

**Journal of  
Urban Learning, Teaching, and  
Research**

**A publication of the  
American Educational Research Association  
Special Interest Group  
Urban Learning, Teaching, & Research (ULTR)**

Volume 14  
2018

# Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research

## Editor

Eleni Oikonomidou  
*University of Nevada, Reno*

## Associate Editor

Ronald S. Beebe  
*University of Houston – Downtown*

## Editorial Review Board

Edmund Adjapong	<i>Seton Hall University</i>
Franklin Allaire	<i>University of Houston –Downtown</i>
Annamary Consalvo	<i>The University of Texas at Tyler</i>
Roderick Carey	<i>University of Delaware</i>
Chinwe Ikpeze	<i>St. John Fisher College</i>
Regina Giraldo-García	<i>Cleveland State University</i>
Tabora Johnson	<i>City University of New York</i>
Helen Meyer	<i>University of Cincinnati</i>
Margary Martin	<i>University of Hawai'i at Hilo</i>
Kenzo Sung	<i>Rowan University</i>
Kerri Tobin	<i>Louisiana State University</i>
Mary Yakimowski	<i>Sacred Heart University</i>
Kerri Ullucci	<i>Roger Williams University</i>

## Submission Information

The AERA SIG: ULTR provides opportunities for its members to publish scholarly articles and book reviews in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research* (JULTR), indexed by ERIC. We strongly encourage our members to take this professional opportunity and share your knowledge about urban education with more than 500 members across the United States and the world. Please carefully review the submission guidelines and selection criteria before you submit your article or book review. All manuscripts are blind-reviewed. ***Note: Every author and co-author must be a current and active AERA and ULTR SIG member at the time of manuscript submission. Only articles by current ULTR SIG members will be reviewed.***

Each year, a call for submissions will be sent to the membership and shared on social media and via email. Published by the American Education Research Association (AERA) Special Interest Group (SIG): Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research (ULTR) and printed by California State University, Los Angeles. For more information about ULTR, please visit <https://aera-ultr.wixsite.com/ultr>

### Manuscript Selection Criteria

1. Content of manuscript is related to current literature and urban learning, teaching, and/or research issues.
2. Manuscript's content is of high interest to professors, administrators, researchers, teachers, and other practitioners in urban learning, teaching, and/or research.
3. Content of manuscript is current and/or innovative and adds to the body of knowledge about urban learning, teaching, and/or research.
4. Manuscript is well written (organized, clear in purpose, and free of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors).
5. (For article submissions): Manuscript adheres to APA standards and includes all necessary elements: (a) Title and Abstract, (b) Introduction, (c) Conceptual Framework, (d) Methods, (e) Results, (f) Discussion, (g) Implications and Conclusion, and (h) Citations and References.
6. Manuscript is free of biases/stereotypes.
7. Manuscript has correct calculations, figures, graphs, and/or tables.
8. Manuscript is of the recommended length (approximately 3,000-4,000 words for articles, 1,000 words for book reviews).

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction to the 2018 Issue</b>	5
<i>Eleni Oikonomidou, Editor &amp; Ronald Beebe, Associate Editor</i>	

<b>RESEARCH ARTICLES</b>
--------------------------

<b>Urban Teacher Educator Perceptions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A Qualitative Inquiry</b>	7
<i>Tempestt R. Adams &amp; Tebia Starker Glass</i>	
<b>Corps Members' Perspectives of Teaching in a New Teach for America Region</b>	18
<i>Lorrei DiCamillo</i>	
<b>Responsive Classroom Management: Empowering Students and Teachers in Urban Schools</b>	27
<i>Nancy Jo Schafer &amp; Kim Stevens Barker</i>	
<b>Investigating the Impact of Lesson Study and Pedagogical Content Knowledge on Mathematics Teaching Practices of Minority Pre-Service Teachers</b>	37
<i>Rupam Saran</i>	
<b>Does Longevity Matter?: Teacher Experience and the Suspension of Black Middle School Students</b>	50
<i>John Andrew Williams, III, Felicia Dangerfield Persky, &amp; Jennifer Nicole Johnson</i>	
<b>Centering the Voice of Black Male Urban High School Students on Effective Student-Teacher Classroom Relationships</b>	63
<i>Brian Woodward</i>	

## Introduction to the 2018 Issue

**Eleni Oikonomidou**  
*University of Nevada, Reno*  
 Editor

**Ronald Beebe**  
*University of Houston - Downtown*  
 Associate Editor

In the introductory chapter of the *Handbook of Urban Education*, Milner & Lomotey (2014) identify two crises in urban education. They write, “One crisis concerns micro-level practices and programs that inadequately address the needs of students in urban schools.... A second crisis is broader and addresses the failure of research, theory, and policy to make significant strides in impacting urban schools” (p. xvii). The articles in this year’s issue of the JULTR attend to both of these areas, by providing attention to macro-level policies and practices in the critical intersection between teacher preparation and the classroom and by highlighting school dynamics and students’ voices.

In the search of models that translate into policies and practices that “make significant strides in impacting urban schools,” it is important for educational researchers to continually examine dimensions of practice in teacher education that are promising and ones that may require rethinking and revision. Two articles in this issue respond to that call. First is Adams & Starker Glass’ contribution, which focuses on a continuum of the frustrations and sources of hope discussed by teacher educators, who aim to introduce Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in their teacher preparation programs. The second article is DiCamillo’s work, which demonstrates a similar critical analysis between promising and challenging dimensions of teacher education practice. However, the focus shifts to an Alternative Licensure program, that of Teach for America. DiCamillo interviewed participants in the program and through their words identified both promising and challenging aspects.

The next dyad of articles attend explicitly to the juncture between teacher preparation and classroom practice. Schafer & Barker’s piece on responsive classroom management demonstrates strong links between knowledge gained in academy and teaching practice. Saran’s work expands on this topic by explicitly examining teacher candidates’ growth as teachers of mathematics through reflective lesson study during their practicum assignments.

The final two articles move the focus of analysis even closer to urban schools. Williams et al.’s piece on whether teacher longevity matters in the suspension of Black middle school students attends to a persistent issue in urban education. The study’s findings seem inconclusive, but the authors’ analysis of urban schools as sites of reproduction is thought provoking. This piece is complimented by Woodward’s manuscript, which focuses on an exploration of Black male high school students’ perspectives on what they consider characteristics of effective relationships with teachers. Those are juxtaposed to experiences that distance and alienate. The author aims to sensitise teachers to continue to reflect upon their practice in an aim to cultivate authentic and caring relationships with Black students.

As it is evident, the issues examined by the authors in this issue offer food for thought, in both unique and complimentary ways. Individually, they provide in-depth windows to various elements of practice. Collectively, they contribute to the ongoing discussions of efforts to impact practices in urban schools.

We would like to thank the authors for making this issue so rich. We would also like to express our greatest gratitude to the reviewers who provided timely, meaningful, and constructive feedback and responded to our multiple requests with kindness and professionalism.

Unfortunately, the first half of the year 2018 is characterized by ongoing expressions of violence in schools. AERA issued a statement in response to the latest shooting on May 18th. Let's hope that with our collective work, future issues of the JULTR and messages from AERA will share more successes in our urban schools and beyond.

Sincerely,

Eleni & Ron

Reference:

Milner, H. R. & Lomotey, K. (2014). Introduction. In H. R. Milner & K. Lomotey (Eds.) *Handbook of urban education* (pp .xv-xxiii). New York: Routledge

## **Urban Teacher Educator Perceptions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A Qualitative Inquiry**

**Tempestt R. Adams**

*Appalachian State University*

**Tehia Starker Glass**

*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

### **Abstract**

Teacher preparation programs (TEPs) are tasked with preparing future teachers to be able to effectively work with diverse learners. For many, a focus on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) supports this charge, thus an increased understanding of teacher educator perspectives and approaches to this work is necessary. The purpose of this study was to examine teacher educators' perceptions of CRP and how they engage their pre-service teachers in developing an understanding of the pedagogy. The findings presented here highlight frustrations teacher educators face with CRP as well as their hopes. Implications and recommendations are provided in efforts to help strengthen this area of TEPs.

*Keywords:* teacher preparation, culturally relevant pedagogy, urban education

Given the increasing diversity of the public K-12 student body, heightened focus is on the most applicable approaches to curriculum and instruction for diverse learners. Both TEPs and grantors of accreditation to those programs have identified working with diverse learners as a high priority in their planning and evaluation (Dell'Angelo & Seaton, 2016). Similarly, Olson and Rao (2016) argued the need for TEPs to stress the significance of CRP for their pre-service teachers, particularly in efforts to best serve students in urban areas because of this increasing diversity.

Projections for student enrollment in public schools show significant increases for students of color through 2022 (Hussar & Bailey, 2013). Specific increases in racial and ethnic groups noted by Hussar and Bailey (2013) include: multiracial students by 44%, Latino/Hispanic by 33%, Asian/Pacific Islander students increase by 20%, and Black student enrollment increases by 2%. American Indian/Alaska Native student enrollment is expected to decrease by 5%, and White students will decrease by 6% (Hussar & Bailey, 2013). Additionally, English learners have been identified as one of the fastest growing groups of students (Quintero & Hansen, 2017). Although those data show the student population will continue to get more diverse, the teaching population has been stagnant over the past 15 years with about 80% of teachers identifying as White and 77% identifying as female (Taie & Goldring, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Paramount among the many challenges schooling in the US currently faces is the lack of preparation of teachers equipped to serve students from diverse backgrounds (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Trends in teacher employment indicate beginning teachers are more likely to teach in urban districts with high populations of students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Rahman, Fox, Ikoma, & Gray, 2017; US Department of Education, 2014). Of the largest 100 districts in the nation, the majority of students (63%) in urban areas are Black or Latino (Sable, Plots & Mitchell, 2010). These trends are important considering research highlights the lack of a thorough infusion of diversity, urban education, and multicultural courses throughout TEPs, leaving teachers inadequately prepared to serve their students (Milner, 2010; Villegas &

Lucas, 2002). Teachers are primary socializing forces in the lives of students (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012), which makes it necessary to examine the role teacher educators play in teaching pre-service teachers about CRP, as well as encouraging them to critically reflect on race/ethnicity, class, culture, and privilege. The responsibility of preparing a teaching workforce capable and willing to reach and teach all students through CRP falls heavily on teacher educators (Jett, 2012).

There is heightened demand for effective teachers knowledgeable of the affirming aspects of cultural differences and the role they play in the classroom. This requires more instruction about CRP and its inclusion as an integral part of TEPs (Jett, 2012). Due to CRP being both a theory and a pedagogy, there are gaps in the literature on teacher educators' perceptions and understandings of how they work with their pre-service teachers to understand and practice the pedagogy. The aim of this research was to examine teacher educators' perceptions of CRP and how they teach their pre-service teachers about the importance and use of CRP using the following research questions:

1. What are teacher educators' perceptions on the role of CRP in teacher education?
2. How do teacher educators teach their pre-service teachers about the importance and use of CRP?

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Post-integration, parents, teachers, and teacher educators have long advocated for the use of multicultural education in classrooms (Anderson, 1988; Banks 1994). Once Black teachers were pushed out of the profession via *Brown v. Board of Education* (Foster, 1997; Fultz, 2004; Tillman 2004; Walker, 1996), there was a consistent and sophisticated progression of theoretical and pedagogical movement to ensure marginalized children received a quality education from multicultural education to CRP (Milner & Howard, 2004; Walker, 2000). First coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) as a defining creation in this movement, CRP focuses on student empowerment and requires students to be academically successful, be culturally competent, and to develop critical consciousness. Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasized CRP as the essence of what teachers do in their classroom to ensure academic success for all children, and not a list of strategies or a bag of tricks that supports some children and not others. The power of CRP resides in what teachers believe; teachers should not have a deficit orientation about children of color but be able to see the assets they possess. Extending CRP and explicating its classroom applications, Gay's (2002) work asserts school success of ethnically diverse students can be made possible through the use of the pedagogy and petitions for it to be an integral part of TEPs. Within Gay's (2002) framework, she argued students can be more successful in school if the content and instruction is relative to their lived experiences. Content that is framed and taught, uncritically, from a Eurocentric perspective as well as taught in the same manner can limit how all children, and in particular, children of color or linguistically diverse children interact with it (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Subsequent iterations of CRP have manifested over the years. Paris (2012) introduced Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, which discusses how CRP has become ineffective since it has become a checklist versus teachers' ways of being. As more teachers and teacher educators were introduced to CRP without a framework of racial equity or critical race theory, CRP became to



some a series of steps versus a pedagogical practice. Paris (2012) argues for the sustainability of cultural and linguistic pedagogy in schools by intentional practice, not steps. In efforts to work towards this sustainability, we argue working to understand the perceptions of teacher educators leading this charge is necessary.

### **Culturally Relevant Teacher Educators**

Fasching-Varner and Seriki (2012) explain, although decades of research have been disseminated regarding CRP, teachers still struggle to put CRP practices into action. Part of this difficulty is CRP cannot be taught because it is a dispositional commitment (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012). These dispositions, however, must also be possessed by the teachers of teachers in order to be shared (Fasching-Varner, 2012; Gist, 2014). Teacher educators are also challenged by misunderstandings of CRP as theory and CRP as practice (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012). Another perspective, argued by Hayes and Juarez (2012), is how White privilege impedes progress of CRP within TEPs. They contend the standard in TE is Whiteness - White professors assign readings by White scholars who represent people of color and while pre-service teachers may do field work in culturally diverse settings, they are never challenged to address and dismantle issues of power and privilege (Clark, Zygmunt, Clausen, Mucherah, & Tancock, 2015; Hayes & Juarez, 2012). The lack of support for discussion about CRP is a direct result of a false commitment to diversity maintained by White privilege, which hinders TEPs ability to effectively prepare teachers to teach all students (Hayes & Juarez, 2012).

### **Methods**

Using a basic qualitative approach (Merriam, 2009), this study was designed to learn more about how teacher educators interpret their experiences. This qualitative inquiry took place at a large urban university in the Southeast. The research site stands as the third largest producer of teachers in the state and the only institution to identify as having an urban focus. In this university, there has been a recent push in the Elementary Education program for more encounters with diversity and CRP for their pre-service teachers. At the time of this study, the program requirements for the elementary education undergraduate degree required students to take two diversity courses and no stand-alone course existed for CRP.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify professors from this licensure program who voiced desire to strengthen their focus on CRP. Patton (1990) explains purposeful sampling allows researchers to select cases that are information-rich. "Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This sampling method required some exploratory work to review the research agendas and teaching experience of faculty members in the department. With the help of a notable scholar of CRP in the department, five potential participants were contacted via email to solicit their participation.

### **Participants**

Three participants volunteered, all of whom were White. There were two females, Dr. James and Dr. Matthews, and one male, Dr. Evans (all pseudonyms). Both Dr. Matthews and Dr. Evans are tenured professors and at the time of the study had been at the university for at least six

years. Dr. James, an assistant professor had been there about a year and a half. Dr. Matthews researches classroom technology integration and she teaches social studies methods courses; Dr. Evans researches early childhood writing development and teaches language arts methods courses; and lastly, Dr. James researches Whiteness studies and teaches diversity courses.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was collected through individual interviews. A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to focus on specific information while providing flexibility for both the researchers and participants (Merriam, 2009). Interviews were recorded digitally and ranged between 35 and 60 minutes and all interviews were conducted on campus. After verbatim transcription, coding was done manually. Inductive thematic analysis was used in an effort to discover themes in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain inductive analysis is a “process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions” (p. 12). The six phases for thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to search for and name themes. The process for thematic analysis required familiarization with the data, the creation of initial codes, and collapsing codes into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Findings**

Three themes were identified from interview data. The first theme was “CRP has specific requirements.” Participants reported at length the components of CRP they believed to be fundamental to strengthening one’s competency of CRP. The second theme was “CRP has unique challenges” which encompassed the individual difficulties participants experienced and discerned from both students and departmental colleagues. The third and final theme was “students can be engaged and understand CRP through hands-on experience.” This theme highlights what participants believed to be some best practices to help heighten students’ understanding of CRP.

#### **CRP Has Specific Requirements**

Participants articulated what they believed CRP is, how it was embodied in their classrooms, and what they identified as its key underpinnings. Collectively, CRP was identified as “foundational” to teaching. During interviews, participants spoke about the importance of students being able to speak knowledgeably about educational issues, to be able to recognize multiple perspectives, and to be able to pose critical questions about curricula. According to participants, these elements were found to be the specific requirements of CRP. Dr. Evans was a strong advocate for CRP to have a central focus in TEPs and his thoughts below highlighted the shared essence of what pre-service, in-service, and professors alike need to be able to do:

On all levels, we have to explore cultural backgrounds to know where we are coming from, to acknowledge privilege if we have it and where there are inequities. I think it’s really important to learn about other cultural backgrounds different from your own so you are aware of differences and how other people come to a classroom with their own range of experiences that are going to be different than your own. I think TE programs need to foster that. I think we need a stand-alone class in this but then I also think CRP needs to be woven across all the classes. I think it’s the responsibility of all classes to weave culturally relevant

instruction so it is taught across the curriculum. (Dr. Evans, personal communication, October 12, 2016)

Here Dr. Evans shares what he believes to be crucial to all CRP related efforts. An understanding of various cultures, sources of privilege, and the existence of inequity in society were identified as fundamental knowledge he believed pre-service teachers needed to develop both an understanding and disposition for CRP.

Interview data furthermore found CRP to be difficult to separate from what is known as “good work” in classrooms. Dr. James explained CRP could not be separated from any aspects of TE because:

It’s really hard to be an excellent science, or an excellent math, or an excellent ELA teacher if you are not grounding in terms of language patterns, cultural knowledge, in terms of students’ identifications, and their social world. (Dr. James, personal communication, October 25, 2016)

Like Dr. Evans, Dr. James also identifies some of the integral knowledge teachers should possess in order to be more effective. Both of their perceptions of teaching indicate a necessity for teachers to know who they are teaching as well as the context in which they are teaching.

These two data extractions were highlighted because, in addition to explaining what they perceived to be necessary skills and dispositions for teachers to be more culturally relevant, they also identified CRP as the bedrock of excellent teaching. This first theme shows participants’ personal perceptions and their belief that CRP is a necessary inclusion in TEPs. Above all, the three participants were adamant about CRP not being an add-on or another “thing to do” but a “way of being”. Echoed here is the shared understanding that in order to be rooted in CRP one needs to become more knowledgeable about self and others.

### **CRP Has Unique Challenges**

Though the first theme in essence showed the participants believed CRP was a foundational element to their work, this theme captured some of the difficulties they experienced with their students and co-workers. Participants spoke about student responses to their efforts, how their experiences varied from semester to semester, and the resistance CRP efforts met within their program. Notably, Dr. James spoke mostly about difficulties she has had with her students, while the other participants referenced their challenges mostly with colleagues, which could likely be attributed to difference in their tenure status. More specifically, Dr. James shared she had to reconsider the structure of her classes and which topics she would address in depth and which she would address broadly:

Last year I did a multi-week unit of study on African American language and an expert came to lead a workshop with them. It was hostilely received. I am trying to find that fine line between being untenured needing to have good evaluations and also wanting to push my students. This was not a topic they digested very well so I backed down a little bit this semester. It is not a place I want to stay but it is the place I am in right now so we did a general overview of language and language discrimination. (Dr. James, personal communication, October 25, 2016)

Ultimately, Dr. James faced an internal battle. While she desired to challenge students, she was also mindful of the possibility of students showing their resistance in course evaluations. This excerpt is an example of how teacher educators may have to consider potential negative ramifications of their course design and CRP related work in their classrooms.

In addition to Dr. James' challenges with her students, both Dr. Matthews and Dr. Evans expressed their difficulties with students but they addressed their colleagues, more specifically, Dr. Matthews felt as if the department was not unified on the role of CRP in their work. She explained:

I know a lot of us are doing things but we are not talking to each other about it, it's not cohesive. Just like our students, we are dealing with folks that have personal histories, maybe they've never thought of it, maybe they've been doing it and aren't calling it that but we all just need to come together. So, the role of CRP can be something that brings us together but they just see it as something that fits good with social studies or with the diversity course where I see it as fitting with everything without it being "work". (Dr. Matthews, personal communication, November 10, 2016)

Here Dr. Matthews channeled some frustration with the lack of cohesiveness and unity throughout her department but she highlighted some hope that progress was possible.

In Dr. Evans' interview, he shared that he believed "underlying racism" to be a key factor impeding the CRP efforts in the program. Through outside consulting efforts, he explained many sessions have been eye-opening for him but the lack of participation and "eye-rolls" from colleagues during those sessions was obvious. As a result of these observations, he was left feeling as if "there is a group of people that will embrace this and bring it into their classrooms and I think there are people that no matter what you do, they won't" (Dr. Evans, personal communication, October 12, 2016). Like Dr. Matthews, Dr. Evans displayed some disappointment with what he perceived to be repudiation from colleagues.

These significant pieces of data show the professors faced resistance from their students and their colleagues. Though the resistance from colleagues appeared to be subliminal, a lack of coherence could impact the fervor of the work because the participants desired a stronger sense of unity. Ultimately, tension existed between the role CRP "should" play and the challenges impeding the work.

### **Students Can Be Engaged and Understand CRP through Hands-On Experience**

The final theme captures both examples and perceptions about what the three participants believed to be necessary for students to be able to understand CRP. By and large, the participants advocated for intentionality in readings, topics, classroom activities, and community exposure.

Dr. James spoke about the importance of student-centered classrooms. She articulated there is a difference between students staying rooted in opinions for class discussion and students being able to connect to applicable research. Thus, she worked to curate lots of resources available for students to use to guide their work. She created learning communities and challenged students to work in groups both online and in the classroom. Student groups were also assigned days and topics to teach lessons. Student-centered classrooms are understood as a component of CRP because they allow students and their realms of reference, learning styles, and existing knowledge to be at the forefront. Though valuable, she felt teachers must be careful not to assume student-centered classrooms automatically make a classroom culturally relevant given the additional tenets required of the pedagogy.

Like Dr. James, Dr. Matthews identified student-initiated conversations and reflection as approaches to help strengthen one's understanding of CRP. More specifically, she advocated for genuine experiences for students instead of keeping course assignments as grade driven.

I think a gap comes from either not providing or not showing the connection. Let's say the privilege walk. If I just had them get in a line and go through the step forward and step back and then we just go on to the next day without unpacking, no reflection... that's where the rigor comes in when you have the students really reflect and if you do the work in between that will fill the gap. And I don't know what the work in between is except more experiences. You do the privilege walk first, then a poverty simulation and then go out and do a community study. Another reason there is a gap is because it becomes an assignment and I think when this kind of life stuff becomes an assignment, the students do not see how real it is. (Dr. Matthews, personal communication, November 10, 2016)

Dr. Matthews provides concrete examples of some of the work she believes is necessary to advance pre-service teachers understanding of CRP. Here she challenges faculty to dig deeper than assignments and grades but to increase exposure to experiences and conversations that could help cultivate appropriate teacher dispositions.

Lastly, Dr. Evans' identified very specific ways he engaged students in CRP including building classroom community and trust, using different texts and genres, and by talking about language and different discourses or "grammars":

I really address CRP when I talk about grammar. In writing instruction, the most common thing you hear is "oh these kids don't speak proper grammar or they don't write proper grammar." I really try to break it down and talk to students about it not being an issue of what is correct and incorrect but that grammars are plural and we change those grammars based on the context in which we are speaking or writing. I really confront CRP when I specifically address that topic. (Dr. Evans, personal communication, October 12, 2016)

Through this explicit example, Dr. Evans identifies the need for pre-service teachers to unlearn and reconcile areas of biases regarding home languages, language legitimacy, and cultural pluralism and he challenges those notions in his classroom.

While not tied to the two research questions directly, a significant finding worth noting is the need for faculty to have experiences to help them understand the theory-to-practice gap as it relates to enacting CRP. Participants identified this gap as an attributing cause for teacher educators facing difficulty with CRP. Both Dr. James and Dr. Matthews spoke throughout the interview about the need for more professional development in order to fill this gap. Dr. Evans explained why he thought the gap existed:

I think it exists because we are not providing enough real-world examples of how to close the gap and I think we are not providing that because we're not seeing that. It's hard to pave your own way. I think if you want to learn about excellent literacy practices you could pull up a video online. You don't really have that for CRP. I don't think there is a lot of great practice out there and I think one of the reasons why is because being culturally relevant is antithetical to a lot of what's mandated in schools so teachers have to work extra hard to find out how to make that balance and I also think what's culturally relevant for one person is not for another. There is no generic version of culturally relevant because it is defined by your students... I mean what that means for one classroom is not the same for another classroom so finding these models it's sort of trite right because isn't it generated from within? (Dr. Evans, personal communication, October 12, 2016)

In this excerpt, Dr. Evans identifies the lack of resources that exist for CRP while simultaneously noting that having a toolkit of resources could potentially be less beneficial because of the importance of classroom context. Dr. Evans' thoughts remind us of how CRP instruction is easier said than done.

## **Discussion**

We revealed here in this qualitative study of three participants, the perceptions they hold regarding CRP and how they work to increase their students' understanding of it. Notably, however, is the variation among participants in regards to how CRP is addressed. Throughout Dr. Evans' interview, he spoke about CRP topically and the specific ways he highlights CRP in his classes. This was unlike Dr. James and Dr. Matthews who talked about the pedagogy as a "way to be." This manifestation could arguably be used as a prime example of Paris' (2012) argument of how CRP has become less about teachers' ways of being. Yet, Dr. Evans' leaves us with a lingering question about CRP being dispositional at the end of his interview informing us that he is aware of the overall essence of CRP. This data reminds us of how difficult it can be to teach others "how to be" as well as some of the inherent difficulties teacher educators face in efforts to prepare future teachers for the realities of their classrooms. Collectively, across participants, they each acknowledged the need for more learning and personal discovery concerning CRP for all parties involved. From the data gathered, we feel that each appeared to be in a place where they were not only retrospective, but also introspective regarding their work and growth.

As these professors have shown, some students and faculty are receptive and some are not. Yet, the notion that "it depends on the group of students" as noted by Dr. James poses a problem that could potentially continue to maintain the state of the literature which says teachers continue to leave TEPs unprepared to work with diverse learners. Until programs like this one experience more unity amongst faculty and embed foundational CRP concepts across the program, the results of significant CRP related experiences for students will not be consistent.

## **Implications and Conclusion**

Though this study is limited given its small sample size and the fact that results are not generalizable, the findings have some potential implications for TEPs. Our study demonstrated participant viewpoints that show both faculty and students still struggle to "get it," which could continue to have detrimental effects on the diverse student population of students in K-12 schools, particularly in urban districts. It becomes more important for both theorists and practitioners to find ways to deepen educators' understanding. Teacher educators should spend time in schools and with teachers where it is evident that CRP exists. Faculty development can strengthen the work with pre-service teachers to supply them with the necessary literature and experiences to understand the pedagogy. Teacher education programs are also encouraged to consider whether or not they have both created and explicitly explained expectations and program requirements regarding CRP. This includes not only being intentional regarding program offerings, required readings and experiences, but also employing faculty who have the necessary knowledge and disposition to support the creation of future educators who display the fortitude for CRP. Taken together, these suggestions could help us garner "best practices" in efforts to prepare teachers who are capable and willing to reach and teach all students.

Taking these results into consideration, there is cause for both theorists and practitioners to question whether trying to find models or "best practices" for CRP is being done in vain. It is important for more research to try to understand, if possible, how we can get teachers to embody this pedagogy if it is a dispositional concept. Future research can further examine perceptions and how they contribute to the focus (or lack thereof) on the pedagogy throughout this TEP and perhaps

others. Suggested research includes capturing the perceptions of teacher educators in other TEPs to find ways this data and new data converges and diverges. Additionally, a variety of qualitative work including ethnographies of teacher educators and their pre-service students as well as autoethnographic studies of teacher educators could aid in our understanding of how CRP is approached in TEPs.

Ladson-Billings (2014) expressed CRP interpretations and educational efforts appear to be reductionistic. From the “remix” of her work, scholars have and are encouraged to question, challenge and advance both CRP scholarship and educational practice. This fact informs us that the work on CRP is continuous. Whether or not the participants in this study have mastered navigating CRP within their TEP, what is appreciated is their willingness and intentionality to do the work it takes to get there.

### References

- Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Banks, J. A. (1994). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Needham Heights, MA; Allyn and Bacon Inc.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Brown-Jeffy, S., & Cooper, J. E. (2012). Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 38(1), 65-84. Retrieved from <http://www.teqjournal.org>
- Clark, P., Zygmunt, E., Clausen, J., Mucherah, W., & Tancock, S. (2015). *Transforming teacher education for social justice*. Teachers College Press.
- Dell’Angelo, T. & Seaton, G. (2016). Students and teachers co-constructing identity. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*, 12, 124-132.
- Fasching-Varner, K. J., & Seriki, V. D. (2012). Moving beyond seeing with our eyes wide shut. A response to "there is no culturally responsive teaching spoken here". *Democracy & Education*, 20(1), 1-6.
- Foster, M. (1997). *Black Teachers on Teaching*. New York: New Press.
- Fultz, M. (2004). The displacement of Black educators post-Brown: An overview and analysis. *History of Education Quarterly*, 44(1), 11-45.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Hayes, C., & Juarez, B. (2012). There is no culturally responsive teaching spoken here: A critical race perspective. *Democracy & Education*, 20(1), 1-14.
- Howard, T. C. (2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy: Ingredients for critical teacher reflection. *Theory into Practice*, 42(3), 195-202.
- Hussar, W.J., and Bailey, T.M. (2013). *Projections of Education Statistics to 2022* (NCES 2014-051). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Jett, C. C. (2012). Let's produce culturally responsive pedagogues on Deck. *Democracy & Education*, 20(2), 1-5.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-65.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 206–214.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A.K.A the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1) 74-84.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Milner IV, H. R. (2010). *Start where you are, but don't stay there: Understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Milner, H., & Howard, T. (2004). Black teachers, Black students, Black communities, and Brown: Perspectives and insights from experts. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 73(3), 285-297. doi:10.2307/4129612
- Olson, J. D. & Rao, A. B. (2016). Becoming a culturally responsive teacher: The impact of clinical experiences in urban schools. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*, 12, 133-141.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Quintero, D. & Hansen, M. (2017, June 2). English learners and the growing need for qualified teachers. *The Brookings Institution*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/06/02/english-learners-and-the-growing-need-for-qualified-teachers/>
- Rahman, T., Fox, M.A., Ikoma, S., and Gray, L. (2017). *Certification Status and Experience of U.S. Public School Teachers: Variations Across Student Subgroups* (NCES 2017-056). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017056\\_report.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017056_report.pdf)
- Sable, J., Plotts, C., and Mitchell, L. (2010). *Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 2008–09* (NCES 2011-301). U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011301.pdf>
- Taie, S., and Goldring, R. (2017). *Characteristics of Public Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look* (NCES 2017-072). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017072.pdf>
- Tillman, L. C. (2004). (Un)intended consequences? The impact of the Brown v. Board of Education decision on the employment status of Black educators. *Education and Urban Society*. 36(3), 280–303.
- U.S. Department of Education, (2016). *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*, Washington, D.C: Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversityworkforce.pdf>.



- US Department of Education. (2014). *Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (Teacher Equity)*. Washington, D.C.: Office for Civil Rights. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-teacher-equity-snapshot.pdf>
- Villegas, A. & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20-32.
- Walker, V. S. (1996). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated South*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Walker, V. S. (2000). Valued segregated schools for African American children in the South, 1935-1969: A review of common themes and characteristics. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 253-285.

## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol

#### Warming Up Questions

1. Tell me about your professional background. How long have you been an educator? What levels have you taught? (Reference demographic questionnaire here)
2. How long have you worked here, what other schools/universities have you worked, has it always been teacher education programs?
3. Tell me about how you came to this institution.
4. What are your research interests? What courses do you teach?

#### Preparing Teachers

5. How did you decide to become a teacher educator? Why?
6. Tell me about your teaching philosophy.

#### Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

7. Talk to me about what you know about culturally relevant pedagogy.
8. How do you define/identify culturally relevant pedagogy?
9. What role do you think CRP plays in teacher education programs?

#### Context Specific- CRP

10. Tell me about the receptiveness of CRP in this elementary education teacher prep program?
11. What kinds of conversations (if any) do you have with your pre-service teachers about CRP?
12. Would you say that you employ this pedagogy in your classroom work as a professor? If so, how? Why? If not, why not?
13. What do you think are some best practices for CRP with pre-service teachers?

#### Documents

14. Talk to me about the documents can have to share with me that you use to incorporate CRP in your classroom (syllabus, course assignments, course website, readings/resources).

#### Conclusion

15. Are there any other types of pedagogies you spend time with discussing with your students?
16. What final thoughts can you share about your overall thoughts about teacher preparation and CRP?
17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Corps Members' Perspectives of Teaching in a New Teach for America Region

Lorrei DiCamillo

*Canisius College*

### Abstract

This qualitative study examined the perspectives of 14 Teach For America (TFA) Corps Members (CMs) in a city where there was no teacher shortage. CMs discussed the benefits and challenges of being in TFA. Benefits included serving others, developing leadership skills, and being part of a flexible organization. CMs also highlighted some of the challenges they encountered, such as being unprepared for full-time teaching, taking qualified teachers' jobs, and feeling unsupported by inexperienced TFA staff. The findings add to the discussion about whether or not TFA should expand to cities where there are no teacher shortages, and raise questions for policymakers, school districts, and TFA about how to support these new teachers.

*Keywords:* alternative teacher preparation programs; Teach for America; and teacher perspectives

### Introduction

When Teach for America (TFA) began in 1989, founder Wendy Kopp envisioned sending energetic yet inexperienced corps members (CMs) to public schools in areas of the country that lacked licensed teachers (Kopp, 1989). But between 2008 and 2013, the recession caused 324,000 teaching positions in public school districts to be eliminated, so TFA recruits were sometimes sent to cities where there were no teacher shortages (Hootnick, 2014). As a result, some veteran teachers began losing their jobs to TFA CMs because CMs were less expensive for districts to hire (Ravitch, 2014). TFA has been repeatedly criticized by educators as well as its own alums, who argue the organization's growth has compromised its original mission (Barnum, 2013; Hootnick, 2014).

In 2013, TFA came to a city in New York where there were no teacher shortages except in adolescent special education and limited-English-proficiency classrooms. A teacher education program at Catholic College, a small, private college in the city, partnered with TFA to meet the needs of alternatively certified teachers in urban schools. Before beginning their coursework at the college, the CMs completed a five-week Summer Institute through TFA in a large city in a nearby state. The Institute was a combination of coursework and supervised teaching experiences in a summer school program for K-12 students. After the Institute, CMs were enrolled in a two-year Master's degree program for either Students with Disabilities (SWD) or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at the childhood or adolescent levels. CMs took approximately two courses per semester in these programs and were the teacher of record in their classrooms through a New York State Transitional B license. After completing coursework and passing all certification exams, CMs obtained a Master's degree and certification to teach in New York State.

As a Teacher Education Department faculty member and the TFA program coordinator for the college, I found that there were problems with the coursework and mentoring structures in the

graduate teacher preparation program for CMs. I decided that before I could make substantive changes to the program, I needed to study the partnership and interview CMs about their experiences in TFA and the college's graduate programs. This article discusses what I learned about CMs' experiences in TFA in a region where they were often not wanted or welcomed in the large public school district.

### Conceptual Framework

This study used sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) as the conceptual framework. Sociocultural learning theory posits that teachers' learning is shaped by social and cultural contexts and experiences. Social and cultural factors, such as school context, mentor support, and interactions with colleagues and administrators influenced CMs' perspectives of their experiences in TFA and their learning experiences in the college's graduate program.

The lived experiences of teachers who are committed to urban teaching should be recognized and valued by education policymakers (Borrero, 2016). Most alternatively certified teachers in the United States work in urban classrooms (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Thus, when university teacher education programs partner with alternative certification programs, like TFA, they must reflect on their programs to ensure their curriculum and experiences prepare teachers for state certification and teaching in an urban environment (Carter, Amrein-Beardsley, & Cooper Hansen, 2011; Heineke, Carter, Desimone, & Cameron, 2010).

This study adds to the personal stories of former CMs' experiences (Albina, 2012; Barnum, 2013; Diamond, 2012; Hootnick, 2014) and research about CMs views of Teach for America (Brewer, 2013, 2014; Veltri, 2008, 2010). As a former TFA CM, Brewer (2013) interviewed other CMs about their experiences and critically examined TFA's recruiting practices, interview process, and approach to pedagogy. Veltri (2008, 2010) conducted an eight-year qualitative study and examined how TFA teachers learn the complexities of the school, community, and teaching, and how they view their work and TFA's mission. Using the CMs narratives, she described the site-based realities and experiences involved in becoming a TFA teacher.

### Method

I conducted a yearlong qualitative study from September of 2016 to May of 2017 where I investigated the following questions: (a) How do TFA CMs perceive their experiences in TFA? and (b) How do TFA CMs perceive their learning in Catholic College's graduate teacher education program? This article focuses on the first research question (and first four interview questions) about CM's experiences in TFA in a new region. The name of the college as well as the names of CMs are pseudonyms.

I emailed the 39 CMs in the college's graduate program and asked if they wanted to participate in an individual interview to help me understand their experiences in TFA and their graduate education program. Fourteen CMs agreed to a 45-minute interview. Eight CMs were female and six CMs were male. All CMs were recent college graduates and ranged in age from 22 to 25-years-old. Eight of the 14 CMs were in their second year of the program, while six CMs were in their first year. The CMs interviewed were reflective of the larger group of CMs in the new region; 11 identified as White, one as African American, and two as Latina. CMs were asked why they joined TFA, what their TFA experience was like, what they enjoyed about TFA, and

what, if anything, they thought could be improved by TFA. They were also asked five additional questions about their experiences in the college's graduate education program (see Appendix A).

Data analysis began immediately and continued throughout the research process. Interview transcripts were read and reread to get a sense of CMs responses. Next, transcripts were coded based on initial themes and patterns. For example, some themes that developed from the interviews with CMs were that TFA was helping them develop leadership skills and serve others. Additionally, the CMs discussed challenges they were experiencing in TFA, such as being unprepared by the Summer Institute to teach full-time. I continued my analysis of the transcripts by member checking and checking for confirming and disconfirming evidence (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006), which helped me determine final themes.

## **Findings**

The themes discussed in this section came from interview questions about CMs' experiences in their first and/or second years of the program. During interviews, CMs discussed both the benefits and challenges of being TFA teachers.

### **Benefits of Being TFA Teachers**

**Serving others.** Many of the CMs I interviewed said they liked TFA's dedication to serving others, especially children in low socioeconomic status urban schools. Caitlin explained she liked the way the organization recruited teachers:

I like the way they find teachers because it's a very extensive interviewing process...they find people interested in social justice and community service; so that helps in the classroom. It allows you to teach kids differently in that everyone [teachers and students] respects each other.

Neal discussed how the idea of teaching as service drew him to TFA:

I like the focus on underserved schools...it is something I've been interested in since high school. I saw it as a good way to do some volunteer work...essentially some community service type of thing; while also getting some good experience of being in charge, taking control of my classroom, and then getting into science literacy, which is also my passion.

Some candidates brought up teaching in TFA as a way to work for equality in society. For example, Anna said she liked being surrounded by CMs who were "equally passionate about education" and "believe in the social justice mission and in eliminating inequality." She cautioned that CMs should also be critical when examining inequalities:

I think that people who join TFA see education as the great equalizer...but there are so many different types of inequality, like economic inequality, racial inequality, and gender inequality. To simplify it and say that if we just have good teachers we can end educational inequality...I think that is not realistic.

Clearly, the idea of serving others and addressing inequities, which many corps members had learned about in high school and college, was viewed as a benefit by the CMs interviewed. The TFA program encouraged CMs' view of teaching as service and helped them make sense of their experiences through this lens. Yet, as Veltri (2008) points out, "TFA's 'mission' in poor urban and rural schools embraces a business model with a brand, image, and culture designed to attract candidates for a finite commitment" (p. 536). Thus, when CMs view teaching as simply a two-year service commitment rather than a potential career, the schools that employ them do not gain

teachers who will remain in teaching and provide consistency for the students and family they serve.

**Developing leadership skills.** Since 2011, TFA founder Wendy Kopp has asserted that TFA's central mission is to develop leadership skills in recent college graduates. According to Hootnick (2014), TFA's long-term goal is to "build a force of leaders who will go on to influential public and private sector careers supporting TFA's education reform initiatives" (para. 22). Thus, it was not surprising that many of the CMs said they liked that they were developing leadership skills by teaching. David explained, "Being in TFA has not been easy, but I had supports and I've taken advantage of that because TFA is looking for leadership skills and I have them and I love challenges. So for me, I have loved this experience." Likewise, Adam said he was not sure if he would stay in teaching after his two years as a CM, but he had learned much from the experience: "I picked up a lot of people skills and relationship skills and they're transferable. That's what I like about TFA – it's an emphasis not just on teaching...the nuts and bolts of education...but on leadership."

Three interviewees also discussed that they planned to stay in TFA as leaders once their two years of teaching were finished. As Ava remarked, "I am inspired every day to be a leader within our community." Similar to viewing teaching as service, some CMs discussed teaching as leadership development. The TFA community seemed to assist CMs in making sense of their teaching experiences by relating them to experiences they would encounter as future leaders.

**Being part of a flexible organization.** Several CMs brought up that they thought the local TFA office, which was underfunded and understaffed during its first three years, was flexible with them and their needs. Sadie commented, "They take criticism well...they are open to change." Likewise, David explained:

I like that TFA is new here so they have been open to new ideas about making the experience better for us. I appreciate that...that they're relentless in the pursuit of being better, which is one of our corps values. So, they demonstrate all of our values really well. Bethany said she had several concerns and brought them to her Manager of Teacher Leadership and Development (MTLD). The MTLD then assisted her in creating a Corps Member Advisory Board, where she served as a leader. She explained, "So, I like TFA, that they're constantly trying to improve because they are new to [the region]." She added that she planned to become a TFA leader in the future.

There were three interviewees who said the TFA staff was not flexible and focused more on the challenges they encountered as TFA teachers. The next section discusses their concerns as well as concerns that several other CMs brought up during interviews.

## Challenges Encountered in TFA

**Inadequate preparation before teaching.** All of the CMs interviewed described the Summer Institute as a very intense, exhausting experience where they were teaching and attending professional development workshops into the evenings and on weekends. Brewer (2013) discussed a Summer Institute in a southern state where "staff coordinate a hazing event in which staff members scold and ridicule corps members" (p. 8). In contrast to Brewer's (2013) account, none of the CMs interviewed said they were hazed, and four CMs thought parts of the Institute were helpful to their growth as a new teacher.

All of the CMs interviewed stated that the Summer Institute did not prepare them for the realities of full-time teaching. One of the main reasons it was not as helpful as it could have been is that the CMs did not know what they would be teaching yet. As Anna explained, “My placement in Institute was in a first grade and my position now is eighth grade reading.” Diana said that the Summer Institute did not prepare her for teaching because it focused on “identity work,” which she explained was examining her own background and privilege as a White American. She continued by saying, “Although it [identity work] is a great practice, it provided little of the foundation I needed to be successful my first few months as a teacher.”

James said the Summer Institute did help him learn more about classroom management, but he wanted additional instruction on methods: “We never got to learn how to incorporate strategies...how to teach English or social studies...there was a big focus on classroom culture.” Likewise, Caitlin said the Summer Institute was “frustrating”:

For Literacy, you only taught one standard a day, and if you failed, they [TFA staff] wouldn’t let you revisit it. So, for the entire Summer [Institute] they [TFA staff] wanted you to do 20 different standards, which is not realistic...they just need the data and to give you the experience teaching, but it didn’t make any sense. I was like, ‘You’re not helping the kids. If they can’t read the book the day before then they’re not going to be able to read it independently.’

While the CMs had different problems with the Summer Institute, all agreed it was not enough time to develop the knowledge and skills needed to become strong first-year teachers. Their learning was influenced by interactions with their students, mentor teachers, and administrators at their school sites. This finding is consistent with other studies (Veltri, 2008, 2010; Brewer, 2013) and reports from former TFA teachers (Albina, 2012; Barnum, 2013; Diamond, 2012). As Albina (2012), a former TFA teacher, explained, “I needed time to absorb, make sense of, and find ways to implement my own budding ideas about teaching” (p. 71). The CMs in this study also brought up that they wished they had more time to observe and reflect on classroom teaching and learning before assuming the role of a lead teacher.

**Taking qualified teachers’ jobs.** Since there was not a teacher shortage in the city where this study takes place, there were several teacher layoffs in 2013 and 2014 to make room for the new TFA teachers. The strong teachers union in the district found out about the reason behind some of the layoffs, and contacted the local newspaper, which published an article about TFA coming to the city and taking certified teachers’ jobs. Following the publication of the article, the local TFA leaders asked CMs not to self-identify at their schools – to say they were new teachers, but not to reveal that they were part of the TFA program. This caused anxiety among many of the CMs, who felt a sense of guilt that they were replacing qualified teachers. For example, Anna related:

I feel morally wrong doing TFA just because a lot of the people I love and respect who are working on educational issues, like in [nearby city] despise TFA. I think there is this message being sent that a young college graduate with the right mindset can do your job better than you can...I feel that is incredibly insulting to teachers who spend years learning...a direct message that they [TFA] send is there’s a shortage of teachers and we’re filling this pipeline...but ultimately I think the implicit message is that there are a lot of bad teachers out there who are not doing their jobs and that is why our urban schools are failing...I don’t agree with that.

Another CM, James, reflected on how “there is a lot of ill will toward us [TFA teachers] and some teachers want nothing to do with us.” He said his team at his school knows he is part of TFA and told him, “We should hate you but you do your job and do it well.” James related that when he brought this up with the local TFA staff, they told him he was not taking teachers’ jobs,

But I’m like there are teachers who have been subbing in this district for four years and can’t land a position and they are more than qualified. A lot of the teachers I work with say we [CMs] are not qualified and I agree with that.

Anna and James’ comments revealed the guilt and tensions some CMs felt about being part of a program in a city where there was no teacher shortage. Additionally, they seemed to receive mixed messages from TFA staff about a perceived teacher shortage. These CMs’ views were shaped by their interactions with TFA staff as well as experiences with other teachers at their school sites.

**Inexperienced TFA staff.** As discussed in other articles (Barnum, 2013; Brewer, 2014), some of the people who work for TFA in the role of advisors, coaches, curriculum specialists, and professional development leaders, are former corps members who only taught in TFA for a short time and would not be considered veteran teachers or skilled mentor teachers. Barnum (2013), a former TFA teacher, described a time during his first year of teaching when his MTLT “appeared in my classroom with no warning...only to sweep out, fifteen minutes later, after leaving a post-it note that said something along the lines of, ‘Keep up the great work!’” (para. 14).

In the city where this study took place, there was only one full-time TFA staff member supporting the 39 CMs. She had taught for two years in TFA before becoming a TFA staff member. There was one other woman (also a former TFA CM) who assisted her, but she lived an hour away and was not available to meet with CMs on a regular basis. The college where the CMs were taking graduate courses also assigned CMs mentors (clinical faculty who were veteran teachers), but they were told by the local TFA staff that they could not do classroom observations and could only assist CMs if the CMs reached out for support via email.

During interviews, all of the CMs brought up that they needed experienced, qualified, and consistent TFA mentors, who could help them with the daily challenges they encountered as new teachers. Caitlin explained how she invited her TFA MTLT into her 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom to watch a lesson in a class she was struggling with, hoping to get feedback about what she could do to improve her teaching. She said the MTLT did not know how to answer her questions and then told her to “make sure you have student work hanging on the wall.” Caitlin related:

I flipped out because that was my feedback. It was irrelevant. And my classroom last year was covered in student work. The feedback the MTLT gave me was not helping me become a better teacher. I believe that student work should be on the walls, but that feedback is not helping me.

Pilar shared that she felt unsupported her first year teaching in a bilingual classroom: “There was no one Spanish speaking on TFA staff, so when they would go into my classroom, they told me some things, but I still had to figure out how to adapt it to Spanish speaking students.” She said TFA contacted their national office and sent a coach to help her, “but when I got done with the management, then the teaching part started.” She said she realized, “I don’t have teaching down, I don’t know the curriculum, I don’t know how to do this and you’re not helping me find stuff...so my management went down again.” Eventually, Pilar was removed from her classroom by the school principal and put in a non-bilingual classroom.

Several of the CMs interviewed commented that they knew the local TFA staff was particularly inexperienced and the office was underfunded and understaffed compared to other

regions where TFA existed. Some CMs had friends or acquaintances who had been TFA teachers in other cities. For example, James knew a man who had been a TFA teacher in an east coast region, and when he told the man about his experiences,

He was shocked...he said they have one MTLTD for every seven CMs. They make good money so they're not going anywhere...they know their stuff...they were teachers for 10-15 years and a lot of them were TFA alums...they know the districts and what they are teaching.

As James' comments illustrate, the lack of experienced TFA staff seemed unique to this new TFA region. The CMs descriptions of their mentoring in TFA illustrate how their interactions with TFA staff influenced their thinking about good mentoring for new teachers.

### **Discussion**

Interviews with CMs in a new TFA region revealed they saw benefits and challenges to being TFA teachers. Some of the themes found in this study were consistent with other research studies, such as CMs views' of teaching as service (Veltri, 2008) and their lack of preparation to teach (Albina, 2012; Barnum, 2013; Brewer, 2013). Yet this research also revealed unique perspectives, for example CMs' views about developing leadership skills, being part of a flexible organization, and taking qualified teachers' jobs.

The CMs interviewed liked that they were serving others, especially poor children in "low-performing" public schools, and developing their leadership skills for future jobs. They also enjoyed being part of a new organization where the TFA staff member valued their perspectives and worked to make the program stronger for them. CMs spent more time discussing the many challenges they faced as new teachers in the alternative certification program. They did not think the Summer Institute prepared them for the rigors of full-time teaching and said they needed more mentoring from experienced TFA staff. Additionally, CMs felt guilty about taking jobs from certified teachers.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

This study highlights some of the experiences and perceptions of a group of teachers who were placed in a region where teacher shortages were not widespread. These findings are limited in that they are a single case of a small TFA program where I, as program advisor, conducted the interviews. Yet, despite these limitations, the findings add to the discussion about whether TFA should expand to cities where there are no teacher shortages (Barnum, 2013; Hootnick, 2014; Ravitch, 2014) and raise questions for policymakers who push for alternative certification programs, school districts and universities who partner with alternatively certified teaching programs, and TFA. Should TFA expand to cities where teacher shortages do not exist? Should TFA teachers, many of whom leave after two years, take certified teachers jobs? If CMs are unsupported by experienced, knowledgeable mentors, how can they become stronger teachers? How does the lack of support that CMs receive influence their teaching and students' learning? These questions are important for all stakeholders to discuss and for future research.

The CMs views about their experiences in TFA illustrated their learning was shaped by social and cultural contexts and experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). CMs' experiences of being part of a TFA program in a new region, along with their experiences with the students they taught, the mentors who supported them, and teachers and administrators they came into contact with,



influenced their thinking and development. Teacher educators and policymakers should consider the views of these CMs as they work to make alternative certification programs stronger. For example, CMs' views about needing additional mentoring support should provoke conversations among TFA, school leaders, and university preparation programs. The three organizations should combine financial resources to support these new teachers in a comprehensive way. Teacher preparation programs should also work to ensure their curriculum is relevant and meaningful for CMs since they often feel unprepared for the realities of first-year teaching in urban schools.

Based on their review of the existing research studies about TFA, Vasquez Heilig and Jez (2014) made several recommendations to school districts in regards to hiring through TFA. They recommend that districts only hire TFA teachers when the alternative hiring pool consists of uncertified, emergency, or substitute teachers. Additionally, Vasquez Heilig and Jez (2014) assert that districts should require TFA teachers to receive additional in-service professional development based on supported best practices. The perspectives of teachers in this study support their recommendations; many of the CMs interviewed said they wished they had been placed in other regions where there were teacher shortages and an established TFA program with adequate supports.

## References

- Albina, G. (2012). Which is better? Alternative or traditional: A former Teach For America recruit who completed her training in a university-based program compares the two approaches. *Education Leadership*, 69(8), 70-72.
- Barnum, M. (2013). It's time for Teach For America to fold – former tfaer. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/02/28/its-time-for-teach-for-america-to-fold-former-tfaer/?print=1>
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Borrero, N. (2016). New teachers for change: Considering the perspectives of pre-service urban teachers. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*, 12, 107-115.
- Brewer, T. J. (2013). From the trenches: A Teach For America corps member's perspective. *Critical Education*, 4 (12), 1-17.
- Brewer, T. J. (2014). Accelerated burnout: How Teach For America's "academic impact model" And theoretical culture of hyper-accountability can foster disillusionment among its corps members. *Educational Studies*, 50, 246-263.
- Carter, H., Amrein-Beardsley, A., & Cooper Hansen, C. (2011). So not amazing! Teach for America corps members' evaluation of the first semester of their teacher preparation program. *Teachers College Record*, 113(5), 861-894.
- Diamond, A. (2012). Do I really Teach For America?: Reflections of a Teach For America teacher. Retrieved from [http://www.rethinkingschools.org/restrict.asp?path=archive/24\\_03/24\\_03\\_tfadiamond.shtml](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/restrict.asp?path=archive/24_03/24_03_tfadiamond.shtml)
- Heineke, A., Carter, H., Desimone, M., & Cameron, Q. (2010). Working together in urban schools: How a university teacher education program and Teach For America partner to support alternatively certified teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(3), 123-136.
- Hootnick, A. (2014). Teachers are losing their jobs, but Teach For America's expanding: What's

- wrong with that? Retrieved from <http://www.thenation.com/article/teachers-are-losing-their-jobs-teach-americas-expanding-whats-wrong/>
- Kopp, W. (1989). An argument and plan for the creation of the teacher corps. (Unpublished Bachelors Thesis), Princeton, St. Louis, MO. Retrieved from <http://worldcat.org/title/argument-and-plan-for-the-creation-of-the-teacher-corps/oclc/642714964>
- Ravitch, D. (2014). Teach For America: Is the magic gone? Retrieved from <https://dianeravitch.net/2014/05/03/teach-for-america-is-the-magic-gone/>
- Vasquez Heilig, J. & Jez, S. J. (2014). *Teach for America: A return to the evidence*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved July 5, 2015 from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/teach-for-america-return>.
- Veltri, B. T. (2008). Teaching or service? The site-based realities of Teach For America teachers in poor, urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(5), 511-542.
- Veltri, B. T. (2010). *Learning on other people's kids: Becoming a Teach For America teacher*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind and society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, S. M., Floden, R. E., & Ferrini-Mundy, J. (2001). *Teacher preparation research: Current knowledge, gaps, and recommendations*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

### Appendix A

1. Why did you join TFA?
2. How long have you been teaching in TFA?
3. What has the TFA experience been like for you?
4. What do you like about being in TFA?
5. What do you feel could be improved by TFA?
6. What has your experience in Catholic College's graduate education program been like?
7. What courses and instructors have been helpful to your learning?
8. What improvements could Catholic College make to the graduate education program that you are enrolled in?
9. Is your Catholic College mentor helpful? Please explain your relationship with her or him.
10. What do you think of the TFA/Catholic College partnership? Do you think it is a collaborative relationship?

## **Responsive Classroom Management: Empowering Students and Teachers in Urban Schools**

**Nancy Jo Schafer**  
*Georgia State University*

**Kim Stevens Barker**  
*Augusta University*

### **Abstract**

This research explores a finding from a multicase study of effective teachers working in urban high-poverty schools who used responsive classroom management as a tool. While classroom management was not the focus of the larger study, it emerged as a finding that was critical for participants as they fostered success for their students, and in the process, preserved and strengthened their commitments to work in challenging school contexts. The current study was undertaken to better understand classroom management and its commonalities across the teachers. Additional data analysis revealed connections between the certification program and teachers' implementation of a responsive classroom management approach that included common vocabulary, theories, and methods. This research reveals important connections between teacher preparation and effective teaching in urban high-poverty schools, which has practical implications for those concerned with this population of students and families.

*Keywords:* Classroom management, effective teachers, teachers' visions, advocacy

### **Introduction**

Teachers who are skilled at classroom management may appear to outsiders as “naturals,” operating their classrooms with a calmness and precision that disguises the consistent cycle of reflection and adjustment they use to manage their students and the learning environment. While some describe the best classroom management as invisible, experienced educators recognize the importance that intentional classroom management has on students and teachers' success. Strong, Ward, and Grant (2011) compared practices of effective and less effective teachers concluding, “Top-quartile teachers had fewer classroom disruptions, better classroom management skills, and better relationships with their students than did bottom quartile teachers” (p. 349).

New teachers often report a lack of preparation and confidence for the management needed in their classrooms. Additionally, school administrators acknowledge that classroom management is one of the areas in which teachers are least prepared (Melnick & Meister, 2008). This is particularly concerning considering research indicating that productive classroom environment may be more important than curriculum and strategies for success in the complex environments of urban schools (Skiba, Ormiston, Martinez, & Cummings, 2016; Brown, 2003). Furthermore, demographic mismatches between teachers and students may hinder teachers' efforts at effective management when they make judgements regarding behavior and decisions for their responses through their own cultural lenses (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2007).

Although teachers recognize the need for life-long learning, new teachers describe feeling more prepared and confident when they have participated in coursework focused on classroom management (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012). Martin (2004) found that teachers who effectively manage their classrooms view the work as a process to be accomplished with students rather than a set of techniques to do to students. Rather than equating education with compliance, Morrison and Vaandering (2012) argue that management becomes a joint endeavor “when students are valued as human beings to be honored rather than objects to be controlled” (p. 145).

The complexity of classroom management is compounded when teachers attempt to implement ambitious pedagogies that often require them to “teach against the grain” (Cochran-Smith, 1991) of the norms of the school community in which they work. Lampert and Graziani (2009) explored novice teachers’ abilities to increase their own knowledge and improve student outcomes through the implementation of ambitious pedagogy, that is classroom practices that support student learning across ethnic, racial, class, and gender categories with the goal of fostering deep understandings rather than low-level knowledge acquisition.

### **Theoretical Framework**

“Teachers who demonstrate care and a consistent demand for excellence have a significant positive impact on African American student achievement” (Acosta, 2015, p. 3). These teachers are committed to developing nurturing relationships and classroom environments where learning is cooperative and engaging. While this approach is considered widely to be a best practice, it contrasts to practices in urban education that are often discipline-oriented rather than community-oriented (Milner & Tenore, 2010; Noguera, 2003).

From a sociocultural perspective, the goal of classroom management would be the development of an effective learning community where students and teachers are full participants in the community of learners. Hickey and Schafer (2006) argue that classroom management’s main focus should be on the collective success of students and teachers with a focus on proactive approaches to classroom management rather than reactive ones. This includes ritualizing effective routines and practices that define the classroom community. This approach to classroom management emphasizes the social-emotional wellbeing of the students and teachers, as teachers scaffold students’ ability to manage themselves.

The study examined here is guided by the work of scholars in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995), specifically its influence on Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran’s (2004) culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM). Weinstein et al. (2004) state that teachers who implement CRCM must (a) recognize their own ethnocentrism, (b) have knowledge of their students’ cultures, (c) understand the broader systems influencing education, (d) use appropriate management strategies, and (e) develop a caring classroom. This perspective is the foundation for considering the work of effective teachers working in diverse urban school contexts.

### **Study’s Background**

Findings from a multicase study of effective teachers working in urban high-need schools revealed that the participants held similar core beliefs prior to beginning their teacher preparation program (Barker, 2016). Additionally, they believed that their preparation program had strengthened their core beliefs, which they acknowledged were initially “idealistic” and “shallow.”

The participants emphasized the role of the program in helping them to operationalize and focus their early visions for teaching into purposeful endeavors.

In anticipation that their own work as teachers would certainly have positive or negative influences on their students' success, the larger study found that the teachers enacted a vision of anticipatory advocacy (Barker, 2016). Anticipatory advocacy includes intervening actions that are the result of a dual awareness of students' immediate and future needs and have implications beyond boundaries of time and space in an effort to positively influence students' lives in the immediate as well as distant future.

In order to enact anticipatory advocacy, the participants employed tools to advocate for their students: (a) culturally responsive classroom management, (b) ambitious teaching, and (c) professional collaboration. These tools that the teachers had acquired during their preparation program produced expanding layers of success for the teachers and their students. These successes in turn reinforced the teachers' visions and gave them the power to resist professional weathering forces.

Classroom management was not the focus of the larger study, but rather culturally responsive classroom management emerged as a finding that was critical to the teacher's acts of advocacy. In order to understand how the participants used classroom management as a tool in their work, we returned to the data to focus on the theme for this study. This research underscores the significance of social and urban contexts that complicate management of children who are often racially, culturally, and economically different from many of their teachers (Weiner, 2003).

## Methods

### Participants

The four participants in the broader multicase study were graduates of the same cohort of an intensive, urban-focused, two-year certification and master's program. The participants were nominated by faculty of the program, and they were each confirmed by their principals to be effective teachers for their students. All four participants were female, two identified as European American, one as African American, and one as African American/Latina. The participants selected pseudonyms for the purpose of the study.

In order to explore in depth the culturally responsive classroom management tool, researchers in this study returned to the same cohort of graduates, analyzing data from all members of the cohort in addition to the original four case study participants. The mission of the program was to promote the success of elementary students schooled in high-need urban contexts through the development of pedagogically competent, equity-oriented, caring, empowered teachers who were change agents inside and outside the classroom. The program began with a culturally responsive pedagogy course which addressed first three elements of CRCM: (a) recognize one's own ethnocentrism; (b) have knowledge of students' cultures; and (c) understand the broader social, economic, and political systems in education (Weinstein et al., 2004). The course was followed by a responsive classroom management course which continued the work along with addressing Weinstein et al.'s (2004) last two elements of CRCM: (d) use appropriate management strategies; and (e) develop a caring classroom.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Multiple data sources for the broader study captured the work of the four participants revealing their working theory and teaching methods. Similar to the work of Ladson-Billings (1994), the study utilized a reverse design approach to link effective teaching to initial preparation. This approach goes beyond positive shifts in attitudes and dispositions by tracing practices of effective teachers to elements of teacher preparation programs (Clift & Brady, 2005; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

Data for the broader study included analysis of program documents (admission documents, writing samples, course assignments, etc.), three interviews, and three field observations for each of the four participants. The four participants also participated in three focus group interviews. Over a period of 16 weeks, the teacher participants were interviewed and observed 25 times, capturing their work in the spring semester of their second year of teaching. The primary researcher used grounded theory to conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously within the study, spiraling in analytic circles in a recursive, iterative process (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Using the constant-comparative method of data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the researcher analyzed the data using open coding before cycling back through to identify categories and relationships between categories that could constitute a model useful for understanding each case (Creswell, 2013). After open coding, the researcher cycled back through data for each individual participant to collapse codes, using focused coding to develop categories (Saldaña, 2013).

For the study presented here, a second coder independently analyzed 50% of the cases focusing on codes related to classroom management. Those codes were compared to determine agreements. Disagreements were discussed to determine satisfactory agreement, and finally categories were collapsed to determine final categories/themes.

## Findings and Discussion

Findings from the broader multicase study revealed that teachers enacted a vision of anticipatory advocacy. Anticipatory advocacy includes intervening actions that are the result of a dual awareness of students' immediate and future needs and have implications beyond boundaries of time and space in an effort to positively influence students' lives in the immediate as well as distant future. The teachers, each of whom held beliefs that aligned with the culturally relevant foundations of the program prior to their selection, employed responsive classroom management, ambitious teaching strategies, and professional collaboration, tools they acquired and honed during their preparation. Those tools enabled them to experience successes that bred additional successes, strengthening their visions and protecting them from professional weathering forces (Barker, 2016). One participant, Michelle described how responsive classroom management led to layers of success,

I constantly heard that they were the worst class in the entire school, that they didn't know how to do anything, so we worked on behavior first. You know, being consistent with my rules, my classroom management, to the point where I have had people come up to me telling me now that they're the best class in the entire school. Like the music teacher, they get a sticker every single time. Little things like that, that even though they're still labeled as 'the really bad class,' people are noticing that they're not really bad, I guess. (...) So, that's one way I feel like I advocate for them is just trying to erase that label that they've been given by having people come

and see that they really are working, the conversations that they're having – just little things like that.

### **Teacher Expectations and Methods for Culturally Responsive Classroom Management**

While participants in the broader study were not asked to discuss their philosophy or approaches to classroom management as part of their visions for and enactments of advocacy for their students, classroom management themes emerged early during data collection for all four teachers. Constant comparative analysis of interviews and observations revealed that all four teachers had similar expectations for their roles as teachers that guided their actions in creating their classroom communities. Specifically, they believed: (a) Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that all students learn both academically and behaviorally; (b) Teachers have a duty to care for the whole child including their safety, basic needs, and emotional wellbeing; (c) Teachers have an obligation to advocate for their students both in the present and for the future; and (d) Relationships are instrumental to effective teaching (teacher-students, teacher-parents, students and educators working within the classroom).

In addition to holding similar expectations that influenced their classroom management, the teachers used a similar vocabulary when discussing identical methods of classroom management, the same language and methods that are characteristic of their teacher preparation classroom management methods courses. The classroom management methods that were most salient and crossed all four of the cases were: (a) classroom meetings, (b) choice words, (c) ground rules and routines, and (d) logical consequences.

**Classroom meetings.** Classroom meetings, often referred to as “morning meetings” by the participants, were times when the teachers intentionally worked on building relationships with and among their students. Jordan described how classroom meetings built relationships and supported her goals for her work,

I like to bring in things that the students kind of connect with already, whether it's from the environment or from their community – kind of bring things on their level. We always have group discussions, such as morning meetings, which I was taught when I was in the UACM [Urban Accelerated Certification and Master's] program kind of just, ‘How are your days going?’ We're just having a normal conversation.

Through the process of having a “normal conversation” as a classroom community, the teachers strengthened their relationships with their students and in the process communicated and modeled care and respect, nurturing an environment that encouraged students to build positive relationships with each other. Lola described how building community through classroom meetings developed healthy relationships:

You don't have to be hard in my classroom. For example, so we do morning meetings. And I have a special place in my heart for young Black men, because I feel like they're so misunderstood. Especially as they get older, they're seen as a threat kind of. You know? And you see it even perpetuated in third grade how they interact with each other. They try to be hard and, you know, whatever. But it's interesting. At the beginning of the year, we do ‘hug, handshake or high-five,’ which is like a morning meeting activity. And they greet each other, and they get to choose which one that they want. So, in the beginning it's always like handshake, high-five. And now towards the end of the year it's like, ‘I want a hug.’ So, they

hug each other. So just, again, allowing them to have that emotional space to kind of be themselves, and it's okay, you know?

Conducting daily classroom meetings was one method the teachers brought from their preparation program that supported their enactment of their core beliefs related to culturally responsive classroom management. Classroom meetings were opportune times for the teachers to incorporate another classroom management tool, and that is language as described in Peter Johnston's (2004) *Choice Words: How our language affects children's learning*, that positively supports student success.

**Choice words.** Johnston (2004) argued that talk is the central tool of a teacher's trade, an action that positions children in relation to each other and within their worlds. Language was an essential tool for the teachers in this study. They used their words to build relationships and to demand academic and behavioral excellence. They were outspoken advocates for their students' safety, basic needs, and emotional wellbeing. They described their acts of advocacy as powerful both for the present and for the future. Susie explained the power she felt as a teacher:

I think about that every day, how much power and influence I have over them, and I think a lot of people in teaching just don't realize that, or don't know it. They must not, based on some of the ways they talk to kids, because if you did—

I just feel like as a teacher, especially in elementary school, you have such power to shape the way kids think about themselves. And I can either be a negative influence or try not to be an influence – like be ambivalent or something. Or I could work to be a positive influence, and I would like to be that.

The teachers rarely directly corrected their students, but rather asked questions that gave them the power to direct their own actions. For example Jordan would say, “What am I going to tell you? Is this a third-grade line? Check yourself. Are you doing the right thing?” She explained why asking questions of her students was effective for management:

I think it contributes because they have a reminder. They do a self-check, and so you could kind of see them self-check. Or I'll compliment somebody and they'll say, ‘Oh, well, let me fix myself,’ and they'll change how they're behaving, and then kind of just having that discussion.

Susie explained her determination to equip her students and to trust them with their choices. “You are a person. You have agency in the world. You can make the change,” she explained:

Should you be okay in a not great situation? No. Some people need a little more direction on how to do that and need a little more help in their stepping stones. But this is a conversation I have a lot with my students.

**Ground rules, rituals and procedures.** Establishing mutually created ground rules was a foundational experience for the teacher candidates' in their preparation program, and this was a strategy that they implemented within their own classrooms in order to support their high expectations for student behavior and to foster trust and mutual respect. Lola described ground rules within her teacher preparation cohort, “I think the ground rules kind of set up the safety net,” she recalled. “It was not always pretty, but it was a relatively safe space. We were able to at least not be afraid to truly speak our minds. It was a foundation.” Jordan recalled that the establishment of “ground rules” during the teacher preparation program was helpful in maintaining her own beliefs. She explained:



In Maymester, we started off with creating ground rules, which I felt allowed for open conversation and respecting that everybody has their own opinion and pulling from it, and honestly, I've taken that into my teaching career as far as faculty meetings and grade-level meetings. You know, if you value everybody's opinion, maybe you can work together to come up with something. You can say it, and nobody judges you.

Carried into the classroom, establishing ground rules also worked as a safety net for the students. Lola explained:

Well, our rules in our classroom-- of course I allow them to participate in that process. I don't just say, 'Here are the rules.' It's all about us interacting with each other and with the people around us. You know, we offer it within a school. Of course we have our community, but how do we respect everyone in it and all of that?

Ground rules, routines, and procedures gave the classroom community a set of logical and clear expectations and predictable routines to follow, strengthening the students' abilities not only to make their own positive decisions, but also to support each other as a community in making good choices. Jordan explained:

You are affecting somebody else, no matter where you are. We're in a classroom full of 23 kids, so if I have to get on you for doing something, then they're not getting what they need. So kind of that [idea that we are] working together, we're all here for the same purpose. I really like them to self-reflect, and they kind of take care of each other like a family.

Ground rules and clear consistent procedures fostered trust, respect, and ultimately, success by proactively aligning the community about expectations.

**Logical Consequences.** All four teachers referenced and were observed using logical consequences as part of the classroom management approach. On occasions when students did not follow rules and classroom routines, they knew that they could expect the logical consequences of their actions rather than an arbitrary or inconsistent punishment. Michelle explained the importance of choosing consequences that make sense for occasions when students fail to keep ground rules:

It kind of goes back to being proactive instead of reactive and thinking about the things that you're doing before you do them and also having logical consequences. I mean a child using bad language, losing five minutes of recess. He probably needs those five minutes of recess as a break, so I think that is really important too.

Michelle also set up her classroom community to be logically responsive to student needs instead of deeming these behaviors as discipline issues:

But you also kind of have to choose your battles. I still have about seven boys that are really active and my expectation for them is not, you have to sit in your seat all day long. 'You can stand up. You can move around; you can do the things that you need to do.'

With the implementation of logical consequences, students had the opportunity to make conscious and logical decisions about their behavioral choices. Lola explained:

I kind of make the kids responsible for themselves. I definitely allow them to kind of help each other out, and I make it so that it's definitely logical consequences, – 'Alright guys, so if you take my time, I have a job to do, I'm going to take your time

later. There's going to be something that you want to do that you're going to have to wait on, because we have to get this lesson done.' But, I also make it so that they're responsible for each other, because they know very well what they're supposed to be doing. 'So if you see your folks, someone that you know, one of your friends cutting up, you might want to help them out, because, otherwise, you're going to have to reap the consequences for that as well.'

Consistent and logical consequences based on ground rules that the classroom community had created set the stage for the teachers' students to make conscious choices and to realize that they had agency within the community and more broadly in their personal lives. Autonomous thinking was a skill that fit with the high expectations the teachers held for their students. They viewed them as young people who would one day become adults with serious life choices to make for themselves and their families. Lola explained the importance of developing agency within her students:

That's why I'm such a big proponent of autonomy, because if you have the ability to think for yourself, that can totally influence so many other parts of your life. So, if you are constantly thinking, 'Well, do I agree with what's going on? Do I disagree with what's going on? Why do I not agree with this?' Whether they're out socially or whatever, it can totally help them just kind of adjust to society and do what they need to do. Maybe not just become a drone, but – Be a leader.

Logical consequences followed ground rules created by the classroom community and consistent routines and procedures to set up an environment where students could be successful and fairly autonomous in their school environment.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

The teachers in this study credited their teacher preparation program for giving them the tools they needed to enact their visions for advocacy within their work. They enacted a vision of anticipatory advocacy in order to positively influence their students' lives in the present and in the future. In the process, their actions produced success for themselves and for their students, and they also served as a powerful defense mechanism that shielded them from professional weathering forces, protecting and further strengthening their core beliefs (Hammerness, 2006). Culturally responsive classroom management was one tool acquired during their preparation that supported their efforts to build relationships, to foster academic and behavioral excellence, to care and advocate for their students' safety, basic needs and emotional wellbeing and to advocate for them both in the present and for the future.

Although all four teachers had different personalities, they had similar core beliefs and expectations that guided their similar classroom management methods. While there is evidence that their core beliefs, to some level, predated their participation in the certification program, the certification program appeared to give the teachers common vocabulary, theories, and methods to implement culturally responsive classroom management, which in turn strengthened their core beliefs, fostered successful student outcomes, and bolstered their commitments to their urban school contexts. Research, such as presented here, reveals important connections between teacher preparation and effective teaching in urban high-poverty schools, which has practical implications for all stakeholders concerned with this population of students and families.

## References

- Acosta, M. M. (2015). "No time for messin' around!" Understanding Black educator urgency: Implications for the preparation of urban educators. *Urban Education*, DOI: 0042085915613545.
- Barker, K.S. (2016). "'More than just a teacher': Anticipatory advocacy as vision and defense in urban high-need schools." (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Georgia State University, [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/mse\\_diss/31](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/mse_diss/31)
- Bondy, E., Ross, D., Galligane, C., & Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience: Culturally responsive classroom management and more. *Urban Education*, 42(4), 326-348.
- Brown, D. (2003). Urban teachers' use of culturally responsive management strategies. *Theory into Practice*, 42(4), 277-282.
- Clift, R. T., & Brady, P. (2005). Researching teacher education in changing times: Politics and paradigms. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education* (pp. 309-424). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (1991) Learning to Teach against the Grain. *Harvard Educational Review* 61(3), 279-311.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed.). Los Angeles : SAGE Publications.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Hammerness, K. (2006). *Seeing through teachers' eyes: Professional ideals and classroom practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hickey, D. T., & Schafer, N. J. (2006). Sociocultural, knowledge-centered views of classroom management. *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, & contemporary issues*. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Johnston, P. (2004). *Choice Words: How our language affects children's learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
- Lampert, M., & Graziani, F. (2009). Instructional activities as a tool for teachers' and teacher educators' learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 109(5), 491-509.
- Martin, S. (2004). Finding balance: impact of classroom management conceptions on developing teacher practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(5), 405-422.
- Melnick, S. A., & Meister, D. G. (2008). A comparison of beginning and experienced teachers' concerns. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 31(3), 39-56.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Milner, H. R., & Tenore, F. B. (2010). Classroom management in diverse classrooms. *Urban Education*, 45(5), 560-603.

- Morrison, B., & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative justice: Pedagogy, praxis, and discipline. *Journal of School Violence, 11*(2), 138-155.  
doi:10.1080/15388220.2011.653322
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). Schools, prisons, and social implications of punishment: Rethinking disciplinary practices. *Theory into Practice, 42*(4), 341-350.
- O'Neill, S. & Stephenson, J. (2012). Does classroom management coursework influence pre-service teachers' perceived preparedness or confidence? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(8), 1131-1143.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. (2nd ed). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Skiba, R., Ormiston, H., Martinez, S., & Cummings, J. (2016). Teaching the social curriculum: Classroom management as behavioral instruction. *Theory Into Practice, 55*(2), 120-128.  
doi:10.1080/00405841.2016.1148990
- Sleeter, C. E., & Owuor, J. (2011). Research on the impact of teacher preparation to teach diverse students: The research we have and the research we need. *Action in Teacher Education, 33*(5/6), 524-536.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stronge, J. H., Ward, T. J., & Grant, L. W. (2011). What makes good teachers good?: A cross-case analysis of the connection between teacher effectiveness and student achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62*(4), 339-355.
- Weiner, L. (2003). Why is classroom management so vexing to urban teachers? *Theory into Practice, 42* (4), 305-312.
- Weinstein, C., Curran, M., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (2004). Culturally responsive classroom management: Awareness into action. *Theory into Practice, 42*(4), 269-276.

## **Investigating the Impact of Lesson Study and Pedagogical Content Knowledge on Mathematics Teaching Practices of Minority Pre-Service Teachers**

**Rupam Saran**

*Medgar Evers College, CUNY*

### **Abstract**

Contextualized in an urban college's teacher education program and its partnership inner-city elementary schools, this qualitative study explores the impact of lesson study on the emergence of a stronger pedagogical content knowledge on mathematics teaching practices of minority preservice teachers. Aiming to raise the mathematics achievement of K-6 students by increasing the effectiveness of preservice teacher candidates, this study focuses on developing and deepening 11 prospective teachers' mathematics pedagogical content knowledge by requiring them to analyze their students' mathematics work samples and study the effectiveness of their own teaching practices during their clinical-practice/student teaching year. Findings reveal that participant preservice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge benefited with lesson study. By using the lesson study approach, they were able to change their mathematical identities and beliefs about teaching mathematics in positive ways and become more effective in teaching mathematics. Implications for urban preservice teacher education programs are discussed.

*Keywords:* Lesson study, pedagogical content knowledge, mathematics identity, pre-service teachers

### **Introduction**

This study focuses on developing and deepening 11 prospective teachers' mathematics pedagogical content knowledge by requiring them to analyze their students' mathematics work samples and study the effectiveness of their own teaching practices during their clinical-practice/student teaching year. In this study, minority students are defined as first-generation-college-going immigrant or non-immigrant non-White students of lower socioeconomic background, who finished their high school either outside of the U.S. or in inner-city U.S.-schools that followed traditional mathematics curricula and teacher-centered mathematics teaching strategies. Most policy makers and scholars in mathematics education stress that teachers' effectiveness is very much mediated by their beliefs, perceptions, and the way they learn mathematics (Ball, Lubinsky, & Mewborn, 2001; Bray, 2011, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Frank, Fennema, & Carpenter, 1997, NCTM 2007). In order to increase teachers' effectiveness and students' outcomes, teacher education programs should focus on preparing teachers who have profound knowledge of reform-based mathematics content and "knowledge of students' mathematical thinking and learning" (Hill, Ball & Schilling, 2008, p.373).

To support reform-based mathematics, it is essential that teacher education programs have a deep understanding of how teachers' beliefs, pedagogical and content knowledge, and teaching practices are related (Ball et al. 2001; Bray, 2011, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond 2006; Frank et al. 1997). Battista (1994) asserts that in mathematics education,

changing teachers' traditional beliefs and practices is crucial to the success of reform efforts. In a study on mathematics' teaching practices, Goldhaber (2006) concluded that what teachers learn in education method courses is fundamental to their teaching practices, effectiveness in the classroom, and their Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). The National Academy report on higher educational outcomes emphasizes that effective teachers with a higher level of PCK are successful in raising students' achievement (Hill et al. 2008). Aligned with Hill et al.'s (2008) notion on teacher effectiveness, this study argues that in addition to the subject matter knowledge, Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) need the knowledge of students' mathematical thinking and learning. By utilizing the lesson study approach, pre-service mathematics teachers develop a higher level of PCK. Thus, the questions that guided this study were:

- How does lesson study help minority PSTs teach mathematics lessons and enable them to study the effectiveness of their own teaching practices?
- How lesson study helps PSTs to develop stronger PCK?
- How higher level of PCK, a deeper mathematical understanding, and teaching strategies (learned in the mathematics methods course) enable minority PSTs to develop in-depth knowledge of the mathematical concepts they teach?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is grounded in the concept of mathematics identity (Gee, 2001; Gresalfi & Cobb, 2011; Martin, 2007; Yackel & Cobb, 1996; Taylor, Puchner, Scheibel, 2006), and the importance of beliefs and experiences (Fennema et al., 1996; Thompson, 1992). The concept of identity emphasizes that mathematics identity encompasses: (a) individual teacher's self-perception with regard to their knowledge of mathematics; (b) their confidence level to teach mathematics; and (c) a set of practices and expectations that shape individual teacher's beliefs about their mathematics teaching competencies (Gee, 2001; Gresalfi & Cobb 2011). The process of preservice teachers' mathematical identity formation is profoundly influenced by the norms, values, and practices of the specific context of their prior mathematics experiences, mathematics method course(s), and their early field experiences.

Further, it has been proposed that *racialized forms of experiences* (Oppland-Cordell, 2013, p. 91) influence the *mathematics identity* of minority teachers and minority students. Martin (2007) defines mathematics learning as "structured by the relations of race that exist in the larger society" (p.5) and mathematics identity as "the dispositions and deeply held beliefs that individuals develop about their ability to participate and perform effectively in mathematical contexts" (p. 150). Martin's mathematics identity co-construction theory examines Black PSTs' mathematics learning and racial identity construction. Since all of the participants in this study were Black (American or foreign born), it is assumed that their mathematics learning, mathematics identity, and self-perception would be influenced by their racial identity.

The co-construction theory provides explanation for negative outcomes in mathematics by highlighting factors such as cultural differences, knowledge of mathematics, problem solving skills, family's socioeconomic status, and oppositional behavior triggered by school contexts that influence mathematics achievement of African American students (Martin, 2009, 2012). The theory depicts that African American students' mathematics identity is socially constructed in the social climate that labels African American children as mathematically deficit (Ackerman, Heafner, & Bartz, 2006; Stinson, 2007; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Zilanawala, Martin,

Noguera, & Mincy, 2017). Research has identified many cognitive, non-cognitive, institutional, and structural factors that influence the nature of participation and socialization and the mathematics performance and achievement of Black children (Berry, 2008; Martin, 2007; Terry, 2010; Jackson, 2009; Oppland-Cordell, 2013). For instance, negative social realities and the ideology of Black inferiority (Martin, 2009a, 2009b; Jackson 2009) influence negatively Black children's confidence in mathematics learning. The influence of Black inferiority ideology is often evident in classrooms impacting mathematics achievement and performance. In sum, it can be proposed that mathematics identity construction is not only mediated by performance in mathematics, but rather it is deeply influenced by society's perception and stereotyping of minority students' mathematics competencies.

### **Conceptualization of Lesson Study**

Among mathematics education researchers, the widespread belief is that PCK contributes to effective mathematics teaching and students' mathematics learning in the classroom (Abell, 2007; Akerson et al. 2017; Bausmith & Barry, 2011; Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, & Carey, 1988; Van Driel & Barry, 2012; Hashweh, 2005; Hill et al. 2008; Tröbst, et al. 2018). PCK is defined as "teachers' combined knowledge of content and their students' learning" (Hill et al. 2008, p. 373). Effective teachers possess mathematics teaching methodology and exclusive knowledge of their students' mathematical thinking, conceptual and procedural understanding, and competencies. The research by Hill et al. (2008) stresses that effective teachers have knowledge of the mathematical concepts they teach and understanding of how students learn and know mathematics. At the same time, PSTs understand how PCK is related to students' mathematics achievement and performance (Hill et al. 2008). The insights into students' understanding of mathematics provide a significant foundation for PSTs' PCK. Teacher education programs that concentrate on the development of PCK by teaching PSTs to investigate students' mathematics learning practices analyze their students' misconceptions and misunderstandings of mathematical concepts, produce effective mathematics teachers, and improved students' mathematics achievements.

Lesson study provides opportunities for preservice teachers to examine their teaching practices and understand their strengths and areas that need improvement (Taylor et al., 2006). The lesson study inquiry involves systematic, intentional study of one's own professional practices (Puchner, & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al. 2006). It follows a collaborative framework in which cooperating/mentor teachers, PSTs, and the college supervisor work together to plan lessons and units of study. It is a type of teacher action research that allows PSTs to examine their own teaching strategies, their students' understanding, and consequently improve their mathematics teaching practices. Accordingly, teachers identify a problem, design the research project, collect and analyze data, and change their teaching practices based on their findings (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Taylor et al. 2006). The most salient feature of lesson study is collaboration. The participating teachers collaborate to design and plan the lesson. In this study, the PSTs were involved in the lesson study process that provided them opportunities to understand and examine their teaching skills and practices, and based on the insights gained through this examination, to improve their teaching practices and teaching methodology.

## Methods

The study was conducted in a large Northeastern urban city. The Brown College (pseudonym) is a part of a large urban university. The college educates and prepares preservice teachers to teach racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse students in urban communities. The study specifics included:

- *Research schedule and timeline:* The timeline for this research was two semesters of clinical practice in two elementary school classrooms. The grades ranged from first to fifth. The grade level of the PSTs was determined by the college's clinical practice supervisor.
- *Research sites:* Brown College's partner schools in urban neighborhoods. All partner schools were within the vicinity of five miles of the college. These schools were situated in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods with high unemployment rates. On the average, 80-90 percent of the students in these schools qualified for free lunch.
- *Participants:* Out of eleven participants, there were nine female and two male participants. All participants were of Black heritage. Ten participants had emigrated to the U.S. from the Caribbean Islands of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana. Only one participant was from South Carolina, United States. The participants were enrolled at the Elementary Education Teacher Preparation Program at Brown and completed their student teaching practices requirement at the college's partner schools.
- *Curriculum Focus:* PSTs were expected to use reform-based mathematics curriculum (NCTM, 2007), the Common Core mathematics standards, and quality mathematical activities.
- *Instructional Methodology:* PSTs were supposed to follow the Concrete- Pictorial-Abstract (CPA) methodology (Bruner, 1966). According to Bruner (1966) there are three stages of cognitive development: the concrete, the pictorial, and the abstract stages. It is proposed that children learn best by constructing their own knowledge through concrete-pictorial-abstract activities that include three stages of learning: *enactive*, *iconic*, and *symbolic*. The *enactive* representation stresses that children learn associating the concrete experiences with past experiences. The *iconic* representation is comprised of mental and visual images of an activity. Finally, the *symbolic* representation is the final stage of mathematics learning. At this stage, individuals connect the mathematical concepts with symbols or language (Bruner, 1966).

## Data Sources and Data Collection

The qualitative data for this study comprised of lesson study, reflective journals, field notes of informal interviews, pre and post surveys of PSTs perception/beliefs of their mathematics teaching, and re-teaching lessons. PSTs worked with cooperating teachers to plan a unit of study, taught the lesson while collecting data on student learning (the research lesson), discussed and revised the lesson (debriefing), and re-taught the lesson with the modifications that were made based on the findings from the prior research lesson. The researcher examined PSTs perceptions about their classroom environment and experiences and its impact on their self-efficacy toward mathematics, and development of PCK through lesson study.



PSTs constructed two mathematics units consisting of six lessons each were designed and enacted each semester. They developed a rubric for each lesson. More specifically, the pre-service teacher participants:

- Developed a formative assessment to assess students' conceptual understanding, computational and procedural fluency, mathematical reasoning, and problem-solving skills.
- Defined the evaluation criteria they would use to analyze student learning related to the mathematical understanding described above.
- Collected student work from the selected assessment and analyzed students' mathematics learning practices, mathematical errors, confusions, and partial understandings learning in graphic (chart or table) or narrative form to identify patterns of learning.
- Selected and submitted 5 work samples that demonstrated an area of struggle identified in their analysis and analyze the errors or misconceptions related to the struggle.
- Designed and taught a re-teaching lesson based on the targeted learning objective/goal and to teach 5 focus students during one-on-one, and small group implementation.
- Analyzed the effectiveness of the strategies they used during the re-teaching lesson to develop students' mathematical understanding misconception(s) in relation to the identified areas of struggle.
- Wrote reflective essays evaluating and reflecting on the effectiveness of their teaching practices and its impact on students' learning. The reflective essays were an essential part of this study. The PSTs reflected on their teaching practices and wrote their reflective thoughts on their teaching methods and children's mathematics learning. To write realistic reflections and correct conclusions, PSTs observed their students' mathematics learning, responses, and class work. In their reflective essays, PSTs were required to analyze their students' work. Often in the classroom settings, teachers tend to treat their lesson through teachers' perspective and interpretations (Fernandez, Cannon, & Chokshi, 2003) not from students' perspective. In order to honor students' perspectives, PSTs reflected on their lessons and methods of instruction through their students' perspective (Fernandez et al. 2003). The discussions of reflective thoughts, reflections, and students work analysis provided PSTs opportunities to examine strength and areas of improvement of their mathematics teaching.

### **Data Analysis**

Following the qualitative research design (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), the analysis of qualitative data began as soon as it was collected. Data was analyzed utilizing Grounded Theory (Strauss, 1987) where theorizing grows from the data rather than from a pre-existing framework used to confirm or disconfirm a theory. Through document analysis of reflective narratives, surveys, transcripts of informal interviews, re-teaching lessons, lesson study, pre and post surveys of PSTs perceptions and beliefs, and field notes, codes were developed based on categories which emerged within mathematics identities, conceptions of the nature of mathematics, and best practices in mathematics teaching and learning. The video analysis enabled PSTs to compare the

salient features of the teaching practices from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, a framework of prolonged engagement, member checking, and triangulation of data from multiple sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) was followed. The member-checking process provides opportunities to verify data with participants who provided them (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Member checking guaranteed that the PSTs' opinions and experiences were truthfully recorded at all times and especially at the close of the research study (Stringer, 2004). During the collection and analysis period, participants were asked to verify their responses for accuracy and consistency between what was recorded and what was intended to communicate, correct errors, and confirm data and judge the adequacy of their responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher was with the participants for one academic year, which provided opportunities to build rapport and establish trust with participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

### **Results and Discussion**

The pre-surveys from the beginning of the study revealed that PSTs' negative belief and perception of their abilities was a manifestation of prior socializing experiences in mathematics contexts. Out of eleven PSTs, ten responded that they did not like mathematics, lacked confidence in teaching mathematics, and possessed very low motivations and rationales for teaching mathematics. All PSTs, except one, voiced the lower expectations for their performance in mathematics teaching. In the beginning of the study, PSTs started with a shared assumption about their mathematical literacy, negative identity, and lower agency. These ideas surfaced in reflective thoughts and informal interviews where PSTs expressed views on the relationship between mathematics performance and Blackness, which were appropriated from their prior experiences in mathematics context. The results support Martin's (2012) assertions that Black individuals' negative self-perceptions and mathematics identities are shaped by deficit ideologies and racial stereotypes.

However, findings revealed that most of the minority preservice teachers who participated in this study changed their mathematical identities and beliefs about teaching mathematics in positive ways and developed motivation to teach mathematics. The main ways in which change occurred are discussed below.

#### **Impact of Lesson Study on PSTs' PCK, Ability to Analyze Students' Mathematics Work and Their Effectiveness in Teaching Mathematics Lessons**

The qualitative data of this study such as reflective narratives, surveys, re-teaching lessons, lesson study, and field notes, demonstrated that lesson study helped and provided support to the 11 minority PSTs to teach and re-teach the same lesson. After collecting data and assessing their students' learning and gaining knowledge of their students' mathematical thinking, PSTs developed a higher level of PCK. After debriefing with cooperating and mentor teachers, a college supervisor, and analyzing personal reflections, PSTs found the lesson study method valuable. They mentioned that the input and examples of teaching practices from cooperating teachers and the college supervisor served as a major resource for them and contributed to the development of PCK and mathematics identity.

The lesson study provided them with insights into their students' misconceptions and misunderstandings of mathematical concepts, which caused their students' mathematics errors.

Most of the PSTs did not want their lessons to be “bombed” (failed) and tried to take preventive measures to avoid “bomb” (Taylor et al. 2006, p. 193; Van de Walle, 2007, p. 57) situations. At the same time, they discovered the benefits of collaboration for the success of their lessons. These findings are exemplified as PSTs shared their reflections:

Back home (Jamaica) we learned fractions, but I did not get it and I hated fractions. The first time I taught the lesson they did not get it and the lesson was “bombed” [Failed]. I collected their work to learn from their mistakes what I needed to work on. When I analyzed their work many things [mathematical concepts] became clearer to me. The re-teaching lesson was a success ... they got it. I think a good lesson plan has less chance to be “bombed.” (Sharifa, female PST, second semester of Clinical Practice).

The collaborative experiences boosted moral and motivated her to teach mathematics with ease and confidence. Sharifa acknowledged that the collaborative nature of the lesson study was a source of emotional support for her. She shared her teaching experiences and revealed that the lesson study process helped her prepare for teaching future lessons. With the lesson study process, she became aware of the benefits of collaboration, in-depth lesson preparation, discussion of unforeseen classroom situations, and many other elements that can save a lesson from being “bombed.”

What follows is another example in which a participant, Lucinda, emphasized on the importance of good planning and the benefit of prior knowledge:

Before teaching my first lesson I thought that making a re-teaching lesson and rubric would be very hard. But I realized that we did students’ work analysis in our math course and learned to make rubrics... [the] problem was making a “good lesson. I had to work with my cooperating teacher, other student teachers and my professor. The first time ...I did not do good planning. The book I used to introduce the concept was not a very good book (the ebook did not work) and I needed to make more charts... I did better next time. (Lucinda, female PST, first semester of Clinical Practice).

Lucinda reflected on the collaborative aspect of the lesson study and the importance of detailed lesson planning in enactment of the lesson. She mentioned that better planning and collaboration helped her create a sound and detailed lesson plan, improved her instructional practices, and increased her teaching effectiveness.

Overall, the participants reported that the lesson study was very helpful in the preparation and enactment of their lessons and that the strategies learned in the mathematics method course enabled them to teach mathematics successfully. The application of mathematics teaching strategies, such as, problem-analysis skills, selecting various problem-solving strategies appropriately, assessing and justifying the validity of answers, and helping students learn by generalizing the problem, provided them with in-depth knowledge of how the subject matter they teach is connected to children's mathematical thinking. They developed higher level of PCK by analyzing children’s mathematics understanding and errors, and developing and re-teaching lessons. Most of the PSTs examined their students’ work by using analysis skills, such as, integrating writing in math, conferencing, initiating dialogue, and using a rubric, among other methods that they had learned in their math method class. Although in the initial stage of their clinical practice, they had problems in providing explanation for their students’ mathematical errors and did not have a sense of why those errors occurred, this changed as they gained experience by doing many sample work analyses through lesson study.

## Impact of PCK, Mathematical Understanding, and Reflective Thoughts on Minority PSTs' Teaching Practices

**Initial learning of pedagogical content knowledge: First semester of clinical practice (student teaching).** The data suggested that during the first semester of Clinical Practice PSTs' PCK was at an early developmental stage. Although they learned methodology of how to teach mathematics, their PCK was challenged by the real-life situations of the classroom, such as, classroom management issues, the cultural and linguistic dynamics of the classroom, the curriculum, testing challenges, and their own limited PCK. While they were learning to navigate day-to-day classroom discourses and teaching dilemmas, their PCK was developing. Rabina, a first semester Clinical Practice PST possessed stronger subject matter but her knowledge of "how students learn the content" (Hill et al. 2008) was weaker. She had to learn more about her students' mathematics learning practices, teaching mathematics through problem-solving, and teaching reform-oriented mathematics. Rabina shared her frustration about her own teaching ineffectiveness: "Math is my concentration area. I can do Calculus. I get good grades in mathematics but I am not sure why I had a hard time teaching base ten to third graders? What is the problem?" Rabina had strong mathematics content knowledge but her pedagogical content knowledge needed improvement; she had to acquire knowledge of her students and how students learn mathematics. She added, "In my math methods course I was very confident that I will have no problem in student teaching because I know my math, I was wrong. I was not serious in that class." Rabina realized that her content knowledge alone was not enough to become an effective math teacher; she had to learn how to teach math.

Sabrina admitted that her lower level of mathematics content knowledge, and PCK affected the success of her place-value lesson. However, her statement "My re-teaching lesson went well" is indicative of the development of PCK from which to build in the second semester of Clinical Practice. She continued:

I thought strategies like counting by ones, counting by groups with sticks and plastic cubes in class was too easy activity but now I know they are important strategies to introduce place-value. I always thought that place value is a very easy topic to teach and learn but this is not easy ...this is a hard topic to teach. (Sabrina, First Year PST)

**The second semester of clinical practice: Strengthening of pedagogical content knowledge:** Sharifa's experiences of teaching fractions demonstrate the impact of PCK on teaching practices. Although she came to the methods class with fear of fractions, gradually she gained the conceptual and procedural knowledge of fractions. However, the first time she taught fractions she failed to apply the knowledge gained in her methods course. This changed in the second semester, when she was able to strengthen the content knowledge of fractions, and the knowledge of how students learn fractions, and what strategies are useful to teach the content. She shared:

Comparing last semester this time (second semester) I did good on fractions. I can explain better why we need to get common denominator or doing problems with mixed numbers. Teaching adding or subtracting fractions are easy for me to teach following the way we learned to teach in college. When we learned fractions in my country it was only rules of doing fractions the concept was not explained ... (Sharifa, second semester of Clinical Practice)

The PSTs shared their ease in teaching the specialized topics and their higher confidence level in teaching mathematics. They became better in interpreting their students' work, detecting reasons for errors and conceptual misunderstanding, and identifying the root causes of the errors while understanding the students' mathematical competency according to their age and grade. Edwin, a second semester PST wrote in his reflective journal:

The second semester is easier because I know how my students learn. I find it easier to examine their work for mistakes and I can discuss their problems or mistakes better and I find easier to write about their problems. When Martha added  $35+16$  and her answer was 411, I knew how she got that answer. I have many examples like this....

### **Impact of Positive Mathematics Identity on Mathematics Teaching Practices**

By the end of their Clinical Practice, the majority of the PSTs confirmed a positive change in their mathematics identity. They shared that their lower mathematics teaching confidence was the manifestation of inadequate elementary and high school mathematics preparations. They believed that they were much more confident in teaching mathematics because they had not only refreshed their knowledge of elementary mathematics but had also experienced how much it could be relatable to and useful in their real lives. The PSTs also felt more comfortable and confident because they now had a deeper understanding of the conceptual processes rather than mere procedural knowledge through lesson study and sustained reflection. In conversations with the College Supervisor, two PSTs noted:

Now teaching math is easy to me... Discussing math lessons before teaching is helpful. It clears problem spots in lessons...I know what to do...no problems (Sabrina, female PST, first semester of Clinical Practice).

I am teaching them about "time" so I have to give examples to make them understand time... In Guyana our math classes were different. You do not want me to teach math like that... I never liked math but I think I can teach math. They understand it when I teach math (Ustfa, pseudonym, Male PST, second semester of Clinical Practice).

While teaching through lesson study, PSTs were able to see improvement in their students' mathematics understanding. At the same time, their negative perception of their mathematics ability was gradually fading. They were afforded with opportunities to analyze their students' mathematics work samples and study the effectiveness of their own teaching practices of mathematics literacy. Consequently, the PSTs felt more comfortable and confident because they could analyze and modify their own teaching practices. The feelings echoed by the majority of PSTs were that, during their clinical practice, they realized how valuable using manipulatives and concrete-to-pictorial methods (in which individuals learn by working with physical materials) are to teach mathematics.

Edwin, one of the PSTs shared his experiences:

In my class all Asians were very good in math and we were (non-Asians) slow in math. I thought math was [an] Asian thing. Now I like to teach hands-on math. I think I am good at teaching math to young children (Edwin, male PST, first semester of Clinical Practice).

Edwin's early mathematics experiences speak of racialized mathematics experiences and how he constructed his mathematical identity. However, his mathematics methods course and Clinical Practice experiences resulted to a change in his preconceived dispositions and beliefs, as he recognized his evolving mathematics competencies.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

The pedagogical content knowledge comprises of the knowledge of how students learn, what misunderstandings and misconceptions negate or facilitate students' mathematics learning, and the insights of a specific subject matter or topic. The development of PCK is an integral part of PSTs awareness of their teaching practices. The lesson study approach provided teachers with specific input, opportunities to enact certain instructional strategies, chances to reteach a lesson, and time to reflect, individually and collectively, on their mathematics teaching experiences. All participants reflected upon their pedagogical experiences and instructional strategies and were able to identify why their lessons were unsuccessful. By teaching one topic and one lesson over and over, PSTs acquired a myriad of teaching practices that contributed to their PCK. Many participant PSTs shared that by analyzing their students' mathematical errors they became familiar with the logic and thinking behind students' errors. In doing, they developed a better ability to identify, recognize, and interpret students' mathematical errors. With the insight into students' mathematics learning and errors, PSTs developed abilities to design better lesson plans. At the same time, they gained confidence in teaching mathematics. The PSTs benefited with lesson study and developed stronger PCK, which shifted their negative mathematics teaching beliefs into positive ones. The positive beliefs can improve their effectiveness in teaching mathematics and set them on more positive teaching journeys when they enter their own classrooms in predominantly urban areas. These positive shifts in beliefs and competence can likely translate into more positive experiences for Black students as they will not perpetuate a negative cycle of mathematics affect. With this shift in beliefs, they are also better able to develop confident mathematics identities and can become autonomous mathematics teachers.

In urban schools, the influence of Black inferiority ideology (Martin, 2012) is often evident in classroom mathematics learning and mathematics performance. Mathematics identity construction is not only mediated by performance in mathematics, it is also deeply influenced by society's perception and stereotyping of students' mathematics competencies. This study can inform practices in urban teacher education programs by its emphasis on the importance of self-analysis and reflection. With these practices, preservice teachers are more likely to develop PCK and positive identity, which can potentially transform into increasing student mathematics achievement in urban settings. With these practices, minority PSTs are more likely to look beyond their racial experiences in mathematics, which could translate into them becoming effective teachers, meeting the expectations, and increasing student mathematics outcomes in urban settings. Finally, the study could inform future research that focuses on the use of lesson study for enhancing PSTs' PCK and their effectiveness in teaching mathematics.

Funding: This study was supported by The PSC-CUNY 2014-2015 Research Award # 67325-00 45. The City University of New York IRB is cleared.

## References

- Ackerman, T., Heafner, T., & Bartz, D. (2006). *Teacher effect model for impacting student achievement*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Akerson, V.L.; Pongsanon, K.; Rogers, M. A. P.; Carter, I.; Galindo, E. (2017). Exploring the Use of Lesson Study to Develop Elementary Preservice Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge for Teaching Nature of Science. *International Journal of Science and mathematics*. 15(2) pp 293-312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10763-015-9690-x>
- Abell, S. K. (2007). *Research on science teacher knowledge*. In S. Abell & N. Lederman (Eds.), *Handbook of research on science education* (pp. 105- 149). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ball, D.L., Lubinski, S.T., & Mewborn, D.S. (2001). Research on teaching mathematics: The unsolved problem of teachers' mathematical knowledge. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 433-456). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Battista, M. (1994). Teacher beliefs and the reform movement in mathematics education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(6), 462-470.
- Bausmith, J. M., & Barry, C. (2011). Revisiting professional learning communities to increase college readiness: The importance of pedagogical content knowledge. *Educational Researcher*, 40, 175-178.
- Berry, R. Q. (2008). Access to upper-level mathematics: The stories of African American middle school boys who are successful with school mathematics. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 39(5), 464-488.
- Bray, W.S. (2011). A collective case study of the influence of teachers' beliefs and knowledge on error-handling practices during class discussion of mathematics. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 42(1), 2-38.
- Brown, A. (1992). Design-experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in creating complex interventions in classroom settings. *Journal of Learning Science*, 2(2), 141-178.
- Bruner, J.S. (1966). *Towards a theory of instruction*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Calderhead, J. (1996). Teachers: Belief and knowledge. In D.C. Berliner & R.C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology*, (pp. 709-725). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Carpenter, T.P., Fennema, E., Peterson, P.L., & Carey, D.A. (1988). Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of students' problem solving in elementary arithmetic. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 19(5), 29-37.
- Cobb, P., Stephan, M., McClain, K., & Gravemeijer, K. (2001). Participating in classroom mathematical practices. *The Journal of Learning Sciences*, 10(1), 113-164.
- Dana, N.F., & Yendol-Silva, D. (2003). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 21.
- Darling-Hammond, L. and Bransford, J. (Eds.) (2005). *Preparing Teachers for a Changing*

- World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*. National Academy of Education, Committee on Teacher Education. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc., 12. Retrieved from <http://www.josseybass.com>
- Fennema, E., Carpenter, T. P., Franke, M. L., Levi, L., Jacobs, V.R., & Empson, S.B. (1996). A longitudinal study of learning to use children's thinking in mathematics instruction. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 27(4), 403-434.
- Fernandez, C., Cannon, J., & Chokshi, S. (2003). A U.S.-Japan lesson study collaboration reveals critical lenses for examining practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19 (2), 171-185.
- Franke, M.L., Fennema, E., & Carpenter, T. P. (1997). Changing teachers: Interactions between beliefs and classroom practice. In E. Fennema & B.S. Nelson (Eds.), *Mathematics teachers in transition* (pp. 255-282). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gee, J. P. (2001). Identity as analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25(1), 99-125.
- Goldhaber, D. *Everybody's doing it, but what does teacher testing tell us about teacher effectiveness?* <http://www.crpe.org>. Center on Reinventing Public Education. Paper presented at the AERA annual meeting April 4, 2006, 31.
- Gresalfi, M. S., & Cobb, P. (2011). Negotiating identities for mathematics teaching in the context of professional development. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 42(3), 270-304.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln Y.S.(1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. California: Sage Publication, Inc.
- Hashweh, M. (2005). Teacher pedagogical constructions: A reconfiguration of pedagogical content knowledge. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 11, 273-292.
- Hill, H. C.; Ball D. L.; and Schilling, S.G., (2008). Unpacking pedagogical content knowledge: Conceptualizing and measuring teachers' topic-specific knowledge of students. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 39(4), 372-400. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40539304>
- Jackson, K. (2009). The social construction of youth and mathematics: The case of a fifth grade classroom. In D. B. Martin (Ed.), *Mathematics teaching, learning, and liberation in the lives of Black children* (pp. 175-199). New York: Routledge.
- Martin, D. (2007). Mathematics learning and participation in African American context: The co-construction of identity in two intersecting realms of experience. In N. Nasir & P. Cobb (Eds.), *Diversity, equity, and access to mathematical ideas* (pp.146-158). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Martin, D. (2009a). Researching race in mathematics education. *Teachers College Record*, 111(2), 295-338.
- Martin, D. (2009b). *Mathematics teaching, learning, and liberation in the lives of Black children*. London. UK: Routledge.
- Martin, D. (2012). Learning mathematics while black. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*. 26(1/2) 47-66.
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2007). *Mathematics teaching today*. Reston, VA: NCTM.
- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1),59– 68.



- Oppland-Cordell, S. (2013). Mathematical and racial identity co-construction in multiple sociopolitical contexts: A case study of a Latina undergraduate student from an urban community. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching and Research*, 9, 89-99.
- Puchner, L. D., & Taylor, A. R. (2006). Lesson Study, collaboration and teacher efficacy: stories from two school-based math Lesson Study groups. *Teaching & Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 22(7) 922- 934.
- Stinson, D. W. (2007). African American Male Adolescents, Schooling (and Mathematics): Deficiency, Rejection, and Achievement, 76 (4), 477-506  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543076004477>
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Stringer, E. T. (2004). *Action research in education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Taylor, A.R., Puchner, L.D., Scheibel, G. (2006). Gwen's story: researching teaching with others in a lesson study transforms a beginning teacher's understanding. In Langrall, C.W. [Ed]. *Teachers engaged in research: Inquiry into mathematics classrooms in grades 3-5*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Terry, C.L. (2010). Prisons, pipelines, and the president: Developing critical math literacy through participatory action research. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 1(2), 73-104.
- Thompson, A.G. (1992). Teachers' belief and conceptions: A synthesis of research. In D. A. Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning* (pp. 127-146). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Tröbst, S., Kleickmann, T., Heinze, A., Bernholt, A., Rink, R., & Kunter, M. (2018). Teacher knowledge experiment: Testing mechanisms underlying the formation of preservice elementary school teachers' pedagogical content knowledge concerning fractions and fractional arithmetic. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/edu0000260>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2008). *Foundations of success: Final report of the national mathematics advisory panel*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Van De Walle, John A. (2007). *Elementary School Mathematics: Teaching Developmentally*, Seventh Edition, New York: Longman Publishers.
- Van Driel, J.; & Berry, A. (2012). Teacher Professional Development Focusing on Pedagogical Content Knowledge. *Educational Researcher*, 41(1) pp. 26-28. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41413082> Accessed: 05-20- 2018 13:00 UTC
- Yackel, E. & Cobb, P. (1996). Sociomathematical norms, argumentation, and autonomy in mathematics. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*. 27(4), 458-477.
- Zilanawala, A., Martin, M., Noguera, P. & Mincy, R.B., (2017) Math Achievement Trajectories Among Black Male Students in the Elementary- and Middle-School Years, *Educational Studies*, 54(2)143-164, DOI:[10.1080/00131946.2017.1369414](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2017.1369414)

## **Does Longevity Matter?: Teacher Experience and the Suspension of Black Middle School Students**

**John Andrew Williams, III**

*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

**Felicia Dangerfield Persky**

*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

**Jennifer Nicole Johnson**

*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

### **Abstract**

Decades of research have showcased the inequitable exclusion of Black students in urban middle schools via out-of-school suspensions. Black students exhibit the highest rates of suspensions when compared to their White peers according to the 2013 – 2014 Office of Civil Rights database. Urban middle school teachers are typically placed in high-stress situations, and are initially ill-prepared to manage classrooms, while their lack of experience as a teacher candidate could be exposing Black students to biased discipline practices, which may serve to reproduce societal inequities within the classroom. Although researchers have identified numerous factors which negatively impact Black students' suspension rates, this study sought to determine if there is a positive association between an increase in teachers' years of experience and lower out-of-school suspension rates for Black students in urban middle schools.

*Keywords:* Black students, teacher experience, school discipline

Since the release of the Children's Defense Fund (1975) report, scholars have attributed the inequitable suspension of Black students to teachers' deficit beliefs, antiquated and oppressive school code-of-conduct policies, lack of teacher preparation courses specializing on teachers' use of culturally responsive classroom management practices, and over militarization of schools through the increased involvement of law enforcement personnel because of the enactment of No Child Left Behind (2002) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) across the U.S. (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2013; Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004; Losen, 2013; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Researchers have argued that teachers are the critical component that can reduce how, and when Black students are referred to the office for subjective, non-violent offenses (Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000; Gregory, Clawson, Davis & Gerewitz, 2016; Monroe, 2005). How teachers perceive the actions, or inactions of their Black students plays a critical role in their ability to properly manage their classrooms; and for teachers, understanding the cultural contexts (i.e., tone, body language, and personal space) behind these actions takes years to ascertain.

The effective management of the classroom environment is often a skill which is mastered by teachers who have remained in the profession for a longer amount of time (Meister & Melnick, 2003; Yilmaz, 2004); however, the outcomes of effective classroom management can appear differently for teachers who are employed in urban middle schools. Urban middle school teachers

contend with a number of complexities (e.g., interacting and instructing students from high-poverty backgrounds, instilling culturally sustaining pedagogies without administrator and district level support, and having high levels of stress and frustration), and simultaneously they are learning how best to instruct students, who are in constant transition either into middle school or out of middle school and into high school (Albright et al., 2017). Still, researchers have found that the middle school timeframe for Black students is a hyper-critical period, as these students are exposed to higher rates of suspensions than in pre-school, elementary school, and high school (Sprague et al., 2001). To delve deeper into this pivotal academic period for Black students, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between urban middle school teachers' years of experience and the rates of suspension for Black students; to understand if out-of-school suspension rates are lower for schools whose personnel demographics include a higher percentage of veteran teachers. The implications from this study will serve to potentially impact the preparation of classroom management for teacher candidates, and teacher recruitment and retention in urban middle schools.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Middle School, Discipline, and Black Students**

Although this wide-spread issue has gained much-needed attention over the past few decades, Black students in the U.S. are still disproportionately suspended at higher rates (as much as three times as high in certain states) than their White peers (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Recent research studies have investigated further into this issue, finding that an even larger disparity exists between Black males and females; with Black female students experiencing higher rates of suspensions when compared to White females for primarily non-violent offenses like disrespect, defiance, assertiveness, and dress code violations (Blake, Butler, & Smith, 2015; Epstein, Blake, & González, 2017; Sprague et al., 2001). When exploring the reasons why this issue still prevails, researchers have pointed to oppressive school policies, culturally deficit instruction and curriculum, the lack of culturally competent courses and diverse field experiences in educator preparation programs, and teacher longevity (Fabelo et al., 2011; McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014).

As it pertains to school discipline and middle schools, research in this domain has yielded a number of interesting findings. For starters, the multiple transitions into and out of middle school (e.g., elementary school to 6th grade and 8th grade to high school) lead to an increase in assertive behaviors by students (Pennington, 2009). Maladaptive understanding of students' behaviors, by teachers and administrators have created a varied response to students' behaviors which has resulted in an increase in suspensions and expulsions in middle schools (Gottfredson, 1989). It is during the middle school years that students receive most of their disciplinary infractions (Sprague et al., 2001), which could either be a symptom of higher rates of misbehavior by Black students in urban schools, or teachers' and administrators' overreliance on exclusionary discipline interventions to correct student behavior. Disproving a previously widely held assumption that schools with a higher concentration of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, equaled higher rates of discipline infractions in urban schools, Skiba et al. (2011), utilizing a national data set determined that when socioeconomic (SES) was controlled, Black students were still the highest suspended group. Additionally, Witt (2008) analyzed federal middle school data and found that when controlled for ethnicity, Black students were just as likely to misbehave as their White peers.

When examining school discipline data for Black students at the middle school level, researchers have found similar conclusions in conjunction with possible indicators of why these disparities exist. Hilberth and Slate (2014) analyzed Texas middle school disciplinary infractions and concluded that with each grade level increase (6th, 7th, and 8th) there was an increase in the percentage of Black students receiving an out-of-school suspension in general education and in alternative education settings. Utilizing a multilevel analysis, Skiba et al. (2011) found that the beliefs and perspectives of administrators in schools may play a significant role in the inequitable dispersal of discipline rates between Black students and their peers. In addition to the administrators' beliefs, researchers have discovered that teachers and their deficit-based beliefs significantly impact the number of office referrals for Black students, which increases their risk to be suspended (Delpit, 2012; Gordon et al., 2000; Monroe, 2005; Natesan & Kieftenbeld, 2013; Weinstein, 2002). Although research has called for an increase in professional development seminars, which specifically focus on making teachers reflect on their own biases and increase their cultural competency/responsiveness towards Black students (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Natesan & Kieftenbeld, 2013; Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009), practitioners have argued that these efforts, when in isolation, are not in-depth enough to change teachers' lifelong perceptions and beliefs without teachers remaining in the profession for an extended period of time (DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Paris, 2012).

### **Middle School Teacher Longevity**

The U.S. is in the midst of a long-term shortage of teachers, with half a million teachers leaving the profession each year (Haynes, 2014). This has resulted in an increase in the number of novice teachers (0-3 years) entering the profession. While educator preparation programs across the nation have improved their efforts to recruit and matriculate teacher candidates into the profession, retention of teachers past their initial years of instruction has been impacted by states' reduction in salaries, an increased workload due to high-stakes testing, teacher burnout and absenteeism, and teacher attrition (Bayard, 2003; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2009; Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola, & Pepe, 2017; Miller, Murnane, & Willett, 2008; Tingle et al., 2012). Another issue that impacts novice teachers and their willingness to remain in the profession is classroom management, as many enter the profession unprepared to handle this aspect of their position (Meister & Melnick, 2003). Greenlee and Ogletree (1993) explored this aspect and found that the lack of classroom management skills is a major contributor to novice teachers exiting the profession. Feng (2010) found that, frequently, novice teachers in urban settings were assigned to classrooms with the most challenging children, or the highest percentages of Black students, as compared to more experienced teachers. When merging the findings from the previously alluded to studies, a pattern emerges which suggests that in urban schools, the lack of veteran teachers could hamper school-wide efforts to eliminate or reduce suspensions disparities for Black students.

### **Theoretical Framework: Social Reproduction Theory**

Social reproduction theory asserts that historical societal structures and mechanism replicate the same instances of economic inequality in the following generation (Bourdieu, 1986). One part of social reproduction theory, social capital, revolves around an individual's or groups' connection to another individual or group, which allows access to certain items (e.g., privileged

social clubs, finances, institutional rights) for their own betterment. The assertion rests on the fact that individuals in higher socioeconomic brackets have greater access to these items, and they utilize their access to maintain their stature in society or improve it. Social capital places a heavy emphasis on who a person knows, rather than the individual's own merit or acquired knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Social capital is relevant to this study because as students interact with teachers who have taught for a number of years, the students are exposed to a wider array of individuals, inside of the school, who can serve as a support system within the school. This provides a behavior outlet so that teachers can refer the student to the support system rather than to the school administrators for a possible punitive punishment.

Cultural capital is the acquisition of social assets that promote mobility in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). It is comprised of the embodied state, the objective state, and the institutionalized state. The embodied state is the knowledge that individuals acquire over time, through socialization and forms of education. These long-lasting dispositions of the mind often reproduce themselves as individuals begin to seek out additional knowledge or experiences that strengthen their embodied state. Along with the embodied state, there is the objectified state, which represents the physical items that present to society the status of a person. For example, purchasing a high-end brand computer, or having a high-end brand of clothing gives off the impression that an individual from a high SES bracket. Lastly, there is the institutionalized state which refers to the qualifications, credentials, or titles that exemplify competency and authority in society. Examples of this are college degrees, high school diplomas, vocational technology certifications, and so forth

Relating to education, which has long been held as a structure that assists students to transcend inequality, Bourdieu contends that education is actually a structural mechanism that promotes inequality through disproportionate funding for urban schools, the lack of culturally or racially affirming curriculum(s), and the increased employment of underprepared teachers in these settings (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). When viewing the issue of school discipline through this theoretical framework, one would question if the conditions (e.g., a larger population of novice teachers with limited classroom management skills) within urban schools are reproducing a segment of students who are being locked out of equitable learning environments (e.g., the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized state of cultural capital) by over relying on suspensions as behavior management interventions. Furthermore, as teachers remain in the profession longer, they are more involved with professional development training and seminars that are designed to improve their pedagogical instruction and content knowledge (Deglau & Sullivan, 2006), which are extrinsic forms of cultural capital that can benefit the academic proficiency of students in their classroom and create a new status quo of high achievement. The retention of high-quality, experienced teachers is a form of social reproduction, if they can instruct in such a manner that reduces classroom disruptions and promotes Black students' acquisition of knowledge towards the obtainment of the institutionalized and objectified state (i.e., graduating from middle school).

## **Methodology**

The aim of this research study was to examine the relationship between out-of-school suspension rates for Black students in urban middle schools and teacher longevity. Researchers contend that novice teachers enter the field without the necessary classroom management skills and are more eager to refer students to the administrator's office (Kee, 2011; Weinstein,

Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Alternatively, research suggests that teachers who have more professional years of experience, actually rely more on pedagogical and subject matter content to manage their students which reduces their need to remove students from the class (Caples & McNeese, 2010). Thus, the hypothesis for this study states:  $H_0$ : *There is no significant relationship between rates of suspensions for Black students and teachers' years of experience*; and  $H_1$ : *There is a significant relationship between rates of suspension for Black students and teachers' years of experience*.

The data utilized for this particular study was collected from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) database, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Each data set is from the 2013-2014 academic year (NCDPI, 2017; OCR, 2016). The first data set, the number of unduplicated counts of out-of-school suspensions for Black students and White students in North Carolina public middle schools, was collected from the OCR database. This study investigated middle schools from four racially diverse school districts in North Carolina, determined by which schools contained a Black student population that exceeded 50% of the total school enrollment during that academic year. A high proportionality of Black students was chosen as a filter, because it increased the chances of teachers having to discipline Black students versus students from other racial categories (i.e., White, Latinx, Asian, etc.). Of the 98 middle schools which operated during that academic year, 27 schools met the requirement. Traditionally, disparities and inequities in the U.S. schooling system have fallen along class and racial lines; thus, the higher rates of Black enrollment signal a higher possibility for these schools to exhibit characteristics of being labelled as urban (Milner, 2012). The second dataset consists of the percentage of teachers employed by years of experience (0-3 years, 4-10 years and more than 10 years), which was collected from NCDPI. NCDPI considers novice teachers to contain between 0-3 years of experience, and veteran teachers to be of the 4-10 years of experience category or the more than 10 years category.

## **Data Analysis**

Simply examining the disaggregate number of out-of-school suspension rates of Black students in isolation, only reaffirms the deficit-based theories which suggest that Black students are more prone to violence and disobedience, which is the reason why they are being removed from school. In an effort to capture a complete analysis of teachers' years of experience in conjunction with Black students' suspensions, this study utilized the relative rate index (RRI) to better understand the difference between normalizing rates of suspensions, and suspensions that are the result of fabricated conditions. The formula for RRI is:

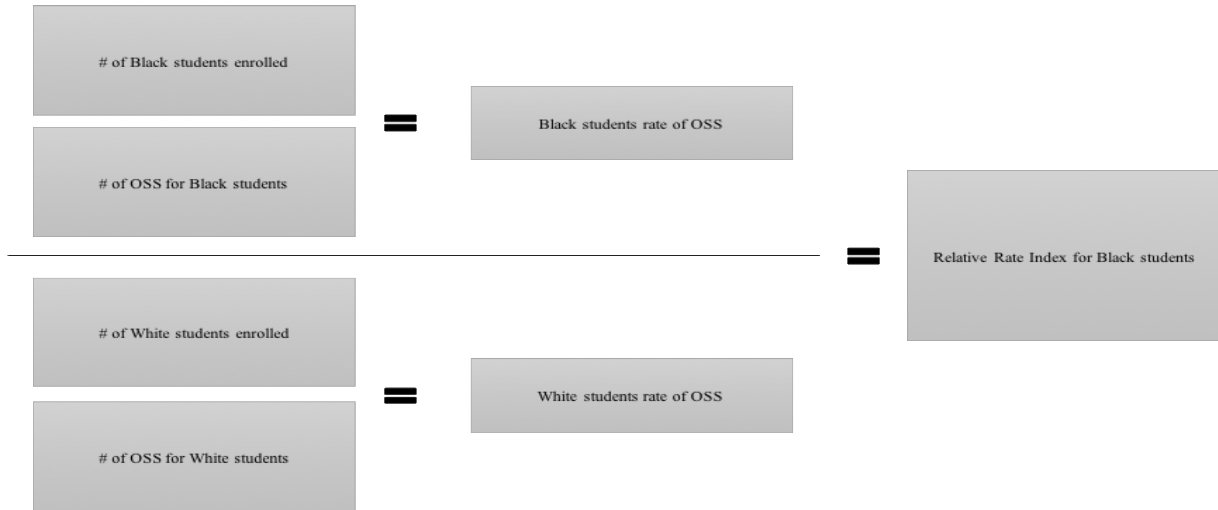


Figure 1. Relative Rate Index Formula

Ideally, finding an RRI for Black student suspensions of 1.0 would suggest that Black students are being suspended at equal rates as White students in that particular middle school. If a school received an RRI of 3, it would suggest that Black students are three times as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension. The higher the RRI, the higher the chance that what is occurring is not due to random chance, thus indicating that the result is statistically significant. A bivariate correlation (Pearson correlation) was calculated to measure the strength of linear association between the RRI for Black students out-of-school suspensions and each years of experience category. The assumption is that the smaller RRIs will be associated with schools with fewer novice teachers.

### Findings

Table 1.1: Student Enrollment by Race and Teacher Years of Experience

School	Student Enrollment			Teacher Years of Experience		
	White	Black	Black Percentage of Total Enrollment	0-3	4-10	10+
School A	69	501	0.69	0.34	0.52	0.14
School B	59	762	0.67	0.50	0.20	0.30
School C	38	613	0.57	0.43	0.18	0.38
School D	83	459	0.60	0.37	0.39	0.25
School E	38	484	0.60	0.30	0.38	0.32
School F	160	612	0.64	0.27	0.37	0.37
School G	33	815	0.73	0.41	0.27	0.32
School H	287	900	0.62	0.40	0.32	0.28
School I	61	370	0.54	0.42	0.30	0.28
School J	79	551	0.59	0.48	0.24	0.28
School K	90	357	0.60	0.07	0.53	0.40
School L	154	398	0.55	0.23	0.40	0.37
School M	68	188	0.53	0.23	0.46	0.31

School N	79	453	0.70	0.23	0.39	0.37
School O	51	399	0.76	0.26	0.34	0.40
School P	35	321	0.79	0.23	0.43	0.33
School Q	166	371	0.52	0.38	0.28	0.34
School R	55	320	0.70	0.24	0.39	0.37
School S	113	512	0.65	0.42	0.31	0.27
School T	23	434	0.62	0.23	0.48	0.29
School U	58	396	0.66	0.25	0.38	0.38
School V	26	252	0.53	0.14	0.42	0.44
School W	238	435	0.51	0.20	0.49	0.31
School X	9	586	0.78	0.19	0.38	0.43
School Y	38	314	0.67	0.15	0.51	0.33
School Z	282	692	0.52	0.27	0.43	0.30
School AA	145	539	0.54	0.17	0.52	0.30

Retrieved from North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, *Statistical Profile Race, Sex, and Grade* <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/>

Using a descriptive analysis, School P contained the largest percentage of Black students enrolled at 79%, whereas School W contained the lowest at 51%. School V exhibited the highest percentage of employees (44%) who had more than 10 years of teaching experience; whereas, School A contained the smallest percentage of teachers in this category (14%). In regards to the percentage of novice teachers employed, 50% of the teachers employed in School B were considered novice, which was the highest, and School K had the smallest percentage of novice teacher employed (.07%).

Table 2.1: *Out-of-School Suspensions by Race, and Black Student RRI for 2013-2014 Academic Year*

School	Black	White	Relative Rate Index
School A	52	5	1.432335
School B	94	7	1.039745
School C	88	22	0.247961
School D	64	4	2.893246
School E	58	16	0.284607
School F	22	4	1.437908
School G	115	10	0.465644
School H	85	7	3.872222
School I	46	13	0.583368
School J	70	2	5.018149
School K	37	5	1.865546
School L	37	10	1.431658
School M	37	10	1.338298
School N	58	19	0.532357
School O	46	7	0.839957
School P	16	13	0.134196
School Q	34	7	2.173277
School R	49	4	2.105469
School S	67	16	0.924194
School T	31	0	7.142857



School U	31	2	7.828283
School V	25	0	9.920663
School W	28	10	1.531954
School X	28	8	0.053754
School Y	25	10	0.302548
School Z	67	4	6.825867
School AA	52	4	3.497217

Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. (2016). Civil rights data collection (CRDC), 2013 to 2014 [Data set]. Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>

After calculating the RRI, Black students at School V had the highest probability of being suspended (9.9 times), and School X exhibited the lowest probability of suspending Black students (.05 times). Interestingly, School P had the highest percentage of Black student enrollment and exhibited the second lowest probability of suspending Black students (.13 times). Of the 27 schools in this sample, only nine exhibited risk ratios at or below the 1.0 threshold, which suggests that there is no disparity occurring for Black students.

Table 3.1

*Pearson Correlation Relationships Between Teachers Years of Experience and Black Students' Relative Rate Index*

Years of Experience	Relative Rate Index	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
0-3 Years	-0.170	0.289	0.11163
4-10 Years	0.146	0.382	0.09707
10+ Years	-0.161	0.328	0.0627

*Note.* Schools in the sample were (n=27). Correlations in the table indicate that there was no statistical significant relationship between the years of experience for teachers of any subgroup, and the relative rate index of Black students' out-of-school suspension.

The hypothesis for this study sought to surmise if there was a relationship between years of experience for teachers and the rates of suspensions for Black students. According to the data, teachers in the 0-3 and more than 10 years categories of experience, had a weak negative relationship with rates of suspensions ( $r^2 = -.023$ ,  $-.161$ ). However, teachers whose experience in the field placed them in the 4-10 year range, were found to have a weak positive relationship with rates of suspensions ( $r^2 = .146$ ). Still, with each data category and rates of out-of-school suspensions, there were no statistically significant relationships found. According to the data, the average percentage of teachers who are considered experienced, (i.e., having more than three years of teaching experience), was larger than the novice teacher percentage, with 0-3 years exhibiting .289%, 4-10 years showing .382% and 10 or more years being at .328%.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between teachers' years of experience and Black students' rates of suspension at urban middle schools in four racially diverse southeastern school districts. There is a possibility that urban schools who employ a larger percentage of teachers in these categories (0-3, and 10 or more years) are reproducing lower suspension rates for Black students as indicated by the weak relationship between those individual categories and rates of suspensions. The data also indicates that employing more teachers whose

experience situates them in the 4-10 years of experience category is weakly positively attributed to reproducing exclusionary discipline outcomes, such as suspension at urban middle schools. Additionally, Black students are still being suspended at higher rates when compared to their White peers in middle schools, which is consistent with studies fielded over the past 30 years (Losen, 2013; Skiba et al., 2002). Under the social reproduction theoretical lens, the characteristics that are connected with novice teachers and more experienced teachers (e.g., lack of classroom management and culturally responsive practices versus an abundance of culturally responsive practices and classroom management skills) is not translating into recognizable trends of high or low suspensions in urban middle schools. Furthermore, while no statistically significant relationship was determined between the RRI of Black students and each category of experience for teachers, the findings do require that future research must investigate what other factors are impacting rates of suspensions for Black students at the critical juncture of middle school.

Where much of the research regarding school discipline has focused on identifying factors that negatively impact Black students, there is a glimmer of positive information in this data. School P exhibited the lowest rates of suspension for Black students and was able to employ the largest percentage of teachers whose experience is 10+ years. Under the lens of social reproduction, School P has created a culture within the building that retains teachers and maximizes Black students' learning opportunities by not relying on suspensions as behavior interventions. Both of these outcomes are contrary to research (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002) that suggests that urban schools cannot keep Black students in the classroom, because school administrators are challenged with retaining high-quality, experienced teachers.

Several factors could be impacting these two aspects, such as teachers' exposure to professional development, teacher recruitment and retention strategies employed by district administrators, the type of instructional support services and resources provided, and how School P incorporates/enforces their culturally sustaining classroom management into their code-of-conduct policy. Any combination of these factors demonstrates School P's willingness not only to value the cultural capital that Black students bring to their school, but it signals their effort to strengthen the embodied state (i.e., the acquired knowledge and skills through experiences) of novice teachers by having them surrounded with veteran teachers. Moreover, future studies into different aspects of this school would explore the literacy and mathematics achievement of Black students, the rate of matriculation for Black students into secondary education environments, the characteristics of Black students transitioning into School P from elementary school, and if these factors are the result of socially equitable practices being enacted by the teaching staff.

As a whole, these urban middle schools are not a reproduction of societal structures, as the mean for years of experience favors veteran teachers, more than novice teachers. Explicating this trend through social reproduction analysis, the retention of teachers past their novice years indicates that the structure of these schools supports the development of novice teachers. Future research would require an in-depth qualitative approach that explores the experiences of veteran teachers at these schools, who remained past their initial 0-3 years.

### **Limitations**

There are a few limitations to this study. Although the sample for the study consisted of 27 schools, one limitation is the sample size of this study. Future studies, utilizing a larger sample could potentially establish an association between teachers' years of experience and rates of

suspensions for Black students in urban middle school. Also, this study analyzed schools where Black students were the majority demographic, while excluding schools that did not meet this requirement. A mixed racial composition could impact the rate of suspensions for Black students, which could produce different results as it pertains to the retention of veteran teachers. It is possible that if this study was conducted using a different metric to define urban, (e.g., the percentage of free-and-reduced lunch students, and the SES of houses in each particular zip code), that different schools would be eligible, which could alter the findings of this study. The results from this study only represent four school districts in North Carolina, which limits the ability to generalize the findings to school districts outside of these four districts, and outside of the state of North Carolina.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the reduction of suspensions for Black students in middle school continues to require affirmative solutions rooted in high performing environments. The purpose of this study was to ascertain if there was an association between teachers' years of experience and out-of-school suspension rates for Black students in urban middle schools. The findings did not identify any significant correlation between these two variables; however, one specific school did defy historical trends by employing a higher percentage of teachers who have more than 10 years of experience, and under-suspending Black students. The indications from this finding may have implications for teacher candidate education. Educator preparation programs should continue to include classroom management courses and expose teacher candidates to opportunities that allow them to practice their classroom management techniques in culturally diverse schools (Stough & Montague, 2015). Furthermore, an additional avenue that educator preparation programs can explore is the hiring of high-quality veteran teachers to serve as mentors for teacher candidates. This places teacher candidates around teachers who perpetuate a culture of inclusiveness as it pertains to classroom management, which should serve to reproduce future teachers who ascribe to this philosophy. The combination of these two items can act as a buffer, which reduces the attrition of novice teachers who often leave urban schools due to their inability to manage their classroom. Finally, the inconclusiveness of this study offers the opportunity to further investigate factors in education that affirm or negatively impact Black students in their quest to obtain equitable education opportunities in U.S. public schools.

### References

- Act, E. S. S. (2015). of 2015 . *Public Law*, (114-95), 1177.
- Albright, J. L., Safer, L. A., Sims, P. A., Tagaris, A., Glasgow, D., Sekulich, K. M., & Zaharis, M. C. (2017). What factors impact why novice middle school teachers in a large midwestern urban school district leave after their initial year of teaching. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 12(1), 53-68.
- Bayard, S. R. (2003). *A study of the relationship between teacher absenteeism, teacher attributes, school schedule and student achievement*. (Ed.D. dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text. (Publication No. AAT 3120004).
- Blake, J. J., Butler, B. R., & Smith, D. (2015). Challenging middle-class notions of femininity: The cause for Black females disproportionate suspension rates. In D. Losen (Ed.) *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Research to Practice*. New York (pp. 75-88). New York: Teacher Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. *Cultural theory: An anthology, 1*, 81-93.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Bowman-Perrott, L., Benz, M.R., Hsu, H-Y, Kwok, O-M, Eisterhold, L.A., & Zhang, D. (2013). Patterns and predictors of disciplinary exclusion over time: An analysis of the SEELS national data set. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 21*(2), 83-96. doi: 10.1177/1063426611407501
- Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., O'Brennan, L. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Multilevel exploration of factors contributing to the overrepresentation of black students in office disciplinary referrals. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(2), 508-520.
- Caples, C., & McNeese, M. N. (2010). Student Misbehavior and Teacher Persistence among Beginning and Veteran Teachers. *International Journal of Learning, 17*(6), 427-436.
- Children's Defense Fund. (1975). *School suspensions: Are they helping children?* Cambridge, MA: Washington Research Project.
- Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2009). Are teacher absences worth worrying about in the U.S.? *Education Finance and Policy, 4*(2), 115-49.
- Deglau, D., & O'Sullivan, M. (2006). The effects of a long-term professional development program on the beliefs and practices of experienced teachers. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 25*(4), 379-396.
- DeJaeghere, J. G., & Cao, Y. (2009). Developing US teachers' intercultural competence: Does professional development matter? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 33*(5), 437-447.
- Delpit, L. (2012). *Multiplication is for White people: Raising expectations for other people's children*. New York: The New Press.
- Epstein, R., Blake, J. J. & González, T. (2017). *Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of black girls' childhood*. Center on Poverty and Inequality. Georgetown Law.
- Fabelo, T., Thompson, M., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M., & Booth, E. (2011). *Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement*. New York Council of State Governments Justice Center. Retrieved November 11, 2017, from [http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/drupal/system/files/Breaking\\_School\\_Rules.pdf](http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/drupal/system/files/Breaking_School_Rules.pdf).
- Feng, L. (2010). Hire today, gone tomorrow: New teacher classroom assignments and teacher mobility. *Education Finance and Policy, 5*(3), 278-316.
- Fiorilli, C., Albanese, O., Gabola, P., & Pepe, A. (2017). Teachers' emotional competence and social support: Assessing the mediating role of teacher burnout. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 61*(2), 127-138.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*, 106-116.
- Gordon, R., Piana, L., & Keleher, T. (2000). *Facing the consequences: An examination of racial discrimination in U.S. public schools* (Research Report No. 141). Retrieved from <http://www.arc.org/pdf/196apdf.pdf>
- Gottfredson, D. (1989). Developing effective organizations to reduce school disorder. In O. C. Moles (Ed.), *Strategies to reduce student misbehavior* (pp. 87-104). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ED311 60)

- Greenlee, A. R., & Ogletree, E. J. (1993). *Teachers' attitudes toward student discipline problems and classroom management strategies*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 364330). East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2016). The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 26*(4), 325-353.
- Haynes, M. (2014, July). *On the path to equity: Improving the effectiveness of beginning teachers*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Hilberth, M., & Slate, J. R. (2014). Middle school Black and White student assignment to disciplinary consequences: A clear lack of equity. *Education and Urban Society, 46*(3), 312-328.
- Irvin, L. K., Tobin, T. J., Sprague, J. R., Sugai, G., & Vincent, C. G. (2004). Validity of office discipline referral measures as indices of school-wide behavioral status and effects of school-wide behavioral interventions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 6*(3), 131-147.
- Kee, A. N. (2012). Feelings of preparedness among alternatively certified teachers: What is the role of program features?. *Journal of Teacher Education, 63*(1), 23-38.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491.
- Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(1), 37-62.
- Losen, D. J. (2013). Discipline policies, successful schools, racial justice, and the law. *Family Court Review, 51*(3), 388-400.
- McIntosh, K., Girvan, E. J., Horner, R. H., & Smolkowski, K. (2014). Education not incarceration: A conceptual model for reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality in school discipline. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk, 5*, 1-22. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/childrenatrisk/vol5/iss2/4>
- Meister, D. G., & Melnick, S. A. (2003). National new teacher study: Beginning teachers' concerns. *Action in Teacher Education, 24*(4), 87-94.
- Milner IV, H. R. (2012). But what is urban education? *Urban Education, 47*(3), 556-561.
- Miller, R. T., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. (2008). Do teacher absences impact student achievement? Longitudinal evidence from one urban school district. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 30*(2), 181-200.
- Monroe, C. (2005). Understanding the discipline gap through a cultural lens: Implications for the education of African American students. *Intercultural Education, 16*, 317-330. doi:10.1080/14675980500303795
- Natesan, P., & Kieftenbeld, V. (2013). Measuring urban teachers' beliefs about African American students: A psychometric analysis. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 31*(1), 3-15.
- No Child Left Behind. (2002). No child left behind act of 2001: Reauthorization of the elementary and secondary education act. *Public law, 107*-110.
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2017). *2013-2014 Statistical profile of middle schools by sex, gender, and grade*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/resources/data/>
- Office of Civil Rights. (2016). *Civil rights data collection (CRDC), 2013 to 2014* [Data set]. Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/>

- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- Pennington, M. (2009, January 17). Re: Characteristics of middle school learners [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://penningtonpublishing.com/blog/reading/characteristics-of-middle-school-learners/>
- Schellenberg, R., & Grothaus, T. (2009). Promoting cultural responsiveness and closing the achievement gap with standards blending. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 440-449.
- Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *Urban Review*, 34(4), 317-342.
- Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C. G., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, 40(1), 85.
- Sprague, J., Walker, H., Stieber, S., Simonsen, B., Nishioka, V., & Wagner, L. (2001). Exploring the relationship between school discipline referrals and delinquency. *Psychology in the Schools*, 38, 197-206. doi:10.1002/pits.1010
- Stough, L. M., & Montague, M. L. (2015). How teachers learn to be classroom managers. In E. Emmer (Ed), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 446-458). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Tingle, L., Schoeneberger, J., Schools, C. M., Wang, C., Algozzine, B., & Kerr, E. (2012). An analysis of teacher absence and student achievement. *Education*, 133(2), 367-382.
- Weinstein, C. S., Tomlinson-Clarke, S., & Curran, M. (2004). Toward a conception of culturally responsive classroom management. *Journal of teacher education*, 55(1), 25-38.
- Weinstein, R. S. (2002). *Reaching higher: The power of expectations in schooling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Witt, H. (2008, September 24). *School discipline tougher on Black students*. The Chicago Tribune. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/services/newspaper/edition/chi-070924discipline,0,7975055.story>
- Yılmaz, E. (2004). *The relationship between novice and experienced teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management and students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom management*. Unpublished master's thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara.

## **Centering the Voice of Black Male Urban High School Students on Effective Student-Teacher Classroom Relationships**

**Brian Woodward**

*UCLA*

### **Abstract**

While teaching is often touted as the single most important factor for the success of students, at the core of instruction is a foundation rooted in the classroom relationship between students and teachers. Despite teachers being regarded as the authority of instruction within their respective classrooms, what is frequently missing is the voices of students articulating their thoughts on factors that impede or enhance an effective student-teacher relationship. Thus, the author sought to examine academically successful Black male urban high school students' perceptions of the student-teacher classroom relationship. Findings reveal three significant features of such relationship, including: (a) teacher perceptions of Black male students; (b) the willingness or unwillingness of teachers to include culturally relevant teaching; and (c) the importance of validation of student voices on teacher pedagogy within classrooms. Ultimately, listening to one of the most marginalized student groups can assist with allowing these young men to feel valued, as well as offer teachers the tools to improve their relationship with students in the classroom setting.

*Keywords:* Urban high school students, student-teacher relationship, student voice

Educational standards, acts, and or policies (e.g. No Child Left Behind, Common Core) are frequently recommended as ways to improve the educational experiences of students, yet these mandates are typically representative of short term solutions. The act of teaching, however is a constant fixture in the educational process and studies highlight that teachers can have the single biggest impact on student success within schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2010). Milner (2013) maintains that teaching is not a linear act; it is rather a multifaceted and complex process, which is influenced by both out-of-school (e.g. family income, parental educational level) and in-school (e.g. instructional practices, school culture) variables. While the factors listed above directly or indirectly effect the learning experiences of students, this study will place emphasis on an in-school variable: the student-teacher classroom relationship. Milner (2018) defines "relationship-centered teaching, as learning opportunities, instructional moves, and overall classroom construction that centralize relationships as the object (curriculum) and mechanism (pedagogy) of teaching and learning (p.61)." Additionally, Milner (2018) maintains that while scholars (Howard, 2010; Sleeter, 2011) have noted the importance of relationships as a central aspect of teaching and learning, "educators, preservice or in-service, are rarely purposefully prepared to build the kinds of relationships that can potentially serve as learning bridges in the classroom (p. 61)." One way to strengthen teacher preparation on student relationship building is to gain insights from students.

Enhancing the scholarship that centers student voice on ways to establish a productive relationship with teachers is critical because Milner (2018) contends that “students find it difficult to learn from teachers who do not have--or at least have not demonstrated--a strong level of concern for them through the relationships they exhibit (p. 62).” Furthermore, students are directly impacted by the interactions employed by teachers within classroom spaces. Gregory & Chapman (2012) note that there is not a one size fit all approach to teaching and specifically relationship building. However, Milner (2012a) notes that “instructional practices and related educational experiences need to be constructed in ways that address and are responsive to students’ varying needs because of the range of differences that students bring into the classroom and because of the social context in which students live and learn (p.694).” Given that students are not often queried about the act of teaching, an investigation of student perceptions of effective teaching broadly, but more specifically of student-teacher relationship, is warranted. This is especially important because of the troubling trend to blame students for problems associated with urban schools.

While validating the voices of all students is critical, listening to urban students in general and Black males specifically can be beneficial for teachers, as the voices of these students are seldom heard. Scholars have conducted studies centering Black male secondary student voices on a variety of school topics including, the role of racism, the effects of the zero-tolerance policy, and the perceptions that school personnel have toward these young men (Howard, 2008; Duncan 2002, Canton, 2012; Owens et al., 2011). While the literature highlighting Black male voices continues to grow, Howard (2013) notes that “Black male accounts of their own schooling experiences have registered only a minor blip on the radar of social science research because it is assumed that they are unable or unwilling to tell it (p. 64).” By concentrating on ways to foster an effective student-teacher relationship, educators can gain insight into the minds of these young men about how to improve teacher interactions with students in the classroom with the subsequent potential to develop teaching and learning theory and practice. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine how academically successful Black male students, who attend urban schools, conceptualized notions of effective teaching, with an emphasis the student-teacher relationship in the classroom.

### **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework: Student Voice & CRT**

In recent years, the concept of student voice has increasingly become a part of educational literature. Conner, Ebby-Rosin, and Brown (2015) discuss researchers’ attention to student voice as “a strategy that engages youth in sharing their views on their experiences as students to promote meaningful change in educational practice (p. 3).” Moreover, the authors maintain that student voice efforts have three primary goals: (a) to share students’ perspectives on their educational experiences; (b) to call for reforms that the students feel will better address the learning needs of themselves and their peers; and (c) to change the social construction of students in the school (p. 3). Scholars have attended to students’ perspectives on a variety of educational topics that include: school reform, notions on college preparedness, experiences in single-sex classrooms that aided with transitioning into high school, and effective implementation of common core (Friend & Caruthers, 2015; Mitra, 2008; Flennaugh et al, 2017; Flennaugh, 2017; Yonezawa, 2015). Yet little attention is devoted to students’ voices about how to foster productive relationships with teachers within classrooms. Cook-Sather (2010) argues that students have a unique perspective about learning in schools that educational stakeholders should learn from in order to enhance their craft. Through this study, I sought to explore how students and teachers can develop a classroom relationship predicated on the notion that students and teachers can learn from one another.



In addition to the conceptual framework of student voice, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used as a theoretical underpinning for the study. In the seminal article, *Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education*, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) illustrate how race persists as a significant factor in determining inequity in the schooling experiences of students of color. Moreover, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) advanced CRT with an emphasis on the methodological aspect of the theory. Two tenants put forth by the authors that are applicable to this study are the “centrality of race and racism” (p. 25) and “challenging the dominant ideology” (p. 26). For Black boys, issues of race are embedded in their daily learning experiences and the effects of racism in the classroom cannot be understated when examining student-teacher relationships. By recognizing the experiential knowledge of students, CRT is a theoretical frame that validates the experiences and voices of those who are seldom heard, helping in turn to challenge conventional notions of who Black young men are and how valuable they are to the classroom space (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Howard, 2010). With an emphasis on providing a voice to students, a CRT frame could help teachers learn how race is a factor in fostering relationships with students. This study was designed to address this concern by centering Black males’ thoughts on factors that foster or impede an effective student-teacher classroom relationship.

## Methods

### Participants

The participants in this study were twelve Black males selected from a larger study conducted over a five-month period from August 2015 to December 2015 examining 200 successful Black and Latino males enrolled in three high schools (which had student populations of 1,564, 1247, and 4,464) across a large metropolitan county in the western region of the US. The twelve participants were chosen based on recommendations from school personnel and knowledge gained from the larger study. These students were not only successful in the conventional sense of the word (*e.g.* grades, enrolled in high level courses, expected college entrance), but these young men were also deemed as “success stories” in their respective communities. While there have been studies that examine the educational plight of successful or high achieving Black males (Everett, 2016; Ford & Moore, 2013; McGee, 2013; Wright, 2011), the research on these young men can be extended by listening to how they describe their classroom relationship with their teachers. Thus, the primary research questions guiding the study were:

- (a) What are factors that either impede or strengthen a classroom relationship between students and teachers?
- (b) What role does race play in fostering student-teacher relationships?
- (c) By providing voice to students, what can teachers learn about ways to enrich both their relationship and pedagogy?

Below is a table with the participants’ demographic information. In addition to more conventional demographic information such as names, age, and race, their parents’ education as well as the AP courses that they took are included. While all Black males can contribute to thinking about enhancing student teacher relationships, participants were chosen from the larger study because there was a limited number of Black males in higher-level courses. Thus, including the AP courses in the table aimed to highlight an example of the academic potential and ability of the participants.

**Table 1: Participant Demographic (Pseudonyms were used)**

Name	Grade	Age	Race	Parents Education	AP courses
Chris	12	16	Black (African)	College grads	AP Calculus; AP Chemistry
Steve	12	17	Bi-racial	Some College	AP Calculus AP Physics
Everett	12	17	Bi-racial	Masters	AP Stats/AP Chemistry
James	12	17	Bi-racial	College grad	Physics
Sherman	12	17	Black	Masters	Bio, Chemistry, Physics
Jason	12	17	Black (African)	Masters	
Eugene	12	17	Black (African)	Bachelors	Calculus Chemistry
Eric	12	17	Black	High School	Physics
Derwin	11	16	Black	Some College	Honors Chemistry
Doug	11	16	Bi-racial	Bachelors	Physics
Jake	11	16	Black	Bachelors	Biology
Charles	11	16	Black (African)	Masters	Calculus Chemistry

### Data Collection/Data Analysis

The primary goal of the study was to uncover and interpret the meaning that Black male students attribute to effective student-teacher relationships. Therefore, a qualitative study was considered an appropriate methodological design to address the questions. The primary mode of data collection were semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013). Each of the interviews conducted was audio-taped and transcribed, and lasted approximately 60-70 minutes. The overall focus of the questions was designed to gauge Black male secondary students' perceptions of effective teaching by querying about the strategies, approaches, and methods of teaching that participants describe as having the potential to enhance teaching and learning. Additionally, the questions were employed to examine what teachers, researchers, and policymakers can learn from Black male students' about how to better serve this student group in the classroom. Upon completion of the interviews with the participants, transcriptions were conducted and after the cursory review of the data I began the open-coding process. Merriam (2009) states that "after working through the entire transcripts, the researcher can then go back and group the codes established to construct categories (p. 179)." Following the creation of the categories, I merged the themes affiliated with each category to establish the preliminary analysis. Furthermore, I analyzed categories seeking recurring themes that resulted in the specific findings revealed in the next section.

## Findings

### Centricity of Race and Racism

Despite the participants being deemed as academically successful, several teachers held low expectations and/or had negative perceptions of them. When asked what role, if any, do teachers play in fostering or impeding success for the Black males in the classroom, Steve responded:

The teacher has to put everyone on the same playing field, as far as professionally and when talking to the class. But I'm not sure that in their day to day thinking that they expect the Black students to do well. Maybe it's the classroom population. Maybe the teacher sees that because this class doesn't have as many students of color they extrapolate from that and say, well this is supposed to be my achievement class, there is three Black guys in here. All the rest of them are not in here and that's probably for a reason. That's probably what the teacher sees.

In a similar vein Chris stated:

Sometimes a teacher will have a preconceived notion that, "Oh, it's a Black male. He's not going to do as good as these other people," but I think teachers, kind of think that off the bat.

Steve and Chris contend that relationships between Black male students and their teachers were rooted in a foundation of low expectations and preconceived notions. Moreover, Everett, noted, "A lot of teachers have this mentality of, if you don't care then there's really no point. Like I'm going to try to help you learn but I'm not going to go too far out of my way." This mentality of low expectations, preconceived notions, and giving minimum effort by teachers when instructing Black male students, was exacerbated by the notion that a few teachers would show favoritism to other students. James expressed this concern by stating:

There was a lot of favoritism towards the Latino students. You know. They would get more attention. They would get more help on assignments than we would; In my opinion because he [the teacher] speaks Spanish; He's just felt more comfortable around them.

James asserted that in a class with Black and Latino students, the Latino pupils would occasionally receive favorable treatment from Latino teachers. Moreover, a few of the participants expressed the notion that if classes were comprised of majority Black students, some teachers would exert less effort and demonstrate a lack of belief in their abilities, which was resulted in objections from students. Everett commented:

Black males, they're more willing to speak out in general. They will say if teachers disrespect us in some way. They will say it to the teacher. And that usually causes a confrontation. I would say at school, with Black students, the teachers might not try as hard to teach his students because he doesn't believe in his students, that just goes to the personal relationship he has with them, his willingness to try to teach the students.

A few of the participants described that a significant challenge to establishing an effective student-teacher relationship in the classroom is the preconceived notions that teachers have toward Black males. Responses included teachers exerting limited effort in the classroom, as well as an all-round absence of confidence in Black males' ability to excel in the classroom. The young men perceived the teachers to have low expectations which was contingent on the level of the course being taught (*e.g.* regular, honors, or AP), and the number of Black students enrolled in a course. While all the participants did not experience teachers, who had preconceived notions of Black

males' abilities, a significant number of them maintained this issue was critical and was an impediment to positive student-teacher interactions.

### **Racial and Cultural Inconsistency**

The inclusion or exclusion of race and culture in the classroom was another pervasive theme in the data. Many participants discussed a racial and cultural gap (Howard, 2010) that existed between the students and teachers, resulting in a lack of pedagogy that was relevant to the lives of Black male students. When asked if most teachers embed culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in their daily lessons, the responses were mixed. Jason, expressed that most of his teachers did not utilize the pedagogical method, by commenting:

Most teachers don't do that [use culturally relevant pedagogy]. They just want to teach what they teach and if you learn it, you learn it. If you don't, you don't. They wouldn't take the time out sometimes to know about you as a person.

Similarly, Eric commented, "not really. Only in my English class and my Business class, it doesn't really help you with the real world. They're basically just teaching a lesson." For Jayson and Eric, culturally relevant pedagogy was not often employed by teachers due to their decision to not deviate from conventional teaching lessons. While some participants did not experience culturally relevant teaching in their lessons, others did. Derwin described how his teacher embedded cultural interests outside of their classes into their lessons by stating:

A lot of students like hip hop for example, so a teacher would embed hip hop with statistics by having a survey about hip hop. That can attract everybody because mostly everybody likes music.

Likewise, Doug replied:

For math or science, they'll[teachers] tell us real world applications and how we would be able to use this in an everyday situation. So that happens a lot in Econ or History classes. They want us to know where this came from and how it evolved over time to where it is now. So they[teachers] want us [students] to be able to show what happened and why we're here now.

One of the factors that was salient to the relationship between Black male students and their teachers was the inclusion or the omission of culturally relevant teaching. While teachers may not have checked off all of the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, the teachers who did incorporate elements of culturally relevant pedagogy better understood who their students were outside of the school. However, some participants detailed that most of their teachers did not implement lessons that were aligned with who they were as students outside the classroom space, jeopardizing an opportunity to foster a stronger relationship with these young males and to keep them fully engaged. The third theme replete in the responses was validating the voices of students on the type of pedagogy that the participants deemed effective.

### **Challenging the Dominant Ideology (Student Voice)**

Effective pedagogy is a critical element of the student-teacher relationship, and the students were given the opportunity to articulate their perceptions of effective instruction. Jake detailed that when teaching students, teachers should:

Be able to have patience and talk to us, and we've got to be able to trust them, they've got to be able to trust us, you know. They got to have faith in us that we can, make a difference,

or we can get a better grade, you know? If you have nobody supporting you, you're just going to feel like why even bother, you know? You need a support system.

Additionally, Charles commented that he wanted teachers to:

Encourage them, let them know what's out there, what you can be in life, because after high school you don't really know where you may be in college or supporting your family getting a job. Just being supportive and just helping them really. Do hands on stuff with them... ask them to stay after class talk to them and encourage them to be better really.

Doug and Charles commented that effective teaching in the classroom had less to do with the pedagogical strategies and more to do with having confidence in the ability of Black males to be successful in the classroom and beyond. Adjectives such as trust, faith, patience, encouragement, and support were highlighted as critical to fostering an effective relationship. Alternatively, Sherman delved into more instructional guidance for his teachers by stating:

Most teachers give you problems to work on. They don't give you the freedom to build up self-motivation to learn and realize, "Hey, I could do a whole lot more with this phone I have in my hand than just Instagram and stuff like that. I can find some information." Allow students to gain more responsibility and master the subject on their own. When you get something, you have to find a way to break it down yourself. Maybe that does mean going on YouTube and searching videos, or maybe looking for examples. The ability to use technology is effective in one's own teaching. Just maybe a little bit more technology access would really benefit.

The participants articulated that a priority for the students is to have teachers acknowledge their potential and be willing to help them achieve success. Furthermore, the participants maintained that independent learning, as well as, being flexible with the use of the internet as a tool for learning are strategies that would improve teacher instruction.

### **Discussion/Conclusion**

Factors the participants contended were critical for productive student-teacher relationship included: (a) the perceptions that teachers held of Black males; (b) the willingness or unwillingness of teachers to implement culturally relevant pedagogy in the lessons; and (c) the validation of the voices of students regarding ways to enhance pedagogy within the classroom setting. One of the concerns highlighted by the participants was the negative perceptions teachers placed upon Black male students. Scholars (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Reynolds, 2010) note that teachers not only portray Black males in an unfavorable light, but they also attribute any underachievement to cultural deficiencies and not to their own teaching. Preconceived notions about Black male students, who are often marginalized both inside as well as outside of the classroom, can prohibit the ability to create a foundation of trust between students and teachers in the classroom. Milner (2018) recommends that "teachers should engage students directly in conversations to learn from, with, and about them (p.64)."

The second finding was the teachers' willingness or unwillingness to employ pedagogical strategies aligned with the culture and/or lives of Black male students. Howard (2010) claims that teachers must be cognizant about fostering the growth of racial consciousness that is integrated within their teaching. Having teachers who are comfortable with discussing race in the class not only allows for open and honest conversations, but also helps teachers to understand who their students are outside of the classroom, which can further enrich teacher pedagogy. The third principle the participants recognized as critical when developing an effective relationship between

the students and teachers is to allow students to make recommendations on ways to improve teacher instruction. Mitra (2003) argues that seeking advice from students on the perceptions of teaching not only will impact the way students learn and will encourage their own abilities but will also help teachers meet the needs of their students. Furthermore, Daniels, Deborah, and McCombs (2001) have found a correlation between teacher interest in students' learning needs and greater student interest in schoolwork. Students in general, and Black males in particular, are aware that success in the classroom is contingent on the type of relationship that exists with their teacher. For the participants in this study, the three areas of importance when establishing a successful classroom relationship include addressing the preconceived notions teachers have regarding Black male students, implementing pedagogy that is relevant to their lives outside of school, and providing a voice for students to offer their opinions on the type of teaching that works well for their learning styles. Boutte (2012) argued that negative legacies bequeathed to urban schools can be reversed and rejected via transformational approaches (p. 516). Educational scholars, practitioners, and policymakers can begin by allowing students to offer their insight on one of the most important elements of education: the student-teacher relationship.

### References

- Boutte, G. S. (2012). Urban schools: Challenges and possibilities for early childhood and elementary education. *Urban Education, 47*(2), 515-550.
- Canton, M. (2012). Black male perspectives on their educational experiences in high school. *Urban Education, 47*(6), 1055-1085.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2010). Students as learners and teachers: Taking responsibility, transforming education, and redefining accountability. *Curriculum Inquiry, 40*(4), 555-575.
- Conner, J. O., Ebby-Rosin, R., & Brown, A. S. (2015). Introduction to Student Voice in American Education Policy (Reprinted from NSSE Yearbook, vol. 114, pgs. 1-18, 2015). *Teachers College Record, 117*(13), 1-18.
- Daniels, D. H. K., Deborah L., & McCombs, B. L. (2001). Young children's perspectives on learning and teacher practices in different classroom contexts: Implications for motivation. *Early Education and Development, 12*(2), 253-73.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to Equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Duncan, G. A. (2002). Beyond love: A critical race ethnography of the schooling of adolescent Black males. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 131-143.
- Everett, S. (2016). "I just started writing": Toward addressing invisibility, silence, and mortality among academically high achieving Black male secondary students. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice, 65*(1), 316-331.
- Flenbaugh, T. K., Howard, T. C., Malone, M., Tunstall, J., Keetin, N., Chirapuntu, T. (2017). Authoring student voices on college preparedness: A case study. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 50*(2), 209-221.
- Flenbaugh, T. K. (2017). Life Skills: A Single-Sex Classroom Intervention for Black Boys Transitioning from Middle School to High School. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research, 13*, 53-62.
- Ford, D. Y., & Moore, J. L. (2013). Understanding and reversing underachievement, low achievement, and achievement gaps among high-ability African American males in urban school contexts. *The Urban Review, 45*(4), 399-415.

- Friend, J., & Caruthers, L. (2015). Transforming the School Reform Agenda: A Framework for Including Student Voice in Urban School Renewal. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*, 11, 14-25.
- Gregory, G. H., & Chapman, C. (2012). *Differentiated instructional strategies: One size doesn't fit all*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Howard, T. C. (2008). Who really cares? The disenfranchisement of African American males in preK-12 schools: A critical race theory perspective. *Teachers College Record*, 110(5), 954-985.
- Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms. Multicultural Education Series*. Teachers College Press. New York, NY.
- Howard, T. C. (2013) How does it feel to be a problem? Black male students, schools, and learning in enhancing the knowledge base to disrupt deficit frameworks. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 66 – 98.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-48.
- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (2009). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-billings (EDs.). *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 17-36). New York: Routledge.
- Lynn, M., Bacon, J., Totten, T., Bridges, III, T., & Jennings, M. (2010). Examining teachers' beliefs about African American male students in a low-performing high school in an African American school district. *The Teachers College Record*, 112(1), 289-330.
- McCombs, B. L. (2001, April 10-14). Preparing teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners in Urban schools: The learner-centered framework. Paper presented at the Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, W A.
- McGee, E. O. (2013). Threatened and Placed At Risk: High Achieving African American Males in Urban High Schools. *Urban Review*, 45(4), 448-471.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Milner, H.R. (2010). *Start where you are but don't stay there*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Milner, H. R. (2012a). Beyond a test score: Explaining opportunity gaps in educational practice. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(6), 643–718.
- Milner, H. R. (2012b). But what is urban education? *Urban Education*, 47(3), 556–561.
- Milner IV, H. R. (2013). Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a critical race theory lens. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 1-53.
- Milner IV, H. R. (2018). Relationship-Centered Teaching: Addressing Racial Tensions in Classrooms. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 54(2), 60-66.
- Mitra, D. L. (2003). Student voice in school reform: Reframing student-teacher relationships. *McGill Journal of Education*, 38(2), 289–304
- Mitra, D. L. (2008). Amplifying student voice. *Educational Leadership*, 66(3): 20–25.
- Owens, D., Simmons, R. W., Bryant, R. M., & Henfield, M. (2011). Urban African American males' perceptions of school counseling services. *Urban Education*, 46(2), 165-177.
- Reynolds, R. (2010). "They think you're lazy," and Other Messages Black Parents Send Their

- Black Sons: An Exploration of Critical Race Theory in the Examination of Educational Outcomes for Black Males. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 1(1), 144-163.
- Sleeter, C. E. (Ed.). (2011). Professional development for culturally responsive and relationship-based pedagogy. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers College Press. New York, NY.
- Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytic Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 8(1), 23-44.
- Wright, B. L. (2011). I know who I am, do you? Identity and academic achievement of successful African American male adolescents in an urban pilot high school in the United States. *Urban Education*, 46(4), 611-638.
- Yonezawa, S. (2015). Student Voice and the Common Core. *Teachers College Record*, 117(13), 39-58.