Is it Really Just Black and White? A Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study of Effective White Teachers of Black Students in a Small, Southern Community

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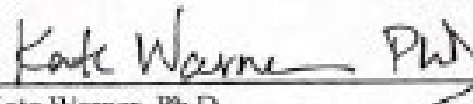
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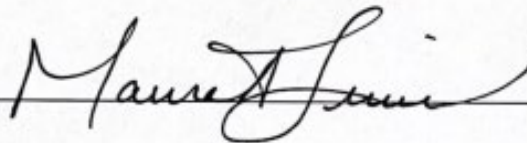**Defense Date**   March 23, 2022

ABSTRACT

In his now famous protest *The Souls of Black Folk,* W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) predicted the 21st century as one fraught with many of the same racial inequities and perils previously seen in American history. As with most social diseases, racism has not been eradicated but rather spread and is still infesting many of our social institutions, especially our educational system (Coates, 2015; Yosso, 2006).

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to examine "best-practices" and identify strategies commonly employed by effective White teachers of Black students; the research examines the nexus of inequality in education, the achievement gap, and teachers' influence in multicultural classrooms. Six, White secondary school teachers participated in this study by sharing their educational beliefs and experiences within a rural, southern town through one 90-120 minute face-to-face individual interview with iterative questioning. Data obtained from the interviews was analyzed using a three phase approach where three common themes were ascertained. Critical Race Theory and Community Cultural Wealth Theory were used as theoretical foundations for this study.

Results revealed effective White teachers of Black students must build relationships with Students of Color in order to earn their trust; this results in students doing better in the teacher's class and building lasting relationships which effect the student's capital (Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational and Resistant). Three major themes emerged from the data: *Building Relationships: When They Know You Care, Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and* Race and *Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two sons who have seen mommy be in school for most of their lives. Without your love and belief in me, I could not have done this. Remember to always pursue your passions and dreams with vigor and that "Lewises never quit!" Mommy loves you so much.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the preeminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white. (Coates, 2015, p. 7).

The United States has a sordid history of racial tension. The court cases of *Plessy v. Ferguson 1896* (Hoffer, 2012)*, Brown v. Board of Education 1954* (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 2017)*,* and The Federal Civil Rights Act 1964 (Uhl, 2016) sought to transform the famous Declaration of Independence statement, which exclaims "all men are created equal," into a reality instead of just words . This social reform was supposed to alleviate or at least lessen racism and create equal opportunities for all, but in light of recent events in the United States, it would appear we have regressed and are once again fighting this battle (Delpit, 2013; Du Bois, 1903; Ladson-Billings, 1999). In his now famous protest *The Souls of Black Folk,* W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) predicted the 21st century as one fraught with many of the same racial inequities and perils previously seen in American history. However, is regression the problem, or rather a lack of progression? Much research is founded in the idea that racism is endemic and "normal" to our society (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2017; Yosso, 2006). As with most social diseases, racism has not been eradicated but rather spread and is still infesting many of our social institutions, especially our educational system (Coates, 2015; Yosso, 2006).

The United States Educational System is continuously under attack for not adequately preparing students to face the 21st century economic and job market, as well as not being competitive with countries who have better math and science scores like Korea and Finland (OECD, 2016). In addition to unmet curriculum standards, the racial disparity in the classroom leads to unequal education for multicultural students (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b). Most Black students are generally located in an urban area where teachers are not adequately trained to handle the needs of multicultural students, and White teachers who do not understand the students' background culturally or personally teach these students (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b; Pinder, 2012). In the book *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (2006), Delpit highlights this in a conversation she has with one of her colleagues:

> Children have the right to their own language, their own culture. We must fight cultural hegemony and fight the system by insisting that children be allowed to express themselves in their own language style. It is not they, the children, who must change, but the schools. To push children to do anything else is repressive and reactionary. (p. 37)

Critics continuously ask what can be done to better the educational system in the United States while serving all students equally and fairly, but they often leave out the discourse on Race due to inherent conflict and strong feelings related to the topic (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

I have been a teacher for eleven years and a school administrator for four. My first four years of teaching were at a rural school in the Southeast where 50% of its students

were Black. The second school I taught at was in a semi-urban school district in the Southeast where 85% of my students were Black. I am now working in my third school district in the Southeast, and 70% of its students are Black. For the past fourteen years, I have taught or administered to classes which were either 100% Black students or comprised of mostly Black students, and sadly, I was not properly prepared for that.

Personal Interest

When I began teaching, I had a non-renewable certification and a degree in Advertising and English. I attended a university where I enrolled in a program that allowed me to complete my renewable certification for teaching during the first year of coursework and my Master's degree in Education during my second year. Students in this program were able to teach full-time while completing the coursework. There was no student teaching involved in this program; you became a teacher, and as long as you finished the program in five years, you would be a renewable teacher. Since I never experienced a mentor teacher or student teaching, I had no basis for understanding many facets of being a good teacher. However, what I learned quickly is I had no understanding of the Black culture in the Southeast. I do not mean that in a derogatory fashion, but rather as factual. I moved to the South from the North, and even though I was not in culture shock upon moving South as many of my friends thought I would be, I quickly realized there were many different cultural elements and colloquialisms that the North had kept me from experiencing.

Understanding and embracing the culture of my students was not something I was prepared to do nor had any training in. I often found myself evaluating my teaching and personal beliefs and analyzing if these resulted in less connection with my Black

students. I can honestly say that after eleven years of teaching and four of being and administrator, I finally feel comfortable in my ability to create relationships with all of my students and teach/reach each accordingly; learning how to understand and embrace the multicultural differences of my students within the classroom as well as individually would have been invaluable information when beginning to teach.

Similarly, I have seen many of my White colleagues be effective teachers of Black students, and I often studied their teaching style in order to learn from them; thus, the idea for this research was born. Since the majority of teachers are White (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b; NCES, 2015b; Pinder, 2012), it becomes necessary to specifically examine how some White teachers effectively teach Black students. Since becoming an administrator, I have seen new teachers struggle with similar feelings of inadequacy when it comes to teaching in multicultural settings. Therefore, this research becomes important to helping novice teachers and administrators better understand the way to effectively reach and teach Black students.

Statement of the Problem

The problem evident in this study is an achievement gap between Black and White students exists and has not been aptly addressed nor fixed since educational reform has become a topic of interest (Coleman, 1966; NCES, 2015b). Also, teacher preparation programs in multicultural education are underdeveloped (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

The National Center for Educational Statistics uses assessments in both reading and mathematics for fourth and eighth graders. The 2015 report "Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform on the National Assessment of

Educational Progress" shows the achievement gap narrowing between Black and White students since its first testing in 1978. However, an achievement gap still persists as shown in the most recent testing. The 2007 report details a 26-point gap in mathematics grade 4, a 31-point gap in mathematics grade 8, a 27-point gap in reading grade 4, and a 26-point gap in reading grade 8. The Georgia Department of Education 2016 CCRPI Progress Report states the goal of schools is to 'increase the achievement of the schools' lowest achieving students." The Georgia DOE compiles information provided by standardized tests from all schools to create CCRPI scores; achievement gap is a measure in the computation of the CCRPI score. Similar to the NAEP reports, the GA DOE CCRPI 2012 study (GA DOE, 2016) indicates Georgia has achievement gaps between White and minority students in all tested academic areas. Ineffective teaching may contribute to this achievement gap when White teachers encounter, or perceive they encounter, barriers to teaching non-White students (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Thus, the primary problem for this research is to critically explore how race, of teacher and student, influence the achievement of minority, specifically Black, students in the United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002) is to examine "best-practices" and identify strategies commonly employed by effective White teachers of Black students; the research examined the nexus of inequality in education, the achievement gap, and teachers' influence in multicultural classrooms. Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Yosso, 2006) and Yosso's Cultural Wealth Theory (2006) provide the theoretical framework for this research.

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Using similar techniques to those of Ladson-Billings' (2009) in *The Dream-keepers,* I asked a principal and his/her administrative team to recommend White teachers who effectively teach Black students using the following criteria:

- teaches classes with a majority of Black students

- effects gains in student achievement as measured by standardized test scores and grades, and

- maintains positive student and parental relationships

These criteria mirror information teachers are evaluated on by their administrators.

Teachers were not excluded based on age, sex or experience; however, at least two years of teaching experience was preferred. The only criteria participants needed to meet was they were White, a secondary school teacher, and selected through recommendations by the school administrative team.

I selected six participants for the individual interviews as the maximum amount for this study because I wanted my research to go deep instead of wide; by this, I mean I wanted to develop a deep understanding of each teacher's personal beliefs and experiences and how these apply to his/her teaching. Sufficient research exists on 'wide' teaching practices to engage non-White students in secondary classrooms (for example, see Delpit, 2006 and Ladson-Billings, 2009). However, lesser known is the personal beliefs of the teacher and the path they followed to adopting their own effective practices. In-depth analysis of a few talented teachers enabled me to examine the teachers' personal beliefs thereby addressing the existing gap in the literature.

Significance of the Study

This study identified the teaching strategies employed by White teachers who effectively teach Black students by documenting teaching strategies used to connect with students. The identification of these teaching strategies provides teachers of multicultural classrooms, pre-service teachers, building administration and school systems with strategies to effectively teach Black students while helping them achieve at rigorous levels, from teachers who have developed them, refined them and found success with them – evidenced by peer recommendation. Specifically, the teacher journey was explored; by understanding the teachers' journeys and stories they shared, educators can recognize the path they can walk when trying to appreciate and serve Students of Color.

This research will help people address the stated problem of achievement gaps between White students and minority students through the examination of positive practices by White teachers which impact minority students. Instead of using the deficit thinking model which prevails in most educational institutions and assumes multicultural students are less capable of educational achievement (Delpit, 2006, 2013; Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b; Yosso, 2006), this research provides insight to pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators who want teaching strategies with results and which are focused on what multicultural students, specifically Black students, can achieve when provided with a progressive and inclusive environment. This strength-based approach examined and expressed how people can quickly transform when drawing on certain resources and help from others instead of focusing on what they cannot do and how it is difficult to change themselves and the processes by which they can achieve at higher levels. It also inspected

if teaching school in small, racially-divided southern towns impacts a teacher's lived experiences with his/her students and how this information can be applied to lessen the achievement gap, especially in the South.

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory

The prominent theory associated with inequality in education is Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Thompson, 2016); many researchers use CRT to examine Race in accordance with the social construct of racism in society, but Ladson-Billings (1999) and Tate (1995) elucidate CRT allows theorists to frame racial inequality issues in terms of the law and education, proposing White culture has become so embedded and prevalent in our society, that it is the norm by which all cultures are expected to adhere and transform their behavior to match (Tate, 1997). Similar to Ladson-Billings (1999), Tate (1997) argues racism is normative behavior and natural to people's culture in the United States.

The CRT movement began in legal studies where the art of storytelling was used to convey the situations apparent in "normative" culture, but unequal and unjust to minority people (Tate, 1997). Yosso (2006) defines CRT "as a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" (p. 74). CRT is the basis for my theoretical framework and allowed me to use a strength-based approach to examine the effectiveness of White teachers with their Black students instead of a deficit model, which provides excuses for why Black students achieve at lower rates than White students, as well as assumes Black

students arrive at school with deficits due to socio-economic status and race-related issues (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Yosso, 2006).

Ladson-Billings (1999) used CRT as the perspective from which she showed "preparing teachers for teaching diverse learners" cannot be done with a few professional learning programs or without purpose. By employing CRT, Ladson-Billings (1999) examines the construct of racism in the educational system and proposes four main tenants of CRT:

1. racism has become the norm to American culture;
2. CRT employs storytelling to examine the foundation of racism in America;
3. there is an insistence on a "critique of liberalism," which means the current system in place in the United States is not able to make the changes necessary to thwart racism; and finally,
4. "CRT argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation" (p. 213).

Ladson-Billings (1999) uses CRT to examine teacher preparation programs and deduces that these programs lack in the fundamental foundations needed to properly train new teachers in culturally sensitive pedagogy and prepare them for the challenges they will face when working with minority students. Following Ladson-Billing's research, I used her application of CRT when interviewing teachers and examining the effectiveness of the teachers in this study.

Community Cultural Wealth Theory

Further applying CRT to my study, Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory (2006), embedded and constructed through the application of Critical Race Theory, was

applied when examining the comments of the White teachers. Similar to Ladson-Billings'

use of CRT in educational studies, Yosso (2006) uses a "strength-based perspective"

when examining teachers' interactions with their students and defines Community

Cultural Wealth as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and

utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of

oppression" (p. 77). Examining what the teachers are doing correctly in a classroom

instead of why Black students are not achieving at the same levels as White students

enabled this strength-based approach to examining the research while also learning how

the participants' cultural capital wealth has informed and influenced their education.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory defines "six forms of cultural capital:

aspiration, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance" (Yosso, 2006).

The use of all six forms of Cultural Capital aided in my creation of interview

questions and became the basis for the examination of emerging themes (see Figure 1

below).
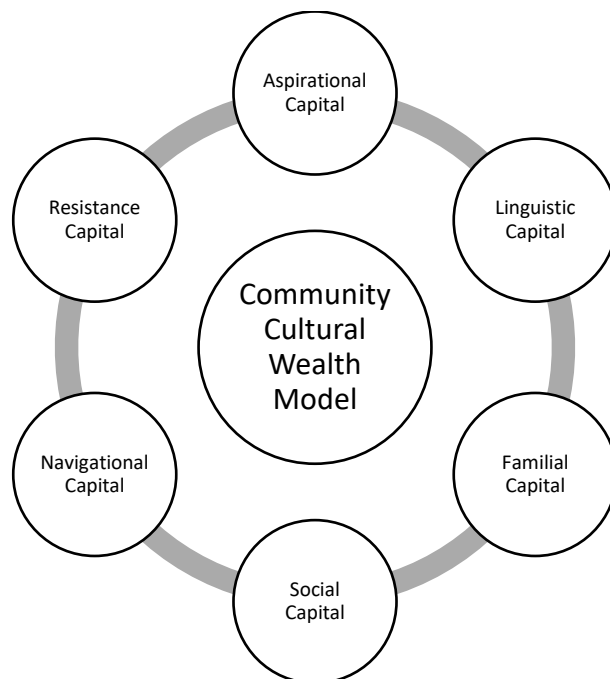
Figure 1 Community Cultural Wealth Model

Aspirational Capital

Yosso (2006) defines aspirational capital as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future" (p. 77). In this study, I conducted individual interviews with six teachers. A large concentration of these discussions included aspirational capital, specifically the teachers' expectations for their students' future and what perceived barriers they believe their student will have to overcome to reach these expectations.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital refers to the idea that Students of Color arrive at school with a larger set of certain skills due to exposure to multiple languages or styles of language; often, these abilities derive from cultural traditions including oral storytelling and visual arts (Yosso, 2006). Through the interviews with teachers, this study determined if cultural influences are embraced or employed within the classrooms at the research site as a learning/teaching strategy.

Familial Capital

Familial capital refers to the cultural knowledge and manners students acquire from their families (Yosso, 2006.) These families are comprised of immediate family and often spread to include extended families and friends who "model lessons of caring, coping, and providing education" (Yosso, 2006, p. 79). Familial capital was examined in this study through discussions about the teachers' personal life and educational experiences. Specifically, how these affected their teaching beliefs and styles and correlate to students' familial capital.

Social Capital

Social capital deals with the "networks" a Person of Color has and utilizes when pursuing education, higher education, sports and other societal institutions (Yosso, 2006). In turn, the people share this capital with culturally similar people facilitating future access to such institutions. This study employed the knowledge of teachers who have invested in their students' social capital and analyzed how they become "networks" for their Black students.

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital "refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (Yosso, 2006, p. 80). This capital has been necessary for Persons of Color to succeed in school, employment, legal and social institutions within the United States. Navigational capital was used in this study to examine how the research setting has affected the educational outcomes of the students.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital "refers those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso, 2006, p. 80). Structures of inequality such as racism, capitalism and patriarchy are challenged by Persons of Color through teachings by parents, mentors, teachers and family. These people support Persons of Color in being proud of their heritage and culture in spite of the intrinsic and extrinsic forms of racism they face every day. In this study, teachers were asked if they provided any forms of resistant capital to their students and how they believe this has helped them flourish or fail in the educational setting.

Research Design

A basic interpretive qualitative research design (Merriam & Associates, 2002) was used for this study. The use of iterative questioning interviews (Shenton, 2004) with six teachers was engaged to ascertain what methods of instruction they use with Black students in order to be justified as effective White teachers of Black students by their administrative team. The six research subjects with whom the interviews were conducted were selected by their administrative team.

Initial questionnaires were provided to all participants to garner demographic and educational information. Multiple forms of data collection were used in order to triangulate the data gathered to better substantiate the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2020; Patton, 2002).

Research Questions

This research project has two main research questions:

(1) What are the experiences of White secondary teachers working with Black students in a small, southern community?

(2) What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success?

Methods of Analysis

Since this is a qualitative study which hinges largely on the information gleaned from interviews, it was necessary to immediately begin data analysis upon completion of data gathering (Maxwell, 2013). After each interview, I rewrote and reorganized my notes made during the interviews, as well as transcribed the interview; a transcription service was used to complete this task. Through the transcription, I analyzed and categorized recognizable patterns in participant responses to questions in three phases of

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coding with each phase further dissecting the data. Memoing was employed throughout the entire process to continually evaluate key thoughts and connections made while reviewing the data. Likewise, I used three phases of coding to examine common themes throughout the data. Again, this occurred after all six interviews.

Definition of Terms

To provide understanding of the terms used throughout this dissertation, the following key terms and definitions are provided as defined by the researcher.

Achievement Gap. For purposes of this research, the achievement gap will refer to the statistically significant difference between the achievement of Black and White students (NCES, 2015a).

Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) allows theorists to frame racial inequality issues in terms of the law and education, proposing that White culture has become so embedded and prevalent in our society, that it is the norm by which all cultures are expected to adhere and transform their behavior to match (Tate, 1997).

Black/White Students/Teachers/Parents: Even though Race is deemed a societal construct rather than a physiological one (Coates, 2015; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings 2009; Milner, 2017), for purposes of this research, Black students and parents refer to students who identify with Black culture, and White teachers refer to those who identify with White culture.

Culture. Culture is the behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people (Yosso, 2006). Milner (2017) explains culture "can be defined as deep-rooted values, beliefs, languages, customs, and norms shared among a group of people" (p. 5).

Community Cultural Wealth. Community Cultural Wealth is "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color" (Yosso, 2006, p. 77).

Minority Students. For purposes of this research, minority students refer to any non-White students. Black students will be the primary minority students discussed throughout this research.

Multicultural Education/Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) proposed three main components of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: (a) a focus on student learning and academic success, (b) developing students' cultural competence to assist students in developing positive ethnic and social identities, and (c) supporting students' critical consciousness or their ability to recognize and critique societal inequalities. Ladson-Billings asserts culturally relevant pedagogy is in fact not multicultural education (1992b.) Specifically, culturally relevant pedagogy does not teach about other non-White cultures, but rather teaches students with respect to their culture. This is done by teaching the educational standards with regards to the students' culture instead of based in White-middle-class-normative culture.

Persons/Students of Color. This study uses this term to describe any non-White person.

Race. Milner (2017) explains that "race is constructed physically, socially, legally, and historically. The meanings, messages, results, and consequences of race are developed and constructed by human beings, not by genetics or some predetermined set of scientific laws" (p. 6). For the purposes of this research, race will be considered a social construct and used to examine the societal issues faced by Persons of Color.

Summary

This basic interpretive qualitative study explored what makes certain White teachers effective educators of Black students. The data provided evidence-based best practices by educators selected by their administrative team. Studies and researchers like Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) and Lisa Delpit (2006) have examined what makes certain teachers better at teaching Students of Color, especially Black students, better than others. This study is unique, because it focused on the positive qualities of White teachers of Black students in a small, southern community; the Southeastern United States is traditionally considered to be more racially divided than other areas of the country, so having this as the backdrop to this study provided a new layer of understanding and exploration.

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions and design, conceptual framework and definition of the key terms.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the foundations for education of Persons of Color in the United States, the Black-White achievement gap, multicultural or culturally relevant pedagogy and the theories associated with this research.

In Chapter 3, I will provide a detailed description of the study's research design including a discussion about triangulation and the importance of the data gathering techniques employed during research.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data and discussion of the findings, and Chapter 5 will present the summary, conclusions and recommendations from the research.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of racial inequities in the educational system specifically related to the achievement gap between Black and White students. In addition, the literature review evaluates teaching strategies suggested for multicultural classrooms as well as theories related to race in education. In these ways, the literature review enables analysis of the proposed research questions.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion on the history of race in education. Next, I looked at the concept of the achievement gap and how it has affected the United States Educational System. Then, I examined the literature on teaching strategies in multicultural classrooms. The chapter concludes with an examination of common theoretical models applied to the discussion of race in education and the achievement gap.

A History of Inequality in Education

America was founded on the values of separatists who desired religious freedom from England. These settlers were tough, hard-working people who survived and flourished even while losing half of their population during their first winter. This spirit of prevailing through hard work and determination became a foundation of the United States. However, with this ideology came the need and desire to cultivate and expand, and with expansion came a conquering of native people. The need to cultivate and expand also led to the democratization of schooling. Noltemeyer, Mujic, & McLoughlin (2012) explain the "overarching goal of education is to prepare citizens to lead productive lives within our democratic society" and suggest "if we are to realize the promise of

equal opportunity and participation for all students that is consistent with a democratic framework, then education should be provided fairly, equitably, and inclusively" (p. 3). Yet, the United States' history does not show favorable equality for all students. Unfortunately, the education system was sometimes used as a means of expanding power and conquering native people.

Since early settlement of the United States, minority groups have had an oppressive educational experience. Loring (2009 as cited in Noltemeyer et al., 2012, p. 4) explains in the late 1800s European settlers placed American Indians in boarding schools in order to "force assimilation to White culture." Similarly, and during the same time period, many Hispanic students primarily located in the Southwest region of the United States were not allowed the same educational experience as their White counterparts.

However, the discussion of inequality in education usually focuses on discrimination of Black students, to the exclusion of native and Spanish-speaking students, which Noltemeyer et al. (2012) claims is due to the large proportion of Black students compared to smaller proportions of other minority groups. Ogbu (1992) explains that Black students qualify as involuntary minorities since they were brought to the United States as slaves or indentured servants, and this often leads to an "oppositional identity" where Black people are often juxtaposed with traditional White culture due to the mistreatment they have received since being brought to the U.S. Since White people viewed Black people as inferior and White slave owners were worried about revolt, Black Americans were often not allowed to learn to read (Noltemeyer et al., 2012). Learning and reading, it was feared, would aid in a revolt.

During the 1700s and 1800s, a few Black schools were created throughout the country, but these were mainly to "impart White behavioral norms, conceptions of morality, and religious beliefs that were viewed as being deficient in Blacks" (Rury as cited in Noltemeyer et al., 2012). Thus, education was not used to promote democratization for non-White students. Instead it was used to expand power via colonialization.

The Civil War brought an end to slavery which somewhat improved the situations of Black Americans. The14th Amendment (1868) stated Black Americans were equal citizens with "equal protection and privilege." However, the education system still marginalized and treated Black Americans unequally. The late 1800s saw the enforcement of Jim Crow laws, where racial segregation was enforced through "separate but equal" rights. Then, in 1896, the Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld the "separate but equal" laws and created segregated schools for Black and White students. Even though equality was the word du jour, similar to other social institutions, Black Americans were not receiving the same quality of education as White Americans.

In 1954, everything supposedly changed. The Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) overturned the separate but equal laws and required schools to become integrated. Even though integration was a long process and rarely met with compliance from all involved parties, schools eventually became integrated and Black students were expected to receive similar schooling as White students. Achievement by Black students steadily increased from this time period through the 1980s due to full integration. However, it has never reached parity. Unfortunately, the Unites States is experiencing a turn towards segregation again as Black students become centralized in

urban areas, which is a direct effect of economic status, and economic status is directly related to educational attainment; thus, a vicious cycle ensues (Condron, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Newton & Sandoval, 2015; Noltemeyer et al., 2014).

Although some of the achievement gap has narrowed, some forces continue to disadvantage Black students. First, most school funding is still tied to local tax systems. And this means students in urban schools, funded by urban tax revenue, receive less funding per pupil than students in other types of school districts. Students in urban areas are more likely to be Black. Second, research shows that Black families cannot afford to move out of urban areas into districts with higher funding per pupil, because they themselves received inferior educations and cannot compete with students who received education in those other districts. Thus, a cycle of economic status and educational achievement become inextricably linked and maintained.

Achievement Gap

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2015a) defines an achievement gap simply as "a difference in scores between Black and White students only…if the difference is statistically significant, meaning larger than the margin of error" (p. 1). In other words, the difference between the scores must be determined by statistics to be real, and not one that could occur naturally in a sample. Most scholars agree that there is a real and persistent achievement gap between minority groups and White students, but many scholars have a hard time agreeing on the causes of the gap.

To examine the achievement gap, the NCES uses assessments in both reading and mathematics for fourth and eighth graders. The 2009 report "Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform on the National Assessment of

Educational Progress" shows a narrowing in the achievement gap between Black and White students since its first testing in 1978. However, an achievement gap still persists as shown in the most recent testing. The 2007 report details a 26-point gap in mathematics grade 4, a 31-point gap in mathematics grade 8, a 27-point gap in reading grade 4 and a 26-point gap in reading grade 8.

Condron et al. (2013) examined the achievement gap as "a vital element in the creation and reproduction of economic inequality between [B]lacks and [W]hites" (p. 131), and discussed the necessity of additional theoretical and empirical research on the role of economic inequality in the achievement gap. Through quantitative analysis, Condron et al. (2013) demonstrate a link between the achievement gap and school racial composition. They found greater achievement gaps (both in math and reading) in schools where the Black students were geographically isolated and had little exposure to White students. They also discovered that the achievement gap lessened in schools where Black students had more exposure to White students. This study posits that one of the explanations for the achievement gap between Black and White students is racial segregation. The authors also found that reducing racial separation, or put differently, increasing racial heterogeneity, decreased the achievement gap.

Additional studies have sought to identify further possible causes of the achievement gap. Previously, the achievement gap has been examined from a "blame the victim" standpoint in which scholars have attributed the gap to individual factors such as poverty or parenting styles. Poverty used to be charged as a major contributor to the achievement gap and overall achievement by minority students, but leading scholars of culture in education have changed the discourse and made the gap resultant of factors that

can be fixed and not ones that can be easy scapegoats like poverty, lack of parental support, and single-parent families (Delpit, 2006; Williams, 2011).

Rigorous studies from Delpit (2006) and Ladson-Billings (1992a, 1992b, 1995) focus on the "in-school factors such as teacher quality, rigor of the curriculum, students' engagement in academic tasks, and a school culture of high expectations" (Pitre, 2014). Pitre (2014) states the achievement gap has been aptly renamed as the "opportunity gap" by many scholars "in recognition of the unequal schooling practices in the U.S. that consistently deny racial and ethnic minority students equal opportunities to receive a high quality education" (p. 212). Darling-Hammond cites "three key factors contributing to the opportunity gap and unequal schooling: resegregation of schools, unequal access to qualified teachers, and the lack of access to high-quality curriculum" (cited in Pitre, 2014, p. 212).

Teachers' Influence in Multicultural Classrooms

Leading scholars in the field of culture in education include Gloria Ladson-Billings and Lisa Delpit. Both of these scholars evaluate the idea of multicultural classrooms and inequality in education through the lens of what happens within a school and not through the "blame the victim" idea of previous scholars who have examined this subject (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992a; Pinder, 2012). Intense amounts of research have been conducted on achievement gaps, achievement of minority students and educational inequality based on race, but these studies often pose the student and his/her low achievement as a result of his/her circumstances (Delpit, 2006; Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b).

In the book *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom,* Delpit's (2006) first chapter examines the cultural disconnect between many teachers and their students through the focus of literacy. This cultural disconnect can occur due to Black students being taught by a mostly White teaching force (Delpit, 2006; Douglas et al., 2008):

In puzzling over these issues, it has begun to dawn on me that many of the teachers of black children have their roots in other communities and do not often have the opportunity to hear the full range of their students' voices. (Delpit, 2006, p. 17)

Delpit continues by discussing the differing expectations of Black and White teachers and how their cultural background influences the way in which they deliver content to children. Specifically, Delpit explains White teachers tend to lean more towards teaching the process, especially with literacy and writing, where Black teachers focus on the actual skill of writing and reading. She asserts Black teachers understand the culture and community many minority students live in and "see the teaching of skills to be essential to their students' survival" (p.18), but also reiterates "if minority people are to effect the change which will allow them to truly progress we must insist on "skills" *within the context of* critical and creative thinking" (p. 19). Thus, Delpit evaluates various teaching styles and uses these as a premise to examine the discourse on inequality in education. She proposes one of the only ways to increase our Black students' achievement is to start learning about them and their culture, and use the knowledge gained to create an open learning environment where creativity is embraced and all children are put on a level playing field.

Likewise, Gloria Ladson-Billings suggests the need for culturally sensitive pedagogy; it needs to be clarified that this is not multicultural education, but rather educational outcomes formulated around the knowledge and understanding of the culture from which your students originate (1992b). Specifically, Ladson-Billings (1992b) explains "culturally relevant teaching" as:

> . . . a term I have used to describe the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to *fit* the school culture to the students' culture but also to *use* student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. (p. 314)

Ladson-Billings (1992b) identifies teachers of Black students who use culturally relevant pedagogy and observes and interviews them to discuss more intricately the foundation upon which their teaching philosophy lies. Precisely, Ladson-Billings (1992a, 1992b) identifies a White teacher who is enmeshed in her school and community culture, teaches Black children using an open, student-led classroom environment, and "empower[s] students to examine critically the society in which they live and to work for social change" (p. 314). Ladson-Billings (1995a) specifically states that

> …culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160).

Recently, more studies have surfaced evaluating the ability of White teachers to teach Black students. Douglas et al. (2008) examined White teachers of Black students and used student interviews plus classroom observations to note that many students do

not feel their teachers connect to them well. Boucher (2016) takes a different approach and examines how a successful White teacher creates solidarity with his Black students and uses this research as a counterargument to the many studies which posit White teachers cannot adequately serve the needs of their Black students. Boucher's study was influential in creation of my research questions and decision to examine the positive effects of high-quality White teaches on the achievement of Black students.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks guided this research: Critical Race Theory and Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory. I introduce the major tenets of both.

The most common theory associated with inequality in education is Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Thompson, 2016). Many researchers use CRT to examine race in accordance with the social construct of racism in society. A social construct is something that exists as an idea and not as an objective, material reality. For example, a puddle of water exists objectively – all witnesses can agree that water is on the ground. However, whether a person is short or tall (or Black or White) depends on an idea of what a Black or White person looks like. And these ideas change, for example, in different places around the globe. A person considered Black in the United States may not be considered Black in Canada or Kenya.

A major benefit of CRT is that it explains racial inequality in terms of the law and education. Laws and educational policies have created and defined race and the resulting inequality. The CRT movement began in legal studies where the art of storytelling was used to convey that situations defined by and apparent to "normative" culture may be unequal and unjust to minority people (Tate, 1997). Yosso (2006) defines CRT "as a

theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" (p. 74).

Specifically, White culture has become so embedded and prevalent in our society, that it is the norm by which all cultures are expected to adhere and transform their behavior to match (Tate, 1997). Similar to Ladson-Billings (1999), Tate (1997) argues racism is normative behavior and natural to people's culture in the United States.

CRT is valuable to my theoretical framework because it is compatible with a strength-based approach to examine the effectiveness of White teachers with their Black students. By contrast, a deficit model provides excuses for why Black students achieve at lower rates than White students, as well as assumes Black students arrive at school with deficits due to socio-economic status and race-related issues (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Yosso, 2006). A strength-based approach focuses on factors external to students such as unequal access to resources or unequal expectations that could be impacting students.

Using the CRT framework, Ladson-Billings (1999) uses CRT to examine teacher preparation programs and deduce that these programs lack in the fundamental foundations needed to properly train new teachers in culturally sensitive/relevant pedagogy and prepare them for the challenges they will face when working with minority students. In her study, Ladson-Billings (1999) proposes four main tenants of CRT: racism has become the norm to American culture; CRT employs storytelling to examine the foundation of racism in America; there is an insistence on a "critique of liberalism," which means the current system in place in the United States is not able to make the changes necessary to thwart racism; and finally, "CRT argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation" (p. 213). For example, affirmative action

has proven to benefit mostly White women (Guy-Shefall, 1993), which, in turn, benefits White people. Following Ladson-Billing's research, I will use her application of CRT when examining the effectiveness of the teachers in this study.

Since this study examined the effectiveness of White secondary school teachers to teach their Black students, the use of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory (2006) is used in tandem with Critical Race Theory to understand challenges of educating multicultural students. Yosso (2006) uses a "strength-based perspective" when examining teachers' interactions with their students. Examining what the teachers are doing correctly in a classroom instead of why Black students are not achieving at the same levels as White students enables this strength-based approach. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory defines "six forms of cultural capital: aspiration, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance" (Yosso, 2006). I included all six forms of cultural capital in my interview questions; they became the basis for the examination of emerging themes.

Summary

Research has demonstrated that the educational system was implemented to foster democratization but also to colonize native and non-White citizens. Predictably, over time, gaps in educational achievement arose such that wealthier students and White students achieved higher scores than their counterparts. Despite Supreme Court edicts first, that education must be separate but equal, and later that it must be integrated and equal – many factors indicate public schools are neither integrated nor equal. Schools remain racially segregated. And the achievement gap between White and Black students persists. As scholars seek solutions to both of these problems – one promising approach –

and one addressed by this study is examining how geographically isolated Black students can be taught effectively by White teachers. To examine these particular teaching methods that can reduce the achievement gap, both Critical Race Theory and Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth theory were utilized.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Becoming a teacher can be a difficult craft to acquire. Much to the chagrin of teachers everywhere, George Bernard Shaw (1903) famously wrote in his drama *Man and Superman*, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." This statement has historically allowed people to belittle teachers and make a mockery of the teaching profession and those who have chosen to pursue it. Any teacher in his/her first year of teaching can attest that teaching is not for the faint of heart nor something one just decides to do and ends up doing well. It takes courage, perseverance and a strong pedagogical foundation in order to succeed; teacher education programs strive to create this pedagogical foundation. However, studies express many teachers do not have a strong foundation in multicultural education and how to teach to anything other than the White, middle-class norms by which most teacher preparatory programs are established (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b; Pinder, 2012). To address this gap in teacher preparation, this study sought to find White teachers who teach in classrooms with predominantly Black students, and who have proven to be effective teachers of Black students.

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to examine and identify "best-practices" and strategies most commonly employed by White teachers who effectively teach Black students. Due to the large Black-White achievement gap and the fact that most Black students are taught by White teachers, the need for the research and the resulting evidence-based practices on this subject becomes an integral and necessary conversation on multicultural education in teaching programs (Delpit, 2006, 2013;

Douglas et al., 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b; NCES, 2015b: Yosso, 2006). The following chapter details the basic interpretive qualitative methodology I used to examine the purpose of this study. It includes the research design, research questions, detailed description of my setting and participant selection process, the data collection process as well as how I analyzed the data once attained. This chapter concludes with an acknowledgement of my own biases and how these impact this study.

Research Design

The research methodology used for this qualitative study was a basic interpretative design (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The basic function of qualitative research is "to make sense of phenomena from the participant's perspective" (Merriam & Associates, 2002; p. 6). This model was used because I am interested in, "understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 6). Specifically, I wanted to understand the "perspectives and worldviews" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p.6) of the participants in this study and how they view their role in the classroom as a White teacher of primarily Black students.

The data sources I used for this research include administrative feedback and commentary, pre-interview questionnaires and individual face-to face iterative interviews.

Research Questions

RSCH Q 1- What are the experiences of White secondary teachers working with Black students in a small, southern community?

RSCH Q 2- What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success?

Setting

      The study took place in a secondary school comprised of grades 9-12 in the Southeast United States. The public school district is a county system and serves all students within the county. The county is located between two neighboring counties that have both a county school system as well as a city school system. Each of these other counties resides approximately 20-30 miles outside of the town center and, according to the United States Census Quick Facts (n.d.), has 117,406 residents and 44,451 residents; these other counties could be considered more "urban" than the county being studied.

      Comparatively, the research site's county has a population of 15,457. The setting is a small, rural county population-wise, but encompasses 498 square miles of land. The primary economy is agriculture. The county does not have a widely diverse population with 61.4% of the residents being White, 35.2% are Black and 6.2% are Hispanic or Latino. 21.6% of the population is under the age of 18 or considered school-aged. The median household income is $38,285. 85.1% of the residents are high school graduates while 17.8% have a Bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Quick Facts, n.d.).

      Even though the setting is in a large land mass county, the actual "city" or town the school system resides in is comprised of a main street that bisects the two sides of the downtown area. When one imagines small-town U.S.A., this is the picture they most likely see. Many of the original buildings are still standing and used for various locally-owned businesses from restaurants and pharmacies to boutiques and insurance agencies. As one continues down this thoroughfare through town, she may be impressed by classic mansions now converted into media studios and flower shops. The end of town is concluded with a true Southern Gothic style courthouse straight out of the pages of

Southern Living; at the time of the research, the courthouse lawn and sidewalks are festooned with a plethora of American flags honoring their local veterans. Spanish moss drapes the tress and a feeling of nostalgia and the way things used to be will encompass a person while wandering through this area of town. Like is normal in most southern towns, beautiful houses are neighbored to places not as well taken care of, and there are certain parts of town, like "The Circle," that are government subsidized housing. There are three main areas like this in town, while the outlying areas and smaller towns which comprise the county are dotted with pricier real estate enveloped by family farms.

The county school district serves approximately 2,200 students which includes six schools: one Early Learning Center for Pre-K students, two K-5 elementary schools, one middle school serving grades 6-8, one high school for grades 9-12, and one alternative school serving students in grades 6-12.

The high school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The following data is taken from both the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (n.d.) and The National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) for the 2018-2019 school year. Since there was a global pandemic during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year, the data provided by state and national agencies concentrates on the 2018-2019 school year because standardized testing and reporting did not occur for the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the high school served 486 students. 260 of these students were male while 226 were female. The racial demographics of the school consist of 53% Black, 32% White, and 12% Hispanic students. Please note the difference between the county racial demographics and that of the high school. It should be noted

the county is located close enough to its two neighboring counties that some students who should attend this school based on where they live attend schools in these neighboring districts. 39% of the students at the high school are considered economically disadvantaged. However, since the school district participates in the Community Eligibility Provision, all students receive free breakfasts and lunches. 12% of the school's population is Students with Disabilities (SWD) and 2% are English Language Learners (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, n.d.). During the 2018-2019 school year, the research site had one principal, two assistant principals, one counselor and one instructional coach.

The high school is the newest building in the district and was constructed in 2009. Upon entering the high school, one goes into a large cafeteria area that can also be used as an atrium for community events. To the right of the atrium is a large spectator gymnasium and, to the left, is the academic wing. The school website explains the school offers traditional coursework in all academic areas. Also, students who qualify can participate in the dual enrollment program and attend college level academic and career technical education courses with partnering institutions in the area; these classes allow students to attain post-secondary credit hours as well as high school credits. The school also offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses in all academic areas, as well as the Advanced Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program. The high school offers many Career and Technical Education (CTAE) pathways including agriculture, culinary, healthcare sciences, marketing and fine arts.

The site has a rich history of being a football town and the high school football team is a symbol of town pride. The team has won ten regional championships and two

state championships. The football stadium is located in the middle of town and is a focal point for most residents of this small community who can be found basking under the Friday night lights during home football games. These events draw an abundance of community members; athletic events are often more attended than academic engagements.

I have a personal connection to this high school as it is where I ventured from being a classroom teacher into the world of school leadership; I was an instructional coach for one year at this site. This was my first year in this school district as well as in leadership. I was transferred to the middle school the following year where I became an assistant principal. The high school was chosen as the research site due to my no longer being at that school or working with those teachers in a leadership capacity. Also, almost all of my years in the classroom were in the secondary setting, so this is where I became interested in this research topic. Moreover, the thought-provoking backdrop of the South and the still visible segregation of school systems provided a catalyst for examining how teachers effectively teach Black children in these circumstances, and allowed me to evaluate common trends against similar research presented from more urban areas.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to evaluate effective teaching strategies of White teachers to help Black students excel. I interviewed six White teachers selected by their administrative staff to investigate their experiences teaching Black students and the role they play as White teachers in facilitating Black students' success. The administration identified nine teachers who met the criteria for being effective White teachers of Black

students. Through availability and discussions of comfort-level of the study's topic with these teachers, six teachers agreed to complete the interviews.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants in the teacher interviews. Purposeful sampling is fundamental to understanding the direct experiences of White teachers with Black students (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Using portions of Ladson-Billings' (2009) sampling techniques for her research in *The Dream-keepers,* I asked the principal and his administrative team to identify all of the White teachers who are the most effective at teaching Black students. The criteria for selection included:

- teaches classes with a majority of Black students

- effects gains in student achievement as measured by standardized test scores and grades, and

- maintains positive student and parental relationships

These criteria mirror information teachers are evaluated on by their administrators. Once the principal's list was submitted, I emailed all of the teachers asking if they would be willing to participate in this study (see Appendix A).

A list of nine teachers was provided to me and personal face-to-face interviews occurred with six of the nine teachers. Three of the teachers recommended by the administrative team did not want to participate in the study. Even though this was not part of the overall selection process, the interview participants were comprised of two male teachers, four female teachers, two social science teachers, one English teacher, one Math teacher and two Science teachers. Two of the participants were also coaches. All of these

factors delivered rich data sources with multiple viewpoints and real-life experiences from which to draw upon.

The interview participant contact information was collected from the principal (see Appendix B for the principal email invitation). A study recruitment e-mail was created and sent to the participants (see Appendix A for the initial recruitment e-mail for potential interview participants). The selected candidates submitted their acceptance to participate in the study via e-mail. Once the acceptance was received, a pre-survey questionnaire was given to the participants; this information is included in Table 1 (see Appendix C for the pre-survey questionnaire). All participants were given a pseudonym.

Table 1 *Pre-Interview Teacher Questionnaire*

Research Participants	Gender	Age	Years Teaching	Years at Current School	Highest Degree Attained	Born
Jennifer	Female	32	6	5	Bachelor's Degree	Columbia, MD
Judy	Female	34	9	5	Bachelor's Degree	Orlando, FL
John	Male	45	22	4	Bachelor's Degree	Rockledge, FL
Jessica	Female	46	19	2	Bachelor's Degree	Tampa, FL
Jan	Female	53	23	9	Specialist Degree	Deland, FL
Jacob	Male	31	7	6	Specialist Degree	Brunswick, GA

Data Collection

Data Collection occurred during the fall semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Face-to-face individual interviews were the primary sources of data collection for this

study. Additionally, all participants were asked to submit an initial questionnaire prior to the interviews. The teacher selection was based on teachers who

- teach classes with a majority of Black students

- effect gains in student achievement as measured by standardized test scores and grades, and

- maintain positive student and parental relationships

These criteria mirror information teachers are evaluated on by their administrators.

Six teachers were selected based on the nine teachers provided by the administrative team; three of the recommended teachers chose not to participate in the study. The interview consisted of one semi-structured, iterative interview; interviews lasted for approximately 90-120 minutes. All participants were given a copy of their interview transcription upon completion to examine for accuracy.

Consent to Participate in Study

Before beginning the interviews, participants were asked to verify they are 18 years or older. During the audiotaped interviews, I read aloud the consent statement to participants. The transcripts document the reading of the consent as this is required documentation that participants were informed. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were reminded not to identify themselves or others during the audio taped interviews (see Appendix D for the consent script). Willingness to continue with the interview was considered consent.

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Interview Process

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Seidman (2013) simply states, "I interview because I am interested in other people's stories" (p. 7). The main reason why I chose qualitative research as my vehicle

to learning more about multicultural education and what makes a White teacher an effective educator to Black students, is because I learn better from stories. People encapsulate their experiences, thoughts and beliefs within their stories. I have frequently been taught by mentors and leaders that telling people your story is the best way to let them get to know you and feel a connection with you. Purely, people's personal stories create buy-in and belief. After all, if this worked for this teacher and he/she is a successful educator, then there must be some validity to what is being said.

I did not just want to collect test data from a plethora of teachers and evaluate who was the best teacher based on test scores. I can produce numbers to support or deny most anything examined, but I wanted a rich explanation of how the teacher came to be known as such a good educator within his/her school. Likewise, I desired the personal touch only human interaction and story-telling can provide. The most important aspect of this research and what I wanted to gain from it is the "lived experiences" of the participants and how they create meaning from this (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013). Through these experiences, I found common threads and themes emerge that can be used to help future educators better educate ALL students. Also, as Seidman (2013) explains, little educational research is done using the voices of the people who are experiencing it every day.

As researchers and people who want to answer the all-encompassing question of how to best educate our children, why would we not go straight to the source? Thus, the selection for teacher interviews was an obvious way to gain the experiences of the people who quite possibly influence education the most.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire & Document Review

Before the interview with the teachers, the participants completed a pre-interview questionnaire. This gave me basic information about the participants (age, race, places lived, degrees attained, etc.). This served two purposes: one, we do not waste valuable interview time establishing these details, and two, this gives background information that can better establish the experiences the participants bring to the interviews (see Appendix E for the interview participant questionnaire).

Also, I reviewed documentation of the research site's academic progress. Specifically, I evaluated the data provided by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), which gave me a detailed account of the research site's academic achievements. Specifically, GOSA displays the school's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) and how they are rated compared to other schools in the state. Since the state did not use CCRPIs last year due to a global pandemic, this information came from the 2018-2019 school year.

Interviews

Interviewing is the most used and practical practice in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013). Patton (2002) explains, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). In this study, I used one personal face-to-face semi-structured interview with iterative questioning per subject. The semi-structured process allowed for a more personal feel, and this encouraged participants to unwrap their thoughts and experiences as the interview progressed. The interviews lasted approximately 90-120 minutes and progressed in a systematic/iterative fashion through the use of three phases.

Phase one of the interview examined their current experience as a teacher and what they do within a classroom/ their teaching style. Phase two of the interview focused on the life history of the participants. Understanding where the participants originate and how this influences their current profession is a vital first step to examining how they became the type of teacher they are currently. Phase three questions specifically examined what experiences and role the teachers play in facilitating Black students' success (see Appendix E for interview questions).

The interviews took place within my office. Due to a recent incident at the research site involving an assignment that involved Race, the participants voiced they would be more comfortable at a site away from their school. They chose my school office because it is convenient to get to and afforded us privacy throughout the interview. Interestingly, many of the teachers at my school do not know many of the teachers in the study. The interview time was mutually decided upon based on the participant's availability. After a decided-upon date and time, I sent a friendly reminder via text and e-mail to the participants reminding them of the interview and that it would last from 90 to 120 minutes.

During the individual interviews, I used an audio recording device to capture all of the discussion. This enabled me to take notes throughout the interview which were later used to enhance discussion topics and find common themes among the participant's answers. Following each interview, I used a memoing notebook to write down any thoughts, reactions, feelings or unexpected directions the interview took (Maxwell, 2013).

Participant Confidentiality and Data Security

The participants were not identified within the study; they were given pseudonyms. There is no risk for civil or criminal liability for involvement nor were participants impacted financially or risked damage to their reputation through involvement. The interviews were transcribed by a transcription service and I protected participant anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and a voice recorder app on a Microsoft Surface. I used both machines to simultaneously record in case one of them stopped working and I did not realize it. The software on the Microsoft Surface is secure and password protected, so there is no chance of accidental streaming or public sharing. Immediately following the interviews, the audio-recordings were transcribed for data analysis by a transcription service. In addition, audio files were secured to a locked and password-protected hard drive. A duplicate of all files was copied to a password-protected computer for backup purposes. After three years, the data will be permanently deleted from the password-protected hard drive and computer.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data collection and data analysis is a simultaneous occurrence in qualitative research; it must begin immediately upon completing your first interview or observation and continue throughout the entire data collecting process (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2014; Maxwell, 2018; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013). Thus, I used field notes taken during the interviews, and memoing and coding throughout data collection to analyze data provided by the interviews.

In addition to field notes while the interviews were taking place, upon completion of these encounters, I memoed about the interview citing items, mannerisms or characteristics I thought were interesting or influential to the process. Each interview was transcribed immediately after its conclusion by a transcription service, so the coding and memoing occurred while information was still fresh from the interview. This process permitted the qualitative study to be a "continuous, iterative process" (Miles et al., 2020, p.10) needed to garner appropriate and adequate data and data analysis. All recordings were destroyed upon completion of transcription. Miles et al. (2020) provides a six step common approach to qualitative analysis:

1. Assigning codes or themes to a set of field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and/or visual data

2. Sorting and sifting through these coded materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, categories, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences

3. Isolating these patterns and processes, and commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection

4. Noting reflections or other remarks in jottings, analytic memos, and/or journals

5. Gradually elaborating a refined set of assertions, propositions, categories, themes, concepts, and generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database

6. Comparing those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of concepts or theories (pp. 6-7)

This tactic was created from the conglomeration of commonly applied qualitative data analysis procedures founded by ideas from influential qualitative researchers like Glaser (1965), who favored an inductive approach, or Strauss (1987), who favored a systemic procedure and validation approach. This three-phased approach was employed to ascertain initial themes within the research and then three umbrella themes encompassing the smaller themes.

Interview Questions/Protocols

The interview protocol is researcher created. The questions fashioned for the interview protocol come from a collection of dissertations focused on similar issues of student race, teacher race and effectiveness of teaching (Harding, 2006; Lipsey, 2013; McKay, 2004; Sabnis, 2016; Walker, 2020). I used the questions from these dissertations as well as information from my literature review to formulate the interview questions(see Appendix E for interview questions).

I used my research questions as the basis for what I wanted to learn from the participants. I also used Ladson-Billings (2009) research framework to help guide this process. Specifically, I pulled questions from each of the dissertations that related to my research questions and placed them on a document; there were approximately 70 questions on this document. I deleted repeat, similar or superfluous questions. I then revised each question and edited them to relate directly to my research. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory's six forms of cultural capital (2006) were also used to construct questions. Finally, questions were placed in either phase one, two or three of the interview protocol.

Often times discussions of racial issues immediately stir mixed emotions in people and causes an uncomfortable air to the discussion. There has been much research done about culturally-relevant pedagogy and what is not happening within classrooms related to this, but instead of focusing on the nots and negatives, I wanted to explore this research with a more positive approach. Hence the research questions and the view of what these teachers are doing correctly to better educate students of color. Consequently, this strength-based approach was used when creating the interview protocol.

The initial questions or phase one questions were constructed to open teachers up to the conversation about to take place as well as gain insight into their lives growing up as this can have a significant impact on how they currently view the world, which consequently effects their teaching (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Phase two questions examined their current experience as a teacher and what they do within a classroom/ their teaching style. Finally, phase three questions considered if they think they teach Black students better than other teachers and why they think that is. The questions were iterative and changed/evolved based on the answers given by the participants.

Approval to Conduct Study

Prior to the initiation of the study, full IRB approval was attained by Valdosta State University and by the school district where this study is situated. This study adhered to the guidelines involving human subjects, and was compliant with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations, 45 CFR § 46.102 (2009) (see Appendix F & G for approvals).

The study is deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants and the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research will not be greater than any ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research has been the topic for many debates and is often questioned by naturalists (Creswell, 2014; Detering & Waters, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). However, researchers like Guba (1981) have found using comparative but alternate terminology, like credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, for quantitative research analysis to be useful when discussing the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Maxwell (2013) argues the importance of examining any possible biases and looking at ways to fix this instead of basing the biases off of the methods used. I employed the following measures to make sure there was little threat to validity of the research: memos, respondent validation, triangulation, iterative questioning, peer debriefing, tactics to ensure honesty, peer scrutiny of the research project, collecting rich data, and researcher-interviewer.

Memos

Maxwell (2013) explains a researcher should memo throughout the data collection and analysis process because "memos not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights" (p. 105). Detering & Waters (2018) call these respondent-level memos and use these after every interview or encounter so themes and categories can be identified when further analyzing the data across the multiple mediums used. Again, this is a process that continues throughout the

research. Thus, I memoed throughout every portion of this research. These memos were insightful to my thought process throughout the entirety of the research, especially after encounters with research subjects, and enabled for specific thoughts to be re-examined several times after the interviews; some of the initial "ah-hahs" could have been lost if not immediately memoed and proved to be critical when re-examining the interview transcripts. It also enabled me to regularly reflect on the interview process and record ideas as they arose. After having completed all of the interviews, I used the memos from each encounter to help establish initial common themes.

Respondent Validation

Maxwell (2013) emphasized respondent validation as 'the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on" (p. 127). Transcripts were sent to the participants upon their completion. Participants had a week to examine the transcript and make sure it was accurate.

Triangulation

Triangulation was used by gathering data with different methods (Maxwell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). The use of six teachers in the study coupled with pre-interview questionnaires and information on the study site were important to validating the research. The answers from multiple participants allowed me to compare what the teachers said and see if common themes emerged from them. The triangulation of the methods used to gather data (documents, pre-interview questionnaire and interviews), the difference in participants and the iterative process of the triangulation provided a plethora of data to compare.

Iterative Questioning

Shenton (2004) refers to iterative questioning as the rephrasing of previously asked questions to identify falsehoods in the answers or questionable data. The interviews followed this iterative process. I had a set of prepared questions formulated from the research questions to guide the interviews, but there were also questions embedded into the interview to help clarify answers or go deeper into the subject being discussed. This also enabled me to return to previous questions if subsequent answers did not seem to follow previous answers.

Peer Debriefing

I regularly communicated with my dissertation chair/researcher by email and video chats to discuss particular questions and discuss the progress of my research. My research was also vetted by a dissertation committee to make sure the research methods, data gathering and data analysis were properly constructed throughout the research process. In addition to scholars at my own institution, I enlisted the guidance/assistance of a friend who is a researcher and professor in the social sciences at a major university. She was able to read the research plan with a discerning eye as she is not related to the research, my institution or this field of study in any way, so she also brought a fresh lens to the research and enabled me to see the holes in my research or lack of transferability. I also regularly enlisted the ears of classmates and other scholars known to me to flesh out ideas and bring other perspectives to the research.

Tactics to Ensure Honesty

Honesty of the participants is an important facet of validity, because the theories and themes discovered from the research are based off the comments of human people,

which is subjective and can be untruthful. I gave all participants the opportunity to refuse participation in the study "so as to ensure that the data collection sessions involve only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely" (Shenton, 2004, p. 66). I also explained their names will not be used in order to protect their identities and I am an independent researcher, so I asked them to please be as honest and forward with their thoughts as possible. Participants were reminded of this throughout the process (Shenton, 2004).

Collecting Rich Data

The interviews were approximately 90 to 120 minutes in length allowing me the time to collect "rich data" (Shenton, 2004). All interviews and forums were immediately transcribed upon completion, so I was able to repeatedly examine direct quotes from the participants. I also took copious field notes during the data gathering, and I used memos after each interaction with a candidate as well as while doing cursory readings of transcripts.

Researcher-Interviewer

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the practices that effective White teachers of Black students perform within the educational setting to help students of color past the achievement gap, school to prison pipeline and other social, political and personal obstacles all students face. As a teacher for nine years and administrator for four, I derived the interest in this topic from personal experience.

I am a passionate person who puts her heart into most things, especially my career of teaching and administrating. This dissertation topic is no different; the interest in this research topic stems from passion, interest, and the desire to know more and be better in

my chosen career/craft. It would be silly to think that my personal experiences would not influence or present a bias toward the research questions or focus of the research. Acknowledging who I am not only as a White educator, but White woman, mother, wife, community member and friend is integral to understanding my purpose for this research and passion behind educating children.

My upbringing was what a White-privileged lens perspective may consider "normal." Let me clarify that at the time of my upbringing, I completely thought I was normal. I was raised in a stable two-parent home and was the middle of three privileged children. We did not have the newest and the best of everything, but we certainly always had everything we needed and most of what we wanted. I never experienced the fear of knowing I wouldn't be eating over the weekend or the desire to be in school because I did not receive the love and guidance of strong parental units at home: quite the opposite.

My mother was a stay-at-home mom until I was in the 5th grade, and my father worked a white-collar job. At precisely 6:00 pm every night, we would sit in our designated seats around our dinner table and consume a delicious homemade concoction my mom had whipped up for us. We would converse about our days as the sound of the local evening news rang in the background. I was always secure in the fact that I would have cute/clean clothes to wear, enjoyable food to eat by a Betty Crocker enthusiast and a warm bed, in a room of my own, that I could rest safely in every night.

I had strict rules to live by and parents that regularly enforced those rules; it was a 3.5 or we didn't drive kind of a house and mom and dad didn't hesitate taking the car away if we had a 3.4 (note that my sister and I had a car we shared throughout high school…we had to pay for the gas, but my parents purchased the car and insurance for

us). My parents instilled a strong work ethic in all of their children requiring us to maintain our grades, be involved in extracurricular activities and have a job. I will never forget the day my sister came home from 8th grade stating to all of us at dinner, "…did you know that you don't have to go to college…like, it is not a requirement?" My mom promptly explained that in our house it was required even if she was told it is really an option. Thus, all three of us attended college. We have gone on to be a Colonel in the Air Force (my older sister), an educational administrator pursuing a doctoral degree (me), and an Emergency Room doctor (my younger brother). I do not say all of this to brag about our exceptional lives but rather to set the premise for why delving into the world of education was such a rude awakening for my privileged self.

Upon graduating from a Big Ten University and after becoming a chagrined Membership Director of a Country Club, my sister asked me to come watch her house and dog while she deployed overseas. Fifteen years later she has lived in six places since and I am happily and permanently "stationed" in the locale where I was only intended to dog sit for a few months. I quickly realized I had always wanted to be a teacher, but had not thought it a glamourous enough position at 20-years-old when you are asked to decide what you want to do for the rest of your life. Hence, enter my life into education. My first job was in a small, agricultural community. We had approximately 60% White students and 40% Black students. I had never student-taught, because I was participating in a program where I could teach at the same time as receiving my Master's degree and renewable teacher certification. Similarly to other educators, it was a wild ride that first year. On the way home after work most days, I wavered between crying and trying to keep myself awake from pure exhaustion. I expected all of this; something I did not

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expect was to be so completely lacking in knowledge of other cultures. I mean, I am a smart, college-educated woman. Even though I graduated high school with 600 people and only two of them were Black, I went to a major university where I was friends with many Black people. I often thought I was well-cultured, well-educated and would NEVER be considered racist. How could such an educated, open-minded person not realize how completely white-washed her life had been?

My first year as an educator quickly taught me that I had lived not only a privileged life, but an almost perfect life to this point. I had never experienced real trauma, the death of a loved one, homelessness, hunger or the numerous other hardships many students face on a daily basis. If I am being completely transparent, not much has changed in my adult life either. We have of course withstood the inevitable losses of loved ones and people you know as you get older, and I am not saying everything is always perfect, because Lord knows that is not true, but when compared to some of my students, it is pretty darn close. I married a wonderful man fourteen years ago and we are still happily married today, we have two beautiful sons almost exactly two years apart, we both have stable and successful jobs and we are never without what we need or want. I am living the life I was meant to have, and honestly the only life I have ever known, but the first year of teaching was an eye-opening experience that shook the foundations of my belief-system and made me realize the privileged life I had led to this point. It is such a contrast to the lives of so many of my students, and the sad fact is that this is more the "norm" than my White-washed "normal" life I had been living.

I stayed in my first school system for four years. Even though there was a higher number of White students enrolled than Black, it was still very surprising to me to have

50% of my students be Black. I then went to a city school system where the demographics were 85% Black and 15% White, and the school system I reside in now is about 70% Black and 30 % White. For someone who had at one time had so little knowledge of different cultures, what White privilege means and multicultural education, I have worked primarily with Students of Color for most of my educational career. This stands in stark contrast to the 0.003% of Black students who populated the school system where I was raised.

I know if I had been better equipped and better prepared to teach students of color, those first years would have been much better, and, not better for me, but better for my students. This is where my passion and drive for this research originates. I am also an administrator in the district where the research is taking place and my children attended school there for a year. Thus, I have formed my own opinions about the educational experience within the research site. I acknowledge strong passion for the research topic coupled with a knowledge of the research site provides me with numerous biases that I bring to the research.

Because I am aware of these biases, I chose to attack this topic from Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth Model and focus on the positive contributions Students of Color bring to education in addition to positive experiences found with their White teachers instead of using a deficit-thinking ideology to examine this research. Also, I only worked at the actual research site for one year before moving to another school. There has been turnover and new teachers since then, so I figured I would not know many of the participants; however, the administrative team selected all teachers except for one who had been teaching at the school when I worked there. I had to forget

my initial notions of these teachers and purely analyze the data based on their answers, not what I knew of them. By acknowledging these biases and keeping them at the forefront of this research throughout the whole process, I was able to negate their influence on the data and data analysis.

Summary

This qualitative study used the basic interpretive design. Preliminary questionnaires, semi-structured individual interviews and school data were used to gather data. Data analysis occurred through memoing, coding and categorizing. Trustworthiness and validity were examined using memos, respondent validation, triangulation, iterative questioning, peer debriefing, tactics to ensure honesty, collecting rich data and researcher-interviewer. The data collection and analysis of the participants elucidated the experiences of the participants and allowed me to discuss further implications of this research for teachers, leaders and educational agencies.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine "best-practices" and identify strategies commonly employed by effective White teachers of Black students. The first three chapters provided an introduction to the problem of an achievement gap between Black and White students that has not been aptly addressed nor fixed since educational reform has become a topic of interest, a review of literature relevant to the study that shows how inequality in education has affected many aspects of the educational process for students of color, and the methodology employed for the collection and analysis of this data. This chapter will provide the results of the findings and themes that developed as well as profiles of the six teacher participants.

Six teachers participated in individual face-to-face interviews. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed by a transcription service upon their completion. A memoing notebook was used during the interview process in order to capture any significant moments or interesting thoughts portrayed by the participants throughout the interviews. This initiated the first step of analysis and enabled a cursory exploration of possible commonalities and themes in the participants' answers. A matrix was used during the data analysis portion where three phases of coding took place to discern common phrases and themes among the participants' answers based on the research questions.

Data Analysis and Findings

Six secondary school teachers participated in the study through a face-to-face individual interview format. The face-to-face interviews consisted of semi-structured

interview questions allowing teachers to share their experiences of being an effective White teacher of Black students in a small Southern town. Before the interview, teachers answered a pre-interview questionnaire designed to get simple background information on their personal education and previous teaching experience. During the interviews, participants were assigned a pseudonym.

Profiles of Participants

Jan

Jan has been a teacher for 23 years. She teaches high school history and social studies; she teaches both Accelerated Placement (AP) and regular education courses. She has been teaching at her current school for nine years and her highest degree of education is a Specialist Degree. Jan identifies as a White female. She was raised in a small town, similar to the one in which she now teaches: small, exceptionally rural, agrarian, Title I and mostly comprised of White and Black people with a few Hispanic people. She briefly left the area after getting married because her husband was in the military, but returned as she knew this is where home really was for her.

Jan comes from a long line of teachers who instilled a love of education and teaching in her from an early age. She reminisces on her mother and aunt giving her a strong foundation for what a good teacher looks like:

> My mama, she was a saint. If she knew a kid didn't have a jacket or something like that, my mom would go purchase one. If she needed to take them home after school, she would take them home after school. These are the kind of things I would see my mom doing while I was growing up. I didn't think anything of it because I thought it was just the norm, but there were other teachers that there is

no way that is going to happen. Same thing with my aunt, once I got to high school, my aunt did the same thing.

She has taught in a few other districts, but all were similar in size and racial make-up to her current district. Jan prefers a smaller school and school district and states that "students are just numbers" in a larger school. She says in a smaller school:

You know their names. You know their families. You know the families know you. 'Oh, yeah, I taught so and so five years ago.' I remember you, your family or whatever. It makes it a little bit easier to communicate with parents if you ever have to do a parent-teacher conference or just call them about a grade. It does make it a lot easier.

Jan believes a good teacher "just teaches them," and does not feel she teaches White and Black students differently. Every school she has worked in has been a similar racial make-up of roughly 70% Black and 30% White students. Jan's values system stems primarily from a firm belief in Christian values and she strongly believes that if you are a student in her class, you are a student; nothing else matters to her and she teaches all students the same.

Jacob

Jacob has been a teacher for seven years, all at the school he is at now except for his first year. He teaches 11th grade U.S. History to high school students by day, and he is a football coach by afternoon. He can often be found on the corner where his room is located waving at kids and engaging in conversations about pretty much everything. Much of what he uses in the classroom he ascertained from his time on the gridiron. He states when he is coaching:

All you have is the relationships you get with those kids. There's no content. There's no testing. There's no standards. It's, when you say come here, your voice has to mean something to them. I was doing that before I started teaching, so that's what molded me. I remember, when I started in my cohort, people were student teaching, and they're like, 'The kids don't listen.' I'm like, 'No. My kids listen.' I didn't just walk into a classroom, and I was a teacher. I had to see the role that humor can play with kids. If you will laugh with kids, they will listen to you. Teaching is what it was in those earliest of days coaching football.

Teaching is what he expected it to be from the beginning, and he realizes that "They don't always need you to teach them U.S. History. Sometimes, they just need you to be a responsible adult."

Jacob identifies as a White male and was born and raised in a similar area to where he now teaches: a poor, rural community in the Southeastern United States. He has lived within the same state throughout his life. The one major difference between where he was raised and where he now works is the racial make-up. He attended school with mostly White people and where he works and lives now has a racial make-up of approximately 70% Black and 30% White. Jacob's highest degree is a Specialist Degree in Education.

Jacob decided to become a teacher after being influenced by a teacher and coach who took him in and treated him like family. He remembers:

I was influenced by a teacher and a coach. That's what I wanted to do. He showed me, because I grew up in a single-wide trailer where you could see the bricks, and I'd go to his house, and we'd play golf. Then he lived right across the street from

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the golf course, and I'm looking around. I'm like, he's got a whole house out here with a driveway. I saw the joy that he had in teaching, and then I saw the things that a professional salary gave him…I was heavily influenced by a really good teacher.

Jacob thinks "kids need good teachers" and he strives to provide his students and athletes with a role model who they can look up to and emulate like he had when in high school. Last year, he was given the prestigious honor of the high school Teacher of the Year and remembers students cheering loudly for him when it was announced. He subscribes to the philosophy that "nobody should walk away in a worse mood after they talk to you," and he makes sure to enforce that every day with each of his students.

Jessica.

Jessica has been a teacher for 19 years and has led a life of diverse experiences and backgrounds due to the numerous places she has lived as well as taught. She has been at her current school for two years, and it is by far the smallest district she has ever worked in. Growing up in larger cities gave her an understanding of diversity through multiple lenses. She states, "One of the things I've enjoyed about living around is you have an idea of what goes on. You have a bigger picture of possibilities and options and things." Her life experiences have added to her passion for her students and her career.

Similar to other participants, she has people in her life who were in the educational field including a grandfather who was a principal and a mother who was a counseling secretary. Her principles stem largely from her Christian beliefs and she says, "I want people to know they have a value, and they have a worth. I think education is important. I always tell people that's what gives you a ticket to go somewhere."

Jessica started her collegiate career pursuing engineering, but quickly realized she was a minority in a male-driven career field and could not make the impact she desired to in engineering. Becoming a math teacher seemed like a way she could both affect change and use the skills she had already established in college. Her teaching career started in a large western city where she mostly taught transient students who were not from that area. She taught students from all walks of life, especially Hispanic students. When she moved back to the Southeastern United States, she experienced less diversity and primarily taught Black students. She encountered many differences from her previous teaching experiences, but she states the most important thing is to, "Care about people, be considerate of people, try to—I don't know—see the good in them, find the good things. We all have problems. Let's don't look at the bad stuff. Let's try to find the good stuff."

Jessica believes in her students and their ability to do well in school and find success upon graduation: "I always tell my kids that I'm willing to help you as long as you're willing to try." She explains that her students do not often think of her as the favorite because she has high expectations for them, but they will come back to her after her class and thank her for making them try harder; maturity affords them the ability to see the influence her hard-work tactics and beliefs allows them to accomplish. She states, "That's not my goal, is to be your friend or your favorite, but I want to make sure that I help you be successful and learn to be a little bit self-reliant." Jessica had a favorite teacher in high school who said the class would be harder than any college course she took, and even though it was a struggle and stressful, she learned the importance of setting high standards for her students and making them believe they are capable of achieving those high standards. Jessica says

…part of why I like my job is trying to just—to care about kids. I'm not going to push anything on those, but just to let them know, 'Somebody cares about you and that there is—no matter what, you've got some value to you. You've got something that's worth something. You've got something to give people.'

Jennifer

Jennifer has been a teacher for six years. She is not currently at the same worksite as the other teachers in the study, but this is her first year not working at that site. The administrators chose Jennifer because she is very open with her opinions and was considered a highly effective White teacher of Black students while she was at the research site. Her administrators stated she was able to build relationships and bonds with students that made them feel safe and cared about. She currently works in a large city with students who have been "identified with a mental health disorder or some kind of mental health barrier that's keeping them from fully enjoying their daily life, and they reside in a residence."

Coming from a long line of people in the medical field, Jennifer explains she "really didn't understand what I wanted to be, but sometimes when I would play with my dolls or—Beanie Babies were a big thing—I was always a teacher." Her father was a doctor and often said that being a teacher was nice and valiant but did not pay the bills, so she threw that idea to the side. However, when Jennifer was in her secondary school years, her entire life changed. She moved from a metropolitan East Coast city to a small Southeastern town. Then her father became sick with cancer and eventually died. Although traumatizing, these events helped shape Jennifer into the caring, understanding

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and influential educator she is today. She experienced trauma similar to that of many students and she is able to identify and help them through some difficult episodes.

Jennifer said it was very random how she actually ended up at the research site. Her stepfather knew many people in a surrounding district because he was a coach and teacher there, but they do not often hire first-year teachers, so the research site's principal found her application on a teacher job website and called her out of the blue. She says it was all very random but that after getting there, she realized it was all for a reason:

I was needed there for some reason. I don't know why, but I was needed… There was a lot more emotional support and empathy that I could provide that a lot of the other staff either couldn't identify with, was too busy to really reach out and help, or they were just so jaded from their own life experiences that any little problem just seemed like, 'Grow up, get over it.' It's like, 'This is a 14-year-old. You've got to remember, this is still a child. You've got to give hugs.' That was something that I really—that made me very successful, was I could listen, and I could understand.

She uses the same philosophy with her current students who need an advocate not only in school but also their lives. She tells her current students, "'I'm here to support you, and it is all about you,' [which is] the same thing that I did at my previous school [and it] has really helped me be successful."

Jennifer identifies as a cisgender White woman. She has a bachelor's degree and plans on attaining a Master's degree. She is unclear if she will stay in education for the rest of her career, because she thinks there are so many systemic level issues in education that it is a system that cannot be helped, but she stays with it for now because she loves

what she does and she loves her students. Growing up in a larger city next to an Air Force Base, she says, "her friends looked like the new Crayola crayons that are coming out: the colors of me." Teaching students of color was not surprising to her; conversely, moving to the Southeastern United States was and forced her to more closely evaluate Race and how she would be the White teacher. However, she quickly learned that they are all just kids and need loved; do that, and she says you've done your job. She describes her beliefs by saying:

> I guess I've always believed that everybody has a purpose. You're not here by accident. The world has you, so there's a reason for it. It's just always helped me be very open-minded and non-judgmental and, again, really hungry for knowledge and really wanting to learn about other people.

John

John has been a teacher for 22 years. He has been at his current school, the research site, for four years. He has taught in four total school systems throughout his years in education; all have been in the Southeastern United States. He identifies as a White male, has a Bachelor's Degree and did not grow up where he now teaches. The other schools where he has taught have ranged from a very small private school (200 students) to a larger secondary school (2,000 students). He has taught science for most of his career while also being a coach.

John states he became a teacher because he remembers the "coaches and teachers being pretty influential." He also had to declare a major when going from community college to a university, so he decided education suited his likes and abilities. He definitely had teachers who influenced him in a positive way, but unlike the other research

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participants, he did not have educators in his personal life who influenced him to become a teacher. Actually, he had a speech impairment that had him labeled from an early age as someone who may not do well in school or even graduate. One speech pathologist realized his capabilities and that he had been labeled and advised his mom to take him to another school. He did very well in school after this initial hurdle; he was in mostly honors classes throughout the rest of his educational career. Because of this, he explains he did not have many classes with Black students. Throughout elementary school, he had class with the same 25 kids, and only one or two were Black. Then in high school, he again did not have classes with many Black kids because he was in honors. He feels like honors classes was a way to segregate the students and is still used that way.

He explains he is highly structured in the classroom, but, after 22 years in education, he has learned that relationships are the most important way to influence students: "Get to know them. Try to show an interest in their interest. With the African American males, it's sports. They're all into sports. I guess with the females, I just talk. I try to make some type of connection with them." Even though the research site has a reputation among other districts as "rough," John states that he feels the kids are great and rarely has any discipline problems. The biggest problems he faces are students being able to read and learn the necessary material to pass the state exams.

Judy

Judy has been a teacher for nine years in three different school systems. She has been at her current school for five years. The other school's racial make-up where she previously taught was primarily rural, White students. She states that her current school has a larger percentage of Black students than the other two she worked at, but they were

still small, rural counties. She articulates that this school and town are very close to each other; everyone knows everyone and there are no secrets. Whereas at her previous districts people were more transient and did not grow up around there, this district has many more people who grow up here and stay here. She ended up at the research site because she moved to be closer to a friend and knew some people in the district. She was offered the job on the spot. She explains she struggled her first year but has since gotten the hang of it and the area.

Judy has a Bachelor's Degree and identifies as a White female. She grew up in a large city and went to a high school where she was the minority. Since that is all she ever knew, she said she did not really think about it and it did not affect her in any way. When moving to her current district, she felt there would be no problems because she had primarily grown up around Black people. However, she states the differences between the Black city kids she went to school with and the rural Black students she now teaches are many. She actually got in a fight with her friend because he said it is just different here and she thought he was being unfair, but she admits there are cultural differences. Many of her students seem tougher and more street-wise than the people she grew up around, which she thinks is interesting since people often equate those characteristics with urban instead of rural areas.

She initially became a teacher because she likes helping people and she was good at English. Her mother was also a teacher and Judy saw a love for education transpire from an early age; she could often be found helping her mother in her mother's classroom and knew she wanted to teach from a young age.

Judy believes integrity is huge and she feels:

…like if you were setting out to do something that you were meant to do, do it to the best of your abilities; no matter how long you've been doing it… or how good you are at it, you should be doing it to the best of your ability.

She was raised by a father in the Army and a mother in education, so she had strict rules to adhere to and was always expected to do well in everything she did. A high value was placed on education and college. Judy realizes she is different from many of her students; she knows there are tensions sometimes between White and Black, but instead of acting like it does not matter, she has embraced getting to know her students in order to better communicate with them and build a trusting relationship. She knows most of what happens within the walls of the school is a direct reflection of a student's personal life, and she feels like it is part of her responsibility as a teacher and caring adult to help her students both in and out of school.

Themes from Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of White secondary teachers working with Black students in a small, southern community?

The first research question of the study was designed to understand the experiences of White secondary teachers who have been chosen by their administrators for being effective White teachers of Black students. To add context to the research question, participants were asked to examine their personal lives and comment on how their own experiences may have affected the way they teach or relate to their students. Aspects of living in and/or working in a small, southern town were also examined to determine if the community had any influence on teachers' experiences. Face-to-face interviews were conducted individually with each teacher. The interviews were then

transcribed and analyzed by finding central themes and ideas conveyed throughout the questions that answered research question 1.

Common themes addressing research question 1 from the face-to-face interviews are listed below in table 2.

Table 2 *Experiences of Effective White Secondary Teachers of Black Students in a Small, Southern Community*

Theme	Quotes
Influenced by a Teacher	"I was influenced by a teacher. I didn't have a ton of, I would say, great role models. I was influenced by a teacher and a coach. That's what I wanted to do. He showed me, because I grew up in a single-wide trailer where you could see the bricks, and he would—I'd go to his house, and we'd play golf. Then he lived right across the street from the golf course, and I'm looking around. I'm like, he's got a whole house out here with a driveway. I saw the joy that he had in teaching, and then I saw the things that a professional salary gave him…I was heavily influenced by a really good teacher." (Jacob)
	"Usually it was the coaches or teachers that were pretty influential." (John)

"My momma that fell, she was a saint. If she knew a kid didn't have a jacket or something like that, my mom would go purchase one. If she needed to take them home after school, she would take them home after school. These are the kind of things I would see my mom doing while I was growing up. I didn't think anything of it because I thought it was just the norm, but there were other teachers that there is no way that is going to happen. Same thing with my aunt, once I got to high school, my aunt did the same thing." (Jan)

"He would do this thing every morning where he's like, especially on Mondays, be like, 'Hey, what did y'all do over the weekend?' He would let us share out what we did. I remember this one student was like, 'Hey, I know you pray, this is what happened, can you pray?' He's like, 'Yes, I will keep that on my prayer list.' I was just like, we're in a public high school, it's just so out of the norm to hear something like that. He was very personable, very caring." (Judy)

"'You're a good teacher because you always explain it to us. You make sure we understand what—you make sure we understand what you're explaining to us. You make us answer your questions. You don't just read

through it. You make us answer questions to make sure we understand it before you move on.' That's what they've told me before. That's how my good teachers did it. I copied my good teachers, I guess." (Jessica)

"Well, being raised by a teacher and being able to go to her classroom and help her, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher." (Judy)

Everybody is Family

"You know their names. You know their families. You know the families know you. Oh, yeah, I taught so and so five years ago. I remember you, your family or whatever. It makes it a little bit easier to communicate with parents if you ever have to do like a parent-teacher conference or just call them about a grade. It does make it a lot easier." (Jan)

"I see the same 500 kids every morning, and it's easier. I teach 11th graders. It never fails. I always have kids that come in that know me that I have no clue who they are because they've walked by so many times." (Jacob)

"The way this community is much closer and everybody knows everybody, there's no secrets, and everybody is family." (Judy)

"I like being able to recognize a lot of the kids. I've had them a couple of years, so we get into a routine. It's a good thing, I think." (Jessica)

"I don't even know if I have one, a single favorite teacher. I liked almost all of mine. Then again, growing up in that small community, they were your church members. They were the people that lived right around the corner from you. I knew them because of my mom. I knew them because of my aunt." (Jan)

Honors v. "Regular"

"The color of their skin doesn't. Their abilities do. There's so many variations. I have white kids that are just—they can't count to eight. You know what I mean? You know what I'm saying? I have white kids that are low. I have black kids that are low. Then my two classes—one of them is labeled as honors. The other's not labeled honors, but they're really good. The best student I teach all day academically is a Black kid, and I'd be willing to say the worst kid that I teach all day academically is a white kid. Just the fact that they're all over the place, no, I don't associate the two." (Jacob)

"My lower classes tend to have more African-Americans whereas my AP (Advanced Placement) has more of a mixture of White and other ethnicities and

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African-Americans, so you see more mixture in the higher levels versus the lower classes." (Judy)

"Definitely more Black kids in my regular class. The honors kids now I'll say, over the years in my 22 years teaching, I will say that we are getting more African American kids in honors than when I first started out to be honest with you. We had one or two and the rest were White. Honestly, I think honors classes were used as a way to—what is the term I'm looking for? Segregate students." (John)

Black v. Poor	"I don't know if I think of it as much about as race as much as I would see it as maybe your home life-economic status." (Jessica)
	"I just think the culture, the diversity, is not black, white, blue, or purple. It's rich and poor. That's what it is. A poor white kid and a poor black kid, they have the same behaviors. It's not a color thing. I think a lot more has to do with socioeconomics, and I think looking out—just one day, as I was doing that kind of curriculum it was like, I don't think this is true. I think it's rich and poor." (Jacob)
	"I guess it would be the correlation—the strong correlation between race and socio-economic status in

the south. That is still a big thing, is that most of the people that live in poverty are Black people. That was the big thing, is you've got to remember that where I grew up with money or the ability to go get things, and the ability to have things if I needed them for school, this is not that situation. This is like, 'Yup, kids are going to take pencils. Kids are going to need binders. Kids are going to need stuff.' That was probably where I had my big—maybe where race popped up the most, was that, 'Okay, these kids are going to need some support, maybe with the supplies that they need or the financial stuff that I can help provide to give them this experience.'" (Jennifer)

"Truth be told, the filter when I look at kids, because I'm not perfect, the filter I look at kids is, are you poor, or are you living paycheck to paycheck, or is there some financial stability? If you put kids in those categories, and you teach them like that, it becomes, I would assume, much easier than trying to teach white and black kids differently." (Jacob)

"I know some of those in the lower-income—and a lot of them are Black—they don't have the resources at home. I know we do try to provide that, but I do think

sometimes it's—whether it's intentional or not, I think sometimes it's a little different. They don't have this kind of support." (Jessica)

"I don't know national statistics and things like that, but here, I think there are more poor Black people or more—a lot of Black people are poor, I guess, here, and therefore, you're going—you're going to have a larger population of what seems to be underperforming Black kids when I really think it's underperforming poor kids. If you take these same kids, and you move them to these other areas, and they were still poor, they would still be poor, badly. I think it's a money thing. I 100 percent believe that." (Jacob)

"Honestly, their upbringing and socioeconomics. I think that is the biggest part which I think is a bigger issue in the schools. I think a lot of people think schools are these great equalizers, is not… I think, I don't want to say redistribute the wealth but there's got to be a way to any child, not just Black, anyone who is down in the gutter, there's got to be a better way to bring it out." (John)

Around Black People My Whole
Life

"I was around Black students my whole, entire life, and my momma taught them. It's just it was every day for us. Now, it's a familiar thing." (Jan)

"I went to a very large high school. My graduating class had over 600 people in it, but my school that I went to Whites were the minority. To me, I was used to it, and that's just how it was. To me it didn't affect me that much." (Judy)

"My friends looked like the new Crayola crayons that are coming out. The colors of me. When I came down here, I was always so confused as to the big dynamic between race. It was like, 'Yeah, you cannot like somebody, but just because of how they look,' just did not register in my brain." (Jennifer)

"You knew everybody was different, but they celebrated it. There was more inclusion, there was more wanting to branch out and learn about other people than being afraid of them, or being told that somebody is going to hurt you, and that whole southern dynamic." (Jennifer)

"I had a lot. We knew we were different, but it just didn't make a whole lot of difference, really. You still have stuff in common. We'd still have class together. A lot of my friends, we had an orchestra there. We all

were in orchestra. We have things that are in common, even though we're different." (Jessica)

There's a Bigger Picture Here: Experiences that Shaped Me as a Teacher

"I feel like what he taught us was there's a bigger picture here. He helped you to see that—because his final exam question was, 'Tell the history of the world from the beginning of time to now.' Really, what he did was it wasn't about memorizing a bunch of dates and memorizing a bunch of things, but it was about trying to help it apply to life. I was like, 'That made a huge difference.'" (Jessica)

"I was sounding out the word game, G-A-M-E, silently, and a woman came over and popped me on the knuckles because I was not doing it loud, out loud for her to hear. I won't ever forget that, that one. [This helped me] I think just being patient with students." (Jan)

"Yeah, I had a horrible professor. *[Laughter]* God, awful, of astronomy. Literally screwed me out of the neck. You had four regular tests then the final, but my friend missed a test but the final could sub for that test. I took all four tests. One of the tests I didn't do so hot on, but he would not sub that grade in for the final, which I knocked out of the ballpark, wouldn't sub that in, but my friend who missed the test, he subbed that in. That

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pissed me off. I try to remember that with the kids."

(John)

"He was a young Black guy. He told us the story about how he got mistaken for Santa, or he was Santa for somebody's birthday or Christmas or whatever, and he coined the term 'Brother Claus.' Around Christmas time, we were always like, 'We going to see Santa, or we going to see Brother Claus?' He was just so funny… My homeroom teacher told me, as I was walking to get my diploma, 'I'm really surprised you graduated.' I'm like, 'All the warning signs, all the missing class, all the showing up whenever, sneaking back in my glovebox in the car, smoking in the car, none of that was a red flag to anybody? Doubt it.' It went from early really good memories of education, and then coming to the South, and just being super confused." (Jennifer)

"She would always let me come back in after school to just double check because I would almost panic after I'd had that [seizure]. It was bad. She would give me an opportunity to come back in. That meant a lot to me." (Jessica)

Challenges

"I will say that every now and then, it's—and it's not very often, and generally, the kid comes from another

state. They will come in, and they will automatically assume that because you're white that you're going to treat them differently than everybody else. It takes a little while to show them through your actions and through your reactions with the other students that hey, they're—it's okay. I'm just like you. I'm a human just like you are. That sometimes is a little difficult because you can feel that cold ice around them because they don't want you because you're a white teacher that—it's not very often." (Jan)

"Here you have to—I feel like somewhat learn their lingo as far as how to speak to them, and I have to learn so I understand what they're saying to me. I remember the first time when I taught ninth grade, I had a boy ask me, 'Where you stay at.' I'm like, 'What?' He's like, 'Where you stay at?' I was like, 'oh, he's asking me where I live.' I never heard it that way. I have to learn to talk differently, and also understand them to communicate…I think communication is one of the big ones. Also getting them to respect you, especially if at home their parents may not view white people well; maybe they had a bad experience with them or whatnot

that can also hinder my relationship with them, and how they view me as a person or as a teacher." (Judy)

"I didn't understand that the police were basically getting called every night about the high schoolers doing something, or some gang getting involved in this. Just the overall, and the lack of understanding that education can help. If you always feel like you're not going to succeed, then I see why the effort would go down, but it still was—I tried so hard, and just was like, 'You can do it, you can do it, you can do it, you can do it,' because you really can. You're the only thing standing in your way mentally. I know societally it's everything else, but if you've got the determination, I think that they could do a lot. That their parents didn't finish high school, and their parents didn't finish high school, and nobody in the family's finished high school. The importance of education is lost, because maybe you're the first kid to do it, if you drop out, meh, you just add to the cycle. That was a big thing." (Jennifer)

"When my coworker decided to teach a novel, it was about race and he had taught it; second year teaching it, and he gave an assignment about white privilege and it went viral or maybe not viral, but community-wide. It

went pretty wide across the community on social media.

Of course it was received badly by those—not

necessarily even parents from the school, but just people

in the community didn't like it. They saw it as the

division, 'Why is he teaching this, and why is this in an

English class and such?' I feel like the kids knew there

was no way around that as far as them knowing about

it." (Judy)

"Definitely since the 2016 elections, that vocalization of

a divide got louder. The nastiness got louder, and it

really made the things that people of color have to go

through, more apparent." (Jennifer)

Influenced by a Teacher

Throughout the interviews, almost every teacher reminisced about a teacher

he/she had who influenced him/her to become a teacher. Similarly, it should be noted that

four out of the six participants had immediate family members who were involved in the

educational field in some way whether it was as a teacher, principal, or counseling

secretary. These teachers spoke about understanding the educational career field from an

early age and knowing what they were getting into because they had experienced it

through their families. The teachers revealed they often think of their influential teachers

in order to emulate the good things they experienced while in school. Not only did these experiences directly influence their decisions to become teachers, but it also aides their experiences they now have with their students especially when it comes to building bonds and relationships with them. They know the best way to impact a student is through the formation of these relationships.

Everybody is Family

Another common theme among the teachers was the size of the town and how everyone knew each other. The teachers saw this as a positive aspect of working in a small, southern town, because it enabled them to make better and lasting relationships. A common term used by the teachers was "easier;" it is easier for them to build relationships with the students because they have either had the student before or they have had a family member before. They also stated it is easier because you get to know the parents, which helps with stakeholder feedback and buy-in. Four of the six teachers live in the same town where they work. From being members of this close-knit community, they often see parents and students around town; they explain all of this allows for a more personal experience where relationships can foster future growth and bonds.

Jan spoke about completing her student teaching in a neighboring county with an exceptionally large student population. She said students were just numbers and there were no connections made with the students. You had them for a term and then they were off to the next teacher. You rarely saw them in the school and you usually did not have them again as a student; she disliked it immensely. Judy spoke about how a previous school she worked at had similar demographics to her current school and it too was a

rural community. However, she said it was completely different from her current school, because there were many transient students and most people were not born and raised there. The research site's community is much different; many people grow up and stay and there is loyalty engrained in much of what the town does and the people who occupy it. Outsiders are often looked at suspiciously until they can prove they are worthy of the community's trust.

Honors v. "Regular"

The honors versus regular class demographic make-up is an interesting theme which emerged, because there were not any questions which directly asked about this. There was a discussion about whether teachers associated student color with ability as well as the racial composition of each class, and this is where most of this conversation originated. All of the teachers teach multiple classes including honors or AP (Accelerated Placement) classes. As a side note, it is worth mentioning that all of the teachers were quite modest and had no idea why they were selected by their administrative team as an effective teacher of Black students. However, the fact that five out of six teachers teach at least one honors class and all of them teach numerous subjects speaks to their abilities as exceptional teachers; in a backwards form of praise, educators usually get the higher level classes as well as more classes to teach when they are evaluated as outstanding teachers. Almost every teacher spoke to the fact that their honors classes had either more White students or were more racially mixed whereas their regular classes had mostly Black students.

By contrast, Jacob emphatically stated he did not feel there was any connection between the ability of his students and their color, but he also admitted that most of his

honors classes had more White students. John went as far to say that he thought the inception of honors classes was a way to segregate Black and White students. This became quite interesting to me as the researcher because when I started becoming passionate about this topic and research, part of the experience that led me down this path is I taught in a majority Black school (80/20), and if you had looked in one of the AP or honors classes, you would have thought it was a predominately White school. The racial make-up of the teacher's classes deserves further discussion and research, but having more White students in honors classes and more Black students in regular classes is the experience of these teachers.

Black v. Poor

A common theme formed when asking teachers about student ability and race. Most of the teachers alluded to or commented on the fact that, in the south, most people with less money or lower socioeconomic status are Black. The teachers proclaimed they do not think it is due to Race as much as a socioeconomics. Therefore, a student with lesser means often does not do as well in class, and since we are in the south and it seems like more Black people have less money, then that directly correlates to them not doing well in class. The teachers hypothesized that many of the students who come from a poorer household often do not have the familial support because parents either do not value education or they are having to work many jobs to support their family. This created further conversations about students having to be the care-takers for their siblings and not having time for schoolwork when they get home. All of the teachers attributed this to socioeconomic status rather than Race, and they understand that more Black people have a lower socioeconomic status in the south.

Around Black People My Whole Life

Most of the educators stated they had been around Black people in one way or another for most of their lives, so teaching at a school with predominantly Black students was nothing new or surprising to them. Two of the teachers are from smaller towns similar to where they now teach. Jan said where she teaches is almost identical to where she grew up, so none of this is new to her. Jacob said his town was exactly the same except the percentage of White people was much higher than the percentage of Black people, but he uses this fact again to say the towns are almost identical and the problems the educational system faces in these towns stems back to socioeconomic status and not race. Four of the six teachers grew up in large cities, some down south and some north. The dynamic of the large city afforded them more diversity in their youth than their current teaching situation provides. These four teachers discussed how teaching Black students did not affect them in any way because they had been raised with much diversity, not just White and Black but multiple different cultures. However, they also said that the Black culture of their current school did take some getting used to and was different than the Black culture they experienced growing up. They did not know if this could be attributed to the differences between urban and rural, but they said their current students just seemed tougher and more streetwise than the students with whom they went to school.

There's a Bigger Picture Here: Experiences that Shaped Me as a Teacher

A recurring theme that materialized was how experiences from the teachers' time as a student helped shape them as a teacher. As mentioned before, all of the teachers had previous teachers who inspired them to be a teacher and gave them a template from

which to work. However, it is worth noting that three of the teachers first discussed a teacher who impacted them negatively in their youth before they remembered someone who had made a positive impression. It seems that the negative experiences impacted these teachers even more than the positive experiences. However, they used those experiences as examples of how not to treat students and relegated them to a memory they will never forget so they can remember how they felt and to not repeat these mistakes with their own students.

Challenges

The overwhelming consensus by the teachers is that race does not play a large factor in what they do within the classroom nor does it impact the ability of the student. Categorically, the teachers did not realize they were being good teachers specifically to Black students; they just thought they were trying to be good teachers to everyone. Nevertheless, they identified some challenges they face from being a White teacher of Black students. Although most said it was not often, there are inherent challenges they face when teaching Black students. It was mentioned by three of the teachers that a lack of importance placed on education and generational poverty play a large role in challenges they face. They stated parents of these students often did not like school nor attain a high school diploma, so there is not much importance placed on the idea of education. This is so opposed to what the teachers learned from their parents growing up and a large emphasis being placed on the value of an education and where it can take you, that this struck them as a particularly high hurdle to overcome.

Two of the teaches mentioned that it is hard when a parent does not think highly of White people, because you can often see that represented in their child. It does not

happen often, but it does occasionally happen. Judy mentioned that communication is challenging at times, especially when she first started at the school, because Black students have different ways of saying things and it took her a minute to figure out what they were saying. She thought it made her seem like an ignorant White person in their eyes. Gang violence and the 2016 election were also mentioned as challenges faced recently. Specifically, Jennifer stated the 2016 election seemed to make the "vocalization of the divide louder," and she did witness some of this within the walls of her classroom.

Themes from Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success?

The second research question of the study was designed to discover common practices and strategies effective White teachers of Black students employ to help Black students succeed. Similar to question 1, transcripts were created from voice recorded personal interviews with each of the research subjects, and the transcripts were analyzed to discover common phrases and themes among the participant answers. Collective themes identified as addressing research question 2 from the face-to-face personal interviews are listed below in Table 3.

Table 3 *Common Practices and Strategies of Effective White Teachers of Black Students*

Theme	Quotes
Building Relationships: When They Know You Care	"Build those relationships, honestly-still impactful in a way, if that makes sense because they have those

relationships. Teachers I've noticed and that have issues in my opinion is, I don't think they have good relationships." (John)

"I guess, just look for their potential and know that we may—we don't all start from the same spot. Some people need more support to get to where they need to be. We're not going to all accomplish the exact same things. I think we've all got potential to do more things. Just be aware of where the gaps are, and don't be critical of that because that's usually out of their control." (Jessica)

"You just teach them. I couldn't stand it [virtual teaching] because I couldn't develop that rapport with the kids like I normally do… this is where when they talk about teachers having to getting to know their students. You really need to know your students because you may know a kid and think you know them, but they're still afraid to ask you a question. You have got to see where that kid's coming from." (Jan)

"Well, one thing that helps you is obviously that relationship that you have because they're not going to listen to you at all until you have a relationship when

they know they can trust you; some students more than others." (Judy)

"They have to know you care." (Jennifer)

"Once you have a couple of fights that you break up and you see that the kid is listening to you, you see that there's nothing more powerful than a kid that's going through something that wants to come to your room." (Jacob)

"Eventually, what I noticed was they will—when they see that you care, then they're going to put a lot more work into it. That seems to have helped, over the years, I guess, in a way earn their trust. I hate to say earn respect, but I guess in a way, you are… This is who I am. I care about you. That's all that matters to me, is I want you to learn something. We might be different, but we have the same goal, I hope, is that we want you to get out of school… part of why I like my job is trying to just—to care about kids. I'm not going to push anything on those, but just to let them know, 'Somebody cares about you and that there is—no matter what, you've got some value to you. You've got something that's worth something. You've got something to give people." I want people to know they have a value, and they have a

worth. I think education is important. I always tell people that's what gives you a ticket to go somewhere." (Jessica)

"I can walk by a class and look in there and find a football player and change that kid's behavior, not because I'm some big macho whatever, but him and I sweat, and we yell at each other, and we go after it in football, so there's just a natural—what's the word— kinship or something. Try as hard as you can to avoid a negative interaction with a kid because, whether you like it or not, they're not going to say, yes, sir, and no, ma'am, because you have facial hair or because you drive a car. It's 2021." (Jacob)

"I told them at the end of every class, "I love you." I was that freak." (Jennifer)

"One of the things that I knew him. We had that rapport where we would mess with each other, and he knew that I could play with him and he could play with me." (Judy)

"Again, know and understand what your voice means to those kids. I'm a big believer in, solve the problem before the problem happens. Don't wait until you need the relationship to build the relationship is a really big

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deal. Don't sweat the small stuff. I guess that's more than three. When you get caught up in the little things, the little pissant things, as I call them, you're a machine to kids. If you're willing to not mark them tardy, you're a person, and kids like people. They don't like machines." (Jacob)

"Then the third one is going to come back to you got to love them. You may not like them, but you've got to love them. You may be the only person that's going to smile at them that day, and maybe that's your purpose." (Jennifer)

"Mainly, know their name. Get to know their name. The first day of school, try to remember who they are, and then speak to them in one when they walk in the door, and try to smile if at all possible. That's the big. Start there, and if you can't pronounce a name, ask them, 'How do you pronounce this? Is this what you want to be called? Do you want it shortened?' Because we got some kids with some names, but that's a big deal to them is making sure that you can pronounce their name correctly." (Jan)

"We all give nicknames. I don't even call kids by their name. You're going to have some sort of nickname." (Jacob)

"Really just searching for the things you have in common, and then the conversations might branch out to interests, and then all of a sudden, you're being told things that you have to do mandated reporting for. That was always the most important part, is that they—at the end of the day, you were their advocate, you were there to offer support, and you cared. Love above all else." (Jennifer)

Earn Trust-Don't Force It

"At one point, one of them even said something about—I think I got called a white cracker. I had to learn to, I got to earn your trust. I got to let you know that I'm not—I don't have— you have to work a little harder in some ways to—not fit in, but to let them know that you care about them and that you really want what's best for them and give them a chance to let down their guard a little bit. At least in my experience, it does not work well to force it. I think if you do, you're going to make it worse. I have had a lot where you have to earn their trust, I guess and let them know that it's not just the outside that you're looking at. You have to help them

see that you're seeing what's inside, your character, your personality, your interests, what's in your head. 'You're smart.'" (Jessica)

"I have found that, if you make it very straightforward, and then you make them like you, they'll do anything that you ask. The kids that I am teaching seem to want to know, 'Coach, what do you need us to do,' and then it's my job to teach them along the way with that." (Jacob)

"I try to run my classroom how I used to run my soccer program and what I've learned is, back off. Tell them what the expectations are. Give them a little bit of freedom. Try to keep them focused on the task. If you're too strict, I don't think you get a lot out of the kids." (John)

"Most in my being a White female, small teacher, they're not going to respond to you if you yell at them." (Judy)

"Tell them the truth. It was really hard sometimes to buy in, and if I didn't buy in, there was no way I was going to be able to convince those kids, no matter how hard I tried." (Jennifer)

"I guess all students whether they're white, yellow, green, whatever, they're going to test you, they're going to figure out are you fake, are you for real? Do you know your stuff or are you just covering? Once they get to—I feel like, in my experience, once they get to know you, and know that—when I see a Black student, I don't see, 'Oh, he's Black, I need to treat him differently.' They're going to see that I treat all my students the same, and they're going to trust me to do what I need to do for them." (Judy)

"I had them write a narrative at the beginning of the year, it was a personal narrative. I learned about them about things I would never know. That really helped me as far as knowing them, what experiences they've been through. I had one who lost a parent, I've had one whose house burned down, car wrecks, all these different things that I would never know. I feel like that really builds that relationship especially that trust." (Judy)

Be Willing to Try

"Being willing to try. I tell them all the time, I can't make a blank answer right, but if you would just be wrong, then I can tell you why you're wrong. A blank piece of paper or a blank Google classroom submission, I don't know what you know. I would rather you answer

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every question and make a zero, and then I know. Just try. Just try… I'm not perfect. You're not perfect. You were willing to do it? Sure. Let's get it done." (Jacob)

"For them to be successful I need to be, I think, motivated to some point to take initiative just to do what they're supposed to do, some commitment. On my end I still have to know what I'm talking about and be able to explain it in multiple ways, so that they can understand it, but we both have to meet in the middle. I feel like for them to be successful and me to be successful as a teacher and to be able to teach them." (Judy)

"I think if you want to get to do better, you can, but it's up to the individual. I could sit there and teach you all day long, and talk to you until I'm blue in the face, but until you really want to do it, it's not going to happen, but I believe that you can." (Jan)

"I always tell my kids that I'm willing to help you as long as you're willing to try. My goal is when you finish, I want you to realize you've learned and you've grown. That's not going to be fun." (Jessica)

| Always Be Coaching/Christian Beliefs | "I do not care if you are yellow, purple, green, what have you. I don't care if you have money or don't have money. You're all the same, and as far as students goes, |

if they're sitting in my classroom, they are a student, period, no matter what. I think the Christian part really has a firm hold on the way I do things and believe though…I do believe that when a kid comes in and they work at night, I worked every night when I was in high school. I can relate to that, and I can understand, but I also know it's not an excuse to not have your work done. I will let them know, "Hey, I did it too. If I can do it and turn my work in on time and be an honor graduate, you can also," so different things like that. Also because I had a divorce, I can look at a single parent, and I can understand why something occurs. It's called life can get in the way, different things like that." (Jan)

"People cliché the term like, don't see color, but I just try to see the person you are. There are a lot of sorry White people, there are a lot of sorry Black people, but there's a lot of quality White and Black people too. I think everyone can do some good. I think that nobody should walk away in a worse mood after they talk to you." (Jacob)

"Just do what's right." (John)

"I guess I've always believed that everybody has a purpose. You're not here by accident. The world has you, so there's a reason for it. It's just always helped me be very open-minded and non-judgmental and, again, really hungry for knowledge and really wanting to learn about other people." (Jennifer)

"I think that's important, to make sure you do something worthwhile. Care about people, be considerate of people, try to—I don't know—see the good in them, find the good things. We all have problems. Let's don't look at the bad stuff. Let's try to find the good stuff. We're all different. Let's let that be a good thing. What can we learn? What do we have in common, even though we might be different? What can we learn?" (Jessica)

"Nick Saban gave a clinic on it one time about, always be coaching: ABC. When kids are having good days, make them great days, and when kids are having average days, get them to good [days]. If you try to do that every day, then when they get too bad, they'll come to you. As hard as it may be, you can't let yourself have a bad day. You have to know that, if you walk into the room, in your classroom, with your butt on your shoulders about something that's went on somewhere

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else or something that you're mad at, that bad day and how you treat those kids, you may suffer from it for the next two months because you may really gash their perception of you. Always, always, always be coaching. Always be up. Make sure somebody's day is not worse after running into you." (Jacob)

Hey, How Are You Doing

"You don't have a whole lot of kids saying, "Thank you" for what you taught to them. You have them more coming' back and just hugging your neck and saying', "Hey, how you doing'?" that kind of stuff. I treated them like a human being." (Jan)

"Yeah. I was so happy to see them. I wish I could get that on video because it was during our hammer time or whatever, and I just stepped up—I don't even remember what I was doing. Kids were working. Oh, they have kids in the lunchroom, so I open the door and stand in the hall for a second, and it was a former student, and it was just the biggest hug." (Jacob)

"He's like, "I want to be back in your class." He just loved being in my class and this specific student is not one who loves school. He loves to hit people and to play football, but he would come to class and he would do

	the work, and he would just grow as a person and in reading." (Judy)
	"She's like, 'I just wanted you to know what a difference it made.' I was like, 'I'm glad because I really thought you were going to be mad at me.' She said, 'No, I know you did what I needed you to do.' She had a couple of teachers—I think she had at least one every year that would do that. We don't let them—wouldn't let them just try to make excuses. You don't just let them get away with this." (Jessica)
Just Teach	"Just teach. That's it. You go in. You treat them all the same. You treat them like they're all humans and not lower than anybody else, and that's what you do." (Jan) "I try to teach as best as I can." (John) "…so understanding students' abilities and that differentiation in scaffolding is really, really, really important." (Jennifer)

Building Relationships: When They Know You Care

By far, the most repeated word throughout all of the interviews was *relationships*. A close second was *caring*. Emphatically, the idea of building relationships with students was the number one response when teachers discussed their foundational and most

important teaching strategies. All of the teachers stated if students do not know you care, they will not work for you. John thinks teachers who have classroom management issues have not built relationships with their students. All of the teachers spoke about getting to know your students first; showing interest in them starts building a rapport with them. Second, they must know that you care; when they see that you care, they will try harder in your class. They all said a student who sees that you value and care about them will do hard work in your class. Jennifer thinks it is invaluable to tell students daily that you love them because this may be the only time during the day they hear this. And Jacob proposes that you must not wait until the time you need the relationship in order to start building it--by this time, it is too late.

Specifically, the teachers said with Black students it is really important to learn their names, and if you cannot correctly pronounce it, to ask the students how to pronounce it. Jacob went as far to say he did not use student names but every student acquired a nickname from him. The nicknames centered around something the student commonly did or reminded Jacob of. He said students loved this and it was an instant in for him with the students because he had to know about them in order to make a nickname and the students realized that. Interestingly, when asked their top three strategies for being effective White teachers of Black students, none of the strategies were academic-based. All of the strategies dealt with caring, trusting, building relationships and creating a rapport with your students.

Earn Trust-Don't Force It

Correlating to the theme of building relationships with students, earning the student's trust was also mentioned by almost all of the teachers. The teachers agreed you

have to work at earning the students' trust--not necessarily because you are White, but that definitely impacts it—but you cannot force the issue or the earning of the trust. If you force it, try too hard, are too strict, try to relate to them on a friend level, yell at them or demand trust, you will not get it. Jennifer also insisted telling the students the truth is necessary to help build trust and a bond. Jessica elucidated that she tries to show the students she is going to be consistent and fair with all of her students, and this usually helps her build trust with her students.

Be Willing to Try

Even though most of the teachers identified strategies that dealt with building relationships, when asked what makes them successful, they all discussed that students need to have intrinsic motivation in addition to the support of a good teacher. Basically, if the student is willing to try, then the teachers will do whatever they can to help the student succeed, but the student must first at least try. Jessica felt very strongly about this and said she believes a large part of her job is not to just teach math, but to also teach students how to take care of themselves and be self-sufficient. She said they only have a few years until they are in the real world, and she does not want it to be a shock to the system. Jacob says he would much prefer you try and fail so at least he knows how he can help; not trying at all does not allow him room to help.

Always Be Coaching/Christian Beliefs

Four of the six teachers specifically discussed a Christian upbringing and foundation for their beliefs. The other two participants discussed similar beliefs but did not couch them in the terms of Christianity. Simply, they all believe you need to do what is right. It does not matter what color someone is, where they come from or what they do

or do not have, you should always treat him/her as a human. All of the teachers explained they think it is their job to make sure a student is treated well, is learning and walks away better because that student encountered them, the teacher.

Hey, How Are You Doing

This theme emerged when discussing if students ever came back to visit the teachers; the idea is that if you are a popular teacher or students like your class, they will come back to see you. All of the teachers discussed how they have students come back and visit every once in a while, but it is not often. What they all found interesting is that when the students do come back, they rarely discuss school and they never discuss the actual content taught. They just come back to see the teachers and tell them how life is going; the participants all feel this is a testament to the relationships they built with students and not the subjects they taught.

Just Teach

Even though there is not a quote from each teacher about this, it was necessary to add as a theme, because all of the teachers either simply said, you just teach them, or they implied that they try to teach all students well. They had never thought about the differences between the Black and White students and the fact that they are White and most of their students are Black. They really just try to do a good job, make a difference and help students better themselves every day.

Summary

This chapter revealed the emerging themes from the face-to-face individual interviews of the six research participants. These themes address the two research questions and illuminate why the teachers were selected by their admin team as effective

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White teachers of Black students. The first themes discussed explains the experiences of the selected White teachers while teaching Black students at a rural school in the South. The participants are all secondary teachers in the same building (Jennifer is no longer there, but speaks on the experiences from the previous year), which is located in a small, southern town. All of the participants had teachers in their lives who heavily influenced their decision to become an educator; four of the participants were raised by educators who influenced their decision to become an educator themselves because they saw how their parents had affected change with their own students. The research participants also unanimously enjoy working in a smaller district and said that it is like everybody is family. While this can lead to its own problems, the teachers felt it allowed the students to build stronger relationships with teachers and have closer bonds with many people within the school building. An interesting theme to emerge was that of the honors class versus the "regular" classrooms. Many of the teachers stated that their honors classes tended to have more White students while their "regular" classes tended to have more Black students. All of the participants discussed at some point during the interview that they think the difficulties faced within the school are more closely related to the socioeconomic status of the students rather than their race. All but one participant grew up around either numerous Black people or were raised in more culturally diverse larger cities. All of the teachers discussed experiences they had growing up that heavily influenced how they teach, but three participants specifically explained that a teacher who treated them unfairly was also a large influence in how they treat their students. Finally, the challenges associated with race the teachers face were discussed.

The second set of themes revealed how the White teachers can positively impact Black students. The most commonly used word throughout all of the interviews was relationships. Unequivocally, all of the participating teachers said that relationships are the most important factor in not only affecting Black students but any student. Each participant discussed how relationships with parents, previous teachers and now their students have impacted their lives in some way and how relationships with their students is the number one way to achieve success with any student. A major theme all teachers agreed upon was that you must earn the trust of the students before expecting them to work for you. However, you cannot force the relationship. The trust must be earned and it may take some time, but it will occur naturally when it does happen. All of the teachers stated that students must at least try in their classrooms. They are all willing to work with the students to initiate and engage them, but the student must have some intrinsic motivation and want to at least try. Four out of the six participants specifically indicated a strong Christian belief system as the foundation to their teaching and personal belief system. Within this theme was the idea of just doing what is right, both in general and as a teacher. Finally, even though not specifically stated by all teachers, three of the teachers simply said "just teach." The other participants all indicated or implied that they just teach their students; it does not matter what they look like or what they have, they just want to be a good teacher to all of their students.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study. The overview section reiterates the study's purpose, research design and data analysis. Chapter V also clearly connects each of the study's two research questions to broader conceptual frameworks and theories. Next, key findings are presented followed by limitations of the study. To conclude, implications of the study for advancing effective teaching of Black students by White teachers are provided alongside recommendations for future research.

Overview

This study examined the ways White teachers addressed and mitigated the achievement gaps of Black students. In the midst of a global pandemic, these achievement gaps have widened due, in part, to rapid changes in education delivery including virtual learning, in-person learning, hybrid learning and, sometimes no learning due to school closures. State education systems have experienced so much turmoil in the last two years that there is limited data available to measure the achievement gap between White students and Students of Color, especially Black students. Thus, there is no better time to examine achievement gaps, for Black students, in the United States.

The most recent data available (2012, from the GA DOE CCRPI) indicates significant achievement gaps between White students and Students of Color in all tested academic areas, in Georgia. In 2022, as in 2012, it is more imperative than ever to answer the research questions I put forward in this study: What are the experiences of White secondary teachers working with Black students in a small, southern community? What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success?

In my literature review I surveyed research on the origins and contributing factors to the Black-White achievement gap. There has also been much research completed on multicultural education and how teaching Students of Color with a knowledge, acceptance and understanding of the student's culture can positively impact a student's achievement (Delpit, 2006 and Ladson-Billings, 2009). However, missing from the extant literature are the personal beliefs of the White teachers who lead classrooms comprised of students from cultures different than their own. Although their role is pivotal to closing the achievement gap, we lack understanding of the paths these teachers followed and the effective practices they have adopted to serve these students.

This study makes another contribution to the research literature by focusing on how these teachers' practices are best applied in small, rural towns in the South. Existing literature on this topic is largely focused on urban northern areas where multicultural truly means you have multiple cultures within the same classroom (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ogbu, 1992). The research site's demographics for this study are largely Black (70%) and White (30%) and also placed in the deep South. Thus, this study expands on previous bodies of literature by examining the rural South and how this setting differently impacts teachers' experiences both in and out of the classroom.

Further, previous studies have not closely examined the experiences of White teachers. Since the majority of teachers are White (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1992a, 1992b; NCES, 2015b; Pinder, 2012), it becomes further necessary to specifically examine how White teachers effectively teach Black students. This study provides in-depth analysis of White teachers' beliefs. The

stories they share provide a deeper understanding of what makes them a successful teacher with students from cultures other than their own.

Studies have shown ineffective teaching may widen achievement gaps when White teachers encounter barriers, whether real or perceived, when teaching non-White students (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The wisdom and experience shared by teachers labeled effective by their peers and administrators becomes valuable when learning how to best teach all students and lessen the achievement gaps of Students of Color.

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002) was to examine "best-practices" utilized by White teachers of Black students. Further, this study identifies strategies commonly employed by effective White teachers of Black students that may yet be unknown but soon become "best-practices" in teaching. This research is positioned at the nexus of inequality in education, the achievement gap and teachers' influence in multicultural classrooms.

The research methodology employed purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Patton, 2002) to select six research participants. The research site's administrative team selected teachers based on the following criteria:

- they teach classes with a majority of Black students
- they effect gains in student achievement as measured by standardized test scores and grades, and
- they maintain positive relationships with both students and parents.

Semi-structured interviews with iterative questioning was conducted with each research participant; interviews ranged from 90 to 120 minutes. Interviews contained

three phases starting first with current teaching experience, then exploring the teacher's

life history, and culminating in questions about experiences teaching Black students. The

study is based in Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1999) as well as Yosso's

Community Cultural Wealth Framework (2006). Together, these theories provided the

basis for development of both specific interview questions as well as the study's guiding

research questions:

1. What are the experiences of White secondary teachers working with Black

   students in a small, southern community?

2. What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success?

Discussion

To answer the study's research questions, iterative coding and data analysis was

used, following the tenets of Detering & Waters (2018). Following their procedures, three

phases of coding yielded seven themes related to the first research question and six

themes related to the second research question. After these 13 themes were identified, the

conceptual framework for the study was applied and compared to the themes. From this

analysis, three major themes arose that encapsulated all of the themes for both research

questions one and two:

1. Building Relationships: When Students Know You Care

2. Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race

3. Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town

Building Relationships: When Students Know You Care is by far the most

pronounced theme of the study. It captures ideas found amongst smaller subthemes (i.e.,

the other ten themes identified) such as *'Earn Trust: Don't Force It', 'Hey, How Are You*

Doing' and '*Always Be Coaching/Christian Beliefs.'* For example, students know

teachers care when teachers spend the necessary time to build trust. Students know

teachers care when they ask, and genuinely listen to students' answers about their

wellbeing. Perhaps less obvious is the connection to *Always be Coaching/Christian*

Beliefs but this is well captured in a quote by Jennifer who says, "I guess I've always

believed that everybody has a purpose. You're not here by accident. The world has you,

so there's a reason for it. It's just always helped me be very open-minded and non-

judgmental and, again, really hungry for knowledge and really wanting to learn about

other people."

The theme *Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race* condenses the ideas

presented in four subthemes titled, '*Black v. Poor,' 'Honors v. "Regular,"' 'Be Willing to*

Try,' and *Challenges*. Most of the teachers explained they believe students' abilities are

more directly related to socioeconomic status rather than race. The teachers examined

this through discussion about the racial composition of their honors classes. They also

discussed that none of this matters if students are not willing to try. Specifically, Jacob

said, "Being willing to try… Just try… I'm not perfect. You're not perfect. You were

willing to do it? Sure. Let's get it done."

Finally, the theme *Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town* summarizes the

four subthemes *Everybody is Family, Around Black People My Whole Life, There's a*

Bigger Picture Here: Experiences That Shapes Me as a Teacher and *Influenced by a*

Teacher. A unique aspect of this study is the setting and location; there is very limited

literature about the discrepancy between teacher and student race within a rural, southern

setting. The teachers revealed much of the relationships they build with students and their

families becomes a facet of the small-town life. Jan explained this best when she said, "You know their names. You know their families. You know the families know you. Oh, yeah, I taught so and so five years ago. I remember you, your family or whatever. It makes it a little bit easier to communicate with parents if you ever have to do like a parent-teacher conference or just call them about a grade. It does make it a lot easier." Similarly, the teachers explored who impacted their early education as well as their desire to be teachers, and these were all contributing factors to their lived experience within this school setting.

All three major themes are examined through the lens of both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory.

The result of this comparison is that the three major themes identified in this study are consistent with previous literature (see Table 4). Ladson-Billings (1999) examines the construct of racism in the educational system and proposes four main tenants of CRT:

1. racism has become the norm to American culture;

2. CRT employs storytelling to examine the foundation of racism in America;

3. there is an insistence on a "critique of liberalism," which means the current system in place in the United States is not able to make the changes necessary to thwart racism; and finally,

4. "CRT argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation" (p. 213).

Table 4 shows how this study's themes align with the four main tenants of CRT according to Ladson-Billings (1999), providing support for her theory.

Table 4 *Summary of Themes Connected to CRT*

Themes	CRT Connection
Building Relationships: When They Know You Care	Tenants 1 & 3
Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race	Tenants 1, 3 & 4
Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town	Tenant 1 & Tenant 4

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory defines "six forms of cultural capital: aspiration, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance" (Yosso, 2006). Similar to Ladson-Billings' use of CRT in educational studies, Yosso (2006) uses a "strength-based perspective" when examining teachers' interactions with their students and defines Community Cultural Wealth as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). Table 5 gives an overview of how the three main themes from both research question one and two connected to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory (2006).

Table 5 *Summary of Themes Connected to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory*

Themes	Community Cultural Wealth Theory Connection
Building Relationships: When Students Know You Care	Aspirational Capital Familial Capital Social Capital Navigational Capital
Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race	Aspirational Capital Familial Capital Social Capital Navigational Capital Resistant Capital
Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town	Aspirational Capital Familial Capital Social Capital Navigational Capital

Building Relationships: When Students Know You Care

Overwhelmingly, according to the teachers in this study, it is necessary to first build relationships with students if you want them to be engaged learners. In fact, it is the most important factor when working with any student, but especially with Black students. The teachers explained the students must "know that you care" and a teacher must "earn the trust" of the students. The teachers did this by various means. Jacob even has a name for this: ABC-Always Be Coaching. He explains that students should always leave your presence in a better mood than when they arrived. The teachers elaborated how they build this relationship, for example, by making up nicknames for students or simply asking how students are doing or by recognizing when students may have too many responsibilities at home to complete homework. These relationships build to the point

where students come back to the school to visit the teachers, not because they loved the teacher's subject, but because they loved the teacher.

These findings are consistent with the research. Delpit (2006) explains in her book *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom,* one of the only ways to increase Black students' achievement is to start learning about them and their culture, and use the knowledge gained from these conversations to create an open learning environment where creativity is embraced and all children are put on a level playing field. Even though the teachers in this study did not necessarily say it in these words, they expressed the same ideas of building relationships as Delpit's concept. Similarly, studies by Douglas et al. (2008) and Boucher (2016) posit that students need to feel their teachers connect well with them on a deeper level, sometimes culturally, in order for them to succeed or even want to succeed in the teacher's class.

The idea of relationships and the need to earn the students' trust also correlates to tenants one and three of Ladson-Billings' four tenants of CRT. It is interesting to note the teachers often did not make the leap to racism being a systemic issue (tenant one), but often phrased it in the personalized terms of "the parents did not value education." They seem to recognize the intergenerational impact of poverty, but the attribution is to the individual level instead of a systemic level; hence, the parents did not value education and not the parents may have had to stay home from school to take care of siblings or work themselves to provide food for their family. This speaks to tenant three.

When applying Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory to the theme of relationships and caring, aspirational, familial, social and navigational capital are applicable, and it could even be argued this theme most strongly supports Yosso's

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Community Cultural Wealth Theory and the impact of these capitals on Students of Color. Through the discussions of the teachers, it is easy to see they directly try to impact a student's aspirational, social and navigational capital. At one point when talking about how she feels about her students, Jessica states, "…you've got something that's worth something…you've got something to give people." Jessica embodies many of the teachers' comments with this statement; they recognize the enormity of their job and how they directly affect a student's desire to do well in school as well as the need to help these students navigate their education and become a contributing member of society.

Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race

This theme was a surprising theme to emerge; it became quite interesting when it closely linked to concepts of Ladson-Billings' four tenants of CRT. None of the interview questions directly discussed student ability and attainment level, yet this theme materialized. Unexpectedly, it arose during the conversation of the teachers' schooling experiences and then the make-up of their classrooms. All six of the teachers stated in one way or another that the honors classes they teach are primarily composed of either White students or a somewhat even mix of White and Black students, whereas their "regular" classes had mostly Black students. It needs to again be noted that the research site's demographics are 70% Black students and 30% White students. Some of the teachers explained the racial composition of their own honors classes was this way when they went to school. One participant goes as far as to say he thinks honors classes was and is a way to segregate students. This directly relates to Ladson-Billings' CRT tenants one, three and four. All of these teachers said they do not think it is on purpose that their class make-ups are like this, but it can definitely speak to a larger systemic problem that

has created certain areas where Students of Color can achieve (sports) and areas where they cannot (academics). Ogbu (1992) conducted a study in an affluent school in Cleveland where all students, Black and White among other races, had affluent parents. However, the Black students still had lower achievement than their White peers. The discussion the teachers in this study developed about honors v. "regular" can confirm a similar phenomenon.

Similarly, the discussion surrounding the achievement gap between White and Black students directly relates to this theme. Condron et al. (2013) examined the achievement gap as "a vital element in the creation and reproduction of economic inequality between [B]lacks and [W]hites" (p. 131), and discussed the necessity of additional theoretical and empirical research on the role of economic inequality in the achievement gap. Almost all of the teachers in the study explain they believe the plight of their Black students has more to do with socioeconomic status rather than Race. But if one applies CRT tenants one, three and four to this theme, it could be argued that being poor directly relates back to the students' race and location they live. One teacher even said, "south of a large city in the research site's state, most Black people are poor." There is a plethora of literature that discusses how Black people have been oppressed by the educational system (Condron, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Noltemeyer et al., 2012; Ogbu, 1992), and during the 1700s and 1800s, a few Black schools were created throughout the country, but these were mainly to "impart White behavioral norms, conceptions of morality, and religious beliefs that were viewed as being deficient in Blacks" (Rury as cited in Noltemeyer et al., 2012). This speaks directly to CRT tenants three and four and

how our current system has been defined for hundreds of years and will most likely not change any time soon.

Concurrently, no matter how much the teachers in the study felt that racism is not a problem in their school, a problem with them or a problem they have seen people experience much within the community, they still said, although infrequently, challenges can arise. Often, this relates directly to how the students' parents have been oppressed and treated, and the parents share their distaste for White people which directly affects the student's perception. Interestingly, the two teachers who mentioned this stated this had only happened with students from other places, usually larger cities. This reveals a need for further investigation between urban and rural settings and how this could affect perceptions. Similar to the other themes, when discussing challenges the teachers have between them and their Black students, it often returns to racism as an inherent facet of American society and not one to be easily changed, which correlates to CRT tenant one and stems from a long history of racism in America and inequality in education (Loring as cited in Noltmeyer et al., 2012; Ogbu, 1992).

As previously discussed and parroted by the teachers in this study, the United States is experiencing a turn towards segregation again as Black students become centralized in urban areas, which is a direct effect of economic status, and economic status is directly related to educational attainment; thus, a vicious cycle ensues (Condron, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Newton & Sandoval, 2015; Noltemeyer et al., 2012). The teachers explained they do not think it is a Black/White thing, but a socioeconomic thing. However, their discussions further explore how all of these concepts are directly entwined and affect each other.

Looking at this theme through the lens of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory also explains how the socioeconomic status of students can directly link to their race, achievement level and educational attainment. *Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race* applies aspirational, familial, social, navigational and resistant capital. Within this theme, teachers discussed the need for students to be willing to at least try in their classes. If students at least try, then the teachers will move mountains to help the students attain their goal, which directly links to aspirational capital. Similarly, these teachers will help students "navigate" educational experiences and become these students' social capital because they form a "network" from which the student can work, learn, grow and succeed.

In contrast, some of the challenges teachers face can be from acquired expectations from the students' parents of how a White teacher will treat the student; this actually works in opposition to Yosso's thoughts on familial capital. However, a teacher can use a student's resistant capital to help the students challenge societal norms, racist institutions and to help the students understand they are there to help the students, not hinder them. As discussed above, this connects back to the theme on relationships and the ability for a teacher, whether White or Black, to positively influence Students of Color. A student employs multiple forms of capital to navigate and succeed in school every day and teachers are a large part of this capital.

Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town

The theme *Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town* was derived from the numerous comments made by the participants about the site of the town and how this has directly affected their experiences within the research site. This theme also includes the

ideas that many of the teachers either grew up around Black people or multiple different cultures in more urban areas in addition to the impact the people in their lives had on them growing up and choosing a career in teaching. Two of the teachers grew up in a similar sized town to that of the research site, so they knew what it was like to live and work in a small rural area, but four of the participants grew up in larger or urban areas, so it was surprising to note they too liked small-town living and working for the most part. It appeared Jessica sometimes questioned her choices after having lived in larger areas, but she too saw the advantages to working and/or living in a small, rural area; specifically, the close relationships and bonds she can make as a teacher in this type of setting.

As previously discussed, this is an area that could be used for further research since there is no literature on the impact of race relations and White teachers and Black students in rural and/or southern towns. Even though this does not link to any of the previously mentioned studies, many of the same connections can be made. The "closeness" in this size town breeds an almost familial relation between the teachers and community members. These relations allowed for strong bonds and relationships to be built among the teachers and their students as well as the students' families. Jan spoke most about this and explained you just know everybody; you go to church together, shop together and go to the same school. According to the teachers, there is no way to avoid the relationships you build in a community of this size.

However, Delpit (2006) discussed how many teachers in her research have "their roots in other communities" (p. 17) and often do not connect to students because they are not part of the student's community. Again, analysis of this study's data has shown this to be different in a smaller community.

Everybody is Family, can be examined through tenant two of Ladson-Billings' CRT tenants. Many of the teachers discussed how living and/or working in a small, rural, southern town influenced the relationships they have with both students and their families, usually for the better. Even though no teacher discussed outright racism they have either witnessed or experienced within their school, the closeness of relationships within the community allows for a storytelling aspect to be encapsulated within lore of the town. They may have an almost familial relationship with people in town and knowledge of each other through this close bond, but much of this can be considered gossip or not always factual. There are stories that are still discussed about botched and influenced elections or how the school board favors White people. Even though the teachers approach their students and teaching with a form of "color-blindness," there are still far buried seeds of racial tension within the town.

Similar to the two previous themes, *Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town* relates to aspirational, familial, social and navigational capital. Teachers are often around their students for more than just school hours and can have some students multiple times throughout their educational careers. Additionally, they likely have taught other members of the students' family. Thus, teachers not only impact a student's desire to succeed in school but continually assist families in navigating their education and future careers.

Summary

The study revealed three major themes which encapsulated all of the themes for both research questions one and two:

1. Building Relationships: When Students Know You Care

2. Black v. Poor: Socioeconomic Status and Race

3. Everybody is Family: Life in a Small Town

The rich teacher commentary on these ideas examined why their administrators selected them as effective White teachers of Black students and provided strategies they employ within the classroom that better help them serve all of their students. Building relationships with the students was the most discussed theme among the teachers and helps construct the other two themes. No matter the content area, where or how a teacher grew up, the race of the student or the challenges they face within the classroom, all of the teachers agreed building a strong relationship through a foundation of trust is a necessary facet to students succeeding within their classrooms.

Limitations

The study is focused on the experiences of six teachers in one southern state and should not be generalized to all teachers, all secondary schools, or even schools with similar demographics or size. This study focuses specifically on Black students and White teachers, and is performed in a rural setting in the Southeast, also known as "the deep South" and "bible-belt." Thus, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalizable to all teachers in all settings. However, the rich data gathered through extensive interviews with the participants enables future researchers to examine these findings within the context of their own institutions.

Consequently, since the majority of the data is derived from interviews with the participants, dealings with human subjects and the data they provide may be skewed based on personal opinion, beliefs and experiences. Subjects could also have embellished or forgot dynamic portions of the interviews and discussions. Attempts to mitigate these effects were used via triangulation of multiple data collection methods including

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questionnaires, administrative feedback and personal interviews; collectively, these provide greater validity to the research.

Conclusions

Much research has been conducted on the best way to teach Students of Color in order to lessen the achievement gap between them and White students as well as to provide teachers with the best practices to teach Students of Color (Delpit 2006; Delpit, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lipsey, 2013; McKay, 2004; Milner, 2007; Yosso, 2006). Since there is still an achievement gap between White students and Students of Color, there is a need to determine best practices used by teachers in order to address this gap (NCES, 2015a). The results suggest best practices employed by effective White teachers of Black students include building strong and lasting relationships with students, establishing a basis for trust in said relationships and consistently treating all encounters with students as coaching opportunities with the goal of leaving them better than they were found. Consistent with previous literature, these best practices prioritize building relationships (social-emotional learning of students) over academic focused teaching strategies.

The results of this study suggest students learn best from people who invest in the students, build relationships with the students, and take a meaningful approach to inclusion within the student's lives. These results directly correspond to Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth Theory; the need to invest in Students of Color's capital and how people within their community, including their teachers, can impact this capital becomes a necessary focus of this research.

Many of the participants in this study express a sort of 'color-blindness' approach to teaching, which is not directly supported by multicultural education literature (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009), but it seems to work for them because they express strong commitments and provide evidence that they try to offer similar resources and attention to all students. This presents a conundrum to the negative connotation behind the idea of colorblindness. Perhaps in a smaller or more personal setting, the idea of colorblindness is overshadowed by the effects of a strong relationship between teacher and student, and focusing on the difference in race and culture could in fact hinder this relationship instead of build a stronger bond. This research would make it appear not seeing a person's color and instead focusing on relationships is what works for these teachers.

An interesting facet of the research I was not expecting was the direct connection to CRT and the association to civil unrest, police encounters, Black Lives Matter, Donald Trump and elevated racial tensions that would occur during the course of this research. I initially started the research because of a personal quest to help other teachers find better ways to teach all of their students. Throughout the research, civil unrest grew and could not help but impact the study. The teachers concluded they do not see color and do not think the achievement gap is as related to race as it is to socioeconomic status, but the closer eye on their teaching practices coupled with experiences they brushed off as minimal or uncommon, show even though they do not consciously address it or acknowledge it, the teachers and students are still experiencing this unrest together and it does impact their environment. Interestingly, the teacher comments on more Black students in their regular classes versus their honors classes delivers a juxtaposition to this idea. Inversely, much of the discussed literature suggests teaching students with color-

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blindness is more harmful to the students than inclusive because to better teach and reach

Students of Color, a teacher should acknowledge the student's culture and use this culture

to create culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1992b). Even though the

teachers in this study appear to embrace a color-blind attitude towards teaching their

students which is evidenced in comments like "you just teach them," implying you just

teach all students to the best of your ability, many of their assertions about building

relationships with the students and making sure they know you care, which can only

happen from getting to know the students personally, relate closely to many of the tenants

found in the aforementioned literature.

Something I did not explicitly hear interviewees discuss but expected was a

teacher-advocate perspective. Sometimes at schools, there are teachers who try to go

above and beyond for Students of Color. For example, they find a smart student in the

regular classes and invest in them to get her/him into an honors class. However, the

teachers in this study again approached their teaching with more of an all for one

approach.

Recommendations

This basic interpretive qualitative study examined the experiences of six White

teachers selected by their administrative team as effective teachers of Black students.

This study examined the teachers' perceptions and experiences of teaching Black

students in a rural, southern town as well as a White teachers' role in facilitating Black

students' success. The primary goal of this study was to determine best practices of

effective White teachers of Black students. The following recommendations are based on

the findings from the face-to-face interviews with the six participants.

Teachers should embrace the need to build relationships with students in order to create a learning space where students feel safe and can freely express themselves (Delpit, 2006). The best way to do this is to get to know your students on a more personal level. The student must know that you care and can be trusted. One way to do this is to get to know their cultural beliefs and how this impacts the way they see the world and feel about social institutions like school (Delpit, 2006). A teacher also needs to incorporate the students' cultures into the actual teachings in the classroom to provide culturally relevant teaching and not just multicultural education. Specifically, Ladson-Billings (1992b) explains "culturally relevant teaching" as:

> . . . a term I have used to describe the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to *fit* the school culture to the students' culture but also to *use* student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. (p. 314)

Multicultural education simply discusses the tenants of various cultures whereas culturally relevant pedagogy incorporates a student's culture into the curriculum. An understanding of the student's culture paired with actual use of that culture to help teach the students is necessary when teaching Students of Color.

Similarly, the students must not be blamed for their educational deficiencies and the lack of achievement as a result of their circumstances. A strength-based approach to reaching and teaching Students of Color must be adopted (Ladson-Billings, 1992a; Pinder, 2012; Yosso, 2006). Instead of looking at all of the deficiencies a student brings to the table (lack of financial resources, lack of parental support, multigenerational poverty, learning loss, etc.), a teacher must look at the positive aspects a student can

deliver to and develop during the educational process. What part of the students' world will help them succeed in the classroom? What have they been taught at home that becomes a valuable resource in the classroom? What can you as the teacher do to increase their aspirational, social, navigational and resistant capital? A teacher can know everything needed to teach a subject and the best research-based strategies to deliver a lesson, but if she does not believe in her students and their abilities, then the best teacher training will not help those students succeed. Instead of talking about what the student does not do or cannot do, teachers needs to focus on what they can do and expand on that through building a relationship and teaching to each individual student.

The history of the United States proves racial discrimination is a topic that has not been adequately addressed nor appears to be resolving any time soon (Ladson-Billings, 1992a). Critical Race Theory explores how racism is a systemic problem in America and needs to be addressed if we are to sufficiently teach our Students of Color. This study showed that even in school systems where there is a large number of Black students and the teachers do not appear to factor in a student's race as a problem when thinking about the education of that student, there are still obvious signs that systemic racism is an issue within the educational environment. Through discussion of honors classes, regular classes, and socioeconomic status, it is understood that there is still a long way to go toward eliminating the idea that Students of Color are less than or not capable. The first way to combat this is to have hard conversations with co-workers and leaders. Discuss these problems and be willing to digest the commentary and be open to criticism that may arise from the discussions. Ask questions like why are there less Black students in honors classes when we have more Black students at our school and what can we as educators do

to make academics as important to our students as other facets of their lives? Educators must focus on what the students bring to their educational experience and how they as the teachers can affect change within their sphere of influence.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the specificity and exclusivity of the study, the following recommendations are made for future research. First, future research should include classroom observations where teacher practice can be observed in relationship to what they said in the interviews. This is needed to better triangulate the data as well as substantiate the teachers' answers. Further, observations can provide concrete examples of what teachers describe, for example, how to genuinely inquire about students' well-being. Second, future research should also examine these teacher-student interaction techniques using large-scale qualitative and quantitative studies. This would make findings more generalizable, and needs to include a plethora of schools with different demographics, sizes and locations. Third, future research should examine whether lessons learned from White teacher-Black student interactions can help teachers navigate other student dynamics. One of the challenges discussed by the teachers is that non-resident students often arrive with some bias against White teachers. Doing specific portraitures of students who have moved to the research site from areas outside of the research site would provide further evidence of what makes a White teacher more effective with Black students; did these things change from place to place?

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Recruitment E-Mail for Potential Interview Participants

APPENDIX A: Recruitment E-Mail for Potential Interview Participants

Greetings,

My name is Maura Lewis. I am conducting research, and I would like to know if you would be interested in being involved. I'm currently pursuing a doctoral degree at Valdosta State University in Educational Leadership. My dissertation is on White teachers who effectively teach Black students.

As a White teacher of primarily Black students throughout your teaching career, your experience would be valuable to my study. In my study, I want to investigate your experience teaching Black students. I'm interested in investigating the experiences and future influences from your perspective. If you choose to be a part of this study, here is what will happen:

You will be invited to attend a Focus Forum that will last approximately 60 minutes, and will be asked to complete a questionnaire prior to the focus forum. Then, you will participate in a focus forum with approximately 5-7 teachers where we will discuss your previous educational experience, current educational beliefs and specifically what strategies you use in your classroom that make you an effective teacher. We will also discuss why your administrators may have selected you as an effective White teacher of Black students.

Upon completion of the focus forum, I will select two teachers and ask them to participate in one individual interview and a second focus forum. I will select teachers who are willing to participate further and that have experiences or ideas that are diverse.

If selected, I will have a conversation with you (interview approximately 90 minutes) where I will ask a whole range of questions about your experiences teaching Black students. After an individual interview, you will participate in a focus forum with the other teacher being interviewed. During this focus forum, you will be asked follow-up questions that were similarly answered by the other participant during the interview process and ideas/concerns/thoughts presented by the parent focus forum.

The interview will be audiotaped to capture concerns, opinions, and ideas that are offered by you. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. No one, including the researcher, will associate your responses with your identity. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate in the interview and focus forum, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in the study. Your identity will be kept confidential in the reporting of results.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please e-mail me back at maless@valdosta.edu.

Best Regards,

Maura Lewis

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Maura Lewis at maless@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

APPENDIX B:

E-Mail to Principal for Research Candidates

APPENDIX B: E-Mail to Principal for Research Candidates

Dear Principal,

My name is Maura Lewis, and I am a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. I am writing to solicit a nomination/recommendation for teachers to participate in my dissertation study on successful White teachers of Black students. The study is a small-scale qualitative study to be conducted during the 2021-2022 school year. I will invite all of the teachers on your list to participate in my study as focus forum participants. They will participate in a Focus Forum that will last approximately 60 minutes and from that I will identify two teachers to be individually interviewed. These two teachers will fill out initial questionnaires with demographics and teaching experience/background.

I am contacting you to identify potential participants. I am interested in White secondary school teachers who you would identify as effective White teachers of Black students using the following criteria:

- teaches classes with a majority of Black students
- effects gains in student achievement as measured by standardized test scores and grades, and
- maintains positive student and parental relationships

My preference is to identify teachers with at least three years of classroom experience, but all teachers can/will be considered.

I will also be asking you to work with your Football coach to identify up to 10 black parents to participate in a focus forum that will enable me to understand a parent perspective on what makes an effective teacher and the role of race, if any, in the experience of their student.

Please complete the below form to recommend at least five to seven teachers who would qualify based on the above requirements as well as who you think would participate and e-mail to maless@valdosta.edu. I will follow-up with you via telephone or in person within the next two weeks. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the e-mail above or at 229-251-1554.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maura A. Lewis

Teacher Nomination/Recommendation Form

Teacher Name	Years of Teaching Experience	Subject Taught
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

APPENDIX C:

Pre-Interview Teacher Questionnaire

APPENDIX C: Pre-Interview Teacher Questionnaire

Name_____

1. Gender: _____ Male   _____ Female

2. Age: _____

3. How many years have you been teaching? _____

4. How many years have you been teaching at your current school? _____

5. How many total school systems have you worked in, including your current one?

   _____

6. What was the racial make-up of the other schools where you taught?

7. What level of education do you have? Where did you obtain your degree? Please

   fill in the space(s) that best fits your answer(s).

   a. _____ Associate Degree from_____

   b. _____ Bachelor Degree from_____

   c. _____ Masters Degree from_____

   d. _____ Specialist Degree from_____

   e. _____ Doctorate Degree from_____

   f. _____Other

8. Please describe your ethnic, cultural, and/or racial identity (how you self-

   identify)? _____

9. Where were you born? _____

10. Where did you attend primary and secondary school?

APPENDIX D:

Verbal Consent Script for Interviews

APPENDIX D: Verbal Consent Script for Interview

You are being asked to participate in a qualitative research project entitled "*Is it Really Just Black and White?: A Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study of Effective White Teachers of Black Students in a Small, Southern Community*" which is being conducted by Maura A. Lewis, a doctoral student in the Leadership program at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of effective White teachers of Black students.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. The research involves a 90-120 minute interview. The interview will be audio recorded. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio recording will be destroyed. The transcripts will be stored on a computer and back up hard drive that are password protected to keep data secure in case of loss or theft. I will be saving transcripts for the designated time frame of three years as required by the IRB. Once that time frame has passed, each of the transcriptions will be permanently erased from the secure hard drive.

You will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Your name and workplace will not appear on any document associated with this study, including the transcription of the recorded interview. Likewise, your institution will remain anonymous.

You may choose not to partake in the interview, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, your audio taped conversations, and any written information linking them to the research study will be destroyed/shredded.

You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may be contacted after the interview if I have any additional questions to ask relating to your experiences and feedback.

I will give each participant a copy of the information BELOW before beginning the interview:

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Maura Lewis at <u>maless@valdosta.edu</u>*. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5045 or* <u>**irb@valdosta.edu**</u>*.*

APPENDIX E:

Individual Semi-Structured Interview

APPENDIX E: Individual Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Phase One: Current Teaching Experience

Before we begin the actual questions, I want you to understand the reason I am approaching my research this way is to hear your stories. I believe story-telling is a time honored way of approaching someone's knowledge-base through their experiences as well as one of the best ways to educate people. So, do not be concerned with your answers as much as just genuinely sharing your experiences with me. If you start to go down a rabbit hole, go with it. If something strikes a memory in you, share it. And if at any time you are not comfortable with a question, do not hesitate to say so and we will move right past it. This is your story; I'm just here to ask some questions and listen.

1. Why did you decide to be a teacher?

2. Can you describe your early ideas and images about teaching?

   a. How does this match your current reality?

   b. If this is different from what you thought it would be, do you feel you have been a successful teacher?

   c. If this matches what you thought it would be, what do you think has influenced that? Do you feel you have been a successful teacher?

   d. How many years have you been a teacher? How has that period of time affected the way you teach?

3. How did you end up teaching at this school?

   a. Have you taught at other schools, and, if so, how does this school compare to previous schools?

4. How do you approach teaching your current students?

a. What works best? Why?

b. What has been a failure? Why?

c. What do you think is the most important factor when it comes to students being successful in your class?

5. Why do you think your administration selected you as an effective White teacher of Black students?

a. Why do you think that is (if they answer with because I have good test scores or something similar)?

b. Do you think there are any strategies that you employ that set you apart from others?

c. What strategies do you use in and out of the classroom that help you be an effective White teacher of Black students?

d. Were you surprised that you were selected?

6. What is the racial makeup of your classes?

a. In what ways does it impact how your classroom works?

b. In what ways does it impact your teaching decisions?

7. In this school district, the demographics of your school do not match the demographics of your community. How do you explain this?

Interview Phase Two: Life History

1. Tell me a little bit about how and where you were raised.

2. What are some personal beliefs and/or values you hold as foundations of who you are?

a. How did the way you were raised help construct these values/beliefs?

     b. Did the way you were raised or where you were raised impact your future life choices and goals?

     c. In what ways have your life experiences affected your teaching?

3. Tell me about some of your personal educational experiences growing up you still remember as impactful in some way.

     a. How did these educational experiences impact your future goals?

     b. How do you employ these memories to help your choices within your own classroom?

4. Think back to your favorite teacher: what characteristics/qualities did he/she have that made you like him/her so much?

     a. Do you see similar qualities in yourself as a teacher?

5. How frequently and what types of interactions did you have with individuals from racial backgrounds different from your own growing up?

6. When you were in school, did you notice teachers attending to students differently based on their Race? How did you feel about this at the time?

7. Do you think how you were raised, where you grew up and your early interactions with Race shaped the kind of teacher you are?

8. What experiences, if any and either professionally or personally, have caused you to reflect on your own racial identity?

Interview Phase Three: Teaching Black Students

1. We have discussed many facets of your life and current teaching experience. At this point, I would like to hear about your experiences teaching Black students. Before I start specific questions, do you have anything that jumps out at you as

interesting or related to this topic; for instance, the reason I am so interested in this subject is because I am from the North and graduated with two Black students- there were 700 graduates in my class. However, I still believed myself to be educated and "colorblind" and I honestly didn't even think about Race impacting my professional career. When I moved down here I naively thought Race was not a problem and I could teach all students the way I had been taught and raised. Have you ever had an experience like that in teaching even if it does not have to do with Race? An epiphany moment or awakening?

2. You have been identified as a successful teacher of Black students; tell me about Black students who have come back and shared success stories with you or success stories from within your classroom.

   a. Do you have any stories that are not successful?

3. What, if any, challenges have you experienced being a White teacher of Black students?

4. There has been a heightened awareness, much media attention and turmoil around issues of Race in the United States. Do you have any examples where events have impacted you as a teacher or your students and can you describe them?

   a. Has there been any events that have impacted your actual teaching? If so, how did you handle those? If not, why do you think that is?

   b. In what ways do you feel equipped or even ill-equipped to handle these situations?

5. Do you feel there is inequity in education between Black and White students?

     a. If so, what do you believe are some of the root causes of inequity in education?

     b. From where do they come?

     c. How did they develop?

     d. What do they look like today?

6. Indicate your top three strategies for motivating students in the classroom?

     a. Do the same strategies work for all students?

     b. If yes please explain how, and if no, please explain why.

     c. Do you feel like Race is a factor in any of this?

7. You have been identified as a successful teacher of Black students, but statistics would say there is an achievement gap. Do you consider this when teaching- is there some intentionality that you recognize there is a gap or is good teaching just good teaching?

8. A lot of research says that Black students learn better from Black teachers and yet you are being successful. Why do you think that is?

9. Are your teaching strategies for Black and White students different?

     a. If you use the same strategies for all students, would you use these same strategies at a private school or school with different demographics?

     b. How does teaching in a rural southern district impact your teaching experience and strategies?

10. Anyone who has had teacher training has been told positive relationships with your students is the key to success in the classroom; explain the sort of relationships you have with your students and how you create these relationships.

a. In what ways does the way you approach relationship building with Black students differ from that with White students, if it does?

11. Have you ever had a negative interaction with a Black student?

    a. What happened?

    b. What was the outcome?

    c. Did you take any steps to repair the relationship? Please describe.

    d. Likewise, have you ever had a negative experience with a Black parent?

12. What advice would you give to other teachers working with Black students?

    a. Would this advice change based on the teacher's race?

13. What else do I need to know about why you're successful teaching Black students?

14. When you think about this school system and what your students need, what else do you think I should know?

15. How has this interview made you feel?

16. Is there anything else you would like me to know about being an effective White teacher of Black students?

APPENDIX F:

District Research Approval

APPENDIX F: District Research Approval

BROOKS COUNTY SCHOOLS
Home of the Trojans
1081 Barwick Rd. P.O. Box 511 · Quitman, GA 31643 · 229.588.2340

SUPERINTENDENT
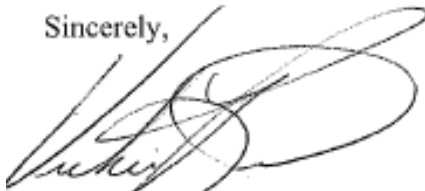Vickie Reed

August 25, 2021

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study regarding the perception of effective White teachers of Black students in the secondary school setting as presented by Maura Lewis, I have granted authorization for Mrs. Lewis to conduct this research within our school system. I understand the purpose of the study is to further understand teachers' experiences when teaching Black students. Mrs. Lewis will recruit participants from Brooks County High School.

I have indicated to Mrs. Lewis that participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw consent at any time during the study with no penalty. Furthermore, there is no penalty for anyone who chooses not to participate.

To ensure that employees are protected and student confidentiality is maintained, Mrs. Lewis has agreed to provide me a copy of any Valdosta State University IRB-approved consent documentation before she recruits participants.

If the IRB has any concerns about the permission being granted by this letter, please contact me at the telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Vickie Reed
Superintendent

APPENDIX G:

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

APPENDIX G: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04207-2021   **Responsible Researcher(s):** Maura Lewis

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Karla Hull

Project Title: *Is it Really Just Black and White: A Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study of Effective White Teachers of Black Students in a Small, Southern Community.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of the research study collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

- *To ensure confidentiality, pseudonym lists must be kept in a separate, secure file from corresponding name lists., email addresses, telephone numbers, etc.*

- *Exempt protocol guidelines permit the recording of interviews provided recordings are made to create an accurate transcript. Upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview session must be deleted immediately from all devices. Exempt guidelines prohibit the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings.*

- *As part of the informed consent process, interview recordings must include the researcher's reading of the consent statement, confirming participant's understanding, and establishing willingness to take part in the interview. Participants must be offered a copy of the research statement.*

- *Interview and focus group statements must be read aloud to participants at the start of each recorded session. Focus group participants are to be reminded not to identify themselves or others in the group.*

- ☒ *If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie   08.30.2021

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

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