engaged his Black males by incorporating popular GIFS and animated graphics to invest them in his class. He knows his Black males typically don't enjoy school, so he wants to bring fun, but with purpose, to his class. He often uses high energy and movements to keep them engage. However, he also discussed serious ways he brings context and relevancy to his lessons. He reflected, "on a more serious note, it's when we have conversations. Pretty much building off from them, from their conversations. Building off from what they expect or how they feel people see them just as African Americans."

Seek to Understand

The theme seek to understand reflects John's commitment to understanding his Black males students more and learning to see them from an asset based prospective. He admitted, "just 'cause I'm Black doesn't mean I'm [their] people," so John sought to learn more about his Black males, careful not to make any assumption. He spoke candidly about how often he has to reflect

to ensure he does not make postulations about his Black males based on a negative mindset. In the area of management, John reflected on his perceptions of their behaviors, which he felt like was misinterpreted often. He had to scale back his punitive consequences, but sought understand their behavior. He stated:

[I just try] to provide one outlet or one avenue that they can learn to improve one. [I think] “is [their behavior] really that bad for me to send them out for the rest of the day? Really that bad for me to want to write them up? Really that bad for me to want to call their parents?” Is it manageable? Can’t I correct this behavior without getting a third party involved?” That’s what I’m thinking about. That reflection piece is one that I had to actually understand.

He admitted that initially his perspective in managing behavior was to do what he experienced growing up, which was a more militant style. However, with reflection and his commitment to understand his Black males, he had to shift his mindset. He noted:

I had to shift from that militant aspect of it. So to go from being more punitive to being now more understanding and now more seeking to understand---that’s a big thing for me. I had to seek to understand why they’re doing this and have to talk with them more. I wasn’t used to talking to them last year. But this year, [I’m] definitely having conversations, talking with them, trying to understand where they’re coming from. Then trying to find that common ground.

Validation

The theme validation reflected John’s perceptions of the spectrum of masculinity and Blackness in regards to his Black male students. Plagued by the traditional disparaging rhetoric, John was transparent in his reflections of validating his Black male students. Understanding the spectrum of masculinity and Blackness, John noticed his boys only understood one aspect of their Black male identity. He shared:

They act as if they’re hard, they’ll act as if they’re really cool; they’ll act...[it’s] not okay to be smart...They typically shun the different of you speak or the different of what you value...[it’s] like them emulating the people they see on TV, because they all have style.

I wouldn't say they all are athletes, but a lot of publicity stemming from certain types of Black males.

John stated that part of validating his Black males is to expose them to Black males they don't typically see in their lives. Noting that most of his students are limited to seeing a variety of Black males and often succumb to stereotypical behaviors, he stated:

I think one factor may be just their exposure to what people expect of them and how that pretty much is becoming like a self-fulfilling prophecy, cause they begin to fulfill it as well. And so one student who's like "I just want to drop out." This student is capable and could do if they just put forth some effort. [I] just [try] to get them to understand we can't just be type casted as a Black male. We got different aspects of us, and saying you can easily be this aspect or you can easily be this aspect [is limiting yourself]. You can be whatever you want to be, but just don't look at that one [aspect] of a [Black male identity].

John wants more for his Black males, especially those who don't perceive school as a place for them. He spoke about how he has to work harder to validate his Black boys' identity and balance it with teaching them about life and how they have to continue to evolve in their identity. John spoke about how his fathers (stepdad and dad) affirmed his Black identity and he commented on how he identified as a non standard or different type of Black male. His fathers made him feel okay to speak different and be interested in different things. He shared this experiences with his Black males He noted:

I hope that it helped. I hope that [the exposure] opened up different doors or just exposed them to a path that they may potentially want to do one day. It's normal to be a different person. It makes more sense and it's that spectrum [that] we just don't fall on one aspect of this range of African American males.

John spoke about how his identity as a Black male teaching Black boys was a positive and a negative. He stated, "the most challenging I would say, again, being a Black male. And it's funny, it can be a positive and it can be negative."

However, John mentioned how he struggled at first because he did not fit the typecast Black male. He shared, “I was a different type of Black man,” and indicated that his Black male students identified him as White with Eurocentric attributes. John stated that his Black boys stated that he did not show his Blacker ethnic side. He reflected, “[they didn’t] feel as if [I] was one of [them] because [I] act[ed] this way. This is one of the reasons John is more successful now because he took time to understand their perception and validated their perspective, but also shared another aspect of Black.

John validation of his Black males typically manifested as valuing their Black identity teaching them pride in navigating through the system. John teaches math and often finds ways to validate and make the content meaningful for his Black males, however, the overall goal is to get them ready for life outside of the classroom. John shared his ways to dismantling deficit mindsets his Black males had by teaching them how to persist in society:

I had to learn the system, excel in that system, or manage in that system. That’s the mentality that I want my Black boys to have. It’s not just “oh the system is set up against you, “ or “oh, the test is set up against you.” We already know that. You know that. I know that. Everyone in your family knows that. But not it’s [me] saying, “look, if you know the system, you got to get in the system, you got to mess it up. You can’t mess it up until you get inside that system.” [I’m] trying to get them to see both sides [have value]. “You can have both sides, but you just gotta know when and when not to use it.”

John last point on validation emphasizes the legacy and the promise of Black people. He stated:

It’s a powerful thing. I feel as if it has the power to hurt our boys and it has the power to propel and make our boys excel. But if it’s truly used in a positive [way] it pretty much make sure that there’s no scapegoat for our boys. There’s no reason for them not to excel. We have, as a people, have a legacy of people who have not only been oppressed but discriminated against. We have excelled in spite of.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

Analyzing John’s case revealed responsive practices he used to support his Black male

students. Creating an environment of care and mutual respect was an evident, as John constantly reflected on his practices to ensure his beliefs and mindsets did not interfere with his interactions or the schooling experiences of his Black males. Consistent with the literature on *cultural synchronization*, John integrated instructional and management techniques that not only nurtured a atmosphere of care, but validated behavioral and linguistic habits and patters on his students. One of the most frequent cited factors of CRP and CRT includes the incorporation of cultural referents not only to spark the interest of Blacks students, but also to evoke meaning and connection to the bigger picture. Throughout the interview, John discussed how he engaged his Black males by using their identified interested, but also extended learning by helping them identify future aspirations.

Perhaps the most evidence practice of culturally responsiveness rests on John's commitment to challenging his belief systems. Gay (2010) asserted that teachers must critically examine how their experiences shape how they work with Black students and John proactively sought to understand his Black males. Even though he leveraged his identity as a Black male, he also understood how he was perceived as a different type of Black male, according to his students. Recognizing as this as somewhat of a disadvantage, this motivate John to reject traditional and oppressing instructional and management practices, and use a more restorative approach as a means of connecting with his students.

CHAPTER XI

RESEARCH FINDINGS: RON

Introduction

This chapter is the seventh of eight case studies of the middle school teachers in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for Ron and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how Ron perceived his experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Ron is in his late twenties and identifies as a White male. He taught special education English Language Arts at a public urban charter school in Louisiana. He taught for two years and was referred and self-reported to being able to provide information about his experiences working with Black males. He currently works in higher education as a graduate school professor.

Individual Case Analysis

Ron was interviewed at his house. He seemed relaxed and ready to fully engage in the interview. Three themes emerged from the interview and had evidence to align with the theoretical frameworks.

Context to Content

The theme context to content outlined how Ron perceived his instructional methods and responsive ways of investing his Black boys into learning. In an effort of being responsive in the

classroom, Ron personalized his lessons to include the interest of his Black male students. He noted, “I think where the personalization piece comes in is matching that up with what they know. If there are gaps that need to be filled for them, [I’m] ready to do that. “ Ron believed engagement was a factor in ensuring his boys achieve the academic success, so he used cultural context to the content to impart knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994). He reflected on the curriculum being irrelevant to his Black males, so he found ways to make the material accessible to them. He stated, “I always go out of my way to either pull in a parallel in pop culture or in their home lives that could make thematic content more accessible.”

One aspect of CRT rests on the idea that teachers engage their students by permitting them to use their personal perspectives and culture to analyze material (Gay, 2010). Aligned to this responsive practice, Ron provided context to his lessons by allowing his Black males to process using their own experiences and language. He candidly discussed how they broke down the content of the lesson by aligning it their real life contexts. He reflected:

You know, really most literature has universal themes that pop up in all cultural contexts and in real life, which makes it accessible to anyone. It’s just a matter of unlocking that for students that might not immediately [understand]. If I used some dry example that has nothing to do with anything they’ve experienced, it’s not as engaging.

Music was another way Ron made his lessons relevant for his students. He taught ELA and during the poetry unit, he used a lot of music to analyze pieces of the content in an engaging and applicable manner. Incorporating music into his lessons in a meaningful way help Black boys understand literary devices. He shared:

For poetry, I brought in a lot of music. We were analyzing some Lil Wayne. I would always try to start out by opening it up to them, so it’s like I want you to go out and find a song that has these literary devices in it and bring it into class for us to analyze. They would be bringing some Kevin Gates songs. It’s like if you’re excited about bringing this

Kevin Gates song in to analyze because it has this literary device in it, I'm not going to squash your joy.

Ron felt that bringing personal and cultural context to his lessons not only validated his Black males students, but also prepared them to excel in ELA concepts. He knew his Black males had to master the ELA standards, but Ron realized that the only way to do so was to involve them and their personal interest. He described how they were “engaged with the academic content” when he used their voice as the main driving force in the classroom. Ron shared how engaged his Black males would be when they owned the lesson and was able to use their experiences to connect to the material. He provided them with opportunities, like writing “humorous anecdote[s],” about their personal lives and bringing “a song that has literary devices” to ensure they was engaged in class.

Validation

The theme of validation reflected Ron's perception of his Black boys and his work in validating their worth. Ron was cognizant how in middle school, most boys do not show interest in school and the schooling experiences of Black males are typically negative (Brown, 2011). Specifically for his Black males he expressed, “[there's] been like a series and a pattern of just being kind of squashed over and over and over again.” Ron also discussed that school often was a place that did not value their identity and patterns of being devalued manifested in inappropriate behaviors and lack of confidence. Illuminating a component of CRT that pertains to dismantling oppressive educational practices, Ron spoke about creating a space where his students all felt validated in the various intersections of their identities. For example, he shared his reflections on masculinity and his thoughts that Black male students are not comfortable with

expressing emotions. He expressed, “I think part of making the classroom a safe space and a judgment-free zone is also allowing [them] to express [their] emotions.”

He did not see the image or cultural habits of Black boys as a deficit, but a means to build them up and affirm a healthy development in their identity, despite the stereotypical characterizations ascribed to them. He discussed how he created a validating class culture. Ron shared:

I think being culturally responsive and being a culturally aware teacher means as much as knowing what to take and capitalize on from students’ backgrounds. Making the classroom a safe space ...I always tried to create a space where they can express their appreciation and their love for their classmates.

He noticed how his Black males needed support in fostering positive relationships with themselves and others. Specifically, he used shout outs in his class and restorative practices to ensure his Black males developed skills they would be able to use in the larger society (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This form of validation decreased punitive consequences often used for inappropriate behaviors. He noted:

Rather than in those instances calling the disciplinarian to come deal with it, I’m going to hold [them] after class and talk through [it]. In those instances, giving them either sentence frames or use “I” statements. Kind of allowing them to actually talk through this.

Ron also saw an urgent need to validate his boys’ language in the class. Part of teaching them ways to express themselves included accepting the language or slang they used, but also providing them with social cues to help facilitate the conversation. Ron discussed the aspect of code switching and how he used it as a way to teach the power of communicating in both languages, which is consistent Lisa Delpit’s (1995) idea of accessing codes of power in order to navigate in a society where social order indicates power. He supports both types, but also

provided rationale as to why it was important to consider both. He reported:

My kind of messaging was always like it's not about one being better than the other. There are some people out there that feel like the formal way is better. I said what it is about is knowing your audience and knowing how they're going to receive the information that you're given them. If you audience isn't going to be able to access our colloquial slang, then you're actually not doing a good job communicating with them because they're not going to understand what you're trying to say. That takes away from the power of whatever you have to communicate.

My analysis of this is that Ron is not trying to devalue the language of his Black boys, as he saw value in it. He was saying that communication is effective when the recipient of the conversation is able to understand a person's message. Ron reconciled this notion by incorporating some of their language into his speech and providing opportunities for them to fluidly move between the two languages. He shared an example when he had them to write an essay using slang and write the same essay in academic language. He stated, "I actually had them write the essay one version and like with slang and then one version that was more formal to see if they could communicate the same idea in both ways." He used peer editors to go through the paper to determine if the message was the same or if there were places where the audience was confused. He later discussed, "I think that allowed them to have that more meta cognitive piece" where his Black boys would stop and think about what they were saying, writing, and what message they wanted to convey.

Lastly, Ron also discussed that his Black males needed validation in their roles typically assumed at home. Most of them came from single parent homes and had lots of responsibility, which could produce a conflict in the class. Ron felt that they wanted to be kids, but also struggled because they had adult responsibilities at home. He expressed, "A lot of [my Black boys] were required to be very independent at home," and Ron's way of validating that dynamic

was by finding ways for them to be leaders and have ownership in the class, but also have a space where they could be kids. He reflected:

[I] find ways through classroom roles or jobs or stuff for them to feel like they're taking some responsibility and ownership that might mirror what they do at home. But also being able to take some of that pressure off to be like this is a time and place for you to just be a kid. It's okay to be curious. It's okay to be emotional. It's like [they need to] feel safe enough to let [their] guard down and be a kid.

Through validation, Ron shared that he was able to build strong relationships and make school meaningful for his Black boys. The relationships with them also allowed him to build strong relationships with parents and the community, which highlights the next theme.

Immersion

The theme immersion referred to Ron's reflections on his identity as a White male and highlighted the importance of community/parental engagement when working with Black male students. Ron reflected on his identity and how he was initially seen as an outsider. He shared, "coming from an upper middle class White background... I remember being suddenly aware that had never until the moment I walk into a classroom at X, been in a room where I was the only White person before. This realization helped him recognize his own privilege and "that was an added layer of I need to work even harder to be here for [them] consistently and show [them] I care." Ron showed parents that he cared about the community and his students by immersing himself in the community and showing value in its culture. He stated:

[I] reached out to them and let them know, "I'm here for the right reasons. I'm here for you child. I want to make this work." I had to show family members I'm here and I'm not going anywhere. Sometimes it came down to [them] not answering the phone. [I] roll up at the house and wait until [they] come home. I relied on my ability to build relationships in more of a social context. Whether it was a church that I knew a lot of family went to. I would go there for church. One of the kids told me that they had a birthday party or [their] momma got engaged and I would just go without an invitation and just be like,

“hey, I brought you a card.”

Ron understood that to his Black male students, showing care and valuing community and relationships mattered (Brown, 2003). He discussed how he would go on home visits to get to know the family and the students better. Ron also reflected on his identity not only as a White male teacher, but also as a gay individual and its influence on his work with Black males. He understood the traditional, often negative discourse around Black males and connected with that as a gay man. This vulnerability allowed him to empathize and be open to immerse himself in the culture. He shared:

Part of me feels that my experience growing up as gay and feeling like a fish out of water for 90% of my youth. I think that's been a large part of what has allowed me to approach [this] situation with more empathy. I know what it feels like to feel like there's not a place for you. I feel like especially for Black Boys, especially in middle school.

Ron's identity and experiences propelled him to learn more about the culture and community. He also stated that he is fully aware of his privilege as well. Understanding that “race and class are so intertwined in our society”, he had to remember that his experiences are not like his Black males' experiences. However, he spoke about using that layer of knowledge to work even harder and consistently to build relationships and foster meaningful connections in the community.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

Analyzing Ron's case highlighted consistencies with the literature in CRP and CRT in regards to teaching Black males. It reiterated the importance of responsive practices that helps reduce adverse experiences commonly experienced by Black male students. The themes context to content, validation, and immersion documented key elements of effective culturally

responsive practices in the classroom. As Ron reflected on his experiences, it was evident that infusing cultural referents cultivated a class where Black boys felt free to express themselves, but also achieve success. He provided personal anecdotes about how his students' engagement peaked when those culture gaps were intentionally bridged (Howard, 2003).

In the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade's (2015) study on culturally responsive practices in schools, they found that teachers must critically reflect on instructional and management practices, assumptions made about Black males, and their personal identity in order to address the gaps faced by Black students. Through a thorough analysis of Ron's responses, his instructional and management practices demonstrated appropriate use of culture to decrease behavior disruptions and increase learning outcomes for his Black males. Understanding that his Black males were typically targeted to adopt stereotypical behaviors, Ron's desire to show solidarity and honor cultural traditions showed his commitment to empowering students to challenge the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1995). From the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching, Ron consistently incorporated opportunities for his Black males to achieve academic success by infusing content relevant to their lives, validating their identity through self-exploration, and being aware of how various parts of his identity influenced his work with them.

CHAPTER XII

RESEARCH FINDINGS: MICHAEL

Introduction

This chapter is the last of eight case studies of the middle school teachers in Louisiana. In this chapter, I present the demographics and background information for Michael and an analysis of the interview data using within case analysis. The analysis describes how Michael perceived his experiences working with Black males and its connection to the theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching discussed in Chapter One.

Background Information

Michael is in his late twenties and identifies as a White male. He taught mathematics at a rural school in Louisiana. He taught for five years and has been at his current school for four years. He taught around 30 Black males. Michael was referred and also self-reported to being able to provide information about his experiences working with Black males. He currently serves in an administrator role at his current school.

Individual Case Analysis

Michael was interviewed by phone due to scheduling and traveling conflicts. He seemed tired, as he had been traveling all week, but fully participated and was reflective in his responses. Based on Michael's answers, I found two themes: context to content and empowerment.

Context to Content

The theme context to content reflected how Michael perceived his instructional and management methods and how he provided culturally responsiveness to his Black boys. Michael stated that he wanted to ensure he included things that were important to his students and would

be useful in the long term. He noted:

Trying to make it realistic as well as important to them. I taught math and it was more about me trying to give them a roadmap of how [the content] help them be successful in the following grades, and then graduate and so forth.

Michal felt that lessons should go beyond the classroom and reflect the real world as much as possible: “talking about the big picture and making it meaningful to them rather than it just being like you need to do this math problem because you have to do this math problem.”

Bringing relevancy and context to the content, Michael used real-life examples to impart knowledge, as this is consistent with Ladson-Billings’ (1995) definition of culturally relevant pedagogy. Additionally, Michael spoke about ensuring the content is attainable and relevant to the students was an important factor of promoting academic success for his Black males. He stated:

Using their names or bringing in pop culture references [helped explained] abstract concepts. I would try to use an example that they understood. So, if we were talking about distance, I would use the distance from the school to the local supermarket. Or from the school to the capitol building in downtown Baton Rouge.

Michael believed that his Black males had limited access to things outside of their rural community, so he would try to build their conceptual understanding to bridge that gap. Stating, “I tried to use as much context of their knowledge to help them understand these abstract concepts,” Michael leveraged the context of their knowledge and experiences to help them connect to the material. This aspect of responsiveness was critical in his Black boys experiencing success in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Another way Michael added context to the content is by connecting the material to his Black male experiences and what their everyday lives. He noted, “[I try] to give them a concept

of their lives in the community and how things that they experience everyday are related to the things we were learning in class.” As evident in Michael’s responses, he was intentional on using students’ knowledge, experiences, and cultural frames of references to ensure he connect the material to something meaningful and relevant to his Black males. As Gay (2000) stated, when teachers use culturally responsive techniques, they essentially make learning accessible for Black students.

Empowerment

The theme empowerment details how Michael used empowerment to affirm his Black males identity and encourage them evolve in their identity development, and see themselves positively in the context of the real world. He used small group or individual conversations outside the classroom to build them up and help them realize their potential. He felt that there was disconnect with what was shown on TV and his Black males’ perception of themselves. Michael stated, “when they see something on TV, they don’t really understand what’s going on, or they dismiss it,” and this prompts him to have conversations about stereotypes He further explained:

Talking about the stigmas [and] just asking questions, to really try to deeply understand. [And] just giving them context of them lives, as they know it and then the lives that they don’t realize. To empower them to understand that they have a lot of opportunities.

Consistent with CRT’s components of responsive teaching practices, Michael engaged his Black male students in conversations that promoted social, emotional, and political understandings of who they were, while empowering them to challenge generalization typically assigned to their identity (Gay, 2010). Michael discussed how even though there is a negative connotation of grit, he still strives to instill confidence in his Black boys and help them

understand the power they have inside to excel at all things. Displaying an anti-deficit mindset, Michael strived to leverage the strength they already possess. He reported:

I hate the word grit. I think the word grit is used really poorly especially when they're talking about young men of color. They were born with grit. Right? Their ancestors had grit. I think it's really harmful to their own identity. But empowering them to know what they already have grit [and potential] and how they can maximize that and use that.

After reflecting longer, Michael stated:

I use the word perseverance because I feel like that's a better way to describing it. There's a negative connotation with grit. Meaning there's a lack of something [and I] need to give it to you versus empowering them to have perseverance. I think a lot of the way I try to give my [Black males] positive self-worth is through empowerment and context in the greater world and their role in that.

One evident piece of culturally responsive teaching includes Michael's commitment to dismantling traditional oppressive practices, especially regarding discipline (Gay, 2010). He encouraged his school to avoid perpetuating cycles of harmful consequences and work towards a more teaching and learning environment. He stated, "we try to focus on positive incentives...it's more about emotional intelligence, and giving kids the resources to make better choices and monitor their own emotional well-being." Michael discussed ways he empowered his Black males, which consisted of not using punitive consequences but providing resources for his Black male students to make well-informed decisions and exercise healthy ways to cope with difficulty in schools and society. He explained, "if a student curses at a teacher, I mean at some schools that I've seen, that's an automatic suspension...versus it really becomes more a conversation about appropriateness."

Michael also empowered his Black males to develop a toolbox of ways to handle different issues faced in life. He discussed learning the "ramifications" and "implications" of

making bad decisions, “understanding time and place” of certain behaviors, “tools to be successful, “tools to advocate for themselves,” and having conversations on “understand[ing] their rights.” Michael explained that part of him being a culturally competent teacher is acknowledging “the cultural norms of the community that [he] work in,” but also empowering his students through explore the greater context of the world and helping them navigate through to be successful.

Analysis through the Lens of the Theoretical Frameworks

Analyzing Michael’s case outlined consistencies with the literature in CRP and CRT in regards to teaching Black males. It reiterated the importance of responsive practices that helps to reduce adverse experiences commonly experienced by Black male students. However, an insight to consider is the aspect of extending culturally responsive teaching practices in a manner that evoke critical consciousness and empowers Black students to challenge the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Yet, through providing context to the content and through empowerment, Michael displayed culturally responsive practices support the unique needs of Black males.

In the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade’s (2015) study on culturally responsive practices in schools, they found that teachers must critically reflect on instructional and management, practices, assumptions made about Black males, and their personal identity in order to address gaps faced by Black students. Through an thorough analysis of Michael’s responses, his instructional and management practices validated his Black males through the use of cultural referents, but also exposed his students to a “wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socio-economic status and making informed decisions about the lives

they wished to lead,” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 36). Understanding that his Black males were typically targeted for punitive consequences and subjected to negative school experiences, Michael’s perceptions of his Black males pushed him to consider the systemic oppression as a lens to which he worked to provide his students with equitable practices. From the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching, Michael incorporated opportunities for his Black males to achieve academic success by infusing content relevant to their lives. He also integrated responsive practices that help his students develop, not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well.

Discussion

This case study documented the experiences of eight teachers’ working with Black males in middle school in Louisiana. The teachers in the study participated in an interview and reflected on their personal insights of their work in education as it related to Black males. Frameworks for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching reveals that why literature is vast, examining individual accounts from teachers uncovers responsive practices that reduces negative experiences for Black males. Throughout this study, I’ve learned that why some of the responsive practices are similar, how the participants experienced and how they derived at their perception play a huge role in incorporating responsive methods. The intersections of race, class, and other identities challenge some participants, while benefiting others.

Summary

In Chapters IV through VII, I provided two stages of data analysis. In Stage I, I presented findings from the transcripts as it related to the following research questions:

- (1) How do middle school teachers perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to serving Black male students?
- (2) What are teachers' mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?
- (3) How do teachers perceive their own identity (ies) and the influence on teaching Black male students?

I used significant statements from each of the interview to understand how the participants' experiences aligned to my research questions. In Stage two, I presented findings from each case in a single case analysis. The findings in Chapters V through XII highlighted responsive practices.

CHAPTER XIII

CROSS-CASE FINDINGS

Introduction

Using a qualitative multi-case research design to explore the participants' experiences working with Black males, this study presented findings in three stages. First, I selected significant statements from the interviews that aligned with the research questions that guided this study. In the second stage, I address the findings from each of the eight single cases in Chapters V through XII. In the final stage, discussed in Chapter XIII, I present a cross-case analysis in two parts: 1) By discussing overarching themes that were common for all participants and 2) by comparing and contrasting the results of each case, considering aspects of their racial and gender identity.

Part One: Cross-Case Analysis

Based on the responses of all participants, I used significant phrases and formulated meanings to develop common themes for all cases. Using Colaizzi's (1978) method of analyzing transcripts, I clustered the meanings in a way that allowed the emergence of themes to describe the collective experience of working with Black males. There were six themes that emerged from the analysis: *Connectedness, Advocacy, Evolution, Purpose, Synthesis and Kinship*. The themes fit within the CRP and CRT frameworks and also with the literature on Yosso's (2005) community of cultural wealth framework, which was addressed in the literature review.

Connectedness

The theme connectedness refers to how all the teachers strived to provide relevant material to their lessons and incorporate responsive strategies to invest their Black males in

learning. In that, they revealed their perceptions of curriculum and courses and how it does not support the needs of their Black males. Grace stated, “the [curriculum/standards] are biased because they’re mostly writing by white men in the Northern part of the United States. They end up alienating not just the Black men, but also a lot of the population.” Similarly, Trinity added, “I don’t think Teach Like a Champion is really adaptive for the young Black males.” The participants understood that supplementing material was important for their males.

Black boys present cultural habits in language, behaviors, style, dress, learning styles and perspectives that are often different than mainstreamed Eurocentric culture. The teachers in this study recognize that uniqueness, therefore implemented cultural referents to reach their Black males students. Understanding that when Black males disengaged from school they are subjected inappropriate behaviors and harsh consequences. Acknowledging that Black boys must connect with the content and the learning experience, the theme *connectedness* sheds light to culturally responsive practices that not only produced connections with content relevance, but also with strategies that cater to learning styles.

When planning instruction, the teachers were intentional in adding cultural references in the lesson that stimulated their Black boys interest and investment in the classroom. Some of the ways included consistent images of Black males in content, using current events, references to community staples, connecting to Black boys experiences, and adding historical connections relating to Black history. The participants reported to seeing more engagement from their students and increased their academic outcomes. Based on the responses, content relevancy was achieved by not only acknowledging the cultural backgrounds of their boys, but also actively seeking to understand their boys. Asking questions, providing opportunities to share their

experiences, one-on-one conversations, and discovering interest (hobbies, strengths, career goals) were utilized by the participants in order to bring connectedness to the their classroom.

Advocacy

The theme advocacy refers to how teachers aspired to teach their Black male students strategies and skills to increase their ability to navigate successfully in and out the classroom. With this theme there is a fundamental need to understand the systematic traps that typically victimized Black boys and the importance of teaching them skills to support their trajectory of success (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teachers must work to reject traditionally oppressive educational practices (Gay, 2010) and engage students in opportunities to enhance their strengths and habits bring from home (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) stated that Black students must gain navigational capital as a means of learning methods that increase positive interactions with others, recognize and challenge systems of injustice, and foster empowerment.

The theme advocacy suggests that if Black boys learn and utilize ways to leverage resources and their strengths, they are able to maneuver through various social entities. The participants discussed how they worked with their students on various skills, not to suggest anything negative or lacking about their identity or cultural habits, but to ensure their Black male students were successful in any given space, regardless of marginalization. For example, Michael shared, “I think for me it’s giving my [Black boys] tools to be successful. And be able to navigate that. And also tools to advocate for themselves. Having them understand their rights.” Sharing that for her Black males, it was important for her classroom reflect the real world, given common negative experiences often attributed to them. Denise reflected, “I spend a lot of time not only trying to teach material but teach how to just prioritize in the real world.” Discussing

her rapport with her Black males also allows her to teach the other skills, Denise also shared, “just teaching them small things [like] the nuances of nonverbal communication” helps them understand personal space and develop emotional intelligence. John also reflected on how he would incorporate responsive practices that promoted advocacy and learning skills that would be beneficial in and out of class. He shared, “it starts here. Even the content starts here, to how you cooperate with people and talk to people starts here. So it’s like a learning ground, a training ground for them later on.”

As a prerequisite of culturally responsiveness in classrooms, all teachers acknowledged how systems (educational, justice, etc) were unjust and how Black males are often targeted and/or forced to assimilate. Refusing to perpetuate unfair methods, the teachers had to incorporate practices that would allow their Black males to access positions to challenge the social order, as Ladson-Billings described in CRP. John asserted, “[Black males] have to know the system. [They got to get in the system...to mess it up. But you can’t mess it up until you get inside that system.” Due to this reality, the participants all saw the necessity of teaching skills to ensure their Black males had resources to capitalize in order navigate through society.

Understanding the importance of relationships and social capital, promoting advocacy and associated skills supported Black males in increasing positive interactions with others. They provided opportunities for their Black males to increase positive interactions by implementing cooperative learning, social intelligence lessons, and conflict resolution strategies. Ron stated that he would allow his Black boys the space to talk through different conflicts, he shared, “In those instances, giving them either sentence frames or like, ...use “I statements...allowing them to actually talk through this is how [they feel].” In terms of empowerment, the teachers also

wanted their Black males to understand how they were perceived and not allowing that to dictate their worth and value. Grace stated, “they’re such a vulnerable population right now and always. They need people who are willing to look past a lot of things and try to dig deeper [despite] stereotypes.” Grace went on to explain that she how she empowered her Black males, she shared, “[I] bring African American history into [class]. The kids really do appreciate that. Talking about race in history, and then obviously bridg[ing] into what’s happening today, it helps them. Especially with what they see in the news.” Supporting students develop critical social consciousness helps students understand the importance of being able to recognize and dismantle oppressive practices.

Evolution

The theme evolution refers to teachers working to build positive self-image of Black males that challenged the status quo. With evolution comes the need to understand there is a spectrum of masculinity and Blackness. Black male identity is vast, but oftentimes seen as one image, which is usually negative. Redefining a different standard provides them with multiple alternative narratives. The teachers spoke to how their Black males assumed stereotypical behaviors, such as aggression, argumentative, lack of investment in school, and other adverse behaviors typically shunned in society and in educational settings. Understanding that punitive consequences do not help the validation, teachers sought to provide alternative examples of positive Black images. Trinity stated, “[having] images on the wall showing pride in the community, representation of people who have come from the community and made it and people who like them [them] come into the building to be role models outside of [the] teacher. John added to the concept of evolving from the stereotypical black male, “It makes more sense

and it's[a] spectrum. That we just don't fall on one aspect this range of African American males.”

For the two Black males interviewed, John and Mark, they both wanted their Black boys to understand that there is a spectrum of Black identity that have yet to tap into and wanted to present themselves in a manner that would encourage their Black males to see beyond their community and media images. Evolution considers the current identity Black males assume, but also actively approach measures to evolve their mindset and explore other aspects of their identity. Teachers who are responsive to the need of Black males work to help them not only develop positive self worth, but help them dismiss stereotypes, the negative implications of labeling themselves, and provide exposure to different images of Black males. Concrete ways to do this is included increasing outside support and inviting members of the community, particularly Black males, to speak on relevant topics.

Purpose

The theme purpose refers to teachers providing ample opportunities for Black males to focus on their dreams and develop hope for the future. Black boys potentially don't see their value, worth in educational settings, and life in the future. It can be asserted that it is due to various factors (home life, previous negative experiences, lack of confidence, institutionalized racism that is promoted, which evoke tensions for Black boys.

The teachers in the study encountered a considerable amount of negative talk and perceptions their Black males had of themselves. Based on the comments they reported, cultivating a sense purpose for their Black boys provided opportunities for them to identify and leverage strengths of their students. John stated that, “they act if they're hard, and Trinity shared,

“They feel they’re not as smart as other kids.” The participants discussed how they addressed this negative self-talk. John reported,

by talking to them about what they want to actually be when they grown up, such as some of them want to be engineers, some of them want to be musicians, some of them want to be actually interestingly, entrepreneurs and fashion designers.

Additionally, Sarah added that she instilled purpose for her Black males through validation of their dreams of being rappers or musicians. She shared her response,

if you want to be a musician, that’s valued and you have talent. This passion and desire to be a rapper can be a positive thing. You don’t have to drop out of school to be a rapper. Going to college and learning and reading more is only going to make you a better rapper.

In order for teachers to be responsive to the need of Black males’, teachers have to consider their assumptions and mindsets about males and work to help Black boys persist in the educational setting. Yosso (2002)’s work on cultural wealth, specifically aspirational wealth, speaks to Black students’ access to their future goals and aspirations. Responsive methods the teachers implemented demonstrated various ways to build that sense of purpose. Career aspirations are ways not only to connect material to interest, but it gives Black boys a reasons to build their confidence in school and develop intrinsic motivation to persist in education.

Synthesis

The theme synthesis refers to teachers facilitating a culture of synthesis for Black boys as it relates to the correlation between language and literacy. Typically identified by their language, Black Vernacular (BV) or Black linguistic styles represent cultural habits that Black boys exhibit in schools. The teachers in this study felt tensions between valuing linguistic styles of their Black male students while considering code switching as a necessary method of teaching them

literacy and preparing them to navigate through an Eurocentric society. John shared his thoughts about code switching: “I know it sounds bad, but I think it’s needed right now.” Sarah reflected on her tensions with code switching, “I want my Black males to be themselves. I want them to feel that their voice is valued and that they’re not wrong for speaking,” but also when they’re communicating formally through writing, they need to know the audience.”

Smithman (1977) asserted that because Black boys’ natural linguistic skill develops and is fixed by the age of five or six, and is unlikely they are unable to totally eradicate from it. Because White English Vernacular (WEV) is taught in schools, expected in schools, and ultimately forced upon Black boys, the theme of synthesis suggests teachers learn to validate the legitimacy of Black boys’ language by teaching them to join/merge linguistic codes (BV and WEV) to communicate and convey desired messages. Ron discussed this aspect, “my kind of message was always like...it’s not about one being better than the other. I said what it is about is knowing your audience and know how they’re going to receive the information that your’re give them.”

Mitchell (2004) coined the term *code meshing* to refer to the methods that combines versions of English in a way that is in line with how individuals speak and write. He vouched for code meshing to debunk the idea that one vernacular is superior than the other and to diminish the assumption that Black boys must use their vernacular at home and switch to standard English in school or when writing. Ron shared how his version of code meshing, “I actually had them write the essay one version and like with slang, and then one version that was ore formal to see if they could communicate the same idea in both ways.” He explained that the process helped students synthesize their natural linguistic pattern with WEV to help their thinking process in

writing. Sarah was transparent in figuring out how to consistently address the tension in teaching Black boys literacy. She shared, “I don’t want to teach them that the way they write, the way they talk is incorrect because a White man says it’s incorrect.” She further explains her attempts to merge the two linguistic patterns. She stated, “I want to relate it to, “okay, you want to go to college? You need to be able to write a college essay,” and this is the way. This is the style of writing, whatever. This is academic language.” All the participants validated the language habits of their Black males, yet understood the tensions of teaching them to code switch. However, they reflected on working on how to merge the two in a way that does not devalue their Black males, but also not force them to assimilate.

Identifying synthesis as a theme illuminates the idea that Black boys’ bring a linguistic style that should be celebrated and integrated in lessons in a way that supports their identity and academic growth. In order for teachers to be responsive to Black boys’ needs Yosso (2002) stated that linguistic capital incorporates storytelling as a method of strengthening literacy skills. Most evident in the ELA teachers’ responses, Ron and Sarah described ways they celebrated their Black males’ language, while strengthening their literacy skills through storytelling, personal narratives, or speaking opportunities. Ron stated, “their writing assignment was to write this humorous anecdote (narrative essay)...[and] knowing what to take and capitalize on from students’ backgrounds provide context. Sarah reflection included,

Giving kids the platform to talk about how they’re feeling or what this reminds them of, my kids become stronger speakers and they’re allowed to verbally process their own thoughts, which then when they would go write, I could see that thought process put down on paper.

Kinship

The theme kinship refers to teachers proactively fostering positive relationships with Black males, families, and the community. Based on the responses, teachers displayed care for their Black boys and embodied willingness to form a bond with them and the community, while valuing their Black identity. Kinship suggest that teachers consciously encourage their students, hold high expectations, have life conversations, immerse themselves in the community, take on surrogate roles/identity, and embrace cultural habits without offending their students. Trinity reflected, “when I close my door, we go off script [and have] discussions related to the text or not related to the text.

The teachers in this study also recognized the value of relationships and it’s correlation to responsive management practices. Affirmations, respect of communication preferences, use of slang, and positive parental communication marked some factors in developing positive relationship. Humor, fresh starts, and also ability to incorporate interest in lessons are other indicators of care.

Part Two: Comparison and Contrasting Across Cases

The cases were unique, but also offered commonalities that supported the development of themes identified in part one of the cross case analysis. In this section, I present a comparison and contrasting analysis of the cases. To add depth to the study and further address the research questions, the cases were paired in order to discover similarities and differences (Eisenhardt, 1989). Specifically, I considered the intersections of race and gender to demonstrate commonalities and differences across the cases.

Race

Tatum (2001) discussed how individuals must develop positive racial/ethnic identity that is absent of assumed superiority or inferiority. Furthermore, she stated that the process includes “unlearning the misinformation and stereotypes we have internalized not only about others, but also about ourselves” (p. 53). Racial identity plays a role in how teachers perceive their experiences working with Black male students. Particularly in this case study, the teachers whom, self identified as White or Black, reflected on their individual experiences. From the analysis, I found connections that aligned with race that revealed two themes.

Black boy joy. The Black teachers in the case study shared common perceptions of their work with Black males. The main theme that emerged from analyzing the cases is Black boy joy. Black Boy Joy refers to the process of providing an alternate perception of Black identity that differed from the common stereotype. They all responded to the research question that explored identity in a way that indicated a responsibility in building positive Black male identity. Two ways in which the teachers challenged the status quo were by setting an example and sharing a counter narrative of Black identity. For example, Mark said:

Most people say African American males are going to end up dead or in jail. Me, when I go to work, I wear the dress pants, I wear slacks, I wear dress shirt and [a] necktie. I want some of these guys to see that positive image versus when they go home.

John reported:

[I try to get them to understand we can't just be type casted as a Black male. We got different aspects of us...I hope that it's opened up different doors or just exposing them to a path that they potentially want to do one day.

The Black women interviewed provided the same narrative, but spoke about their experiences growing up Black and with a similar socioeconomic status and also how they made

choices to break the cycle of stereotype. They provided a counter narrative to what their students was use too. They both discussed how their Black males were not exposed to things outside of their own communities in Louisiana. They stated their role was to leverage their similar upbringing and race as a means of connecting them to a larger context.

Trinity stated:

I leverage my own socioeconomic status and I noticed what makes me rouge around the edges and able to relate to their circumstances...Until I told them my story...it was hitting home for them. I'm big on telling stories. [Like] I have a friend that does this and I have a friend is male and who is an engineer and went to law school. I just used first hand narrative to make that connect.

Similarly, Denise wanted to provide a different narrative of Black identity by sharing her by sharing her story. She reported:

I grew up in the same neighborhoods. I grew up the same way they did. Not having the best of everything. Experiencing the worst, at times, for what a child would have to endure and still making education a priority. I think that plays a part in how I don't allow them to have excuses for everything.

The Black teachers all understood their role as a Black educator and believed they had the power to encourage and empower their Black males to see themselves beyond their local frame of mind. They stated that they did not want their Black males to play the victim and make excuses about their plight in education. John stated, "[I have] to make sure that that there's no scapegoat for our boys. 'Cause there's no reason for them not to excel."

Although the teachers employed culturally responsive practices, the teachers also reported being no-nonsense and strict on their Black males and did not allow them to Make bad choices. Trinity described her role as a Black educator, "I'm strict...I'm like the momma and the enforcer. I'm the momma who can get down on your level...and also tell you

why it is important to get young Black boys to read”. Similarly, Mark shared a story about how his Black males would try to get away with certain behaviors and he would have to confront them about it. He shared his response to this behavior, “Yeah, I know how it is, but we’re not going to carry ourselves like that. We’re not going to conduct ourselves like that.”

Mark went on to say that he works hard daily to ensure his Black males do not fall into the trap. He said, “I want them to see the world is bigger than what [they] see in front of [them] today.

Put some respect on my name. The White teachers in the case study shared common perception of their experiences working with their Black males that differed from the Black teachers. The most common theme that emerged from their interviews was Put some respect on my name. Put some respect on my name refers to how the teachers had to adjust their personal communication styles to better support their Black males, thus demonstrating respect. It sheds light to how Black boys perceive respect differently than the White teachers in the case study.

For example, Sarah discussed how she had to learn to better manage her Black males behavior in a way that demonstrated respect. She shared, “instead of yelling or raising my voice, having one-on-one conversations with them about their behavior to correct...and [not] putting them on blast in front of the class was a much more effective way of getting them back on task.” Similarly to Sarah, Grace shared how she had to redefine respect when working with her Black males. Reflecting on one particular experience where she tried to be assertive, Grace stated, “he felt disrespected and I think I was just trying to make myself make him listen to me.

The White teachers in the study also reflected on how their privilege could inhibit or enhance their experiences with their Black male students.

Understanding the power of transparency, Ron stated,

Coming from an upper middle class White background, I had never...until the moment I walked into X school, been in a room where I was the only White person ever. Then with that came a whole avalanche of other things relating to me realizing my own privilege.

Much like Ron, the other White participants had to become aware of their privilege and take steps to understand their Black males and their communities in order to be respectful, but also remain authentic to their racial identity so it does not force relationships. Michael shared:

A lot of it is because of my identity as a White man. It's just weird hearing a White man saying certain terminology. I think I never, I will never be able to have the same relationship that like, a co teacher of mine, who's African American, can have with them. There is a different bond and I've learn to accept that and I think that I can still have a good meaningful conversations.

Sarah also considered how her identity was perceived and how she had to work to build a relationship of mutual respect with her Black male students. She shared:

I definitely think that my identity as a White person was a source of tension at the beginning of the year. I think my kids didn't necessarily trust me, but I recognized that they need to know who I was as a person. Now, I feel like my identity as a White person has not played as much of a role in the classroom because I was able to form those connections with my students early on in the year, break down that barrier and just to form that level of trust and respect.

All White participants shared how they started the year or their teaching career with difficulty, but contributed challenging their perceptions of students and reflecting on how their identity as a White teacher played a role in their experiences with their Black males. Grace reported:

At the beginning, we had a relationship where they were questioning my authority and may I was trying to assert it more than needed to. Then, by the end of the year, I would be their favorite teacher we had learned how to communicate.

The shared experiences for the Black teachers and the White teachers provides additional

context that supports culturally responsive practices. Specifically, considering racial identity and its role in how teachers can and should incorporate responsive practices. For the Black teachers, it was more of leveraging their Black identity to empower their Black males to see themselves in a different light and exposing them to alternative images of Blackness. For the White teachers in the study, it was considering how their identity is perceived by their Black males and understanding how what respect means for their students.

Gender

Based on my analysis of the interviews, nuances of the role of gender identity provided another layer of analysis of teachers' experiences working with Black male students. In my analysis of the interviews, I identified shared experiences that were common for the male participants and shared commonalities between my female participants. Based on my analysis, two themes emerged.

Are you man enough? The male participants shared a commonality in their perceptions of masculinity and how it influenced their experiences working with Black males. The theme that emerged from my analysis was Are You Man Enough? This theme reflects the spectrum of masculinity that the participants wanted to reveal to their Black male students. Ron reflected on his perceptions of his Black male students. He stated, “

Thinking specifically about boys and Black boys, I think at home most of my [male] students are taught to...for instance when it comes to emotions and feelings, to be very stoic and not, if you're sad, don't let that out. If you're cool to beat your chest and go break something, but not to talk it out or whatever.

Understanding that stereotypically males are not taught to express emotions in a healthy way, Ron expressed his way of redefining masculinity by creating his “classroom a safe space

and a judgment-free zone,” and allowing his Black males the opportunity to express their emotions in a way that came natural for them. John discussed how his Black males idolized people they see in the media and perceived them as cool. He described his realization of how his Black males perceived masculinity and their identity as a male. Indicating that because he was Black, he thought, “they’re going to think I’m more understanding. They’re going to totally buy into what I believe in.” However, John shared that he was “a different type of black man,” and did not fit the typical manly role his boys were use to seeing. He reported that his Black males “typically shun the difference of how you speak, or the difference of what you value” if it did not aligned to their perception of how Black men should speak or act. John’s way of redefining masculinity was to share his experiences growing up to reveal a vulnerable side and displaying a different side of masculinity in order to counter that view. Additionally, he discussed creating a space of allowing his Black males the freedom to cry or show raw emotion. This intentionality challenged the stereotypical role of Black male.

I care for you. In my analysis of the interviews, the female participants shared a commonality in the way they demonstrated care for the Black male students. The theme that emerged was I care for you. I care for you reflect the bond the women strived to form with their Black male students. Getting to know them on a personal level beyond the classroom was a responsive strategy used to show care. Denise used humor as a way to connect with her Black males. She stated, “I’m very big on if you give a jab (joke), and I hear it, please expect me to give one back...we all have a good rapport. We all can laugh with each other.” This type of care correlates to Monroe and Obidah (2004) study on cultural synchronization. In the study, the authors described a humor as a unique management technique used to regulate students’

behavior (Monroe and Obidah, 2004).

Additionally, three of the four teachers identified as a mother figure or extended family member. The teachers discussed how they were able build relationships with their Black males by assuming those roles. For example, Trinity describes her mother figure role as “a gift and a curse,” in that she is pulled in several directions to support her students. However, she shared that “I’m doing this because I care, but because I care, I don’t get a break...but imma do what got to do for those Black boys.”

Summary

In this chapter, I presented two stages of cross case analysis. The first part included discussing common themes across all cases using CRP and CRT, along with Yosso’s (2005) cultural wealth. The second part included comparing and contrasting case pairs to highlight similarities and differences as it related to race and gender.

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Conducting this case study provided insight to eight teachers' experiences working with Black male students in middle school. Honest and reflective in their responses, the teachers acknowledged the reality that typically plagued their Black male students, yet worked to reduce negative experiences for them through culturally responsive practices. They provided insight on their perceptions of their teaching and management practices that were responsive to Black male students. Additionally, the teachers were transparent with their mindsets and beliefs about teaching Black male students and how that influenced responsive practices in the classroom. Lastly, teachers reflected on how they perceive their own identity when working with Black males and how it affected interactions in the classroom. Overall, from the responses and a thorough analysis of the data, a collection of culturally responsive practices were found that could reduce adverse experiences for Black males in middle school for those teachers. In this chapter, I discuss an overall summary of the study, implications of the results for teachers and schools, limitations of the study, and provide recommendations for future study.

Summary of Study

In Chapter I, I provided a background of educational inequities in regards to Black males. I also introduced the problem of their exposure to adverse school experiences and how teachers can play a role in reducing it. I explained the purpose of my study and its significance to the existing body of research.

Additionally, I presented my research questions that guided this study. They are as follows:

- (1) How do middle school teachers perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to serving Black male students?
- (2) What are teachers' mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?
- (3) How do teachers perceive their own identity (ies) and the influence on teaching Black male students?

After explaining the purpose and the significance of the study, I presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks I used to conduct this study. Lastly, I provided a list of pertinent definitions related to the research.

In Chapter II, I presented a review of literature and explained key studies that pertain to my purpose. First, a historical perspective of race and class in the United States and its impact on the educational experiences of both teachers and Black student were reviewed. Next, I explored federal and local policies to highlight systemic influences on teachers' roles in schools and their impact on Black student experiences. Following that section, literature on teachers' role in the schooling of Black students is reviewed. Lastly, the literature review examined the conceptual framework of culturally responsive teaching practices and how it enhances Black males' educational experiences in middle school.

In Chapter III, I outlined my methods, including selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures. I utilized a qualitative multi-case research design to explore the participants' experiences working with Black males. To garner participation, I used snowball sampling and purposive criterion. I asked individuals in my professional network to refer middle school teachers. I also sent an open-ended survey that was designed to gather

possible participants' demographic information that passed the pre-determined criteria listed in Chapter III. I selected eight individuals who passed the criteria to participate in a follow-up semi structured interview.

In chapter IV, I discussed the findings of this multi-case study, which is delivered in three stages. In the first stage, outlined in Chapter IV, I presented the significant statements from the interviews that aligned with the research questions that guided this study. In the second stage, I addressed the findings from each of the eight single cases in Chapters V through XII. In the final stage, discussed in Chapter XIII, I presented a cross-case analysis of all the cases by discussing overarching themes that were common for all participants and by comparing and contrasting the results of each case.

Summary of Findings

There is a growing interest in exploring teacher experiences and using the knowledge to inform teaching practices that promotes positive and equitable learning outcomes for Black male students. I examined the perceptions of eight middle school teachers who teach or have taught Black males and identified responsive practices that could reduce adverse experiences using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Teaching as the theoretical frameworks. In a semi-structured interview, I asked questions pertaining to instructional and management practices, their mindsets and beliefs of their Black males, and how their identities influence interactions with Black male students.

This study differed from other research in that it reflected the experiences of middle school teachers, specifically in Louisiana, with varying identities across race, class, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, and lived experiences. The findings of this multi

case study were documented in three stages in chapters IV through XIII. To summarize the findings, I provide a comprehensive review of the data emerged from the interviews, which will be framed through the research questions. Additionally, a discussion on the common themes found in the study is reviewed.

Research Question One: How do middle school teachers perceive their teaching and management practices in the classroom in regards to serving Black male students?

The most common response to the questions related to the first research question centered on how all eight teachers incorporated cultural references into their lessons and considered their Black male students cultural traditions and habits when implementing management techniques. The teachers offered examples of how they used cultural references in the classroom, which included, but not limited to using community markers, music, and historical Black figures. They concluded that in order to engage and invest Black boys, they must do so by ‘using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes’ (Ladson-Billings, 1997). One participant shared, “The personalization is thinking about how to make it interesting to them, because if I use some dry example that has nothing to do with anything that they’ve ever experienced, it’s just not as engaging.”

Additionally, the participants discussed how Louisiana’s curriculum and state mandated test does not value Black males and are not culturally relevant to their lives. Many of them faced tensions in teaching them quality content and incorporating material that is responsive to their needs. They had to supplement other resources in order to make the content realistic for their students. One participant stated: “I always have to introduce curriculum that is attainable or

relatable to their lives.” They recognized that there is not any curriculum that caters to their Black male students, therefore saw the need to find resources of their own.

Research Question Two: What are teachers’ mindsets and beliefs in regards to teaching Black male students?

The participants in the study expounded on their mindsets and beliefs about teaching their Black male students. Their collective response addressed how their Black boys lacked confidence in their academic ability, which manifested in avoiding behaviors that exuded a ‘too cool for school’ attitude. They expressed frustration getting their Black males to take school seriously, but noted that their lack of interest was due to a possible negative self-image. One teacher shared, “[I] have a lot of Black males who are smart, they don’t want to be perceived as smart. They’re okay if they’re middle of the road, you know, cause succeeding and excelling is just not cool enough.” The participants also shared how they were intentional about affirming their Black males and had to work to build relationships with them in order to build their confidence. Gay stated that part of being culturally responsive, a teacher must empower students academically, socially, and emotionally (Gay, 2010). Similar to this concept, the participants not only used cultural references to empower their students, but also used words to affirm their Black males’ potential.

Another common response centered on the teachers’ perception of the Black males’ home life. They discussed how they noticed a disconnect between home and school. For example, one participant said,

I think we can blame society for a lot of things. At the end of the day, that home life carries so much weight. That’s your environment. From the teaching perspective, when I’m trying to get you to be at an A/B level, but people at home are okay with you getting D’s and F’s, it’s always a tug of war.

The teachers discussed how they believed the home life of their students might contribute to their apathetic attitude because the expectations are not as high. To combat this negative image, they incorporated Black history to evoke a sense of pride, but also motivation to excel in school. They also shared personal success stories and often had to deconstruct the stereotype and label mentality by sharing positive images of Black males.

Research Question Three: How do teachers perceive their own identity (ies) and the influence on teaching Black male students?

The teachers discussed how they perceived their own identity and how it influences their experiences teaching Black male students. Some of the participants reflected on how their racial identity played the biggest role in building relationships. Other participants commented on how either their gender, age, sexual orientation and/or lived experiences shaped their experiences. Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) asserted that teachers must reflect on their perceptions and identities in order to improve the educational opportunities for Black males. As the teachers described their experiences, they pointed out how the intersection of their identities either was leveraged or hindered their ability to teach Black boys.

The Black women who were interviewed stated that their race, socioeconomic status, and experiences as a mother and aunt played a positive role in that they stated that their Black males saw them as a mother figure. Citing that most of the Black male students had single mothers, they believed they offered a nurturing, yet structured classroom where they could have a major impact on their boys. One participant stated, “I’m someone closer to their mom’s age, so that sometimes works in my favor. I think they perceive me as somebody who really doesn’t play, but I’m also not the drill sergeant.” The women also claimed that because they grew up in similar

conditions as their Black males it helps them better understand their boys and relate to their situations at home.

The White female teachers reflected on how their Black males students perceived their racial identity and how they had to adjust some of their management techniques. The difference in communication styles of the women and their students shed light to how they had to consider how they manage behaviors in a way that was not disrespectful. One teacher stated that she initially thought her approach was non-threatening and authoritative, but her Black males interpreted it as disrespectful. She stated, “I honestly did not think that because I view myself as non-threatening that this child would have thought that I was trying to threaten him. But it wasn’t I guess about feeling threatened. He felt disrespected.” The honest reflection of their race and it’s influence in their experiences illuminated a need of incorporating responsive practices to support their Black males.

The Black male teachers shared their frustration on how their Black boys saw themselves not as smart as their counterparts and assumed stereotypical behaviors that reflected an apathetic attitude. Their goals were to affirm the interests and values of their Black males, but also wanted to expose them to different and positive images of Black men. They both believed they were in the position to be a role model and show them how to maneuver through society. One teacher shared:

For the young males, all [they see] on tv is a lot of violent, cursing and they feel as if that’s the way they have to behavior now. I’m the teacher who constantly reminds them that’s not the only way African Americans live. That’s not the only way we are seen. They might show the bad on TV, but they’re not going to show the positive as much.

Because of the imagery of negativity typically assigned to Black males in the media, the Black male teachers were committed to redefining that perception.

The White males in the study presented their stories on how they were initially perceived as outsiders of the community and how they had to recognize their own privilege in order to implement responsive practices. A common reflection from them included how their experiences and backgrounds were dissimilar to their Black males. However, because they acknowledge, they were intention on how they interacted with their students and what supplemental resources to use to affirm them. One teacher shared:

In some ways I think race and class are so intertwined in our society. I just feel like, especially coming from an upper middle class White background. I remember being suddenly aware that I had never, until I walked into a classroom at X, been in a room where I was the only White person before. Ever. Then with that came a whole avalanche of other things relating to me realizing my own privilege. I think that that was an added layer of...I need to work even harder to be her for [my Black males], consistently and show you that I care.

Discussion of Themes

Each participant shared their experiences working with Black male students. While their responses illuminated responsive practices that support their Black male students, their personal accounts reflected the individuality of each case. However, because the findings were consistent with the literature on culturally responsive practices, six common themes surfaced from the data. The six themes that emerged from the analysis were: *Connectedness, Advocacy, Evolution, Purpose, Synthesis and Kinship*.

The themes were developed from analysis of the cases. Finding the commonality in responses, they reflected culturally responsive practices that aided in their reported success in working with Black males. The theoretical frameworks Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and

Culturally Responsive Teaching brought a conceptual lens to this study and allowed for critical and thorough analysis of the data. *Connectedness* aligns to the importance of incorporating relevant material to the lesson and creating a space where Black boys feel connected to the educational experience. *Advocacy* pertains to teaching Black males to advocate for themselves by exposing them to a wider mainstreamed culture and teaching them to make well-informed decisions. *Evolution* refers to empowering Black males to reject society labels and stereotypes and instill pride in the community and culture. *Purpose* relates to supporting Black males in their future aspirations and cultivating a sense of purpose that helps them strive for excellence in and out the classroom. *Synthesis* refers to teachers honoring the linguistic codes of their Black males and teaching them the significance of meshing their vernacular with other linguistic forms to enhance their communication skills. Lastly, *kinship* describes the social and relational aspects of creating a culture of care for Black males.

This case study offered a fresh perspective on teachers' experiences working with Black males. In hopes of finding culturally responsive practices that could reduce adverse experiences, a shared experience revealed the importance of supporting Black male identity development. Per the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, most research depicted Black males as inferior and unmotivated to pursue academic excellence and how teachers face difficulty in cultivating a space where Black males feel successful.

In this study, as the teachers reflected on their experiences, they believed their Black males saw themselves in the way society and most research said about their worth. Furthermore, the results of this research points attention to a potential and precise direction in which culturally responsive practices could be used to reduce adverse experiences for Black males. Specifically,

an important thought to consider is identifying ways teachers can consistently support positive Black male identity in schools through self-determination. As the teachers worked to dismantle the negative and inferior mindsets they perceived their students had, my research illuminated the importance of building pride in community and self, while cultivating a space where Black males feel motivated to learn content.

Additionally, my research provided a semi comprehensive review of not only shared experiences, but also individual experiences of the participants. A unique component of this case study was the comparison and contrasting of the findings based on race and gender. This provided a layer of analysis that is missing from K-12 literature focusing on teachers' experiences working with Black males.

Implications

The data in this case study provided insight to the experiences of teachers who work(ed) with Black middle school males in Louisiana. There is some literature on culturally responsive practices for students of color, but limited studies reflect the personal accounts of teachers with varying identities that specifically address their perceptions teaching Black male students in middle school. This study offers implications for teachers who work with Black males in middle school. The implications include: self-reflective practices, adaptive skills, and commitment to social justice.

Self-Reflective Practices

From the Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) study on culturally responsive practices, they concluded that teachers should regularly engage in personal reflection on their practices to avoid perpetuating inequitable practices for students of color. The teachers in this study

developed as culturally competent educators because of their ability to reflect on their experiences. Introspection that addresses instructional and management practices, mindsets and beliefs, and identity allow teachers to evolve in their competency and renegotiate problematic perceptions when working with Black males. The findings from this study implies that teachers should frequently evaluate their ingrained thoughts about Black males and consider ways in which their beliefs influence their work with their students. In Gay's (2010) book on culturally responsive teaching, she emphasized that teachers much reflect on their beliefs and practice critiquing their mentality about their Black male students, which leads to more constructive and responsive directions for educational reform. As teachers engage in self-reflective practices, they restructure their attitudes by "replacing pathological and deficient perceptions of students and communities of color with more positive ones" (Gay, 2013, p.54).

Adaptive Skills

As Ladson-Billings (2014) asserted, culturally responsive practices "should be ever evolving to meet the needs of students" (p. 82). Another implication of this study rests on the importance of teachers adapting their 1) instructional and management practices and 2) mindsets and beliefs to ensure that they are effectively supporting Black male students. Understanding the Black males learn differently and display cultural traits that are often misinterpreted, teachers should consider those habits as ways to enhance their lessons. Also recognizing that Black males' are often stereotyped and generalized, teachers must be flexible enough to consider each individual case. The participants in the study concluded that schools do not always honor the social and academic differences of Black males. They also stated that their Black male students often are disengaged, which prompts their inclination to incorporate cultural references and

support positive Black identity. The implication indicates that teacher should adapt their skills and curriculum to fit the needs of their students.

Commitment to Social Justice

Aronson and Laughter's (2015) synthesis of culturally relevant education (CRE) posited that social justice is embedded within the frameworks of CRP and CRT and is a catalyst for reform in education. Social justice suggests that teachers must recognize the injustices of marginalized groups, challenge the social order, and reject oppressive educational practices (Ladson-Billing, 1995). The participants in the study discussed how standardized tests and curriculum in Louisiana produce constraints on their instructional practices in the classroom. However, they found ways to integrate lessons on Black culture and community issues and found their students more engaged and connected to the educational experience. Consistent with Gay's (2010) insights on CRT, the teachers were intentional in dismantling traditional and unfair educational practices and pursued an inclusive approach to empowering their students academically, socially, emotionally, and politically. This implies that teachers must commit to developing students beyond a test and find ways for "students to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). One teacher discussed how she implemented a lesson on student activism after the murder of Alton Sterling, which indicated her dedication in ensuring students had an outlet to learn about social issues and also find voice to discuss their thoughts.

Limitations

The findings of the study should be understood with consideration of the following limitations:

1. The participants reflected a small sample of Louisiana middle school teachers.
2. The participants self-reported of being able to provide insight on their experiences working with Black males and discuss responsive practices that could reduce adverse experiences. Their responses were subjective and reflected their personal experiences.
3. My experience as an educator in a middle school could be viewed as bias as it relates to analyzing the participants' responses.
4. My identity as a Black woman may be viewed as influencing the answers of the participants as they shared their experiences working with Black males.
5. The interview protocol was designated to evaluate teachers' efficacy in implementing culturally responsive instructional and management practices in the classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was designed to examine teachers' perceptions of their experiences working with Black males in order to discover culturally responsive ways to enhance their experiences in middle school. This section presents the following recommendations for future research. The suggested recommendations were derived from the findings of this study. This research may also consider including all Black students and other students of color, as it provides rationale for extending research in this area to ensure Black males and other marginalized groups are prioritized in the field of education.

The first recommendation for future research may examine the personal experiences of Black males in Louisiana middle schools. Specifically, addressing their perceptions of teachers who have impacted their success through responsive quality education. This would generate information on instructional and management practices they consider valuable in meeting their needs. In discussing school reform for addressing the academic and social marginalization of Black males, Howard (2001) asserted that students' voices are often left out and need to be integrated in the dialogue for change. There is a demand for a space for Black males to propose suggestions and solutions of how to effectively support them. Another reason to examine the experiences of Black males is to identify factors that aid in their success in navigating educational settings. Extending this study of teachers' perceptions to include Black male's perceptions would also explore challenges they encounter and probable solutions of how to effectively combat those matters.

Secondly, future research may study the impact of parents and/or the home life on Black males' achievement in schools. The participants in the study suggested that they perceived the home environment as negatively influencing the academic and social behaviors of their Black males students. They spoke about the importance of establishing strong relationships with family, yet some expressed frustrations about how certain behaviors, such as a lack of motivation in school and lack of aspirational goals, were possibly reinforced at home. Polite (1993) corroborated this notion and stated that in his studies on Black males, he found that parents are factors in their persistent underachievement. Research in this area may elucidate techniques to bridge the gap between school and home and provide ways to engage parents in school activities.

Third, future research may include a quantitative study examining how culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching have impacted the success of Black males, in terms of performance on state test. There are limited studies that address how to measure culturally responsive practices effects on Black males. In this study, the participants discussed how integrating what they believe were culturally responsive practices in the class aided in affirming Black males' cultural habits, yet struggled to articulate whether it correlated to growth and proficiency. Due to the potential lack of culturally responsive integration on Louisiana state tests and in the curriculum, conducting a quantitative study would offer insight on CRP and CRT effectiveness.

Fourth, future research may include exploring what culturally responsive teaching looks like in each core subject. In this study, eight teachers were interviewed, all varying in subject matter. They all provided basic information of responsive practices, but lack specificity in how CRT is integrated into different subjects. It would be beneficial if teachers had a toolbox of ways of tailoring instructional practices to content that extends beyond incorporating cultural references.

Lastly, future research may include exploring the impact of mentorship and positive role models on Black males. Some of the participants in the student suggested that the steady flow of negative images of Black figures in the media and possibly in their neighborhood may contribute to their disengagement in school. It would be beneficial to examine how mentors have influenced Black males to persist in educational settings. In Green's (2013) study of a Baton Rouge Freedom School, she suggested that the mentoring relationships played a significant role in building and affirming Black identity for the participants. She stated that the youth at the school

desired relationships that fostered trust, care, and stability and the mentors provided that level of nurturing, in which Green (2013) identified as social capital. The research on mentorship may offer recommendations on how to leverage them in schools to better support Black males.

Concluding Thoughts and Final Reflection

My identity as an educated Black woman living in Louisiana for 10 years has been the primary anchor for my pursuit in understanding the educational landscape as it relates to Black students. The vision for this study was prompted in part by my personal experiences as an educator and the increasingly frustration that persist witnessing ineffective practices used on Black students, particular Black males. Another level of frustration surfaces, as I realize the lack of inadequate resources that addresses specific ways to effectively support Black males in middle school. Drafting this case study took on many forms. Once I finalized my focus, I sought to understand the various experiences of middle school teachers who teach or taught Black males. As I conducted this study, I kept a reflection journal (Appendix F) to not only capture my thoughts about the process, but all matters concerning this research. It allowed transparency to guide me in my interactions with my participants and with the analysis of the data. It also helped me negotiate parts of my identity in order to validate their responses.

Furthermore, this research aimed to identify culturally responsive strategies that might aid in decreasing negative experiences Black males face in educational settings. Based on the finding, it is my belief that if teachers in K-12 schools make commitments to intentionally incorporate ways to support Black male students, academically and socially, Black males could have an opportunity to receive an equitable and quality education. The targeted sample for this study was purposely selected due to the lack of research of teachers' personal accounts of

working with Black males in middle school, specifically highlighting their responsive practices. Of the participants referred, I was able to select two Black females, two Black males, two White females, and two White males, all varying in age and experiences. I stopped at eight participants because I believed I reach saturation, as the responses were becoming uniformed.

The title of this research is Educating the Miseducated: A Case Study of Middle School Teachers' Experiences Providing Culturally Responsive Practices working with Black Male Adolescents. It references Woodson's (1993) renowned book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. In the book, he sums up his perspective of Black Americans by stating that racial injustices from slavery to present day not only prevented Blacks from equitable opportunities, but essentially stripped Blacks of their identity and self-worth. He further posits that Black students are often miseducated and taught to fit into mainstream culture. Moreover, researchers have made claims that Black students in public schools are often miseducated and typically focus on their deficits (Howard, 2008; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, Jennings, 2010).

It is not my intention to assert that all Black Americans struggle with this concept. However, in regards to this case study of teachers' experiences working with Black males in Louisiana, a culminating experience revealed their perceptions of how their students perceived themselves in the educating setting. Tensions arise with the participants as they battle seeing students' potential and the reality of managing the negative self-worth their Black males possess. The participants declared that education practices not only devalue the worth of Black boys, but also teach them to lose themselves in the experience. To avoid perpetuating the miseducation, teachers are in a position to positively impact the lives of Black male students by affirming their identity and instilling a sense of self-pride through the integration of culturally relevant material

and practices. This case study sheds light to how eight middle school teachers in Louisiana sought to reject traditional instructional and management practices by employing culturally responsive methods that demonstrated value to their Black male students.

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APPENDIX A

EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Greetings:

I am a doctoral student in the K-12 Educational Leadership program at Louisiana State University under the guidance of Dr. Sonya Hayes. I am interested in gaining understanding of the perceptions of teachers who work with Black male students in middle school. It is my hope that this study will highlight effective responsive factors that aid in the success of Black males and factors that reduce common negative experiences they often face in school.

I value your time and understand that your schedule is full. Please know that you have no obligation to complete the attached open-ended survey. The information obtained in connection with this study that could be identified with you **will remain confidential**. The attached open-ended survey should take 5-10 minutes to complete. I would like to receive the surveys back by March 23, 2017. I have also attached an information sheet about the study for your review. If you have any questions about the survey, you may contact me at the phone number or by the email listed below. If you know of anyone who I could possibly contact, there is a place on the survey for you to provide their information.

I appreciate your time and effort in this matter. Your input will be valuable in adding to the information about creating positive experiences for Black males.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Latrisha Dean, Ed.S.

Doctoral Candidate

ldean4@lsu.edu | lydean@gmail.com | 225-400-2624

APPENDIX B
OPEN-ENDED SURVEY

Name:

Age:

Race:

Sex:

Current occupation:

What subject do you teach?

How would you describe the middle school in which you work (public, charter, private, rural, urban, etc.) (Please do not give the name of your school):

How many years of total teaching experience do you have?

How many years have you been at your current school?

What is the total number of students you teach (estimates are fine)?

What is the total number of Black males you teach (estimates are fine)?

Do you feel that you are able to provide information about your experiences working with Black male students in middle school?

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview either in person, online, or by telephone (your identity will remain confidential)?

Do you know of anyone who would be interested in providing information about working with Black males in middle school (please provide their name and email address)?

APPENDIX C

The Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale

A number of statements about organizations, people, and teaching are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the actual attitudes of educators concerning these statements. There are no correct or incorrect answers. We are interested only in your frank opinions. Your responses will remain confidential.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of each statement.

1=nothing 3=very little 5=some influence 7=quite a bit 9=A great deal

1. I am able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students.
2. I am able to obtain information about my students' academic strengths.
3. I am able to determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group.
4. I am able to determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students.
5. I am able to identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.
6. I am able to implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.
7. I am able to assess student learning using various types of assessments.
8. I am able to obtain information about my students' home life.
9. I am able to build a sense of trust in my students.
10. I am able to establish positive home-school relations.
11. I am able to use a variety of teaching methods.
12. I am able to develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds and social classes.
13. I am able to use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.
14. I am able to use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information.
15. I am able to identify how students communicate at home that may differ from the school norms.
16. I am able to obtain information about my students' cultural background.
17. I am able to teach students about their cultures' contributions to science.
18. I am able to greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native tongue.
19. I am able to design a classroom environment using displays that reflects a variety of cultures.
20. I am able to develop a personal relationship with my students.
21. I am able to obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses.

22. I am able to praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.
23. I am able to identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students.
24. I am able to communicate with parents regarding their child's educational program.
25. I am able to structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents.
26. I am able to help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates.
27. I am able to revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups.
28. I am able to critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.
29. I am able to design a lesson that shows other cultural groups have made use of mathematics.
30. I am able to model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learner's understanding of classroom tasks.
31. I am able to communicate with the parents of English Language Learner's regarding their child's achievement.
32. I am able to help students feel like important members of the classroom.
33. I am able to identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students.
34. I am able to use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how my students like to learn.
35. I am able to use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
36. I am able to explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.
37. I am able to obtain information regarding my students' academic interests.
38. I am able to use the interests of my students to make learning meaningful for them.
39. I am able to implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups.
40. I am able to design instruction that matches my students' development needs.

APPENDIX D

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale

Directions: Rate how confident you are in your ability to successfully accomplish each of the task listed below. Each task is related to classroom management. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 (no confidence at all) to 100 (completely confident). Remember that you may use any number between 0 and 100.

1. Assess students' behaviors with the knowledge that acceptable school behaviors may not match those that are acceptable within a student's home culture.
2. Use culturally responsive discipline practices to alter the behavior of a student who is being defiant.
3. Create a learning environment that conveys respect for the cultures of all my students in my classroom.
4. Use my knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds to create a culturally compatible learning environment.
5. Establish high behavioral expectations that encourage students to produce high quality work.
6. Clearly communicate classroom policies.
7. Structure the learning environment so that all students feel like a valued member of the learning community.
8. Use what I know about my students' cultural background to develop an effective learning environment.
9. Encourage students to work together on classroom tasks, when appropriate.
10. Design the classroom in a way that communicates respect for diversity.
11. Use strategies that will hold students accountable for producing high quality work.
12. Address inappropriate behavior without relying on traditional methods of discipline such as office referrals.
13. Critically analyze students' classroom behavior from a cross-cultural perspective.
14. Modify lesson plans so that students remain actively engaged throughout the entire class period or lesson.
15. Redirect students' behavior without the use of coercive means (i.e., consequences or verbal reprimand).
16. Restructure the curriculum so that every child can succeed, regardless of its academic history.
17. Communicate with students using expressions that are familiar to them.
18. Personalize the classroom so that it is reflective of the cultural background of my students.
19. Establish routines for carrying out specific classroom tasks.
20. Design activities that require students to work together toward a common

- academic goal.
21. Modify the curriculum to allow students to work in groups.
 22. Teach students how to work together.
 23. Critically assess whether a particular behavior constitutes misbehavior.
 24. Teach children self-management strategies that will assist them in regulating their classroom behavior.
 25. Develop a partnership with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
 26. Communicate with students' parents whose primary language is not English.
 27. Establish two-way communication with non-English speaking parents.
 28. Use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
 29. Model classroom routines for English Language Learners.
 30. Explain classroom rules so that they are easily understood by English Language Learners.
 31. Modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture.
 32. Implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a students' culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms.
 33. Develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family background.
 34. Manage situation in which students are defiant.
 35. Prevent disruptions by recognizing potential causes for misbehavior.

APPENDIX E

STUDY INFORMATION AND CONSENT

Study Title: Educating the “Miseducated”: A Case Study of Middle School Teachers’ Experiences Providing Culturally Responsive Practices for Black Male Adolescents

Performance Site: A location in the area selected at the discretion of the participants, free of distractions and interruptions.

Investigators: Ms. Latrisha Dean ldean4@lsu.edu 225.400.2624. M-F 8:00-3:00
Dr. Sonya Hayes sonyahayes@lsu.edu 225-578-5470 Thursdays 1:00-3:00

Purpose of Study: There is limited research on practical responsive instructional and management practices that reduce adverse experiences for Black males in middle school. Your participation in this study is vital, as it would allow the researcher to explore practices that have supported Black males, particularly learning more about the varying factors (teaching/instructional, management, cultural, racial, and social) that create better opportunities for Black males from the perception of a middle school teacher.

Subject Inclusion: To meet the participant criteria for this study, you must be a teacher in a Louisiana middle school, have taught for 2 or more years, identify as Black or White male or female, teach a core class and teach Black male students.

Number of Participants: 8-10

Study Procedures: The study will consist of one opened ended survey, a 45 to 60 minute interview, which will be recorded and transcribed.

Risk and Benefits: The benefits of the study comprises of gaining a deeper understanding of responsive practices for Black males in middle school, redefining the typical inferiority discourse about Black males, and how to better support them. The researcher does not anticipate risks concerning participation in the study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research is voluntary. This study includes one audio taped semi structured interview. All interviews will be transcribed and quotations from the interviews may be included in the study. No identifying information will be included. Interviews will take place either in person, online, or via telephone.

Confidentiality: The researcher will asked questions that are sensitive and personal in nature. To ensure confidentiality, you will be assigned a new name and any other identifying information you share will be replaced with pseudonyms. Your name will

appear on the consent form and will not be connected to your responses. Interviews will be recorded in private and will not be shared. Your responses will be transcribed anonymously and all information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Your responses will serve as data for this study.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. At any time during the study you are free to withdraw your participation. There will be no ramifications if you choose to withdraw.

Informed Consent: I, _____ (please print), have read the this consent, including the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, the potential risks, the confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Each of these items has been explained to me by the researcher. The researcher has answered all of my questions regarding the study, and I have a solid understanding what is involved. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study and that I have received a copy of this agreement from the researcher.

Signature

Date

If you have questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Latrisha Dean at (225) 400-2624 or by email at ldean4@lsu.edu, or Dr. Sonya Hayes at by email at soynahayes@lsu.edu. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Dennis Landin, Chairman, Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 at (225) 578-8692 or irb@lsu.edu

APPENDIX F

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Throughout this entire process, I constantly reflected on my experiences as a way of acknowledging and reducing bias. I did not have predetermined questions, yet questions and concerns were raised during and after the process. I used italics to address to denote my personal reflections. I took excerpts of my reflections to capture the essence of my experiences. It addresses my feelings, doubts, and questions.

Initial thoughts

This process will take a lot of work and I'm not sure if I'm ready to tackle this issue. I work with teachers and Black males everyday. I research and read articles about their experiences after work. I think about it while trying to fall asleep. I feel so personally connected to this study that I must take steps to ensure its validity so that it can add to the existing literature.

Trinity

I completed my very first interview today. I was excited to hear from a Black woman and felt that many of her responses would reflect something I would say. I had to remember that this was not my story though, but hers and had to check myself throughout the interview so that I would not make assumptions or add my voice into her responses. I resonated with everything she said and even felt her emotions as she describe her relentless efforts to provide responsive services to her students. One particular part of the interview stood out to me: her exasperation in building up her boy's pride in themselves.

Of course, I share the same burden, as I work with Black males' everyday.

Denise

My second interview was with another Black woman. Some of her responses were the same, but I got a sense that she was judging her Black males' home life. Even though some of her responses were similar to what I had thought about the Black males I work with, to hear her verbalize that she blamed her Black boys home life was a shocker. I mean, who is she to judge? Who am I to judge? But the reality of it is that some of her reflections are valid. Some of her boys' problematic behaviors are reinforced at home, because the Boys I work with have similar experiences. I have to remember that this study is not about reiterating what research already says about them. I have to work to listen for responsive practices utilized in spite of a perceived reality.

Mark

My first Black male! He was a little shy, but once we started to talk, I could tell he really cared about his Black male students. He seemed to lack a bit on the instructional side, but he was adamant about building up his Black males. I see this as a common theme already. I'm reminded of what Dr. Mitchell brought up during my proposal. This idea of self-determination. All my Black participants thus far made great attempts to build this piece of their boys' identity and instill this idea of self-motivating themselves despite what literature says about them. Mark's interview made me want to read more about building the esteem and building strong Black identity. However, it made me sad that this was my third interview and he said that he didn't think his Black males cared about school and often wanted to live out the stereotypical male.

Ron

Ron was a joy to interview. LoL. He was charismatic and I almost got caught up in his personality. However, in our discussion he was very strong on the instructional side and clearly knew how to connect the gaps to his boys' life.

John

John's interview was interesting. At this point, I'm definitely seeing a pattern of responsive services they provide during their lessons. All of them have added a personalization piece. John's identity as a "different kind of Black" sparked my interest. It made me think about whether there was a spectrum of Blackness and masculinity that has not been discussed. I think Black males do have a preconceived idea about being Black and masculine and it may or may not conflict with their thoughts about school. John said his Black males were too cool for school and how he had to address that. Very interesting concept. It reminded of a book Kenny shared during my proposal. I need to look Vershawn Young up to read his thoughts about performing race and gender in schools.

Grace

I felt very tensed during my interview with Grace. One, I know talking about race was uncomfortable for her. I was happy that she was able to be honest and transparent about her experiences though. I think it was because I didn't offer my insight and feedback on the matter. I was very neutral and affirming of her experiences. Yet, in my head I was like, "this is so racist." But I'm at a point that I can reconcile those thoughts as thoughts and look at her experience as authentic to her. I was able to pull out pieces of

responsive practices.

Michael

Michael acted as if he was too tired to think clearly. But he did say he had been traveling as was tired. Yet, I appreciate his honesty and his reflections. I look forward to reading through the transcripts to re situate myself with his story. I did notice some of his responses were similar to most of my participants and I felt confident that I would be able to see these patterns once I started to analyze the data!

Sarah

Sarah was a joy. She was my last interview and boy, she was so thorough and reflective! I immediately felt a connection and felt that she was one of the strongest participants' who demonstrated culturally responsiveness in her class. She was reflective about her tensions as a White woman teaching Black students and how she struggled with affirming her Black males and preparing them for society. I couldn't help but think that Sarah was the type of teacher who I would love to have at my school.

This next piece is an excerpt of my reflective journal during the analysis phase.

Analysis

This is hard. It's so much data to go through. All of it looks and sounds the same. Analyzing my first few interviews was an interesting process. I needed to reorder the transcripts just to get a new feel of the data. I found myself thinking ahead about what I was about to read and I felt that that interfered with the data.

This is good. I'm seeing patterns of culturally responsiveness. I think I'm getting to my research questions. I'm seeing common trends that are sparking my interest. I feel that I

need to go back and readjust some wording in my chapters 1, 2 ,3. I need to also add something about the schooling experiences of Black males and how teachers feel the need to teach them code switching. From my analysis, the teachers discussed tensions of affirming Black identity, but teaching them White cultural norms, like Standard English. This is confusing Black males! Are they Black and valued or are they Black and valued to a certain extent? I feel that Black males are tired of hearing about “do this because you in a White society.” I know I am. Are schools trying to change Black males? Do they need to be aware of why schools try to change their uniqueness?

I don’t know where to go from this!

I’m having a difficult time with processing my analysis. My whole research is about exploring these experiences to find responsive practices. But I’m conflicted because some of the things may or may not be so responsive. I need to go back and read some articles.

I think I’m getting the picture. I believe the teachers worked hard in delivering responsive practices. I’m seeing the connection to the frameworks, but I’m also seeing what my overall analysis. Miseducated. Before I conducted this study, I originally wanted to name this dissertation to the Miseducation of the Negro Child (referencing Charles Woodson’s book), but I didn’t see any connection to my chapters 1, 2, 3. However, after the WHOLE analysis process, I’m seeing a connection to how schools train teachers to miseducate Black males. That is why I wanted to do this study. I wanted to find teachers who worked to dismantle those ideas and educate Black males who have been miseducated for years, specifically through culturally responsive methods. I’m so aware that these teachers I interviewed have a lot of growing to do, but I was happy to know that they recognized the

need to AFFIRM and VALUE and BUILD Black males! I was happy that I was able to uncover ways they used to respond to this need.

APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/research

TO: Latrisha Dean
Education

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: June 29, 2017

RE: IRB# E10408

TITLE: Educating the Miseducated: A Case Study of Teachers' Experiences Working with Black Male Adolescents in Middle School

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: Modification

Brief Modification Description: Title change

Review date: 6/29/2017

Approved X Disapproved _____

Approval Date: 6/29/2017 Approval Expiration Date: 3/19/2020

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: Make sure you use bcc when emailing more than one recipient. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

VITA

Latrisha Y. Dean is a native of Cedar Bluff, Mississippi and currently resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Latrisha received her Bachelor's of Business Administration with a focus in Marketing from the University of Mississippi in 2006. However, she realized her passion was in education and decided to become a teacher. After serving four years as a 4th grade teacher in East Feliciana, Latrisha continued her education at Louisiana State University. In 2012, Latrisha earned her Master's Degree in Education with a focus in School Counseling. Wanting to remain in the education field, Latrisha earned her Education Specialist Certificate in 2016. Latrisha currently is a Professional School Counselor. Her research interests include education leadership, culturally responsive practices in K-12 schools, and various social justice matters impacting students of color. Latrisha's future plans include conducting research in school districts on culturally responsiveness in schools and use the data to train and support schools in implementing effective practices to ensure students of color receive optimal services.