Teacher Responsiveness to Engaging African American Males: A Qualitative Examination of Inclusion and Understanding

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I respectfully dedicate this research to my uncle. I am not sure I have ever openly expressed how marvelous of a man and role model my uncle has been for me. Cavalier, calm, funny, and consistent typify him. His unabashed love, patience, and persistence are more impressive and admirable than I could ever explain. Since the passing of my father and grandfather, Joseph Harlan has moved far beyond being an uncle. He instantly became every 'man' to everyone in my family. Even further to that point, my uncle is viewed as my daughters' loving and reliable grandad. They find him interesting, faithful, peaceful, cuddly, and willing to do what it takes to keep the family familial.

This research is about the way in which teachers engage Black male students. It examines the richness and depth of minds often underestimated, feared, and revered. It unpacks the impact of access and expectation on the trajectory of a student's life. In short, teachers who listen, accept differences, treat all students with respect, share thoughts, and care are quintessential for Black males to succeed in public schools. Although my uncle Joe, is not a teacher by trade, he taught me the power of being present, poised, patient, and paternal.

I respectfulely dedicate this research to my Father's best friend, my daughters' grandfather, and my aspiration - Joe Harlan.

I love you Unc! Thank you for keeping your word.

_____________

I also dedicate this research to my twin brother. I simply and wholly love you. You have unconditionally supported me throughout every season of my life. This research examines the way in which teachers engage African American males. It unpacks what real engagement and consideration looks like and does for the African American male.
What this research does not do is explain how many African American males make it through life despite lackluster teachers and opposition. It does not show how brothers often are the only support needed to make it through life. I respectfully dedicate the content of this document and my graduation day to you, my best friend and hero. I love you little ‘big’ brother.
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I am grateful that Dr. Antony Norman agreed to be on my committee—when he did not have to. I appreciate the support and willingness to help me obtain this goal. I appreciate what he has done for Western Kentucky University – especially the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. Even further, when racial tensions are as high as I can remember, it is warming to know that people like Dr. Norman are fighting for educational equity and inclusion of all students. I will be forever thankful for his compassion.

I would like to acknowledge my three daughters who have made me realize even more why we as educators must do more for our African American males. There may come a day that they fall fully in love with a person and wish to marry. If that person is an African American male, it is my hope that they (African American males) love them
as I do. It is my prayer that they are not jaded by the system(s) that I believe are not for them. Because I am raising African American females, I dedicate my life to the improvement and inclusion of African American males. My beautiful daughters deserve to walk through life with someone who can and will stand beside them.

I believe that teaching is a calling. Not everyone do it. There are many teachers who are dedicated to supporting and teaching any child that enters their classrooms. I cannot submit this research without acknowledging them. I respect those teachers who give all they have to the students they teach. Because of them, we will be better.

I am my mother’s son. Her tenacity and love have kept me believing in myself. I could never repay her for all she has done for me. I simply wish to acknowledge the strongest woman I know. I hope this work warms her heart and honors her legacy.

Lastly, I acknowledge the strength, patience, and comfort of my wife. She is truly a gift from God. On this side and the next, I will always hold her hand.
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This study examined the influence of teacher practices on the engagement of African American males. Two teachers were selected for observation while teaching African American males. The teachers for this study were found to have a propensity to be culturally responsive and to exude some of those qualities while engaging the African American males. The observations were held in one high school with a high percentage of African American males. The observations, supported by field tested inventories, the Culturally Responsive Inventory Observation Protocol, and the Multicultural Education Awareness Survey, revealed that teachers with an understanding of inclusion and responsiveness (1) can positively and productively engage African American males, and (2) are committed to defying the odds of success for the African American male. This high level of engagement and contextual consideration of African American males yields success, mends systemic inability to connect with this group of students, and improves classroom environments. Implications and findings for the implementation of inclusive and engaging strategies for this group of students are discussed.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Since the creation of U.S. public schooling, the public school system has served as a means to prepare U.S. citizens for success in adult life. The Center on National Education Policy (1996) has claimed that schools were established to improve the social stations of all students, educate students in a way that allows them to be competitive in a global society, celebrate differences, and make all students self-defined and sufficient. Schools are designed to have competent, literate, contributing citizens who possess the thought and collective body of education. John Dewey (1899) posited that what parents want for their own child is what the community must want for all its children as well. The idea of inclusion and support for all students should not stop at the demarcation lines of poverty versus wealth, immigrant versus American born, White versus Black, or in particular for this study African American males versus other students.

Since the days of Dewey, education has changed in many ways and instruction has become more scrutinized; all the while, the overall tenants and structures of school are still the same. Within the constructs of a still racially segregated system, most schools have inherently failed to engage and, thus, adequately prepare African American male students for entry into adulthood. As will be presented in more detail, researchers have scrutinized the performance and behavior of African American males for well over 20 years. Disproportionality in low achievement, suspensions, and lack of access to rigorous classes in relation to the African American male still exist in public schools across America. Perceptions, practices, and beliefs regarding students of color are
problematic in that they contribute to the disparity between students of color and other students in the United States. No doubt, schools will continue be deserts of despair for Black males if researchers do not render solutions to address the proverbial gap. Thus, the public education experience for males of color is worth further study.

Black males continue to be marginalized and stigmatized at rates that exceed their peers in U.S. schools (Anderson, 2008; Terry, 2010; Toldson, 2013). This marginalization means that large numbers of Black males do not have access to the rigorous classes and “good teaching” needed for them to achieve at a high level and be significant contributors in society. Nearly half of Black males never receive their high school diploma or G.E.D. equivalent in four years (Allensworth & Easton, 2001; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). Taylor (1999) posited that the conversations among educators concerning Black male achievement normally are negative.

Rist’s study (1970) highlighted the effect of self-fulfilling prophecy on students in the ghetto—in this case, Black males—as early as kindergarten. Thus, if public schools commonly have Black males who are performing poorly, they may perceive those students as cognitively and socially inept and disproportionately suspend them. Those students could easily begin to see themselves as inferior and undeserving of good grades, success, and college.

Hall (2001) stated that Black males are often labeled with characteristics that render them as disconnected and uninterested in school. They often are perceived to be hostile, mentally slothful, and only athletic. Howard (1998) asserted that depictions of Black males historically can be categorized into five types: (1) the physical brute and
anti-intellectual, (2) the lazy Black man, (3) hypersexual, (4) criminal-minded, and (5) pimp/gangster.

A larger underlying issue that may play into the educational experience of Black males is the way in which educators, as well as society at large, view intelligence, which is quantified and qualified in different ways. Sternberg, Conway, Ketron, and Bernstein (1981) noted that the term intelligence appears to be used more broadly among laypeople than by psychologists. Psychologists from around the United States, and particularly in the general public in New Haven, Connecticut, differ in the way they rated behaviors as characterizing an intelligent individual. Such could still be the case today. The way in which one views intelligence, engagement, and mental fitness could unnecessarily disqualify many African American males from classes and learning that they deserve.

As such, intelligence is subjective and ascribed by those who have a preconceived and self-selected notion of the meaning of intelligence. Bogle (2001) asserted that many African American male students are deemed intelligent or unintelligent by a set of criteria controlled by media and the school system, which often is narrow in thought and cultural relevance. At this point, a concern for the African American male arises. In knowing that the judgment of intelligence tends to be unevenly assigned and that inaccurate perception(s) often drive the judgment of intelligence, practitioners within the education system are obligated to ask why words often used synonymously with intelligence, such as capable, able, smart, engaged, brilliant, and bright, are not applied to African American students at the same rate as their White peers (Karenga, 1980). Could it be that African Americans students are disengaged from the educational environment or, rather,
too often educators fail to recognize, acknowledge, and encourage the intellectual capacity of these students?

As teachers begin to explore their position on race, many comments are normally heard such as, “I never owned slaves” or “I was not born when Columbus took over America.” This research is intended to unveil the potency of White privilege and its negative impact on the Black male by illuminating positive, culturally sound practices that improve the performance of the disenfranchised African American male. Howard (1998) stated that more research should be dedicated to examining those teachers who effectively reach Black males. This study examines the frequent but often under-evaluated positive impact of two teachers on Black males.

James Banks (1996) said, “If we fail to recognize the ways in which social location produces subjectivity and influences the construction of knowledge, we are unlikely to interrogate established knowledge that contributes to the oppression of marginalized and victimized groups” (p. 65). Inasmuch, teachers of Black males must employ practices that are inviting to these students. Teachers also must have examples of effective and responsive teaching; this research seeks to illuminate effective responsive teaching and to provide examples of pedagogy that are different and focused on engagement.

Similarly, Baron, Tom, and Cooper (1985) wrote, “The race or class of a particular student may cue the teacher to apply the generalized expectations, therefore making it difficult for the teacher to develop specific expectations tailored to individual students. In this manner, the race or class distinction among students is perpetuated. The familiar operation of stereotypes takes place in that it becomes difficult for minority or
disadvantaged students to distinguish themselves from the generalized expectation” (p. 251).

Many White teachers are confident that they do what is best for all students and all students benefit from their teaching. Many of these teachers, according to Griffin (1995), neither recognize their Whiteness as a station of dominance nor acknowledge race as an issue. They feel that designing lessons that take into account students of diverse backgrounds, attending professional development courses on diversity, and looking at data regarding gaps in achievement between minority students and majority students, qualify them as inclusive teachers. Recognizing this mindset and understanding the damage done when teachers omit or ignore their own biases about race and cultural differences, students’ backgrounds, and beliefs about potential and ability are where true inclusion and the power of perception can be revealed. Helms (1990) defined racial identity as “a sense of a group of collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (p. 38). Within this identification teachers must first recognize with what group they identify and then accept the fact that all groups, including African American males, may not identify with the same group.

Admittedly, being a White teacher does not automatically mean that students of color are neglected and negatively classified. Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that some teachers have been trained in cultural competence, are receptive to other ethnicities, and are positive influences for all students. Delpit and Dowdy (2008) posited that appropriate education for children of poverty and children of color can be designed only when parents, teachers of color, and adults of the same culture assist in developing the
curriculum and the standards. It would appear that Ladson-Billings and Delpit and Dowdy are at odds; however, such is not the case. Delpit and Dowdy added that teachers are the quintessential tool to improving the performance of the Black male in school. They asserted that culturally competent non-minority teachers should allow teachers from disenfranchised cultures to take an active, respectable, and robust role in helping the Black male achieve. Teachers are important to the growth of students. Understanding that Black males often seek and favor relationships, it is easy to deduce the potentially positive impact of teachers on Black males.

Brookover and Lezotte (1977) examined eight urban school districts and found schools that experienced positive performance from its disadvantaged group had high expectations, felt responsible, and felt accountable for teaching all students with whom they were charged. The inverse was true for schools whose disadvantaged students’ performance declined. Teachers who felt they could not reach Black males or thought academic performance was solely the student’s responsibility typically were in schools with a culture of mediocrity and hegemonic lessons.

It is clear that, in order to combat the plight of many African American males’ low assessment scores, high dropout rates, and disproportionate suspensions, teachers, particularly non-minority teachers, need additional training on ways to reach a growing population in American schools. The African American student needs teachers who are trained to be culturally proficient. It is imperative to be explicit in sharing behaviors and assumptions that impair the social and academic progress of the African American male.

Rogoff (2003) recalled a period in history when psychologist H. H. Goddard was hired by the U.S. Public Health Service to screen immigrants who might “taint” the
American gene pool. This assessment was proctored and generated by Goddard. With no training and clearly no cultural empathy, the newly created word “moron” was attached to Hungarians, Jews, Russians, and Italians. As it relates to perceptions, identity, and motivation(s), one might assume that the mindset of Goddard continues to infiltrate the classrooms, cultures, and communities of those who enter public schools. Whether unintentional or by design, the misinterpretation and assumption about a student’s cultural background appears to remain a problem.

Viktor Frankl (2006) stated, “Strangely enough, a blow which does not even find its mark can, in certain circumstances, hurt more than one that finds its mark” (p. 42). Perception is often unknown and the individual harboring that perception may be unaware of its impact on the one thought to benefit from the consideration of the teacher. Thus, this research addresses teacher practice and beliefs to determine whether responsive teaching evokes engagement in the African American male.

**Statement of the Problem**

Ford and Harris (1999) asserted that African American males have struggled to adjust in United States schools. These students are grossly overrepresented in special needs categories. Too many African Americans have been consistently and systematically told they are inferior and uneducable, and their school performance “has replicated this low expectation for success” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 208). This ongoing system of debilitation arguably has aided in the devastation and denigration of the African American male. The student population increasingly changes demographically and, yet, schools continue to be places with a homogenous teaching population, i.e., mostly White, female, and middle class (Gay, 2004, 2010); teachers must
be prepared to educate African American males in a way that invites their differences and encourages classroom discourse. More research is necessary to equip practitioners with the appropriate research supported tools that transform the classroom into one of inclusion and responsiveness. As DuBois (1903) asserted more than a century ago that the problem with the 20th century is the color line, such is still the case. This researcher seeks to do his part in weakening the divide and improving the overall education system.

While some research has addressed the achievement gap of African American males compared to other students, most researchers have not examined the depth and impact that teacher perception, cultural awareness (or lack thereof), and self-identity have on their students (in this case, Black students). Accordingly, a main facet of the problem addressed in this study is the under-examined connectivity between culturally responsive teachers and African American males. Can the engagement of Black males improve if teachers are culturally “in tune” with students of color? How do teacher behavior/perceptions of the students’ ability impact the students’ motivation to achieve in school?

**Purpose of the Study**

Many researchers have centered their efforts on teacher perceptions of Black students or on Black males and their lack of motivation. Yet, more research is needed on persistent patterns of culturally responsive pedagogical practice and its impact on student self-image and engagement. The factors that evoke inactivity in students of color should be clearly identified and disseminated to public schools. It is important to note that these factors can impact students at different stages in their education; thus, this study focuses
on teachers of African American males (in high school) between the ages of 15 and 19 who are demonstrating it is possible to engage African American males in classrooms.

This research assesses the impact of teacher perception (and resulting behavior and practice) on engaging the African American males in high school—i.e., to qualify the extent to which African American males’ participation/engagement in school is influenced by the perception of their teachers. This research investigates the practices of the teachers and identify correlations between teacher responsiveness and student engagement. Thus, the underlying question to be answered is: How does teacher practice encourage or discourage Black male students’ engagement?

As presented more fully later in this dissertation, both qualitative and quantitative research has shown inequities in the achievement of Black boys. This research seeks to approach this inequity from a strength-based approach that highlights teachers being inclusive and culturally responsive to African American males. This study further illuminates the reciprocated respect between student and teacher when the teacher is culturally responsive, introspective, and inclusive. This study examines the impact of teacher perceptions, societal constructs, and pedagogical practices on African American males’ engagement in the school environment. The question is whether culturally responsive teachers improve the engagement of the African American males by acknowledging differences and by being sensitive to their self-image.

The methodology used in this study is qualitative in nature and utilizes observation and teacher interviews to compile information and to arrive at an understanding of the impact of teacher perceptions, practices, and behavior on students of color. The research also examines teacher practices through a lens of race. The study
takes a critical look at cultural and societal constructs related to race and analyzes practices that build upon those constructs in order to impact the engagement and behaviors of the students being studied.

**Research Questions**

The research questions to be answered are:

1. What cultural and societal discourse in the classroom evokes engagement and positive participation from African American males?
2. What practices do culturally responsive teachers employ that engage African American males?

**Significance of the Study**

The public school system in the United States is aware of the gap that exists in achievement between students of color and White students. The public school system also recognizes the lack of qualified, well-trained, culturally aware teachers in the system. Zumwalt and Craig (2005) noted that the majority of aspiring teachers are White and projected that the ratios will remain much the same in the foreseeable future. Should these ratios remain steady over the course of the coming years, efforts to train teachers in the understanding of different cultures is critical if the public school system is to reach all students.

With stagnation of numbers of teachers entering the profession, it is logical to assume that the homogeneity might serve as a line of demarcation that places students into negative categories based on the teacher’s perception. Valenzuela (1999) purported that teachers, the majority of whom are White, may perceive students of color as in a state of lethargy, low cognition, and social inferiority. If a teacher’s perception of a
student is negative, the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecy is likely to manifest in many students of color. Hence, the need to understand cultural differences and enlighten the mindsets of many teachers is in order.

This study provides evidence that teachers must be aware of their behaviors, position of privilege (or lack thereof), and perceptions about students when designing curriculum and leading a classroom. This study identifies behaviors that heighten school engagement of the African American male. It also seeks to curtail those biases by offering other ways in which to engage these students. Based on this study, teachers should be able to (1) better articulate the dichotomy of the situation; (2) explore and discover the most positive way to engage African American males; and (3) self-reflect and inspect his or her own biases and behavior.

Furthermore, this study attempts to bring to light practices that indirectly weaken a student’s self-loathing and bolster a positive self and social image for the Black male. The researcher intended to debunk the overused assumption that Black males are unteachable and unreachable. Teachers in every urban school district are weakening the social constructs that may corner the consciousness of the Black male and lead him to believe he is not only a novice academically, but a novice in any aspect of life that requires intellect and academic engagement.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

This study makes some assumptions that may affect the interpretation and broader application of results. The most prevalent of the assumptions is that the African American male students in the study already had an understanding of stereotypes and academic expectations instilled upon them by teachers. Second, the assumption was
made that the students had a conscious or subconscious opinion of the stereotypes, perceptions, and whether they are an accurate depiction of African American males. It also was assumed that the individuals automatically identified as belonging to the group designated African American male (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and that the participants—both teacher and student—felt comfortable and behaved as usual knowing an observer was present.

The size of the sample was limited to two teachers and their classrooms, which was a purposeful research decision in order to strengthen the focus and elicit an in-depth understanding of phenomena taking place in the classrooms. “Second, it was assumed that teachers and students have a symbiotic relationship with one another. Since this is the assumption, and this relationship was the focus of the study, the study is monolithic in nature. Taking other factors into account might lead to additional findings” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 165). Yin (1994) posited that case studies allow for exploratory research and useful hypothesizing. It is clear that this study also has an exploratory component that favors qualitative research; however, further research may require a quantitative component.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although there is talk of cultural diversity and the importance of respecting all cultures represented in the classroom, much work remains to be done in order for the ideal of such talk to materialize and manifest itself in U.S. public schools. Minority students remain overrepresented in special education classes and alternative schools. Compared to their peers, Black males have been the focus of concern for decades (Education Trust, 2003; Holzman, 2006). Minority students remain underrepresented in rigorous academic classes and competitive public schools. In many urban school districts, one can deduce whether the instruction is rich with rigor and governed by pedagogical best practices by counting the number of students of minority backgrounds in the class.

The design of most schools and school systems results in sustained degradation of certain students while celebrating the easily acquired social and academic accolades of the often privileged majority. The aftermath of years of such a design resounds and reforms minority students’ outlook on schools, teachers, and themselves (Woodson, 1933). The once joyful and relaxed student begins to lose his mental posture. The student begins to see the mirage in the mirror that is painted and tainted by policymakers, principals, teachers, and privileged peers. In turn, Carnoy (1994) posited that the effects of living in conditions saturated in poverty and socially isolated economically oppressed aid in causing Black males to face school challenges. This is especially true, given that one of three Black children are raised in poor households and seldom see African American males in a positive light (Clark & Clark, 1947). The end result in many cases is bitterness, self-betrayal, and maladjusted masculinity.
The Roles of Delegitimizing Behavior and White Privilege in Teacher Perceptions

Some forms of self-loathing within minority student populations are prevalent as early as kindergarten (Meisels, 1992). Schools and teachers make life-altering decisions about students when they decide to “flunk” a child who is in kindergarten. The retaining of African American students typically happens in the primary grades, often occurring in the third grade (Holmes & Mathews, 1984). Rumberger (1995) found that the retention of primary school students is the most powerful predictor of whether a high school student will drop out. Shade (1994) found that school systems without a welcoming culture for extroversion and social engagement/interaction, and in which little support and attention is given to nurturing differences, African Americans are less likely to feel included and that they can achieve at high levels. Leonardo’s research (2002) supported Shade’s research by noting that White teachers can delegitimize behavior and expressions of learning from Black students when the student’s behavior does not fit the teacher’s frame of reference.

The majority of minorities who live in urban areas are financially poor and downtrodden (Anyon, 2005). The destruction of a minority student’s self-esteem and sense of worth—coupled with the aforementioned infrastructure of public school education—contributes to a distortion of the minds subjected to it. A distrust of school and acceptance of poverty appears to be an ill-decided fate to which many minority students cling and/or revert when the current pedagogical policies and teacher practices that favor the majority student are forced upon minorities and become a heavy burden. Despite the shroud of inferiority designed by school systems and transferred to them by some teachers, some minority students appear to redefine their inferiority by
glorifying poverty, repelling learning, and accepting the majority’s rejection(s). DuBois (1903) championed the need for responsible teaching and community uplift in his venerated book, *The Souls of Black Folk*s:

> It was the duty of someone to see that these workingmen were not left alone and unguided, without capital, without land . . . without even the bald protection of the law, order, and decency,—left in a great land, not to settle down to slow and careful internal development, but destined to be thrown almost immediately into relentless and sharp competition with the best of the modern workingmen under an economic system where every participant is fighting for himself, and too often utterly regardless of the rights or welfare of his neighbor. (p. 156)

Minority students bring their own rich culture to the schools they attend. Their poverty is financial rather than cultural. Upon entering school and having no option other than to ignore their own culture and accept a culture different from their own, dissension and deformation manifest in those students who refuse to embrace or even grapple with the idea of forfeiting their culture. Nieto (1994) posited that more students should be allowed to share their perspective; by doing so, the student engages in the learning and also teaches the educator to be a better teacher. Teachers must become amenable to listening and responding to their students’ opinions and understanding. Learning and inclusion can occur within that understanding. In turn, the sharing of perspectives may engage the African American male.

Rogoff (2003) insisted that individuals need to change the lens through which they view children. Human development is an equation that is solved only by allowing children to experience and share the processes of life, rather than stifling its
progression. As it relates to the school system, it is important that teachers view students individually and allow them to share their world view of life. In doing so, students become a part of the class and the community of the school. Should school systems subscribe to Rogoff’s stream of thought, the achievement gap that allegedly haunts policymakers and some educators in this nation may disappear.

Obiakor’s (1999) research parallels that of Rogoff and found that the teacher’s expectations of African American males typically is inaccurate, unrealistic, simple, and negative. Teachers have subscribed to believing that they serve as viable role models who understand the history, symbols, and culture of the African American. Yet practices and behaviors prove otherwise. Obiakor reported that the disillusionment and detachment the teacher projects toward students is multiplied and internalized by the African American male and in many cases results in dejection, distrust, and defiance.

Steele (1997) fortified the work of Obiakor (1999) by claiming that internalized perceptions from others, in this case teachers, causes Black males to resist and default to failure and self-destruction. In turn, when African American students are asked to self-identify on a test as being Black, then coupling that with subtle but negative cues, the African American (males) performed poorly.

Hunter (2002) posited that discussing issues of race all the while ignoring the systemic construct that enters schools clearly gives one an advantage that must be addressed. Igantiev and Garvey (1996) stated that renouncing White privilege, or at the very least recognizing it, is a starting point toward academic change for African Americans; however, it is not insufficient unless systemic changes and pedagogical practices that help Black students are employed in all school systems. According to
McIntosh (1989), White privilege is the unearned power granted to White people by systemic foundational and environmental circumstance that renders them undeservingly superior to non-Whites. McIntosh added that the way of White people is considered normative and average and is the “standard” to which other races are compared. If other racial groups (in this case, Black males) do not seamlessly fit in the aforementioned normative life, they are rendered as oppositional and troublesome.

Theorists who have examined privilege as a starting point to changing school culture and improving student engagement maintain that, in most instances, change will happen only when White teachers begin to realize that they must relinquish and/or realize the benefits inherited by virtue of being White in a classist society. As Helms (1990) argued, “In order to develop a healthy White identity, defined in part as a nonracist identity, virtually every White person in the United States must overcome one or more aspects of racism” (p. 49).

Wise (2005) illuminated the power of privilege when he asked White and Black adults to discuss what is good about being in their specific racial group. Unapologetically, the minority (Black) group spoke of tight-knit families, convening around food, and culture. The White students highlighted that their intelligence was never brought into question due to racial background and that they were thankful that they were never racially profiled. In summation, students of color identify through culture and connectivity. White people, according to the research of Wise, more often define themselves by who they are not. Understanding that social constructs and behavior do in fact enter the classroom, it is clear that this qualification of identity and the power of privilege at minimum serves as a subconscious means to insulate strata and
permits public school systems to disown the disengagement of African American males in the classroom.

As Felice (1981) purported, teacher expectations and behaviors are vital in determining the achievement of the African American male. Variables such as the aforementioned lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy for minority students. Felice’s research, coupled with the discovery that few schools infuse multiculturalism throughout the curriculum (Banks, 1993), showed a clear and massive problem for the minority student. With few teachers understanding the background that minority students bring to the classroom, and with little effort put forth in trying to understand the differences, the African American male student is in a sense partitioned off in many classrooms. Howard (1998) shared the recollection of a Black male who was not recognized as going to college because he was attending a Historically Black College—Morehouse. Boykin (1986) maintained that the negligence of school systems and the ignoring of differences often place an unexplainable burden on the African American student to fit in with his or her own race. There appears to be a level of expectation for the Black male to forfeit being himself and to ignore the aspects of his life that have made him who he is. In turn, he begins to feel disdain for the culture into which he feels he must conform. This could evoke resentment toward the White race to the extent that underachieving becomes a way of dismissing the White world by acting out and intentionally colliding with the norms of the classroom. Undeservingly, the White teacher may inadvertently become the symbol and focal point of oppression and superiority to the Black male.
The Effects of Marginalization on Both Students and Teachers

Students

The human psyche is formidable and, yet, malleable; years of systemic negligence can transform the minds of students who were once certain, school-faithful, and progressive (Staples & Jones, 1995). The end result of the transformation places students in a psychological sector that perceives a need only to survive. Survival for many minorities entails living, eating, acquiring a minimal education, having a feeble financial influence, limited exposure to other cultures, contagious ill-channeled anger, and complacency regarding the financial and mental stations to which they appear to be shackled. Woodson (1933) posited:

If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one. (p. 7)

For many minority students, they recognize the injustices placed upon them through their schools; however, their recognition of the mistreatment as it relates to combating the problem and taking action is limited to tantrums, retreats, submission, denial, or blending. Noguera (2002) asserted that in schools and classrooms the Black male struggles to maintain and to identify the person he is. Doing so often fuels stereotypes and in some cases builds larger divides between the Black male and his
teacher, which can then cause disengagement to occur. African American youth may deliberately underachieve and choose not to participate in gifted programs to avoid peer pressures and accusations that they are "acting White," or they may camouflage their abilities to be accepted socially by their peers (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Similarly, a study by Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff (2003) revealed that when African American students perceived discrimination by teachers, it had a negative impact on their academic motivation, their perception of school as a need, and beliefs about their own intelligence.

In contrast, Bowman and Howard (1985) studied race-related socialization, motivation, and achievement among 377 African American youth. They found that male students who were racially socialized, which Rotherman and Phinney (1987) indicated is “the developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of the group” (p. 11) and who were made aware of racial differences and cultural protocols, earned higher grades.

**Teachers**

Smith (1995) observed the interactions between teachers and their African American students and brought attention to Black students’ interpretations of the actions and behavior of their teachers. The observations were included three teachers who taught in an urban school system. For the study, Smith entered the classroom as an observer of the class in its entirety and was cognizant of the culture of all classrooms, despite the positive or negative treatment of student or teacher. The study followed 12 students within the three aforementioned classes. Along with observations, Smith also interviewed the teachers and the students. Smith probed for conversations, actions, and
curricula that engaged or disengaged African American students in their classrooms. She qualified characteristics that were tabulated through observations and interviews and designed a scale that classified teacher conversation and interaction as either diminutive or subtractive. Smith posited that, through conversations with and actions of the teacher, students developed a sense of greater or lesser self-worth and a sense of being disregarded or accepted.

Although the design limitations of Smith’s (1995) study leave room for interpretation, the results based on interviews, observations, and case studies showed different teacher behaviors depending upon whether the teacher was addressing a Black or White student. The majority of conversations and interactions that the teachers had with their Black students carried negative overtones. The framing of the observations yielded results that illustrated unintentional negligence and stereotypes. Smith’s findings indicated that a majority of the interactions between the students and teachers were unproductive. A similar study by Comer (1995) affirmed that discriminatory teaching is detrimental to African American male students’ engagement and success.

Greene’s (2011) more recent study of Black college students investigated the effect of considering student background culture and related teacher practice as a means of improving the academic achievement of African American students. This study sought to decrease the achievement gap and improve the academic achievement of African American students. Asserting that excluding or not considering cultural backgrounds has been found to negatively impact the achievement of Black male students, Greene suggested that culturally relevant curriculum and cultural considerations would consequently and quickly improve student achievement. Greene reported that the
formidable challenge of closing the gap does not lie in focusing on the ability of Black students, but rather on the inclusion of Black students and the rich culture they bring to the classroom.

In Greene’s study (2011), data were drawn from student surveys, interviews with two professors, and three focus groups. Greene used questions that focused on classroom culture and classroom transformation and grouped the responses into six categories:

1. Motivation and culturally relevant teaching
2. Relevance of learning environment
3. Peer pressure and pressure to conform to the establishment
4. Learning styles
5. Classroom environments that are culturally diverse
6. Acknowledging the African American culture in the classroom

The survey and interview results suggested that African American students felt that if teachers had paid attention to culture in the classroom, it would have made them more engaged. Greene (2011) stated that motivation for Black students to continue their education was lowered when they realized their culture and background were not considered and the teacher behaved in such a way that led them to believe they were not expected to achieve at high levels. Greene found that many of the students did not solely blame White teachers for their decreased engagement. Many attributed their lack of motivation to their parents’ attitudes toward finishing school. Such findings strengthened Greene’s assertions that policies and prescribed curriculum and pedagogical procedures implemented in several schools have systemically harmed the academic progress of Black students for generations.
Antiracist Education and Racial Identity

Antiracist education can be defined “as an action oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression” (Dei, 1996, p. 25). Antiracist education focuses on the underpinnings and operations/behaviors of dominants group and institutions, in this case schools, according to Troyna (1987). Teachers are called to introspectively consider their social power, backgrounds, behaviors, and thoughts and to decide whether they are, in fact, retarding the engagement of the African American male.

Hopkins (2003) studied the critical effect of community impact, schooling, and influence by addressing three central factors related to Black males’ educational experience and their academic performance: “(1) the need to understand Black male inner city culture; (2) the need to encourage unification among school and community people; and (3) the need to re-evaluate teachers of Black males and monitor teacher attitudes” (p. 176). Hopkins proposed that the primary key(s) to repairing the Black male students’ deficit lies in developing a sustainable program with a culturally sensitive curriculum design, an analysis of the cultural background of Black students, and preparation of teachers versed in teaching practices designed to address the needs of Black students.

Hopkins (2003) interviewed and observed 30 individuals in the school system. The interviews were completed in two increments. Six interviews were conducted with school administration and program directors; 24 interviews were conducted with students, parents, secretaries, and two teachers. The answers were analyzed and interpreted. After Hopkins’ interpretation, the responses were categorized according to the aforementioned factors. Hopkins’ analysis of the data and face-to-face
interviews produced an unexpected finding. Schools designed to meet the needs of Black males have staff members, community advocates, and parents who fervently study trends, stretch resources, and care for the well-being of the Black males they serve.

Hodges (1996) posited that the majority of instruction that occurs in American classrooms is weak and focuses on isolated goals and targets. Winborne (1991) discovered that difference in background between teacher and student, coupled with biases, can stifle the learning of students whose cultural background differs from that of the teacher. Winborne found that some teachers ignore the opportunity for discourse and culture sharing. His research showed that the silencing of the student’s opinion, although unintentional, occurred often. To be ignored in classrooms, whether by design or ignorance, to stifled the achievement of the African American male. Arroyo and Zigler (1995) found that a “racelessness” mindset (not allowing race into the classroom) led to greater risk of student anger, depression, misbehavior, and separation.

Johnson (2001) affirmed that White teachers are put off by the word(s) race and racism, and even the word White. They believe the word is riddled with accusation and blame. As opposed to attaching meaning to the word, or considering race to matter in the classroom, those teachers avoid the issue and in turn fail to show that the African American race is important and welcomed in the classroom. Graham and Hudley (1994) found that when teachers allowed cultural responsiveness to drive their classroom instruction, a recognition of race came from a strength-based approach and African American males performed similarly to their White counterparts; in some cases, they showed greater adaptability to the rigors issued by the teacher.
Other interesting research on student engagement and achievement have been linked to both the teacher and the school. When goals were set and dissonance decreased, it was found that African American students’ achievement increased (Arunkumar, 1998). Tharp (1989) found students from various cultures defined and qualified learning and the goals of learning in different ways. Clear goal setting and consideration of learning goals have impacted students in many ways. Recently, action researchers have studied the impact of matching instructional practice with the cultural backgrounds of the students has on improving the student outcomes (Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994).

In a more recent study, Woods (2010) examined the relationship between White female teachers and their Black male students. The study addressed cross-cultural opportunities available to teachers that they, in turn, could use as tools to improve teaching. Woods identified a common dynamic in the classroom: that of White women teaching Black male students. The qualitative study focused on three White female elementary school teachers and their interactions with Black male students. Three models were used to explain the answers of the White female teachers. As in Greene’s study (2011), Woods’ research demonstrated that hegemonic curriculum and cultural segregation diminished the potency of the teacher-student relationship. Woods discovered that the cognitive distance between students and teacher was magnified when they could not find common ground or when students were not allowed to share their worldly context toward understanding what the teacher was trying to convey.

Woods’ (2010) study was based upon the Whiteness Racial Identity Theory, which is based on a process that requires White educators to understand that their
whiteness represents privilege rather than superiority. Woods’ study also focused on the Teacher–Child Relationship model to categorize teacher responses. The results offered general common answers from the small sample of participants. None of the teachers were familiar with African American urban culture until they became teachers. Their upbringing did not place them in social settings to become knowledgeable of or sensitive to the culture of Black males. The results demonstrated that the cultural background of the teachers denounced or ignored Blacks. Even when they grew up in integrated neighborhoods, their parents’ actions, either consciously or subconsciously, did not advocate close association with Black children. Woods’ results also showed a plethora of generalizations among the teachers. All three teachers held assumptions about Black students’ homes and families. Thus, teacher behavior at times reflected the teachers’ assumptions about the Black students in their classes. A teacher in Woods’ study was surprised to see that one of the students was highly intelligent considering he came from an impoverished background.

It should be noted that one limitation to Woods’ (2010) study was that the Black males in the class were not directly questioned; hence, little opportunity existed to compare teachers’ perceptions with those of students. Further, an assumption was made that the participants would respond honestly to questions. However, caution must be exercised when evaluating self-reported data, as individuals typically experience discomfort in discussing race (Tatum, 1999).

**Differentiation and Perception**

Howard (2014) posited that researchers and practitioners will be unable to clearly address social constructs or the power of their practices and perceptions of the African American male student if they are all viewed as the same. Thus, when Black males are
seen as monolithic, a collision of thought evokes what Ladson Billings (2011) called a “love hate relationship with the Black male” (p. 8):

We see Black males as problems that our society must find ways to eradicate. We regularly determine the Black male to be the root cause of most problems in school and society. We seem to hate their dress, their language, and their effect. We hate that they challenge authority and command so much social power. While the society apparently loves them in narrow niches and specific slots—music, basketball, football, track—we seem less comfortable with them in places like National Honor Society, the debate team, or the computer club. (p. 9)

Watts and Erevelles (2004) stated that schools employ oppressive ideologies and, as such, allow teacher practices and perceptions of students to dismiss the notion that systemically and/or socially a problem may exist in the school infrastructure that weakens the outcomes for African American males. Howard (2014) fortified the work of Watts and Erevelles be asserting that school structures and practices within the school affirm certain identities and marginalize others. This, coupled with Dubois’ (1903) assertion of the double consciousness with which Black people grapple psychologically and socially, points to the power of perception and sensationalized negative assumptions made by teachers in American classrooms.

Harper and Harris (2010) suggested the importance of practitioners moving “beyond singular notions of gender” (p. 5). They asserted that a static understanding of what it means to be Black and male dismisses a large number of Black males who cannot locate their identity in such narrow parameters. This dismissal impacts the self-image, engagement, and behavior of the student. Reynolds and Cuttance (1992) examined the
obstacles of Black parents when advocating for their children and found that they repeatedly claimed the low expectations on the part of teachers were rooted in their biased perceptions of the student. As rendered by Watts and Erevelles (2004), Black males begin to “imitate behaviors and attitudes of their oppressors” (p. 287). One could argue that the Black males’ (mis)behaviors are not the actual problem; the racist practices and ideologies that impact the Black male and normalize bad behavior likely are the problem.

Noguera (2003) found that African American males had enormously different experiences than their White peers. Black males believe education to be important; however, they do not believe that educators in charge of helping them learn, attend college, and get a respectable job desire to do so or believe that the students can accomplish those things. Earlier research on micro-aggressions also gives credence to Noguera’s work. Pierce (1974) asserted: “In and of itself a micro-aggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of micro-aggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished morality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence” (p. 526). Pierce discussed micro-aggressions as being the “chief vehicle for pro-racist behavior…. These are subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges that are put-downs of Blacks by offenders” (p. 526). The research indicated that the subtle actions of teachers are acknowledged by the African American male; coincidentally the student often begins to become unattached and aloof.

Hill (2009) brought a different perspective to Pierce’s research by using student voices to address student self-image and their beliefs about schools and teachers. He also placed emphasis on the collision within the classroom. Hill attributed that collision to
teachers dismissing urban culture and their unwillingness to allow it into the classroom. The students in Hill’s research felt teachers who cared and were positive made a difference in the way in which students performed and felt. Hill found that hip-hop and/or urban vernacular strengthened relationships between teacher and student, and students were engaged and achieved when allowed to utilize their [hip-hop] culture. Also of interest is that the students admitted they had to take ownership in their learning and desired to do so. This idea of ownership referenced by Hill has been verified in the work of others. Several practitioners and researchers have noted that achievement and engagement improve when shared understanding and acceptance of culture and background is present. Mickelson (1990) discussed the Attitude–Achievement paradox whereby Black students often understand the importance of school, yet, they have little faith that the school structure is organized in a manner that supports them. Delpit and Dowdy (2008) supported Mickelson’s notion of including students in the discourse. They wrote:

Listening . . . requires not only eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through ears, but through our beliefs . . . It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue. (p. 139)

Howard (2014) suggested the thinking and behavior of American teachers that impact their depictions/perceptions of the African American male fit into five classifications: (1) the physical brute and anti-intellectual, (2) the shiftless and lazy Black male, (3) the hypersexual Black male, (4) the criminal-minded Black male; and (5) the slickster-pimp/gangster Black male. He added that those depictions infiltrate the
behaviors, thinking, and assumptions of practitioners charged with educating Black male students.

Hutchison (1994) referred to the typecasting of African Americans as a plan to assassinate the Black male. He further stated that this is a deliberate attempt in some cases to ensure that people of privilege are able to maintain that privilege. According to Hutchinson, this manifests itself in the classroom by discounting opinions and disallowing African Americans to connect that which is being taught to what they know. He also posited that such disallowing of engagement is intentional and longitudinal to wear down students, who eventually succumb to the muting of their world view. This will be brought more to light in Chapter III of this study.

Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) advanced another approach to developing culturally familiar adaptive practices by asserting that using students’ funds of knowledge will strengthen student engagement and family. Negating these funds of knowledge, explained by Gonzalez, Andrade, Civil, and Moll (2001) as tools essential for household living and wellbeing, causes biased perceptions and resultant practices to overpower the teacher’s potential for creating a classroom that is inclusive and fertile for both teacher and student growth. Boykin, Tyler, and Miller (2005) drew inferences based on observations about dominant practices in the classroom. They found that individualism and isolated competition was exalted (rather than communalism). Their research suggested that this “theme” was initiated by the teacher. When the far less frequent theme of communalism was employed, it was mostly by the African American male student; furthermore, it was usually treated negatively and “corrected.”
The notion that Black males are more engaged when in communal settings has been documented in the research. Hurley, Allen, and Boykin (2009) showed that fifth-grade Black students who were allowed to solve math problems collectively scored higher than their Black male classmates who were given incentives, more direction, and told to solve the problems on their own. This suggests that allowing a culture of communalism and inclusivity enables Black male students to engage and to excel.

An Oppositional Paradigm in the Perception of the African American Male

Kallen (1964) argued that immigrants have the right to maintain their cultural identities. Understanding that teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices may stifle Black male engagement and skew perception of these students, Okihiro (1994) argued that African American males oppose systemic structures and keep democracy alive; however, in doing so, they may be categorized as defiant and aggressive. Goodman’s (1946) research showed that young children are aware of racial differences; their racial attitudes mirror those of adults in positions of power (teachers); and both White and Black children respond to these attitudes. The response evokes perception and fortifies privilege.

Dissenting Views

As the researcher problematizes based on Critical Race Theory the beliefs that poverty and poorly articulated expectations are the quintessential causes of the performance gap between African American males and their peers, a dissenting view exists to Critical Race Theory. This section chronicles this view and some of the researchers leading what this researcher considers the misdirected approach to educating African males.
Some would attest that the work of Ng and Rury (2006) is one-sided and
dismisses poverty. Some educational researchers attribute the low academic performance
of African American males to be an issue of poverty as opposed to bias and racism or
ineffective pedagogy and other teacher practices. Education theorist Stevenson (1998)
posed that boys [African American] living in poverty have fewer positive role
models and in turn find a way to avoid shame by becoming overly masculine and gang
members to prove their maleness. Kindlon and Thompson (2009) stated that boys are
slower to process their emotions, which causes them to potentially become trapped in
anger. They further stated:

When school is not a good fit for a boy, when his normal expressions of energy
and action routinely meet with negative responses from teachers, he stews in
feeling of failure – feelings of sadness, shame and anger, which can be very hard
to detect beneath that brash exterior. Unable to “talk out” the emotional pressure,
boys typically act out through verbal or physical aggression that wall them off
emotionally from others, straining or severing emotional connections to the
people and circumstances they find painful. And the worse a boy behaves, the
more he invites negative reactions from the teachers and other adults. (pp. 43-45)
Payne, DeVol, and Smith (2001) suggested that culturally responsive teaching
begins with teachers understanding the deficits of students of poverty [color]. They
argued that race and class can be examined separate from one another—even in the
classroom. Such thought stands against the work of critical race theorists and cultural
responsive teaching advocates such as those referenced in this research.
Even further, researchers who do not place race as a [the] main factor to educational inequity dismiss the richness of difference and embrace a meritocracy that leaves African American males believing that they have only to do their work and obey the law to succeed in society. Scholars such as Delpit (1988) have pointed out the importance of having a culturally correct curriculum and empowering the students and families who have no power. Delpit places the notion of inclusivity and understanding poverty in perspective and contextualizes educational and societal inequities. Darling-Hammond and Post (2000) argued that the problem is not that poor [African American] students do not know the rules to successfully navigate through the American school system; rather, policies and practices benefit the middle class and wealthy students who are usually White. Darling-Hammond (2001) also contended that responsive teaching does not allow a teacher’s prior experiences of being from a middle class family, White, and simply willing to teach in a low income predominantly Black school to have the mentality of “helping the less fortunate.” She maintained that such a notion waives the foremost purpose of teaching, which is that students become contributive, educated, and independent.

Summary

Without question, effective culturally responsive teaching and student engagement are symbiotic. In an attempt to share effective teaching strategies that engage the African American male, a level of commitment must match with the belief that reaching African American males is a moral imperative and, even more so, can be accomplished. Chapter III details the process by which two culturally responsive teachers were selected and observed for this study.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate effective teacher practices that engage African American males. This research was qualitative in nature and intended to glean a narrative that shares the interactions between teachers and Black males. How the teacher engaged the student was documented using instruments that are introduced later in the chapter. The researcher also focused on the teacher’s academic expectations of the students and standards set for them and how the students responded to the teacher’s requests and treatment. Inasmuch as it is believed a teacher’s classroom practice impacts the self-image and growth of a student, this research hypothesized that teacher behavior(s) plays a role in the engagement of Black males.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. What cultural and societal discourse in the classroom evokes engagement and positive participation from African American males?

2. What practices do culturally responsive teachers employ that engage African American males?

Research Design

Critical Race Theory Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) supports this research and renders attention to race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of U.S. society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The framework of this research was designed through this lens. A critical race theorist challenges the belief that racism no longer exists or is not prominent. CRT
recognizes that racism is a strong component in the thread of American society, with the belief that education in the United States will become inclusive and promote success for all children only when educators and policymakers understand that the system is tainted with racism. Often when discussing critical race theory, terms such as social justice, civil rights, and culturally responsive teaching are used. These terms are twinned with critical race theory in that they also demand that teachers see difference as value added rather not value lost.

Leonardo (2002) suggested that researchers must disrupt White discourse and thought without their race and validity. In this disruption, Leonardo explained that research must not solely blame or shame teachers and the system for all the atrocities experienced by underserved students. In so doing, it is important to allow the manifestation of race relevance and inclusion. As such, when race is viewed to matter, inclusion, although a byproduct, automatically occurs in the classroom. This study examined teacher practice by (1) using a lens that theorizes about race and the intersection of racism; (2) seeing whether teachers incorporate the student’s knowledge into the curriculum; and (3) providing room for counter-storytelling while learning the lessons (Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002).

Critical race theorists seek to reach three goals: (1) present stories about discrimination from the perspective of the victim; (2) remove racism and recognize that race is a powerful social construct; and (3) address other disproportionate happenings due to gender, class, access, etc. (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The goals that CRT seeks to reach warranted qualitative data collection methods for this study, to include classroom observation and teacher interviews. The research was based on the belief that all students
can learn, including the systemically most disenfranchised groups. CRT is planted in qualitative research (Lee, 2000). If schools are to reverse the low achievement of so many African American males, they must first look at trends, practices, programs, and evidence that support that Black males can learn (Edmonds, 1979).

CRT neither forgives nor ignores the vestiges of slavery and other historical racism. A critical race theorist seeks to partake in intense and unapologetic discourse to expose the effect of power and privilege (in this case, the classroom) on society (Gutek, 2005). An example is the national discourse that challenges educators and the educational system to consider the lack of participation of African American males in the Advanced Program classes and attributing that deficit to racism.

A broader view of the research addresses critical race theory, culturally responsive teaching, and high expectations. Graceville County Public Schools is ripe for research that centers on critical race theory and responsive teaching, as Graceville County is resolved to address inequities in its school system and to challenge some long standing problems that are believed to evolve from bussing, teacher practice, hiring practices, and cultural incompetence. The demographics are changing at a fast pace, and housing developments in its contiguous counties are drawing more White families from the metropolitan areas. In Graceville Public Schools, the use of culturally responsive teaching is a fairly new concept. In many classrooms, teachers still continue to teach from a prescribed style that is rote and mapped out by the state and federal mandates.

Setting

This study occurred in a public school system, Graceville Public Schools. At the time of the study, the demographic makeup was 48.9% White, 37.7% African American,
9.2% Hispanic, 2.7% Asian, 0.13% American Indian, and 3.15% other. The system had a free- and reduced-lunch population of 66%, an English as a second language population of 23%, and over 1,100 homeless children. The overall graduation rate was 68%. The teacher population was 20.5% White males, 63.5% White females, 3% African American males, and 11.5% African American females. As the researcher focused on African American males, it is important to note that Graceville County Public Schools had 19,445 African American male students.

The researcher chose JM High School within Graceville County for the research, which had a diverse student population and state-level achievement scores that were improving. However, JM High School was deemed to be still low performing, had high suspensions, and constant principal turnover. According state measurements, JM High was a persistently low performing school. It is important to note that many trends in data have shown that the school is making gains under the new principal; e.g., the school made gains in literacy and math. The school also decreased its overall number of suspensions.

JM High School had a total enrollment of 1,278 students. Of the total population, the average ACT composite was 15.6, which is 1.6 points lower than the state composite of 17.2. The student population was 47.6% White and 38.7% Black. Additionally, 9.7% were Hispanic, with 2.3% of the student body categorized as “other,” which, in this case, refers to students that qualify as being of two or more races. At the time of the study, the student graduation rate was 59.7%, lower than both the state and Graceville County Public Schools. JM High School was labeled by the Department of Education as a Priority School—i.e., one that needs improvement. The school’s overall accountability
The accountability profile summarizes the status of a school or district in the state’s accountability system, Unbridled Learning: College/Career Readiness for All. The overall score is used to compare and rank school and district performance and to calculate an Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) improvement goal. An accountability classification is calculated based on percentile rank, the school’s rewards or assistance category, participation rate, and graduation rate. The accountability classification also is predicated upon students enrolled a full academic year (100 days).

**Participants**

From an initial pool of 11 potential teachers, two teachers were chosen to interview and to observe. These subjects were selected based on recommendations from their principal and their responses on two instruments, the Multicultural Education Awareness Survey (MEAS) and the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI). These instruments were used to better understand their beliefs and practices regarding culturally responsive teaching. The survey results also allowed the researcher to narrow the pool of potential subjects and to select teachers with self-reported responses that suggest being culturally responsive and inclusive.

Teacher 1, Faith, had eight African American male students in first period, six in second period, one in fourth period, and four in her sixth period class. Teacher 2, Hope, had five African American male students in first period, five in second period, four in third period, four in fourth period, and four in seventh period. Although the numbers varied between classes, each teacher had African American males in the classrooms with
the exception of one class. Table 1 shows the number of African American males in each class. Combined, both teachers taught 41 African American males.

Table 1

<table>
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Instruments

Multicultural Education Assessment Survey (MEAS). The Multicultural Education Awareness Survey (MEAS; Appendix A) was used to measure teacher attitudes about multiculturalism and responsiveness. It further assisted in reflecting on observations in the classroom. This instrument assessed the respondent’s thoughts and feelings about multicultural education and academic achievement in public school settings (Jones et al., 2003). The response choices range from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). After the reverse scoring of some items, higher scores are associated with teachers who follow culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms.

The MEAS scale identifies self-reported perceptions and self-awareness of the teachers. The participants who completed the survey were viewed as possessing the
potential of being culturally competent and self-aware. None scored lower than 80; however, the final two teachers chosen scored above 105 on the survey.

**Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory.** The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) served to identify the respondent’s self-reported beliefs and understanding of a one’s worldview and perceived stationary placement of others in comparison to that worldview. An example of the use of the CDAI was in Milner, Flowers, Moore, Moore, and Flowers’ (2003) work that employed the CDAI to illustrate teachers’ attitudes related to cultural awareness and sensitivity. The CDAI contains 28 Likert-type items. Participants chose from a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Agree to 4 = Strongly Disagree.

Using the CDAI, the researcher was able to obtain a clearer understanding of participants’ perceptions of African American students and the need to address their own bias and feelings toward the African American male. The researcher was able to better identify beliefs and behaviors of the subjects. The teachers also were able to introspectively review their responsiveness repertoire and reevaluate their work, which allowed the researcher to identify genuine engagement as opposed to compliant classroom norms that were commonplace but not culturally responsive. The researcher was able to look for that which Jackson (1993) highlighted in his research as seven components to being responsive: (a) build trust, (b) become culturally literate, (c) build a repertoire of instructional strategies, (d) use effective question techniques, (e) apply effective feedback with a degree of sensitivity, (f) analyze instructional materials for bias, and (g) establish positive home to school relations. This allowed the researcher to
determine whether the aforementioned components were employed by the subjects with intentionality and zeal.

Ladson-Billings (2001) maintained that teachers should possess a level of cultural awareness in order to effectively engage African American males. This study is supported by other researchers who reported that multicultural awareness can be measured by teacher’s breadth of understanding cultural self-awareness, affective response to difference, and the ability to relate across cultures (McFadden, Merryfield, & Barron, 1997).

**Interview questions for subjects.** The driving questions for the interview were constructed to elicit candid responses that identified the teacher’s mistreatment, expectations, and beliefs about students. Their answers were transcribed and helped to shape the researcher’s understanding of their cultural awareness.

**The Cultural Responsive Inventory Observation Protocol (CRIOP).** The original Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) designed by Powell and Rightmyer (2011) was used for the formal classroom observations, which allowed the researcher to categorize observations in a manner that focused on teacher responsiveness and engagement with African American males. The CRIOP allowed the systematic documentation of instances of engagement and responsiveness.

The CRIOP is categorized in seven pillars: **Classroom Relationships**, which seeks to identify the relationships between teacher and student. The **Family Collaboration** pillar allows the researcher to probe and search for connectivity between the school and the families and determine whether a collaboration exists between the two. The **Assessment Practice** pillar helps to identify assessments that are inclusive and considerate
of the diversity in the classroom. Similar to the Assessment Practice pillar, the *Curriculum Planned Learning Experiences* assists the observer in identifying curricula that is inclusive and responsive to all students in the classroom. *Pedagogy/Instructional Practices* is a pillar in the CRIOP that aides in identifying operational practices of the teacher that invites students to be a part of the learning and considers the students’ strengths. Last, both *Discourse/Instructional Conversation* and *Sociopolitical Consciousness* pillars seek to determine whether there is room for dialog or sharing thoughts about topics of interest and need. Understanding the pillars of the CRIOP enabled the researcher to properly categorize inclusive teacher behaviors that drew the African American male into the classroom.

The CRIOP is a seven-item observational inventory used to measure culturally relevant teacher practices and classroom instruction based on a four-point Likert scale model of 4 = Great Extent, 3 = Often, 2 = Occasionally, and 1 = Not At All. The items indicate the teachers’ sentiments in relation to multicultural education in school settings (Powell, Cantrell, Malo-Juvera, & Correll, 2014). The CRIOP has been used to assist school leaders and teachers in deciding the professional development that is needed to improve culturally responsive teaching. In other research, the CRIOP yielded Cronbach’s alpha values of .88 and .94 (Malo-Juvera, Powell, & Cantrell, 2013) and .78 and .76 (Powell et al., 2014). The CRIOP served as an organic growing document that included additional notes documenting the teacher’s classroom patterns and discussions.

It was important that contradictions be identified in the teacher’s self-reported beliefs versus what was actually being observed in the classroom. Both shifts and contradictions were considered to be actions/practices that did not support the self-
reported claims of teacher completing the surveys. Answers rendered in the MEAS allowed a better view and identification of the shifts. Thus, the MEAS often was used in tandem with the CRIOP to more easily identify contradictions.

**School student behavior records and transcripts.** Student transcripts and behavior records of the Black males in the selected teachers’ classes also were investigated to determine whether the behaviors and grades of the students being observed impacted the way in which the teacher treated them and/or responded to them. It was conjectured that these data would support the teacher responses on the surveys, classroom observation data, and teacher interviews.

Grades were examined to identify student longitudinal academic performance in the classroom. The files were reviewed a week prior to formal observations began. Class rosters were obtained from the district database. The list of students was then filtered-to list only the African American males. Upon receiving the final list, each student’s information was viewed. Students’ grades were reviewed to compare academic performance across classes. The grades were reviewed to identify academic grade level and special academic services that were provided for the student in the classroom, which was to document student performance in other classes and whether their performance was an indicator of their behavior and performance in the observed classroom.

**Procedures**

**Criteria and Process for Selection of Subjects**

Prior to selecting potential candidates for observation, a prerequisite was established by the principal of the school, who wanted to ensure that time was not wasted on surveying teachers who were not responsive or culturally sound. The principal
considered culturally responsive teachers to be those who could manage and teach a diverse group of students at a high level. This was important to ensure the teachers who were referred as possible subjects had the capacity to engage African American males.

Understanding that the principal knew the staff better than the researcher, the pool of potential subjects was first considered by the principal, who had observed and evaluated the teachers on occasions that predated this study. The principal was able to communicate expectations, routines, and protocols with the teachers; thus, the principal easily referred potential subjects to the researcher; i.e., the teachers were well aware of the expectations of the principal for the staff. The principal spent a significant amount of time in classrooms providing feedback to the teachers. In turn, the researcher allowed the principal to screen potential candidates accordingly.

The principal asked the teachers if they would be interested in participating in a study that focused on culturally responsive teachers, and the CDAI was distributed to a pool of teachers who varied in years of teaching, race, age, and certifications. The CDAI was given to 11 teachers who were potential candidates for observation, of which only nine returned the inventory, yielding an 81.8% return rate.

As mentioned earlier, two teachers were chosen to interview and to observe. These subjects were selected based on recommendations from their principal and their responses to the two self-report instruments, the MEAS and CDAI, which were used to better understand their beliefs and practices of culturally responsive teaching. Upon reviewing the responses, it was clear that two teachers that were very culturally sound and engaging. Both Faith and Hope scored higher on the self-report instruments than the other nine teachers identified by the principal for potential
observation and participation in the study. The results of both the MEAS and the CDAI showed that both teachers aligned with being culturally responsive. In relation to choosing the two teachers and connecting the research of Moll and Diaz (1987), it was evident that both teachers believed culturally relevant teaching was the cornerstone to effective teaching. Moll and Diaz posit that responsive teaching is the foundation upon which students begin to learn and become a part of the classroom community. They further asserted, when opportunities to explore topics of interest, students are more likely to engage in learning than when instructional topics have little relevance to their lives. As such, based on the information gleaned from the interviews, surveys, and observations, the subjects of this study demonstrated some intentionality in assuring all students were considered in their lessons and that they, as teachers, were sensitive to their own practices and behaviors that may retard or enhance the engagement of the African American male.

After selecting the two teachers, the interview approach was employed to collect data for the purpose of preparing for the classroom observations. The interviews were held 45 minutes prior to the beginning of the school day. Faith and Hope were given a brief description of the purpose for the study. In order to assure the teachers that the research was not evaluative and was only to improve education, it was determined to meet teachers at their school in order to alleviate any possible anxiety or apprehension that may have arisen if they were summoned the district’s central office. Each participant also received an email for documentation of the intent of the study, with the hope of soliciting candid answers and yielding truthful responses as to teachers’ feelings about their students.
District Priorities

Several local and state mandates were in place in Graceville County that coincidentally aligned with the researcher’s interests. As with many other districts nationally, Graceville County Public Schools, were tasked with creating, discovering, and mobilizing efforts to improve outcomes for African American males. As this study focused on ways to engage the African American male, it is important to note that it supports trending national efforts.

Curriculum mapping, pacing guides, and vendor-created teaching tools are the norm for most teachers. As such, it was important to ensure the teachers being observed were not ignoring the priorities of state and federal government and were cognizant of the need to be responsive to the African American male, which in turn at times could collide with the mandates. An example of the priorities of Graceville County Public Schools is to address the disproportionate amount of suspensions and the lack of participation in the advance program. Even more so, the commissioner of education for the state in which this research was conducted has called for additional efforts to recruit and retain teachers in low performing schools that have high concentrations of minority and impoverished students.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher had no prior personal relationship with the subjects of this study and did not directly or indirectly evaluate the employees at the school. One of the teachers, Hope, took a college-level education class that was taught by the researcher. The researcher reported directly to the superintendent of the school district and served as the Chief Equity Officer for Graceville County Public Schools. The
predominant purpose of the Chief Equity Officer is to address inequities, police compliance, improve teacher instruction through awareness of student demographic change, bias, and trends, as well as work closely with families—particularly homeless and migrant parents.

The Chief Equity Officer also must address suspension trends and seek to lower them, apprise the superintendent of the corporate and community climate, expose all trends of discrimination and exclusion, and recruit minority teachers. The Officer must understand what is culturally and pedagogically occurring in all schools, provide teacher professional development, make staff assignments, and speak to the broader community. There is no secondary outcome that could negatively affect the observed teachers’ careers due to the observations and transcriptions.

**Observation Process**

Classroom observations began on February 5 and ended March 11, 2015. The teachers were observed for four weeks, and each observation lasted two hours. The total amount of days spent observing, screening, and interviewing equaled 25 days. The teachers were chosen based on their formal evaluations completed by their supervisors, principal recommendations, and the results of the Cultural Diversity Inventory Assessment (CDAI) and Multicultural Education and Awareness Survey (MEAS).

The Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) was used as an instrument to guide the classroom observations and record the behaviors of the teachers. Using the CRIOP allowed the researcher to observe and document classroom practices that align with culturally responsive teaching pedagogy. By observing in the classroom, it allowed the researcher to discern first-hand the students’ engagement with
peers of the same race and those of different races. It also allowed the detection of the teachers’ interactions with the students. The template for the CRIOP notes is provided in Appendix D.

The CRIOP was helpful in mitigating teacher perceptions based on other pieces of data and their performance to assure their perceptions did not impact their performance in a negative way. That being said, teachers have access to the recorded history of a student’s behavior, attendance, and grades prior to the student entering their classes. While the researcher reviewed student transcripts and history of the African American males, the researcher recognized the tenets of Tatum (1999), who asserted that African American males often are stereotyped before entering the classroom. The CRIOP determined whether the teacher’s perceptions of African American students were in fact negative and whether the teacher’s practices also were negative.

The researcher observed interactions in the classroom between the teacher and the African American males, as well as students with one another. There was intense interest in studying the engagement and participation of the Black males in the class. The CRIOP assisted in ameliorating that interest and developing a qualitative manuscript. The researcher had access to student information due to the nature of his position. Some data were readily available and accessible daily. The researcher also possessed autonomy to observe teachers as often as desired. Viewing the transcripts and data was conducted to better understand the behavioral and academic history of the students. By having a clearer and more holistic understanding of the African American males, the researcher could better qualify the happenings in the classroom between the teachers and the African American males.
Data Analysis

In order to refer to appropriate parts from the observations, notes were transcribed onto the CRIOP. Responses of the interviews were also recorded on legal pads. The CDAI and the MEAS were reviewed multiple times against the students’ transcripts and the CRIOP. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each teacher, the schools, and the district during the transcriptions. To accurately attract the appropriate subjects, a preliminary search was conducted with the assistance of the principal.

Limitations

One of the challenges of the study was interpretation of the answers in the self-reported surveys. It was unclear whether the teachers understood the application of culturally responsive teaching and student engagement in classroom. Terms such as privilege and supremacy were not common considerations for either teacher. One appeared to understand nuances of culturally responsive teaching, which was demonstrated in the interview responses. Questions did not lead the researcher to conclude that the teachers wholly understood culturally responsive teaching or engaging the African American male. Nonetheless, the questions were designed in such a way to elicit candid and clear answers. The teachers were asked simple questions; when questions appeared to be misunderstood, they were reworded. The questions were open-ended and allowed teacher interpretation and personal responses. As necessary, the teacher was prompted to elaborate on and to explain an answer.

Giroux (1988) asserted that researchers must be transformative and reveal historical and subjugated knowledge oppression and move toward hope. He posited the revealing of subjugated oppression as the researcher’s duty to link experiences to hope.
and contextual knowledge that include suffering and conflict. This research sought to illustrate that oppressive behavior is not a constant in the school system. Teachers, such as the subjects observed in this research, counter perceptions and appear to employ cultural responsiveness to engage African American males in their classrooms. The questions assisted in revealing the teacher’s worldview of their students and their understanding of cultural competence in action. The following questions elicited teachers’ beliefs about their profession and being culturally responsive. Although the questions were very pointed and yielded brief answers, the follow-up statement for all answers was, “Please elaborate and explain how.”

1. Do successful teachers consider the background and culture of the African American male to be an asset or a deficit to their ability to learn and achieve at high levels?

2. Do teachers who employ culturally responsive teaching and inclusive pedagogical practices have more African American students with better self-images?

3. Do students with culturally responsive teachers have more positive interactions/engagement with classmates and other teachers whom they encounter in school?

Another limitation was the small amount of subjects being observed. With only two subjects, it is difficult to deduce that the practices displayed by the teachers actually improve student behavior for long amounts of time. As such, the occasions in which the students were observed were limited to the time the African American males spent in Hope and Faith’s classes. The researcher could report on only what was observed while
being in the classroom; thus, it was impossible to determine whether the practices were fully effective before and after the researcher’s observations. Also with only two subjects, the researcher could not accurately posit whether other teachers were employing the practices and having success.

Another limitation was that the researcher did not compare non-culturally responsive teachers to Faith and Hope. Thus, there was a possibility that the teachers were not extraordinarily different than other teachers who scored lower on the CDAI and the MEAS. The researcher is African American and male, which could have led the subjects to feel obligated to tell the researcher what they felt the research favored and wanted to hear. A bias also could have existed in the reporting of the research. As the researcher aspires to assist in closing the proverbial achievement gap of African American males, observing and listening for instances of how that can be done could fog the true occurrences in the classroom. Although the researcher is unaware that such factors caused bias, others may consider the race of the researcher and the topic of the study to possibly include researcher bias.

**Summary**

The intent of this qualitative research was to unveil what/how culturally responsive teachers engage African American males. The procedures detailed the process by which the researcher identified two high school teachers who appeared and were believed to be culturally responsive based on the instruments they completed. Examples and findings based on the qualitative methodology will be rendered in Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the practices that culturally responsive teachers employ in order to reach Black male students. The first three chapters introduced the background of the study, the literature that supports the research, and the methodology behind the work. This chapter presents the culturally responsive efforts that two high school teachers made toward reaching African American male students in their classroom. This chapter reveals the utility the two teachers found in allowing African American males to embrace their differences and share their experiences. The two subjects also allowed the students to make contextual connections to the lessons being designed. Inasmuch, the findings will show that the invitation to learn was intentional and the teachers shared their classroom in a manner that allowed the students to learn.

Context for the Study

The study occurred in Graceville America—in a school district with 86% of the student market share, i.e., the majority of the school-age students attend the public school system. Since 2013, the majority of the students of the school were non-White. To date, that phenomenon has not changed. The district has made some intentional efforts to address cultural mismatches and engage the community. As an example, the district, under the leadership of the superintendent, has called for 100% cultural competency training for the entire staff. All school staff was expected to have cultural competence training and design delivery plans that focused on engaging and improving outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds. The majority of the school-age families in Graceville
were on free- and reduced-lunch. At the time of this research, Graceville had 67% free- and reduced-lunch. That, compounded with the fact that 51% of the students were non-White, heightened the need for culturally responsive teaching and teachers who could engage diverse learners.

In relation to engagement, there was community concern about the disproportionate suspensions among African American males; thus, plans were put in place by the superintendent and the Chief Equity Officer to begin training on racial bias and high expectations. The training consisted of sessions that covered a myriad of school issues such as micro-aggressions, bussing, student assignment, cultural privilege, and curriculum planning. The training also gave the teachers a brief history lesson on the historical racial divide of the city. This was done to provide a context for the reality the teachers faced.

Along with cultural competence training, the district leadership also began reviewing the implementation and interpretation of the Code of Conduct. The district also reviewed the utility of restorative practices. Restorative circles are now being used in the behavioral alternative schools and comprehensive schools. Restorative circles consist of participants who have misbehaved and a facilitator. The facilitators officiates the conversation with hopes that the students eventually own the harm done and then forgive. To that point, the behavioral alternative schools are now called Restorative Academies. Inside the academies, the teachers are trained in de-escalation, restorative language, and restorative circles. Restorative circles are used to address student-to-student conflict and are facilitated by a staff member that has been trained in facilitating the circles. Restorative language is now becoming a part of the school culture. All of the
teachers in the restorative schools wear lanyards with guiding questions to ask when a conflict occurs.

Inside all of the schools, restorative practice(s) have been added as an option to replace traditional consequences such as suspension and detention. This is in partnership with the University of Louisville and their College of Juvenile Justice. Both the Code of Conduct and the implementation of restorative practices were done with the understanding that the African American males were negatively and disproportionately impacted by the punitive options allowed by the Code of Conduct.

**Background of the Subjects**

The two teachers who were observed averaged approximately 28 students per class. They taught six classes; however, only 32 students were considered to be African American based on the qualifiers set for this research. The qualifier for being African American was determined by the way the student identified himself on his transcript and enrollment form. If the student checked the box marked African American, he was qualified for this study. It is important to note that the ages of the students varied from 14 to 18 years.

To better understand the teachers that were observed, it is important that the researcher provides some pertinent information about them. By sharing some background information about the teachers, one can see how mental models may have an impact on the way in which they engaged the African American males and behaved as teachers. In simple terms, mental models are concepts that are organized to inform memory and thoughts. Craik (1943) described mental models as the internal representations of the external world that allow for inferences. Faith was adamant about
not sharing her class roster with many of her colleagues because she knew that opinions
and concepts could possibly taint her desire to be culturally responsive and fair to
teachers. Inasmuch, her actions also demonstrated an understanding for bias to impact
teacher practice; thus, refusing to fuel her existing biases by listening to other teachers.

As the researcher did not emphasize or focus on the teacher’s background, it is
important to provide the limited personal information about the teachers. To that point,
the sparse personal/background information shared with the researcher must be
considered as having some influence on their outlook about teaching males of color. For
example, Hope shared during the interview the value judgments placed on African
American males. She detailed a conversation between her and another teacher that also
worked in the building who told her if she lasts the first two years, she will finally get
classes with kids that care about themselves and their future. Hope claimed she
professionally denounced the statement and stated, “I will see for myself who cares about
what and for who.”

Rogoff (2003) supported Craik’s (1943) earlier research by asserting that a deeper
understanding is needed of how and why people carry out their practices separate from
value judgments. In selecting the subjects, the researcher considered the self-reported
behaviors and values of the subjects. If the values of the subjects were that of no
accountability and/or themed with transferring all blame on the African American male,
other subjects would have been selected. If the subjects did not appear to own parts of
the culture and climate in their room, they were disqualified from being a part of the
research. If their answers seemed to point toward placing the responsibility of having a
healthy culture and climate in the classroom on the students, all the while leaving the
teacher with no responsibility, the candidates were disqualified from being a part of the study. Further, it was apparent that the teachers that had no interest in being observed and to participate in the study also were disqualified if their answers were blatant and clearly dismissive. For example, one teacher wrote that cultural competence is a “joke and the district would be better suited to focus on reading and writing than the feeling of a kid regardless of his color of skin.” Responses such as the aforementioned led the researcher to select a teacher named Faith. Her answers appeared to embody cultural responsiveness and an interest in engaging the African American male.

It also is important to note that the dissenting views of cultural competence related to educating African American males are challenged later in the research. Disbelief in cultural competence and the outcomes from being responsive are clearly disbanded as the researcher shares the happenings in these teachers’ classrooms.

Faith was a second-year Biology teacher who chose teaching after being a medical researcher. She is White, 33 years of age, and had yet to complete her formal year of internship under the Kentucky teacher evaluation program called KTIP (Kentucky Internship Program). It appeared that Faith did not view herself as needing to have materials that reflected the demographics of her classes. This was reflected in a conversation the researcher had with Faith and the principal. The principal asserted that:

Faith, is simply one of those teachers that gets it. She works hard. She is intentional. And she does not need a lot of tools and training when it comes to reaching Black boys. As where she puts a lot of time into reaching them, when you get in there (her room), you will see that she lets the kids run the room and
they have buy in. Faith believed it has only gotten better since the trainings have started.

In the initial interview, Faith asserted that she understood most curriculum and/or lessons would not equally reflect the makeup of her classes. She said, “I knew that I would have to take it upon myself to include aspects of different opinions and cultures if I really wanted to teach in an urban environment.” Another example of when Faith appeared not to need materials was when asked her sentiments on sparse materials that reflected the demographic of the class. She responded by saying, “It is important, but more than the kids seeing students that look like them, they need to feel as if they can be themselves. Besides, I have no school budget to diversify the room. Most of the stuff on the walls is bought by me.” This also showed that Faith was not wholly concerned with classroom displays and needing materials that resembled the African American male.

It is important to note that Faith did not grow up in a diverse environment. She claimed to always be comfortable around different people; however, she admitted, that her comfort was not challenged until she became a teacher. Faith left the field of medicine to become, as she put it, “more satisfied with her contribution to the community.” Faith thought that medicine and research would be her way to contribute to society; however, after working in research, she did not receive the satisfaction she thought she would. She said, she left “feeling empty and mundane.”

In some regards, Faith was uniquely different than Hope. Hope was a third year English teacher, an African American female, and in her early 30s. She was not raised in Graceville County. Hope grew up in a predominantly White school system and county. In the system in which she grew up, Donaldsville, Hope recalled being called a “nigger”
and bullied. She recalled a time that a teacher witnessed a White student call her and her cousins niggers and chimps. Hope said that the teacher did nothing but laugh it off and told her and her cousins that some people are ignorant and you just have to laugh at them. Hope shared with the researcher that she had to constantly remind herself that all White teachers are not bad and that school is a safe place to be Black. She said in a discussion that, “every day for 4 years, I would pray that I did not hurt one of them or hate the teachers that allowed it. I prayed that I could get out of there without fitting the stereotypes they threw at me daily.”

After years of working in business and working on releasing some of the contempt she had for [White] teachers, she thought she would teach. In a conversation before an observation, she said, “I knew I should have taught. I was just thinking differently then.” She acquired her teacher certification through an alternative certification program for teachers of color and has been teaching for four years. Hope chaired the cultural competence teacher work group in JM High School. She also worked with the district in providing professional development for teachers that focused on integrating canonical literature with modern music.

Although seemingly able to engage African Americans, Hope admitted to not wholly understanding the challenges many of her students face. Yet Hope understood that her background shaped how she would interact with African American male students and influenced the behaviors of not just herself, but the students’ behaviors as well (Loewen, 1995).

Growing up in a small rural environment, Hope encountered racism on many fronts. Such encounters led her to believe that she should deliver lessons that make them
better students and people, not to improve scores on an assessment. She believed by delivering lessons in a way that sometimes veered a from core points she was mandated to cover, she would eventually get back to the lesson and arrive at that objective with more students than she started. Hope stated:

   I had to make police brutality part of the lesson. I could not look at these Black boys and keep talking about the book *Lord of the Flies* in a manner that did not resonate with them. We had to talk about danger, perception, and brutality. We had to leave the island and discuss how people can be so savage. But . . . I kept taking them back to the book. But . . . I also let them tell me about the neighborhoods they live in, the brutality they have seen, the love they have, and their fear or hate for certain systemic issues. We have to talk to them. We have to listen to them. I bet you my class will nail the test on this book. Why? Because they have connected what’s going on in this book about some White boys to what is going in their Black lives.

**Teacher Qualifications**

In trying to understand the teachers’ behaviors and routines, it was important to note the qualifications and certifications of the teachers. Faith was certified to teach Biology and Chemistry. Hope was certified to teach English. Both arrived to the profession by non-traditional means. They did not major in education as undergraduate students. This information was shared with the researcher at the introductory meeting between the researcher and selected teachers. Specific introductory questions were asked to evoke conversation and glean a better understanding for the reason the subjects decided to become teachers. The specific questions asked were as follows:
1. What’s your full name?
2. How long have you been a teacher?
3. Why did you decide to teach?
4. Is teaching what you thought it to be?

The answers to the questions allowed the researcher to understand that both teachers did not have preconceived notions or low expectations for the students they were teaching. For example, Faith stated, “I did not know what to expect. I knew that my thoughts were that I could and should help any child that came through the door, so that’s what I set out to do daily. I also didn’t want to share my class rosters with a lot of teachers, because I didn’t want them to cloud my mind with their opinions about these kids.” In response to question three, Faith stated, “I knew it was something I should have done a long time ago. I knew that if I really wanted to make sure kids had good experiences, I needed to be the difference. They’ll tell you that I am a tyrant. But they’ll tell you I love them.” Hope stated, “I realized that the kids that are supposedly problems, need advocates. I want to be that advocate and their chaperone through school. Or at least do my part to dispel what so many think of Black boys.” In response to question four, Hope stated, “I still don’t know what to think of teaching. It is so broad. Is teaching what I thought it would be? Maybe kind of. Is the school system what I thought it would be? No. It’s slothful, racist, and oppressive.”

**Setting for the Study**

**Classroom Setting**

The researcher observed two teachers and how their practice and pedagogy was utilized in engaging African American male students. The students were from 14 to 18 years of age. The two content areas in which the boys were observed were Biology and
English literature. The only criteria for the African American males was that they were to identify as being African American, in high school, and male. The study was conducted in the spring semester of the 2015 school year. The observations were conducted over a span of three months. Both teachers were observed 20 times.

**School Setting**

JM High School had a total of 1,278 students. Of the total student population, the average ACT composite was 1.6 points lower than the district average, with a 15.6. The student population of African American males was 38.7%. JM High School was ranked by the Department of Education as a Priority School, one that needs improvement in the areas of academics and leadership. The school scored only 12% higher than other schools in the state. The school had a change in leadership during this year; thus, many of the practices were altered and newer plans were put in place. This is not to say that the school leadership did or did not worsen the outcomes for this sample of students; however, it is important to note that the students and staff were faced with changes from different levels of the school system. Both the district and the local school were changing to hopefully address and improve the outcomes for students—particularly African American males.

**Community Setting**

Graceville County Public Schools had a population of 101,278 students. Of those students, 19,445 were African American. The school community as a whole had a free and reduced population of 67%. The public schools in the county had 86% of the student market share. The students in the school district were predominately non-White. The
teaching staff of the school community was 20.5% White males, 63.5% White females, 3% African American males, and 11.5% African American females.

**Utility of Student Records**

Although the researcher focused on the practices and strategies employed by the teacher, those practices were directed toward African American males. To that point, the researcher reviewed student records and noted comments and reactions of the African American males in relation to the teacher(s). In short, the engagement between the teachers and the African American males was observed; although the focus was on the practice of the teacher the reactions of the students were noted.

While reviewing the records of the students, the researcher mainly reviewed student grades and behavior records. The records documented that the students were misbehaving in other classes. For example, many of the males were tardy to class, which also led to discipline referrals. Misbehavior and/or disruption was not the case for the teachers observed in this research. This was done to see how the students were performing in other classes and if their performance was an indicator toward how they would behave and perform in the teachers’ classrooms.

Understanding that the teacher may be only a portion of the reason for student engagement in her class, by reviewing the records of the students in the teachers’ classroom, the researcher was able to see if the African American males were engaged based on attendance, behavior, and grades. It was clear that there were less behavior infractions and better attendance with the teachers in this study.

The researcher used the records, particular discipline data, to determine whether engagement and/or misbehavior was prevalent in other classes. Discipline data were kept
on a database and readily accessible to the researcher. The discipline data covered a range of behaviors from minor school infractions to heinous and egregious acts. More so, the discipline data were aligned with the schools Code of Conduct mandated by the presiding board of education. The records indicated that the behavioral infractions assigned to the African American males in Faith’s and Hope’s classes were close to non-existent. By viewing the records, it also allowed the researcher to better understand whether they were able to engage African American students. These records assisted in triangulating the survey responses given by the teachers. Viewing the data also provided fortification to the responses the subjects self-reported in their surveys. In Faith’s and Hope’s class all of the African American males had high grades, which in many cases were As and Bs.

It also was clear that engagement was [not] happening in many classes. Four of the same males had the same teacher the period before they had Hope. Written comments from the teacher about the males read exactly the same as follows, “H, I, J, and K are disengaged, disrespectful, and failing only because they do not try.” Again, it is important to note that this research did not view or consider all the factors that may cause such alleged misbehavior; however, the subjects for this research have not experienced such behavior from students they share with other teachers.

The transcripts of the African American males aligned with findings reported in the CRIOP. Both transcript and CRIOP brought light to the fact that in many cases the students were successfully making competitive grades, engaged in the classroom activities, and positively comingled with their White counterparts in these particular teachers’ classrooms (Hope and Faith), although failing and/or misbehaving in other
classrooms. A discipline analysis of the African American males in the participants’
classes revealed that, combined, they received a total of seven referrals. In turn, the same
set of African American males in their other classes received a total of 51 combined
referrals.

This aligned with findings reported in MEAS responses from the teachers, in that
both marked that they strongly agreed with item seven that stated, *the effective
implementation of multicultural education maximizes the potential of all students.* Hope
directed her students to discuss with the person beside them the effects stereotypes play
on understanding others. One student [African American] told his White classmate, “I
bet you didn’t know, I hate rap music. I think it is lame and rude to women. I sing
gospel and will be a preacher.” The White student stated, “I love rap and no I didn’t
know you hated rap music. Not because you are Black. But because rap is the just best
form of music.”

By allowing discourse and creating a space for different races to discuss
sentiments, it was clear that there was a level expectation and tolerance that the students
needed to appreciate. The subjects also highly agreed on item 26 that stated, *if students
are expected to learn, they will.* This met the researcher’s criteria for selection, in that it
was obvious these teachers believed that inclusion, engagement, classroom management,
and practice were tantamount in reaching Black males.

**Desire for Discourse**

Both teachers were observed promoting discourse and challenging their African
American males to engage in the learning. Both Hope and Faith understand the long
standing research that says oral connectivity and (counter)storytelling is something that
most adolescent Black males yearn for and need (Howard, 2007). As it relates to storytelling and dialogue, an example of inclusion and engagement was when Hope had an African American student come to class late. After the student entered the room, Hope stated to the class that they now have perfect attendance and the class can celebrate. The young man who was tardy to class shared with the class and the teacher, “I am not missing this class. Aren’t we talking about this today?” As tardiness was an issue and a school infraction, Hope was pleased that the student was there. Hope routinely celebrated perfect attendance by simply announcing that the class had perfect attendance and by letting the class clap, jump up and down, whistle, etc. Although very simple, it was clear to the researcher that this African American male saw value in discussing the topic at hand and looked forward to sharing his thoughts and ideas on the matter. The student who came late then started conversing with the students in his section. The discourse lasted for the remainder of the class period.

When the researcher asked the teacher what she thought of the student’s statement, she stated, “I did not know exactly what was said. I just know he does participate when we have discussion.” Noddings (1988) observed, “It is obvious the children will work harder and do things—even odd things like adding fractions—for people they love and trust” (p. 10). The critical nature of the student’s comments and the comfort of the students being able to share their experiences with both teachers indicated that sharing thoughts transcends curriculum and brings learning to a level of exchanging thoughts, including differences. It was in moments like the one mentioned that African Americans males were engaged. Another example of trust was when an African American male student shared with Faith that he and his girlfriend decided to report a
perpetrator of crime. The crime was not committed in school; however, according to Faith, the residue of the crime entered the school and caused tension between students, mostly Black males. Faith stated, “This is the right and brave thing to do. You are not snitching as you had nothing to do with it. You are a witness.” The African American male, then hugged Faith and said, “For you not be from the hood, you sure are down.” Another example was observed in Hope’s class when an African American male was disengaged from the lesson and put his head down for the entirety of the class. Hope allowed the boy to keep his head down and not engage in the classwork; however, when class was over the student came to Hope and apologized for not participating. Hope asked the student what was wrong. The African American male stated, “My foster parent is sending me back.” The researcher then left so that the student may have a more private conversation. Hope in a follow-up discussion with the researcher stated, “That kid has been bounced all around. Some days he is up and others he’s sad. We thought this was the one. He text me a week before that and said, he thinks he’s home. But something must have happened.”

As the discussion between the teacher and the student was not in class, it is clear that the student had a relationship with the teacher and trusted her enough to talk about the personal experiences and struggles he was having. Even further, it was clear that Hope established a culture of compassion and inclusion that in turn evoked trust and engagement.

**Process for Relaying Findings**

The following section of this chapter itemizes the information gleaned from the Multicultural Education Awareness Survey, the Culturally Responsive Instruction
Observation Protocol (CRIOP), the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI), and the interviews the subjects had the researcher—in that order. The findings are qualitative in nature and are documented as a means to share the practices and beliefs of teachers who are apparently successful in reaching the African American male. Further, the method of relaying the findings does not deviate; however, the opinions and practices of the teachers are different and easily detailed later in the research.

**Teacher Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices**

**Teacher 1 - Faith**

**MEAS findings.** The purpose of the Multicultural Education Awareness Survey (MEAS) is to measure teachers’ attitudes about multiculturalism and responsiveness. The MEAS reports self-identified perceptions and self-awareness of the teachers. It also allows the reviewer to report what is happening in the classroom. It further assists in reflecting on what happened in the classroom. Jones et al. (2003) stated that the MEAS also allows the respondent to express thoughts and feelings about multicultural education. The assessment questions ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). After the reverse scoring of some items, higher scores were associated with teachers who follow culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms.

On Faith’s MEAS survey, she appeared to have the notion that multicultural education is important and that she looked to become more versed in how to teach students of color. This was particularly evident in item number seven, which stated, *the effective implementation of multicultural education maximizes the potential of all students.* Faith’s response to question number five, *the lack of minority group*
representation in the community and/or school is a valid reason to exclude multicultural education, showed that Faith disagreed with the statement and aspired to be more inclusive in her teaching. In a discussion with Faith, she also indicated that the lack of minority teachers was a concern. She did not know if that meant it would be harder for her to reach her students or if the students would expect less rigor and concern from her since she was White. Faith’s response to item ten, effective instruction should include educational opportunities targeted toward issues of racism, prejudices, and discrimination, and social differences, revealed that she had interests in being sensitive to cultures. She stated:

I do not exactly know how to show my concern, let alone imbed that in a lesson plan, I am very interested in the inclusion of students and making sure they see diversity in my lesson. Just because I am a White girl, doesn’t mean I can’t reach them. But I will never be so pretentious as to think that I have all of the answers.

Further to the point, on item number ten, Faith believed that topics such as racism should be addressed in the context and content of the school day. She added that, “We are too scared to talk about race. Especially teachers who can claim it doesn’t fit in their curriculum. Like science and math teachers.”

Faith seemed to have little faith in boards of education and the state department as a whole. Her MEAS response to item number fourteen, Educational boards, commissions, councils, and other types of advisory decisions-making bodies should reflect reasonable minority representation of membership, indicated that she disapproved of the mandates of the state department. She went on to posit, “That the state department and the universities know very little about what is going on in schools.” This meant that
Faith did not believe that the boards and school councils take responsibility for any educational equity issues. Faith stated, “They are too far removed and feel too important to do the important needed work.”

Interestingly, Faith reported that the textbooks are not conducive to those discussions either, as surveyed in question twelve, Textbooks and other teaching materials should include the significance of the diverse ethnic contributions to society. Faith did not have a set of textbooks. The one that she had as a class set did not address multicultural teaching or have a diverse representation of prominent scientists. It was clear that that particular circumstance bothered her because she stated, “I can’t imagine having to learn a subject and for a whole year, page after page, day after day, there is nothing in that book that looks like me. It’s got to suck.”

The MEAS findings showed that Faith was well aware of her purpose and desire to be inclusive and multicultural centered. Her attempt to diversify lessons was evident in her extra work assignments. In every lesson observed, Faith would challenge her class to find a historical figure that contributed to the field of science. The caveat to this extra credit was that the person the students found could not be a “White boy.” This allowed the African American males to find others that may potentially look like them. In a brief discussion between classes, Faith asked the researcher, “Is what I said okay? Is my extra credit okay?” The researcher reminded her that the purpose for the observation is to see what culturally relevant teachers do to engage students; not to get the researcher’s approval. Nonetheless, the researcher noted that 75% of the African American males in the class participated in doing the extra credit. She focused on making sure the students
were invited into the learning. She had a strong interest in doing more than what the leadership and the state department expected.

Another example was that Faith would allow students on Monday to do what one student called the “Monday Run Down.” Students had to use one word that accurately explained their weekend. The students could text their response to the classroom dashboard or write it on a notecard. Under the adjective that explained their weekend, the students had to write a paragraph explaining their weekend and why they chose that word. When asked if the routine was effective, Faith showed the researcher that all of her African American males, with exception of three, participated throughout the entire day.

Her interest in multicultural education also was a means to manage her classroom: “Why would they behave if I did not care and if the lessons were not relevant to them?” Faith did not have formal classroom rules. She believed that if her lessons were engaging she would not need, as she called them, “Blah Blah Blahs.” Faith stood firm on the belief that students knew right from wrong. She often would tell her class, “Keep thinking so you do not start stinking.” This meant that she wanted her classes to stay engaged and focused on learning so that they would not misbehave. Since it was mandated that all teachers must have rules posted, she had one—Learn and challenge everything. Faith scored 41 on the MEAS. Aside from Hope, the next candidate for the study closest to her scored an 89. It is important to note that the lower the score, the more culturally responsive the individual.

An area of growth for Faith would be that she need not assume that African American males did not understand lessons unless she added some creative component. It was assumed and reflected in many lessons that she had to bring an
African American figure into the lesson in order for her students to understand it. The researcher posits that liking the lesson and understanding the lesson are vastly different. African American males cannot expect to have teachers like Faith for every class, nor can they expect to like every lesson taught.

**Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol findings.** The CRIOP is a tool to assist the researcher in observing happenings in a classroom. The CRIOP allows the researcher to order thoughts and focus on particular aspects of the culture and climate of the classroom. The CRIOP categorically lists occurrences in a manner that details responsiveness and inclusion. The CRIOP has seven headings: Classroom Relationships, Family Collaboration, Assessment Practices, Curriculum Planned Learning Experiences, Pedagogy/Instructional Practices, Discourse/Instructional Conversation, and Sociopolitical Consciousness.

The CRIOP also allowed the researcher to better understand what observations as it provided examples of research-based practices that would qualify as responsive. The CRIOP also allowed the researcher to note examples during the observations that were counter-responsive. Further, the CRIOP examples allowed the researcher to focus on the purpose of the research and stay faithful to the culturally responsive indicators (CRI). The examples in the CRIOP also allowed the researcher to verify the subject’s responses to the self-reported surveys—the MEAS and the CDAI. Last, when sharing the CRIOP with the subjects, prior to beginning research, the subjects found utility in the CRIOP as well. It showed the subjects what responsive teaching was and was not. It served as a means to allow the researcher to be introspective and organized. The
researcher used the CRIOP while observing Faith. The following section details the observations while using this inventory.

Faith allowed students’ colloquialisms to enter the classroom and become an integral part of the discourse. That allowed the researcher to tally repetitive responsive occurrences. Many of the conversations between Faith and her students were noted in the section of the CRIOP titled Discourse/Instructional Conversation. Even more so, CRI number one states that the teacher promotes active student engagement through discourse practices. Faith exhibited intentionality in having discourse. It also was clear Faith allowed students to make sense of the lesson in a way that did not ignore their understanding and knowledge. Faith allowed students to switch between familiar words they used and the prescribed words used in the lesson. The African American males in the classroom were allowed to interchange the term family tree in the lesson on genealogy. On a website created by one of the African American males, he was allowed to share his family tree with the class and point to family members who had a genetic disease. When the African American students were allowed to apply words that were more familiar to them, the students appeared to understand the lesson better. This was evident, when 80% of the African American students got the answer right on her daily exit exam. The exit question was, Could an evil scientist slowly wipe out a family with one diseased needle? CRIOP data showed that Faith emphasized Sociopolitical Consciousness. Throughout the observation(s), Faith focused heavily on the civic mindedness of the students and their yearning to show connectivity to the broader community.
Sociopolitical Consciousness portion of the CRIOP. It was observed in every lesson and in every class that she planned to find time for the African American males to discuss their views on society. Faith had one rule, “It must connect to what we are learning.” It did not matter if the connectivity was strongly connected. It only mattered that the African American male students could articulate it and connect it to his life or worldview. An example was when Faith shared that she has a 50% chance of getting a very serious disease due to genetics. During the conversation, one African American student shared that he heard that syphilis was put in Black people and killed thousands. He then asked, “Is that why we are jacked up?” Faith, responded by saying, “Who is we?” The student then shared that he was referring to Black people. He stated, “Look at us! We are sick. We are in the clinics. We can’t afford it, we don’t have health insurance.” Another student said, “I have health insurance, your broke ass doesn’t.” Faith then said, “Guys, let’s think about this. What did Tandy really say?” Another student interjected and said, “I don’t care about that. Did White people really give us syphilis, does that mean I gave it to Tandy’s mother?” Faith did not correct the bantering between the two African American males because the two seemed to have a relationship that allowed for such joking to be acceptable. Faith then challenged the students to look for the facts and bring their facts the next day. She said, “I want to know if there was a time in history when Black communities were getting shot with syphilis. I want to know if that really happened and if it did, why.”

During another observation, an African American student yelled out, “This is a lot like family trees.” After hearing that, Faith said, “Guys, Colin made a good point. This is a lot like your family trees. I don’t want you to worry about what it’s called. Just
know that it is like a family tree.” Instantly, the boys seemed to understand it. This was evidenced by the check for understanding hand signals she lets the students use. Students were allowed to create their own hand signal that allowed the teacher and student to communicate discretely and for her to formatively assess student understanding. It is worth noting that Faith then began to call the genealogy charts family trees—where appropriate.

Throughout the observation(s), it was clear that Faith often deviated from the lessons. She felt an obligation to find connectivity for her African American males. Faith had notes throughout her lessons that cued her to make a connection for her students. She linked the lesson of genetics to situations and life episodes that the students could relate to. Faith referenced pedigrees of dogs and cats. For example, one of her students (Latino male), breeds dogs. When the student shared how dogs passed on certain diseases and traits, many of the African American males began to understand and have interest in how genetics worked. Faith also allowed a student to bring in one of his dog’s pedigree charts/lines. Faith clearly wanted to engage in this conversation and understanding. Although pressed with timelines, Faith used what the students knew to allow their reality to guide their understanding. It appeared to actually bolster engagement and strengthen the relationships between her and her students. For example, one the African American males in the classroom stated, “Now I get it! If I get my girl pregnant, my baby could end up with grey hair and green eyes, like my girl’s mother—even though she [his girlfriend] doesn’t have it.”

Another example of Faith reaching the students was when she allowed them to use terms they understood and used in their vernacular daily. While the students were
working on a genealogy chart, she used the term *coupling*. One African American male raised his and said, “So when they hook up, they have kids that have a 25% chance of getting the disease, right?” Faith quickly responded, “‘Hooking up’ is another term for coupling. For this work, you can use that; however, ‘hook up’ will not be on the test. But let’s think about it for a minute. What are some other terms that you use for coupling? Keep it clean.” A litany of words were shared from the African American boys. Faith accepted them all and encouraged them to connect the words that they commonly use to “uncool” words that may be seen on the ACT and the end-of-course test. The next day, there was a list of colloquial terms for coupling on the board.

Overall the CRIOP showed that Faith stood firm in accountability and applicability. Further, the CRIOP revealed that Faith was responsive and her ability to apply the lessons to the students’ worldview was visible. When she was allowed to see the CRIOP tool she stated, “If this was used instead of the walkthrough instrument they use on me, they may see that I got this.” Faith was relentless in her pursuit of being accepted by her African American males. She was focused on making sure they felt accepted by her. The CRIOP tool was a means to observe the acceptability and the need to reach the African American males in her class.

**Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory findings.** The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI), which can be found in Appendix E, served as a way to identify the self-reported beliefs and understanding of one’s worldview and assumed understanding of others’ station in society. The CDAI contains 28 Likert-type items. Participants chose from a Likert scale that ranged from one to four, with one indicating strongly agree and four indicating strongly disagree.
Faith’s scores indicated that she was culturally aware. Her level of awareness was very visible. She intently and always sought to include language and context that was relevant. Her interest to do so seemed to manifest in what was almost a Montessori style of learning. Students could insert opinion and ask questions about anything, as long as it focused or connected to the lesson. For example, Faith posited to the class that the human body is built to survive the elements and certain physical features on the human body change as she said, “to compromise and negotiate with Mother Nature.” Although the subject/lesson was about the mutation, an African American male student asked, “Hey, why is our hair different. And kind of sort of have bigger noses?” Faith, began asking all of the students to think about that question and guess the answer. But she first challenged them to “look in your mind or heart and tell me if you believe what Milo said to be true.” What was noticeable was the fact that two of the African American males who were disengaged had their heads down; however, after being cued to engage in thinking about that answer, they became very engaged in the conversation. The lesson was disruptive; however, the learning and engagement of the entire class was very rich and inviting. One African American shared, “I wish my nose wasn’t this big. When I get money I’m going to get plastic surgery. I don’t live in Africa so I don’t need the big ol’ snoz. I could breathe just fine with a littler nose.” Faith responded by writing the word olfactory on the board. She challenged the students to look up the word. She then wrote the slang word snoz. Following, she said, “Guys, what does a snoz have to do with shape? Let’s really think of this. Oh and by the way, I expect you to know what olfactory is by tomorrow.” One of the African American students in the class asked Faith if the word olfactory was on the test. In unison, the entire class booed the male. The
researcher noticed that although booed, the boy was laughing and understood why he was booed. It was clear that there was a culture in the classroom that welcomed discourse and shunned prescribed teaching. It also was clear that the students (African American males for the purposes of this research) were allowed to think, question, and explore their own understanding. This showed that the teacher capitalized on the context to which the African American male was trying to make a connection. It also showed that the teacher leaves room for students to be funny and have outbursts that are on topic. Even more so, the student’s answer showed that he was understanding physical adaptability and how the body physically changes to adapt to environment.

Question number seventeen in the CDAI asked whether there were ever times in which racial statements should be ignored. This was interesting to the researcher because of a particular event in the classroom. During one observation, Faith forfeited the prescribed lesson so that students could discuss the idea that racism is everywhere. The only rule that Faith posed for the class was that the students had to articulate their opinion as an opinion, or as she stated, “If this is a fact, it better be a fact.” All of the African American males were fully engaged and the students who were not comfortable were left to sit in their discomfort. Faith went on to bring the discomfort and discourse of race to a conscious level when she asked the students who did not engage in the race discussion, (White and Asian students), “Is this how it feels for many of your classmates when they go through school? Is silence perpetuating racism?”

Faith strongly believed that parents being informed is important and asserted that part of that involvement rests on the African American male to inform the parent. As she circled strongly agree to question number twelve on the self-reported survey, she took the
liberty of asserting that she too has a responsibility of informing the parents. Faith did not see this as being culturally aware. This was evident in the fact that Faith did not rely or expect parents to know what she was teaching. She wanted parents to trust that she was teaching their students to the best of her ability. In turn, Faith would text or call her parents and tell them what their student said that was funny, brilliant, or clever that day. She would then end the text with, “Ask him about it.” She considered this effort to be a moral imperative. In between classes, the researcher asked her why she did that; she said, “I use to do it because I wanted the parents to buy in. Now I do it, because they will text me wanting to know what their kiddo is doing. I have them right where I want them. Even away from me they are still talking about this White girl.”

The findings from the CDAI also indicated that Faith was conflicted with how she could be a multicultural teacher when the work it takes is thwarted by time and expectation. She shared that she came to this understanding when she attended an Education Equity Institute led by the district. One of the presenters discussed how difficult it is to make a difference and change. Faith was often observed apologizing to the students for not being able to delve more into a topic that was interesting to them and relevant to the prescribed lesson. She would posit, “Guys we have to move on. They are wanting you to take a test Friday.” This was also illuminated in Faith’s frustration with the timing in the classroom. In her CDAI she reported being very interested in ongoing parent reporting; however, as a new teacher and with so many mandates, that was difficult to do. In turn, she began having house visits when time allowed.

Faith had a texting account that was strictly for the parent and students. She would send mass texts to the students and the parents informing them of broad topics
covered during the week and also would send individual texts that often cued the parent
to talk to their son about the day. Sometimes it was to inform the parent that it appeared
the African American male was bothered or very excited. Faith shared that, “Many of
my parents cannot get to me. But a text and quick phone call really made all three of us
feel like we were in it together.”

There was noticeable contention between what Faith had to teach and what she
felt she needed to teach [her students]. She often dismissed the guidelines and deadlines
prescribed to her. Throughout her CDAI, the researcher discovered that she was not
always considerate of the lesson but more concerned with what she felt needed to be
learned or shared. Her focus on being culturally responsive and inclusive teetered on
being dismissive of administrative mandates and collegial timelines. This was evident in
conversations Faith had with the researcher and her students.

The researcher noted that she stated to her class fourteen times that, “When you
get in study hall or are talking to your friends about where we are in the lesson, don’t
worry we got this. I promise you’ll know more than you need to and more than the test
ask for.” When the researcher asked her why she says that to the students, she replied:

They’ll get in other classes, on the bus, in study hall, and in the neighborhood and
talk about school. People don’t think they talk about school but they do. The
study hall teacher will try to help all of the kids in there. When the teacher gets to
my kids, they’ll tell my kids that they are behind. They will go tell administration
and on and on. They use to come back to me and tell me what the teacher(s) said.
Some would come back worried that they are not on pace. But that stopped after
they got their scores back. They still complain about my pace and my way of
teaching; but I know the kids are better for it. They even bring other students to me to tutor when I stay after. I just can’t worry about all this worthless stuff. We have to learn you know?

Many of the ideas and desires that Faith had to engage the African Americans were close to taboo and frowned upon internally. For example, Faith would allow students to listen to music in class. She believed that students could multitask and that the world in which they live is demanding that of the students. This was sorely frowned upon by some members of the administration; however, according to Faith, the principal of the school was fine with the deviation, as long as the students were engaged and behaving properly. As where Faith had strategies and ways to include smart phone technology, the other teachers may not. It is also the researcher’s opinion that ignoring the rule of the school could cause the students [African American males] to get in trouble in other classes. The researcher could assume that by being able to ignore a rule in Faith’s class, it should/could carry over into other classes.

The researcher recommends that Faith adhere to school rules, while working with school administration to change them. As mentioned earlier, Faith believed she has to deviate from the prescribe way of teaching. She believed that she must allow the students to be themselves and dive deeper into the learning by sharing their knowledge and understanding. Along with the fact that Faith would share her sentiments with the researcher and her students, this also was reflected in her CDAI and MEAS.

**Interview findings.** The researcher interviewed the teacher to elicit reflective and introspective responses from the subject and to potentially unveil discoveries in the classroom(s). The subjects were told to be clear and concise with their answers. They
were assured that the answers would not be shared in a manner that implicated them and the school that they attend. To that point, the only way that both of the teachers were comfortable with this part of the research was if the researcher paraphrased and presented their answers in a manner as to not evoke tone or dissatisfaction with their employer or the efforts laid out by the district. In turn, the researcher presented the responses of Faith as to honor her willingness to be a part of this research while aspiring to not present either of them in a manner oppositional to the direction the district was headed in regards to cultural competence and responsiveness.

The researcher interviewed Faith to better understand her background and how she became a teacher. The questions were open-ended. In turn, the questions also allowed the researcher and subject to become acquainted with one another and allay any misgivings. To that point, it is important to note that Faith was candid with the researcher and voiced concerns about opinions being made of her and readers not getting the full understanding of who she is as a teacher and who she is trying to become as a teacher.

When asking Faith, “What did teaching look like in your school,” her response was:

The teaching was very sterile. But I did not realize that until much later in my life. There were teachers that were very unforgettable and helped to mold me. Those teachers are the teachers I try to mold my teaching around. It was hard when you are really not expected to be that kind of teacher any more. It is hard when the kids need you to be something more than a lecturer and grader. It
is fun when you find time or have that moment where you just have to engage them and they want to be.

This explained Faith’s ambition to be inclusive. Her recognizing the fact that it is important to be around different cultures and races typifies the type of teachers she is trying to become and why she was so adamant about reaching the African male student.

The next question was, “To what factors do you attribute your school’s gap scores?” Faith responded by saying:

Lack of training. Very little of what I received in my formal training prepared me for this. I am being placed in a dissertation because I guess I do a good job. But what makes me supposedly good is not what I have learned formally. It is what I learned from my favorite teachers and specks of trainings.

This showed that Faith wants more training in the areas of cultural competence. This also showed that the district in which she works was not mandating training on how to reach African American males. In spite of the dire need to do so, teachers such as Faith are still left to hunt for training.

This also showed that some higher education institution may not teach teachers on how to thrive in diverse school systems. As teaching is not Faith’s first career, it is clear that her sentiments on teaching preparation were not favorable related to tooling teachers with what is needed to teach in urban public schools with particular focus on the African American male. The researcher then asked Faith, “What have you done to help reach African Americans and assure they achieve?” Faith responded by saying:

I have tried to be different than what I think they are used to. I try to let them have a clean slate every day. I try to support them in this classroom and in their
other activities. I get on their nerves. We fuss. We love. We listen. They like knowing that they never know when I will show up at their house, their church, and their other classrooms. They never know when I will call on them to teach the class. They like my (un)predictableness, and I respect their resilience.

It was apparent that she wanted to teach/reach them in a manner that she feels is not normal for them. The researcher posits that Faith thought her teaching must be different and more vibrant that what her students are used to. Being the case, it also was clear that Faith was relentless in connecting with the African American male by connecting with their community and going into their community.

Faith was then asked, “Do you feel that there are significant barriers between you and the African American male—making it harder to reach him?” She stated:

Yes. We have to own that. We have to slow down and listen. We have to change the curriculum and lessons to be more accurate about their history and we have to look at how some benefit from the way things are set up and how some don’t. They are just brave and beat up enough to speak about it—if we let them. It’s hard reaching them. I need help!

The responses showed that Faith is in tune with the inequities in the school system. It showed that there is accountability that must be laid at the feet of teachers, school leaders, the university teacher preparation programs, and the system as whole. Faith also revealed in her answer that there needs to be more support for teachers in order to reach the African American male. Her admission of needing help, clearly showed that teachers that are to a degree engaging the African American male are doing so mainly on wit and speckled training. The researcher posits that more must be done in providing teachers the
time to grow and training to improve creating a culture to which the African American male and the teacher may flourish in tandem.

As it relates to the district in which Faith teaches, there has been some intentionality behind training that is centered on reaching the African American male and cultural competence. To the following question, “Does this year’s cultural competence training change and/or strengthen your opinion on how to reach African American males in your class?,” Faith, hesitantly responded by saying, “It does! But I have been reminded that I may not have time to do that ‘stuff.’” Faith was asked to elaborate on her response. She said:

Many of the teachers that are considered good teachers, do not believe this type of training is important. One told me that I was wasting my time with the feel good trainings; and that my scores will plummet if I don’t get done with what I am supposed to do. Out of respect I did not reply; however, I know that this matters. I know that Black kids are capable and White teachers are able. I also know that when a white teacher is in a room with Black kids, she better notice and be comfortable with doing unconventional things by common teaching standards to get them across the achievement. But what’s funny is what I do is working. And what she is doing is racking up referrals. But she does get them out of her class. I know this because they come to mine.

Faith’s response indicated that she is proud of her work and that there are teachers who do not see her being responsive as useful or appropriate. It also is apparent that rigidity and rejection are practices still used to not address the African American male. Teachers are still allowed to remove students from the class.
Teacher 2 - Hope

**MEAS Findings.** On Hope’s MEAS survey she appeared to be more culturally comfortable with teaching African American males. Hope indicated that she took her role as teacher and positive African American female role model very serious. Hope’s overall score was 40. The next closest score was earned by her co-participant, Faith, who scored a 41. It is important to remember that the way the MEAS is designed, the lower the score, the better the “grade.”

The MEAS revealed that she often felt compelled to be harder on her African American males than other teachers. For example, an African American male came into class late with a ball cap on backwards and breathing heavy. The student was clearly bothered, out of compliance with the school rules for dress code, and disheveled. As the student went to his seat, Hope asked the student, “Where have you been, and why are your fists balled up. You want to fight me?” The student responded still very frustrated, “No, I don’t want to fight you, but if Sylvester keeps fucking with my sister, I’m going to handle that.” Hope’s response was:

What you’re going to do is sit yourself down right here, open your hands and apologize to me for cursing. And you’re going to do it now. While I sign this referral and assign you and Sylvester to detention with me.”

The student followed all of the directives given by Hope. He even hugged her and said, “Why you so mean to us? You a bully.” Faith then responded, “I run these streets.” Which resulted in the whole class laughing.

In her MEAS survey, item number thirty three asked if schools should develop their students’ abilities to possess a positive attitude toward self. The aforementioned
conversation lends the researcher to believe that Hope’s intent was to deescalate, establish order, get the student to regulate his own emotions, and become positive. By giving the student attention and letting the student vent, the African American male quickly returned to being respectful.

In that same exchange the researcher was reminded that Hope strongly agreed with question number twenty-seven that asked if multicultural education can effectively teach through modeling the skills of problem solving and conflict resolution. This exchange also modeled her strong agreement. By holding the student accountable and then placing the student in detention with the student (an Asian American male), Hope was making it clear that she was going to have the students address their conflict in an officiated manner with her present. This seemed to please the class and the student as many of them watched and smiled after the conversation was over.

In a follow-up conversation with Hope, she explained her reasoning and showed the researcher the referral she would submit to school administration. Hope did not add that the student used profanity, nor did she write that the student was going to fight. Hope wrote that the student was late to class and needed detention with her, as it was important to make sure the student was caught up with classwork. She explained:

I know I could have written the boy up and wrote down all that happened. But what good would it do? I have heard worse and have been called worse. I don’t see any point in escalating something that is already heightened. Yes, he would have fought Sylvester. Yes. He would have been suspended if I wrote that he said fuck and threatened to hurt someone. But, he and Sylvester will not fight and
they will not miss my class, behind some little girl. They are my boys and I will not let them be what some many think they are.

It is evident that Hope felt as though she had more control of the situation than the student. Hope clearly saw the infraction as something that could be maximized in a way that did not bode well for the student. Instead, Hope sought to address the infraction in a manner that did not exclude the student from learning and the teacher from teaching him. This showed that Hope had ownership and accountability for the African American males in her class. Her willingness to address the core problem and not get mired in the secondary issue allowed her to mitigate the situation, maintain order, and keep the student in the classroom. This is important in that many teachers who employ culturally responsive teaching are effective managers of misbehavior—particularly African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In the MEAS survey, question number eight asked, if students are expected to fail they will, and she posited that:

Black boys are expected to fail. They are cornered and shut off from the richness of themselves and the lessons that teachers can give them. And they often accept it. I refuse to let them be silly, pretend to be ignorant, and ignored. I simply refuse.

For example, Hope did not let students exclude themselves from lessons and discussion in the class. When asking students to talk about the differences between two characters in a short story, an African American male said that the story and the book was boring and “lame.” The student commented that he did not really read the story because the language was so “corny.” Hope, agreed that the language was different from what the
class was used to. She also stated, “Ignorance is contagious; and right now, you’re the bubonic plague. You’re not going to come in here and blame the language on why you did not read. All the while looking at you’re homie Ranger, who I can tell didn’t read either.” Although both students continued to laugh, it was noted that they both began reading while Hope continued to discuss with the class. By the end of the discussion, the boys (one African American) began to share the understanding of the content/context.

The researcher noticed that refusal to let the students not answer the questions and engage was common practice for Hope. She appeared vested in making sure that the African American male did the work that was prescribed and that she kept order in the classroom. It appeared that the uncertainty of what Hope would do to the boys for not reading was a driver in making them read. As one of the African American males was leaving the room, Hope said, “You know if you hadn’t have got your butt in gear, I was going to get you. Right?’ The boy said, “See you there you go again. But you know I got you.”

The researcher asked Hope what she would have done if the student(s) did not participate. She stated, “I would have taken them either out of their after school practices and made them read it with me, made them read an even longer boring passage, or cold shouldered them—which kills them.” When asked to elaborate on what she meant by coldshouldering them, she stated:

They hate when momma is not talking to them. They hate it. They hate when I am disappointed. Now being that they can truly be knuckleheads and riotous in other classes, they have a reputation to protect. So I understand that they can’t come in here and always be the angels that they should be. But they damn well
know, not to come in here and do that mess these other teachers let them do. That will not happen. I’m the momma. The role that they put on, is a joke. Slowly but surely, they’ll get out of that role and be kings. Strong boys.

This notion of responsibility roles speaks to what Gillborn (2008) considered to be mindfulness of the role of racism in the United States. Gillborn posited that issues of race should not be taken lightly, nor should teachers overlook the perpetuation of racism in their classroom. This researcher believes that stereotypes, race, and racism are what Hope seeks to eradicate when working with African American males. She seems to value the strength of the boys while detesting the behavior they often exude, because it perpetuates racism and allows the racist to argue that African American males are prankster, lazy, and jolly.

Hope seemed to have more faith in the system than Faith; however, her MEAS revealed that she was concerned about the accountability and lack of high expectations placed on the African American male. As she noted that she strongly agreed that the effective implementation of multicultural education maximizes the potential of all students—on question number seven, the researcher noted that on thirteen occasions she said, “You will not get this in other classes. So listen up.”

When following up with Hope, she made a point that she wanted to make certain the African American boys were getting a chance to challenge, disagree, and debate thoughts of the author. She would often ask her class, when referencing a novel or a passage from a book, “Does this old passed away White man know what he’s talking about?” Along with the fact that all of the students always thought that it was funny that she would ask the same question about any author, she thought it necessary to always
bring race and culture to the discussion. Even more peculiar was that on the MEAS, she marked a three instead of a four on question number two that asked if multicultural education can be viewed as an antidote for many social problems.

Hope believed that effective instruction should be included and racism should be addressed in the context and content of the school day. When the researcher asked her to elaborate on question 10, which asked if effective instruction should include educational opportunities targeted toward issues of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and social differences, she replied, in all seriousness:

I am hamstrung by what I can and cannot do. I am often frustrated that race and responsiveness is a cherry on top at best. And that it fails to ever really make it into the fiber of the lessons. All these Black and brown boys have to read *Great Expectations*, but have no expectation or allowance to connect it to their life. I love to do that. Even if it makes my colleagues and some students uncomfortable.

The researcher posits that Hope feels she is charged to improve the outcomes of students (African American males) although she is not really expected to be culturally responsive. She felt that the curriculum and content, as it is, is not considerate of the background of the African American student.

Opposite of Faith, Hope reported that literature and novels are enormously conducive to having discussion about race. She maintained throughout the time of the evaluations that the challenge is that race is not embedded in the prescribed lesson plans. As surveyed in question 12, *Textbooks and other teaching materials should include the significance of the diverse ethnic contributions to society*, Hope utilized novels and/or passages from novels to connect with African American males. When the
prescribed passages did not evoke enough interest or discourse, she would supplement the passage with rap lyrics, scenes of movies she found on YouTube, or poetry. Hope managed to connect different culture with what she called “dead and gone writers.” Hope used a controversial rap lyric and played the song for her students. She then played a speech from Fidel Castro and asked the students to Venn diagram the message in the assigned soliloquy to the supplemental passages and lyrics she provided. The African American males then became immersed in the soliloquy. The discussion was rich and discourse was riddled with their worldview and ambition.

The MEAS findings showed that Hope was well aware of her purpose and desire to be inclusive and multicultural centered. She had a focus on making sure the students were welcomed into the learning. Hope was the Literary Lead for her grade level. She was charged to provide help to other teachers who were teaching the same level. In her attempt to support teachers, she thought it critical to supplement the lesson with diverse books and writers that, as she put it, “Look, feel, and smell like their lives.”

Hope also had a strong interest in doing more than expected. She strongly agreed with question 16, which asked if the exclusion of minorities, females, and student with disabilities in the curriculum and educational structure creates a false sense of superiority among mainstream populations, which was evident by her starting a book club that read the ‘classics’ but discussed the relativity to them. Hope started this club in the community where many of her children lived. The group grew from four African American males to 15 in a month. Hope also shared that she felt the students would be more comfortable in their neighborhood, which explained why she strongly agreed with questions four and one.
The MEAS allowed the observer to investigate the reported opinions of Hope. It showed that in many instances Hope sought to combat the perceptions other teachers had of the African American male. The MEAS allowed the researcher to further understand that teachers like Hope do not allow students to misbehave; however, they address misbehavior differently than colleagues. This approach to including African American males and expecting them to participate is grounded in the work of Noguera (2008), who claimed that avoiding the sentiments of students of color (African American males) denies students the right to be themselves and leads them to become more disengaged which makes the issues of race more explosive.

**Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol findings.** Hope also allowed students to switch between familiar words and vernacular used by the African American male often in regular conversation. The researcher noted the allowance of code switching fit under the Discourse/Instructional Conversation section of the CRIOP, which includes the item, *students speak in their home vernacular/discourse.* By allowing the students to speak in their home discourse, Hope had a richer conversation and an easier time connecting the objective to the African American male students.

When discussing attitudes of characters, Hope was less concerned with the words the African American male students used and more with the context to which it was asserted. For example, when explaining the mood of a character being discussed, an African American male said, “Ms. Hope, he was on butt. He was mad at the world for no reason.” Hope asked the African American male to give him an example and, “share with the class what on butt means.” The African American male proficiently and with obvious pride did both. The student said, “On butt means he was mad. That is obvious
because he wasn’t making sense, and if you really read it, he knows he is not making sense. He says it right here.” The student then proceeded to show the class where in the passage his point could be found. This notion of invitation and allowance of explanation in familiar terms relatable to the African American male is what Darder (1991), considers to be creating cultural democracies in learning settings, wherein the range of cultures (in this case, African Americans), possesses equal ability to express themselves and learn in the class.

Hope was observed by the researcher putting considerable amount of time into the Sociopolitical Consciousness portion of the CRIOP, which was transferable into her lessons. It was observed in every lesson that she planned to find time for the African American males to discuss their views on society. She would often say, “This author wrote this years ago! Does any of this still apply to Graceville and/or JM High and how we are living now?” This question supports a recurring behavior noted in the researcher’s CRIOP. Hope unapologetically valued and inserted racial charged topics in her lessons. By asking the students to elaborate on the idea of connecting a White author’s book to the reality of the African American mindset and worldview was a non-negotiable for Hope. This strengthens Sleeter’s (2008a-c) research that found White teachers generally resist teaching/examining race and cultural differences or how racism is reproduced daily. The researcher noticed that Hope planned to bring race to the forefront in a non-confrontational way; however, she also was intentional about having the conversation of race in the classroom. It was clear that the students anticipated that question and had prepared an answer for it. It was also noted by the researcher that the African American students frequently shared their societal opinion of current events in
relation to noncurrent piece of literature. To that point, Hope had the highest test scores for grade level among the African American males and students overall.

While explaining literary devices and writing styles, she deconstructed language and terms and connected the terms to colloquialisms that fit and met the students understanding. The teacher referenced musicians and lyrics that apparently connected to the students. When discussing alliteration, one African American student stated, “My pastor always says words that start off the same. I thought he was just trying to be cool; but maybe he was hoping some of you heathens remember the message.” Hope seamlessly inserted, “Another reverend that did that a lot was Martin Luther King. He was one of the best at it.” By not trying to force fit the students into figuring out literary devices, Hope was able to move the learning and relationships forward, all the while not allowing what Rose (1988) called “cognitive reductionism,” which seeks to reduce the complexity of individual cognition into comfortable categories of dualities.

When Hope was allowed to see the CRIOP tool, she stated, “I hope this shows others that so much of what we do is a compliance practice; it is not responsive. Did I do it? Check. Did the kids learn? Who cares?” Hope was relentless in her pursuit of being accepted by her African American males. She refused to let them be marginalized and asserted to finding a need to, “Make others feel odd for a change.” An unforgettable example of the her refusal to let the African American male students be marginalized was when she met with a teacher and challenged her to stop letting her African American male students leave her classroom to come to Hope’s classroom. The researcher was allowed to stay in the room while they were discussing the issue of African American males being sent out. She said:
Ms. Lady, these boys will always come to my room. They will always leave yours. If you let them, they will fail. If you let them, they will become what so many think about them. I cannot teach them Physics. But you can. And believe me, they get on my nerves too. But, I need you let them stay in the class. They need to stay. I will no longer take them in my classroom. But I will bust them up if you tell me they are acting a fool.”

As the other teacher in the dialogue was not part of the research, it is important to note that the teacher admitted to not having tools to keep the “Black boys” engaged and that she thought they would be happier with Hope. Hope responded by stating, “I don’t care if they are ‘happy.’ I want them helpful. They will not get out of Hilltop Park (a low income housing development) if they are happy but do not pass. They won’t really be happy. I want them to be able give back. Not stay back.”

This conversation and the researcher’s data showed that Hope was very connected to her African American males. She understood that many of her students were involved in gangs or had negative affiliations with the neighborhood in which they resided. The researcher counted 11 references about neighborhood and lifestyle during the time of observations. The African American males were allowed to speak of their neighborhood affiliation, Hilltop Park, Damascus Gardens, Diddle Homes, etc., as long as it was connected to the lesson/discussion at hand.

**Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory Findings.** The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) served as a way to identify the self-reported beliefs and understanding of a one’s worldview and assumed understanding of others’ stations in society. Hope had no discomfort in discussing race; however, she reported that race is
uncomfortable for teachers and many White students. For example, during an observation, Hope, challenged the class to talk about the police brutality taking place in America. Hope brought in a relative that lived in the neighborhood where one of the nationally publicized police killings took place. She had him share the tension in the community and aftermath of that killing. This made it evident to the researcher that Hope had a high sense of having to provide opportunities for children to share cultural experiences, as asked in question 23 of the CDAI, which asked the subject to quantify the importance of including cultural differences such as foods, dress, family life, and/or beliefs. Hope then had the students take out their cell phones and anonymously text their questions and statements about the racial tension. She said, “Anyone can text what they feel; however, if you speak you must connect it to what you know and what you have read.” The researcher discerned that the following texts were from African American males because they [African American boys] said that a particular text was theirs. Some of the texts area as follows:

1. It’s sad that this is not the first or last killing that will happen because of cops. My brother is locked up for fighting. But none of the White guys he fought got handcuffed.
2. My uncle is a police officer and he is Black and he is now hated by other Black people even in our own family.
3. We moved from one housing project to another. The police are the same at our new place. They are tired of us and we are tired of them.

The researcher posits that this use of technology and the intentionality of connecting reality to subject matter engages the African American male. Hope provided a space that
covered anonymity but evoked truth. In such a space African American males were allowed to share, be heard, and listen.

The findings from the CDAI also indicated that Hope was frustrated with the limited time she had to engage her African American male students. An African American male student asked Hope why their class was further behind the other classes with other teachers. Hope, responded by saying, “The other classes are not doing what we are doing.” Between classes, the researcher asked Hope why her class behind, and she responded by saying:

If I am to be responsive and really have to get all of my kids across the achievement line, I can’t rush to meet an agenda. I can’t rush to get them to a made up point. I wish I could tell them that we are scoring higher than they are in spite of where they are on a curriculum map. Or that three of my Black boys were supposed to be in that class; but the teacher did not want them.

The aforementioned statement both reflects Duncan-Andrade’s (2009) research, which he called “critical hope.” Critical Hope defies the dominant culture and refuses to marginalize others and what the researchers see as a need to have more time in school for students to learn, as opposed to being monotonously talked to. The richness and passion in Hope’s lesson also equalized the voices in her classroom. For example, Hope gives participation points to students when they share in discussion and positively add to the discourse of the class. In all of Hope’s classes the African American males had an A for participation. This information was shared after the researcher observed an African American student asking Hope if he got his participation points for the day.
Throughout the time observing, it was clear that Hope was intentional about including her African American students. She highly agreed with all items in the CDAI and exhibited her agreement by the ways in which she taught. According to Hope during a discussion with the researcher, her ambition and determination to not be confined to curriculum maps and deadlines, which yielded higher scores for her African American males and only three discipline referrals.

The CDAI was noticeably fortified in Hope’s teaching. It was clear that the teacher was very interested in becoming culturally responsive, embedding student voice, including parents, and challenging exclusionary curriculum that minimalized African American students. Hope extinguished mistrust between African American males and herself by sharing the learning and making the African American males feel as if they were a contributive part of the classroom.

**Interview findings.** The researcher interviewed Hope to better understand her background and how she became a teacher. The questions were open-ended. In turn the questions also allowed the researcher and subject to become acquainted with one another and allay any misgivings. Further, it is important to note that neither Faith nor Hope preferred the answers be listed as they both thought they could be retaliated against and that their answers could potentially cause future problems for them.

The researcher reminded Hope that he was there to research and observe; therefore, nothing observed could be evaluative or return to the subject in any punitive way. This did not seem to comfort Hope; however, she agreed to have the transcribed responses written in a narrative form. Hope’s answers were pithy and clear; however, they serve as an integral part to the narrative of the research.
When asking Hope what did teaching look like in her school, her response was: “I didn’t have a lot of Black educators as role models. I wasn’t around a lot of Black people. All I knew was my family and some friends. So the teachers looked to everyone else but me.” The researcher posited that this particular answers unveiled the practices that Hope employed to engage African American males. It further clarified why Hope considers herself to be the “momma” of the African American males. By not having a lot of African American role models while going through school, she could resort to only modeling what she knew, which were parents and kinsmen.

The next question was to what factors do you attribute your school’s gap scores? Hope responded by stating:

It takes more than some are willing to give to get this gap closed. It takes meeting children where they are and working with them. It is not monolithic. It is not a nice neat lesson plans. You have to be intentional about addressing race, teaching race, and holding us accountable to our part of the gap.

The researcher believes that her response showed that there is some discontent in the lesson design and planning prescribed by the education system. It also showed that Hope was willing to discuss race and works diligently at putting race as a topic in her lessons. Hope was very animated when answering this question. It appeared to the researcher that there were deep feelings behind this question and that she felt isolated in addressing the issues of race in her school.

As it related to her passion for assuring that African American males achieve, when Faith was asked to expand on that, she answered by saying, “I simply give them a voice, choice, and chance. And that’s more than most.” It was clear to the researcher
that Hope felt as though what she did in the classroom is what made a difference between the African American male achieving or failing. Her practices in being responsive and allowing African American males to share in the learning is what she felt allowed them to achieve. It is also clear that Hope did not view many of her colleagues as being willing to work with the African American males and share worldviews. The researcher also posited that Faith appeared to be worried about her answer, as she was very careful in selecting her words.

Hope was then asked if she felt there were significant barriers between her and the African American male, and does that make it harder to reach them. She responded, “There are systemic, mental, social, and mental barriers. Some assume that because I am Black, I should be able to reach all of these boys with ease. I need help. I cannot do it by myself.” Her response let the researcher know that there was frustration and guilt that Faith carried. It is obvious that she was responsive. It also was obvious that she still felt to some degree unable to wholly change the trajectory of her African American males’ lives in the framework to which she must function. Her request for help appeared to accuse the system and herself for being unable to do more for the African American male students.

When asked what the most important charge of her job was, she replied, “Making sure they are loved.” The researcher took this statement to mean that Hope saw a need to show affection for the students. Even further, it was taken to believe that Hope did not think that students were loved in all of their classes. When Hope was asked if the district’s cultural competence training changed and/or strengthened her opinion on how to reach African American males in her class, she responded by saying, “It wasn’t shared
with everyone. I luckily stumbled across the training. I thought it was mandatory—which it kind of was. But many did not see it as necessary. Which explains why some teachers didn’t get the memo.” It was clear that Hope was frustrated with the lack of communication about what she felt to be very meaningful and needed professional development.

The superintendent of the district called for the entire district to receive cultural competence training. This included the entire organization. According to Hope, many leaders did not make the training mandatory, nor was it presented as a need. The researcher asserts that Hope wanted training for cultural competence; however, it did not appear to be a priority for the district in which she was employed.

Regarding an area of growth, Hope was very dismissive of the system and her lessons, lectures, and behavior toward staff showed it. Hope, although very responsive to the needs of African American males, seemed to not work collaboratively with other teachers that could benefit from her knowledge. In fairness, Hope felt that many of the teachers did not wish to address racial equity in lessons; however, it was clear that she did not want to share with the school staff what African American males needed in order to succeed. In a follow-up conversation, Hope shared that she was asked to share some of her practices with the staff at a faculty meeting. She declined and told the researcher that there was no true interest in helping “Black boys” and that “they have the same data I do. I am the neophyte teacher. They should be helping me. It is an act of compliance, not passion.”
A Comparison of the Two Observed Teachers

Differences

The researcher noted very different attributes between Faith and Hope, neither of which were negative, but very polar in position. Faith was more lenient with the African American males’ behavior and action. Even when an African American male interrupted her, she chose not to correct the action. When the student came in late, she did not mark him tardy. As long as the student had a note and sometimes when he did not, she would allow the student to come into class and begin work. This is important because it showed that, even though both teachers were apparently responsive to the African American male, there are approaches and/or delivery styles that differ drastically while getting the same results.

Hope was much more unaccepting of callouts and blurt outs. The three times the researcher observed blurt outs, Hope consistently responded in the same way. She would say, “Mr. X, somewhere that’s okay. But in my house, it is not.”

Tardiness was not acceptable to Faith. In turn, the researcher witnessed on eight occasions African American males running through the hall to make it to her class on time. Such willingness to get to Faith’s class showed that African American students are not always detached from school or refuse to comply with school rules, such as tardy policies. The student discipline data also showed that in many instances these same students were tardy in other classes. To that point, Hope has established a level of high expectation(s) for the African American male and, in turn, the African American male was willing to meet those expectations.
Faith and Hope reinforced the work of Lynn (2006) when she posited that African American males found life experiences and the sharing of those experiences to be important. In their lessons, they made sure there was time for relevant and/or connected vignettes and anecdotes to be shared. It was clear that there were high expectations that the teachers placed on themselves and their students. This is supported by the work of Darling-Hammond (2000) who asserted that there is a relationship between teacher expectations and student outcomes. In this research, it was clear that both teachers left room for students to add on to the discussion by sharing their thoughts on the content of the lesson at hand. Faith often gave classwork and “bell work,” an activity that starts at the beginning of class and often is used to prepare the students for work to review and/or introduce them to a new lesson, which served as a conduit for conversation and cognitive sharing.

Hope did not do much of the conventional parent outreach. She felt it was the student’s responsibility to keep the parents informed. Hope sent letters home and made calls; however, the initiative stopped there. Hope did not hesitate to call parents, but the frequency to the calls was unpredictable and did not center on the parent teacher conferences or known activities in which the African American child was going to engage. To that point she never relayed negative news over the phone. She said, “When I call it is always to say hello, share a good piece of news about the child and invite them to come to my room. I can’t wait for Parent Conference day. I need them when I need them. But I want them all the time.” This is important because it illustrated a sense of understanding and competence. The researcher posits that calling the homes of African American males and relaying positive news is not common practice in public schools. In
turn, many parents of African American males receive calls that are negative in nature and are hinted with judgment and disdain. Hope sought to dismantle that perception. Her calls were pleasant and surprising, which, in turn, led to a more productive and accepting climate in her classroom.

A potential problem with this practice was the fact some of the families may not have had a means to be contacted. The school in which Hope taught had a high concentration of poverty. Along with being highly transient, there also was the likelihood that the parents cannot always be reached. It may stand to reason that Hope may forget to call a student that is well behaved and/or had an academically productive day in her class. Now that this response is clearly expected, should she forget to call a child’s home, the recourse could be one of disappointment for the child.

Hope was very intentional and pragmatic about including parents in very simple ways. Hope would do home visits and would randomly visit places where her African American males frequented. Hope would communicate with the parents using any vehicle of communication she had. This in turn led to gaining the trust of the students and the parents of African American students. It was even more obvious when two different sets of parents came to Hope’s room to quickly apologize for not responding sooner to a text and not being home when she stopped by. One parent said, “Girl, snatch his butt up if you have to. We love you. God bless.” This showed that Faith was trusted by her African American parents. It showed that parents were willing to come to school if they had a voice and are comfortable. The parent giving Faith permission to “snatch up” her African American male is evidence of understanding and shared responsibility in
assuring the African American male succeeds. The researcher posits that such permission is not given to all teachers.

**Similarities**

This research is not comparative in nature. The researcher did not compare the practices of the two teachers. Nonetheless, the research revealed that culturally responsive teachers engage African American males in similar ways. As Faith’s and Hope’s practices are not mirror images of each other, the researcher consistently saw similar behaviors that engaged the African American male. The remainder of this chapter will categorically espouse those similarities. These similarities exceed the obvious facts that the teachers taught in the same school and valued diversity. The similarities were deeper. There was a shared understanding of necessity to reach the African American male despite the social and systemic challenges that made it difficult to do.

Both Hope and Faith had a distrust in the current educational system. They referenced it in all discussions and often shared their distrust with their students. For example, when given the opportunity to talk about the curriculum, many of the African American males asserted that the curriculum was boring. One African American student told Hope, “I hope you jazz this crap up. Cause I ain’t feeling this.” Hope then responded by saying “You, my friend were not thought of when this was designed. And actually neither was I.” At the end of the day, the researcher asked Hope what she meant by that and she responded:

There is absolutely no way they expect me to reach these boys with this. It is sad that we have to look at this literature the way we do. I always tell them that they have to jazz up their lives. Not to mention we play jazz when we write. These
boys have to be selfish and they have to ask what’s in it for them. It’s my job to show them how reading Great Expectations and understanding can help them. I have to make it relevant. And that is often not what I am told to do.

This distrust prompted both subjects to do more with the lessons that prescribed. As it related to African American males, the subjects felt somewhat empathetic with the students and their distrust for the school system as well. For example, Hope shared with the researcher a comment made by another teacher. She quoted a teacher as saying, “I hope we don’t have to have open house in their neighborhoods, I prefer not to get shot.” Faith shared that she doesn’t blame African American kids for distrusting adults (Whites), “They marginalize these boys. And I think they do it on purpose.”

Both Faith and Hope saw responsive and multicultural education as a means to improve outcomes for African American males. They shared the belief of welcoming colloquialisms, slang, and their students’ worldview into the classroom and assisted in getting the African American male to first be a part of the classroom and then achieve. While using the CRIOP, the researcher discovered that in 20 of the lessons, colloquialisms, slang, and the allowance worldview was brought into the lesson. This was present in 80% of all the lessons observed by the researcher. The [African American male] students were allowed to use words interchangeably as to assist them in making connections between what was taught and what was understood. Even further, more times than not, the African American students used words from the lesson only when asked. The conversation and discussion was still fluid and engaging. To that point, neither were given lessons or curricular maps that detailed how to be responsive or
inclusive; thus, they sought training, relied on fond memories from their favorite teachers, and made efforts to reach the African American male. For example, Hope shared in a conversation with the researcher that she often thinks about what is needed to be done in order to reach every child. She stated:

I really don’t know how I am to make this work the way they think I am supposed to. I attend trainings on lesson planning and often leave deflated and over it. I attend as many professional developments on cultural responsiveness and microaggressions as I can. I also kind of remix the curriculum maps and then see if I can get other teachers to look at my work and tell me what they think. I use to be more sharing. But as the kids say, someone snitched on me. A teacher actually took my lesson and sent to the principal and central office folks. Claiming that I was not implementing the standards and race baiting. Long story! But at the end of the day, I have learned little or nothing about how to reach kids; but I can write the hell of a curriculum map.

Even further, both Hope and Faith wanted to have relationships with their students. This was evident in the section of the CRIOP, Classroom Relationships. Though the researcher first thought it to be trivial, the researcher noticed that both teachers were comfortable with calling the African American students by their nicknames. When asked why they did that, Hope stated:

I’m trying to get in their heads, heart, and their community. I think we have it wrong when we think the classroom is our [the teacher’s] community. It’s belongs to them. If calling Abraham Butter, helps me reach them, I am all in. I tell them, that their nicknames will not be written on their diploma or their job
applications. But they can and should keep their nicknames as long as they feel
and as long as it is not negative.

Faith stated, “I had to get over calling them anything other than what their parents named
them. I just had to get over it. I think it is a bit odd. But so is this profession. I think it
is unprofessional if we were interviewing them. We are just trying to get them to listen
and learn.

Another similarity was the fact that the principal using data provided by
Graceville Central Office shared with the researcher that both teachers have consistently
had the highest achievement scores for their African American males in their respective
subjects. Oddly enough, both teachers admitted to not trying to have the highest
scores. Even more potent than the data was the fact that the teachers used assessments to
predict how they would perform on the assessment.

Both Hope and Faith were creative in designing assessments, which mainly
consisted of discussions and application to the lesson. Faith would have a timeline that
listed all tests review dates and the discussions. The timeline was an ongoing sheet of
paper that covered the length of the room. She would have key points of the lesson
written and would state to the students, “Let’s start here and work our way backwards.”
As evident in the section three of the CRIOP, Assessment Practices, this practice engaged
the African American students. The students were allowed and encouraged to take notes
and to share. Conversations between Faith and the students often deviated from the core
lesson; however, it was clear that the lesson taught was received by the African American
males. This was evident in the fact that Faith had 100% participation from all of the
African American males in the class that the researcher observed. While observing, they never thought they would have the highest because neither ever completed a unit course. Another prominent example that was unveiled in both classrooms was the wall of words that the teachers and students referred to while having discussions. This wall had a list colloquial – modern words that were used interchangeably with words used in the curriculum/lesson. Either the teacher(s) or students could add words to the list; however, if a word was added, the person that added the word had to share it with the class and when it was appropriate to be used.

Both teachers seemed to have some form of understanding that it is important to allow differences to be strength and to add to the learning. The African American males in the classrooms seemed to be comfortable and almost expected to let their “fund knowledge” guide them to a new understanding. Hope noted in the follow-up questioning that, “I have learned just as much from them, as they have from me. Here I am Black, and in some instances eons away from understanding their slang, experiences, and needs. If he can understand Shakespeare by referencing his pastor, that makes my job that much easier.” Faith purported in her follow-up interview that she was relieved when the students made connections to what she was teaching through what they already knew. “That is a challenge and concern of mine. So when they do it for me, that’s great. I just have to make sure they know that many of their words are not on the test.”

**Missed Opportunities**

Throughout the course of day, there are opportunities to either engage or disinterest a student. In most instances, Faith and Hope capitalized on those opportunities. These teachers often deviated from the set curriculum to build upon the
opportunity to engage the African American male. However, there were times when the subjects missed an opportunity to have a rich discussion as it related to being culturally responsive and race considerate.

Early in the span of time in which the researcher was observing Faith, an African American student asked if the data being collected (by me) could help “Mexican males” as well. Faith did not answer the question. It was clear that she was not prepared for the question, nor was she comfortable with giving an answer. Instead, Faith replied to the student by saying, “Stay focused on the work.” Shortly after Faith’s response, a Cuban student said, “Ms. Faith, I am not Mexican. I am Cuban and Adam is not Mexican or Cuban, he’s from Ecuador.” Faith, clearly even more uncomfortable, stated again, “Stay focused on the work.”

When Faith was asked why she shied away from the discussion, she embarrasedly stated:

That was too much. I did not know how to get in front of that. I know all the boys in that class get along with each other. I even know that they were probably amused at the fact that I was the only one that was uncomfortable. But I was so afraid, my White kids would be bothered by what he said. I thought they would ask what about them. And why are they not a part of it. I felt odd. I couldn’t see how I was going to shift that into a meaningful conversation. And those clowns did too.

Based on that answer, it was clear that the researcher’s professional role in the district caused discomfort for Faith. To assure Faith that there would be no recourse for what was observed, both Faith and the researcher revisited earlier conversations about the
The researcher also assured Faith that what was observed in the classroom was impressive and needed to be duplicated. The researcher also reminded her of the purpose of the research and the fact that the principal admired her ability to have deep conversations with African American males. Faith simply replied by saying, “This is hard. And you are the Chief Equity Officer over all of this.”

Toldson (2013) posited that there is a critical need to discuss race and differences with African American youth and that doing so dismantles the sometimes wrong mental mind frames of their thinking. By Faith not engaging in the discourse and/or question, it can be assumed that the student did not understand that there are several Latin-rich countries and cultures other than Mexican, which in turn may have perpetuated a culture of exclusion and ignorance. This is important because, in order for all students to be included, students must understand inclusion. As Faith worked tirelessly to include the African American male students, the African American male students witnessed exclusion of another group of males of color.

Hope missed an opportunity when an African student who was a refugee proclaimed that poverty in Black America does not compare to poverty where he is from. Hope verbally agreed with the African student; however, she did not let the African student give examples or share further information. An African American student, said, “I doubt that poor over there is different or worse.” As another student chimed in, “Man at least we get food and have a government. Africa… if you do not have food, you just starve. Right?” Hope interrupted the conversation and said, “Poverty anywhere is not acceptable. Let’s focus.”
Between classes, the researcher asked her about the discourse between the African student and the other African American student, and she said, “I missed it. I knew they wanted to talk about it. I knew they should. I didn’t know if I could do that with respect to the idea that my American Black boys have no clue of what my African student has gone through and seen. I should have let it go further. I missed.”

**Emerging Categories (Giving Voice and Value)**

The participants of this research were amenable to teaching African American students. They were driven to do more than teach the prescribed lesson plan. The subjects understood that African American males were underserved and often underutilized. These teachers sought to be more inclusive in their practice by allowing the African American male to have voice, make connections to his worldview, and challenge the lesson. Both subjects also valued the presence of the African American male. In doing so, they set high expectations and engaged in meaningful discourse with their students. The subjects of this research relied on the discourse to direct their lessons and improve their teaching style. As doing so took more time, both teachers were allowed to engage the African American male in their classrooms.

The following portion of the research is divided into five sections: Classroom Relationships, Curriculum Planned Learning Experiences, Discourse Empathy, Sociopolitical consciousness, Colorblindness and Educational Invitation. The researcher chose these headings because they capture the nature of the observations and/or are the sections of the CRIOP that wholly reveal the observances. Even further, these headings serve as a means to be succinct and accurate in regard to what was seen and voiced in the classroom. The researcher also posits that the headings also are topical in nature to aid in
staying in the province of instructional pedagogy that focuses on culturally responsive teaching as well.

**Classroom Relationships**

In order to discuss the factors that influence how these two teachers interacted with their African American male students, it was important to ask both how they felt about interacting with African American students. Table 2 illustrates their responses. The responses of both teachers seemed to support what they submitted in the MEAS, that their interactions were intentional. However, the research on interaction and integration has asserted that it is natural for students to separate into groups. Allport (1979) said, “They eat, reside in homogeneous clusters.”

**Curriculum Planned/Learning Experience**

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999) discovered that teachers’ worldviews affected how they taught and designed lessons. His study also teased out how teachers may weaken or strengthen their teaching if they first understand their views of African American males. It is important to know that both of the teachers observed in this research echoed a concern with time constraints and being urged to stay on a pace that appeased local, state, and federal guidelines. Noting that these teachers were under some time constraints, it was still clear that many efforts were made to create lessons that fit the understanding of the student.
Faith

I work very hard to make sure some of this work does not slip past the students. I understand that this part of the course could be very difficult and boring, but I think what carries me through is the relationships I have with them. I rely on that relationship to make this lesson not so boring.

I try to let them see that I care and expect them to do more. I have patience, but I make sure that they know that there is an expectation to master this lesson. I do not think it is easy. I hear all the time that I am doing a good job. But it sure doesn’t feel that way at times. I try to figure out why this child did not get it. I labor over it to a point that it can become maddening.

I am really aware of the differences; and I plan to get better at making their differences assets; however, time and mandates really retard what I want to do and find interesting. The majority of these boys mean well and can do well. As it relates to cultural competence and rigor, I maintain that the main thing is relationships and respect. I have to find time to build that. I try to do it in my class. But sometimes . . . a lot of times . . . that has to happen in the hallway or before or after class.

Hope

I worry about our Black boys. I think many schools are giving lip service to the problems and not really trying to save these guys. Cultural responsiveness cannot be addressed with one training and it cannot be more of a compliance exercise. It has to be a part of what we dedicate ourselves to doing. Here I am Black.

And I know that I need training on how to reach these boys. I know that there are Black teachers that cannot reach these children and White teachers that are reaching them. So what I try to do is reach them via music, levity, love, and connecting literature to their lives. And in here, I share what I’ve been through. That works!

I will get off pace with the curriculum maps and all the other tools that are supposed to keep on track. I do it because every teachable moment is a moment that I must address. To dismiss an attempted connection that one of these boys tries to make or actually makes is criminal. They have been dismissed many times. I can’t to do that. I have to make it connect for them.

Whereas Faith intentionally made the bell work and classwork a vehicle in which she welcomed cultural exchanges and discourse, Hope addressed their need to share more experiences by matching current literature (rap, movie scenes, and graffiti) to canonical pieces of literature like *Romeo and Juliet* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In the follow-up
interview, the researcher asked why she used this approach. She said that one of the boys (African American) suggested it to her. She shared, “I was bound and determined to get this particular child to understand that classic literature can be connected to his life. The boy told me that if I could actually connect what he likes to what he has to know to pass the test, he will do the work.” Although foreign to the work of Cole (1996), it was clear that both the teachers and students subscribed to examining culture as a construct that influences not only the cognitive, but also motivates students to interact with and view the world through critical eyes.

Table 3 demonstrates how both teachers in the study used curriculum and aligned it to their African American male students’ life experiences.

Rist’s (1970) venerated study clearly illustrated that teachers used race, manner of dress, and other indicators to classify students and in turn pass unfounded judgment about African American students. Rist went on to suggest that many perceptions influenced the effort that the teacher would put into reaching the students. Neither teacher in the current study was familiar with Rist; however, it was clear that these teachers did not approach their lessons from a deficit mindset. It appeared that the teachers in the current study used the same indicators as hints for a way in which they could reach the students. Hope was quoted: “I know you guys always want me to show a lyric or a video clip that’s from your generation that proves that good writing has not changed and that literary devices are still used. So please turn your sheets over and look at the lyrics or quotes from popular movies and see once again that I am right. You can thank me later.”
Table 3

*Samples of Teachers’ Work Demonstrating Cultural Awareness and Inclusiveness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Hope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bell work</strong></td>
<td>Review the two speeches/essays by Martin Luther King, and find all of the figurative language in his writing. To the side, write what literary device it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create your own family tree and track a particular trait through the generations. (You can use a trait that actually runs through your family.)</td>
<td>What musician do you listen to that uses literary devices? Bring in examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some common traits that are prevalent in your family?</td>
<td>Create a family banner/shield share. Be prepared to share it with the class. What do the symbols tell us about what you think, feel, how you wish to live your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find the beginning of the sickle cell disease in this family.</td>
<td>Who are the modern day characters in <em>The Canterbury Tales</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think horse breeders use trait charts to breed the fastest horse for Derby? Why or why not.</td>
<td>Based on the books that we have read in this class and other classes, how important are father figures? We have had some detailed discussions about many of the male characters that we have encountered in our books. Share what you think about the need for father figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now a couple can pick if they are going to have a child with blue eyes, be a male or female, etc.? Do you think that is ethical?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should you consider what traits your partner carry before you get married?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Homework**

Ask your family if there are any prevalent diseases that run in your family. See if they can tell you the most recent person that is burdened by the disease?

Knowing what you know about traits, diseases, reproduction and environment are there really races? (There is no right or wrong answer.)
Such banter and intentionality demonstrated that the relationships were important to her and that she has successfully created a culture and climate in her class where discourse was welcomed, levity was appreciated, and achievement was not monochromatic or rote. The lessons were very fluid and almost always seemed to connect to the lives and understanding of the children.

Likewise, Faith also harbored levity and invited the African American males’ funds of knowledge to be a part of the curricula and climate of the classroom. Such is apparent in the bell work that she designed. It is important to note that the bell work was not a part of a formatted program or curricula. Faith used her creativity and desire to be inclusive of her African American students. She said, “Sometimes the bell work is the only thing that pulls them in. If I can get them early in the period to always go back to the bell work while we are working in class, I have them.” This implies that Faith used cultural responsiveness to engage an otherwise disengaged group of students.

It was apparent that both teachers showed a commitment to connecting with and engaging the Black male student, many of whom were reported by the two teachers as failing in other classes and on the verge of dropping out of school. Both teachers considered making their lessons applicable to the students’ reality. Hope commented, “They need to be a part of the learning. That’s what makes a difference in their understanding.” Both teachers talked extensively with students about “life” and made links between the lesson at hand and affective traits such as honesty, loyalty, respect, love, hate, and fear. Both used the curriculum to challenge students to see the curriculum not as a compliance exercise but as a rung in the ladder of life. By using the
contemporary snapshots of things to which the Black male can relate, the teacher was allowing the students to see their reality as valued.

**Discourse and Instructional Conversation**

One of the purposes for this research was to see whether teacher engagement actually evoked passion and participation from their African American students. This research and the observations revealed how the teacher spoke and listened to their African American students. Waxman (1989) challenged researchers to analyze student perspectives and their learning environments, since what students learn can be far different than what the teacher expected them to learn. Nieto’s (1994) work posited that, “[S]tudent voices sometimes reveal the challenges and even the deep pain young people feel when schools are unresponsive, cold places,” and “Students have important lessons to teach educators and we need to listen to them carefully” (p. 420).

This research unveiled a truth in what Waxman (1989) and Nieto (1994) wanted. Both teachers yielded more engagement and participation in class from their African American students because they engaged in discourse and a type of celebratory sharing about their lives and where they were from. As mentioned earlier, the teachers used conversation and colloquial connections to assist in making sure the students understood the content and the context of the lessons. More important, the students were allowed to contextually code switch and maneuver in and out of academic spaces by relying on what was most familiar. The teachers had the burden of traveling back and forth between polarities of curriculum, learning, and relevance. Much as in the work of Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996), the revelation of the teachers on the effectiveness of engaging discourse and a welcoming culture and climate in the school, these teachers also
found utility in interaction and discourse to be a valuable and needed tool. When the researchers referenced the MEAS response about communication and talking with their students, one teacher said:

If I am a good teacher, it is because I care so much about the students. Even more than I care about the content. I tell them every day that I care. I invest even more effort into the students that don’t want to learn or hear from me. I try to make sure that all my kids, particularly my Black males, can find some linkage to their reality and share it. Although some of their connections are even far-fetched to me, I try to put myself in their shoes and see how there is a connection. I know that saying to them, “That that does not make sense” would only minimalize their experiences and prevent them from transferring their knowledge to the test. It is dualistic in that sense. I have to understand them if they are to understand this lesson.

**Discourse and Empathy**

Another way that the teachers used discourse to show that they cared for their students and engaged them was through the visible respect that was given to the students. Both teachers were consistent and had high expectations; however, those expectations never outweighed the mutual respect and acceptance of thought they showed for their students. During an observation, a student became disruptive. Hope expressed her dislike for the behavior and demanded that the child “get it together.” The Black student stopped the misbehavior; however, he did not engage in classwork for approximately four minutes. It should be noted that the other Black male students chastised the student for his misbehavior and defended the teacher. In turn, the student
began working. Hope instantly went over to the child, put her arm around him, and then had an apparent discussion about the work and the expectations. Although the conversation/dialogue was short, it clearly had a positive impact on the student and the class. Hope abruptly announced, “Class, Vertner and I are straight.” This, again, galvanized the ever-potent notion of discourse and reciprocated respect. These observances mirrored what Kleinfeld (1975) said about teachers who are “warm demanders,” able to switch between nurturer and stern leader.

Hope spoke to the empathy she had for her African American male students. It was noted that, through her conversations with Black male students, she understood that many teachers have mistreated them either intentionally or unintentionally. She said:

The students will tell you which ones are racist. They can tell you which ones care about them. When I am teaching a lesson and we begin to discuss events that have taken place in the book, many of my boys will share stories not about their neighborhoods or families. They will actually disclose what was said or done to them by a teacher. I often catch myself trying to explain to them what the teacher probably meant but did not relay it right.

**Sociopolitical Consciousness**

Freire (1970) brought forth the notion of “conscientization,” the process for students to engage in the world and other critically. During the observations, teachers brought in current views and oppositional opinions to elicit thought from their students and to ensure that the student saw the lessons as debatable and often in need of fixing. Hope often brought in newspapers, YouTube videos, and other media channels to challenge the thinking. She coined a group of her Black male students as the Culturally
Competent Cops. They were challenged to address the cultural mismatches that were happening in their school, neighborhood, and abroad. Hope also had T-shirts made for the students. The students were charged to first identify what cultural competence is and what they can do as students to address the need for it. More specifically, the Black male students had to look at stereotypes of Black males and discuss whether they fed into the stereotype or not.

This activity allowed the students to see their role in defying or fortifying the stereotypes that are associated with them. The African American male students shared their sentiments of the stereotypes and many defended why they fit so many. In a conversation with the teacher, a student said, “I don’t think it’s fair that we are asked to fit in. I think I have a right to be angry and not trust them [people]. These books you have us read all have corruption and racism in them. They’ll be reading about us the same way 300 years from now. But we are not corrupt. They [people] are.” Another Black male chimed in, “Like Ms. Grouch, I see how jacked up it is, I see that a lot of my teachers don’t care. But some do. You do. Some cops care. But I swear most of them don’t. But we are killing ourselves just like these boys [Lord of the Flies]. Ain’t nobody really stopping it. And we don’t know how.” To that point, the teacher simply allowed students to speak colorfully about their experiences and reflect upon the similarities in the books they had read and the articles that she shared. A natural but profound level of pontification about societal accountability entered the classroom due to the evocation of political opinion.

Hope also assigned the class to write an elected official of their choice and persuade the official to address a particular inequity in their neighborhood, school, or
city. This level of community advocacy and accountability appeared to be engaging for the Black males. According to Hope, many of the Black males wrote about racism, safety, or violence. She was pleased with what she called the ability to connect the dots. These boys have a soul. And it’s not dark and full of malice. It’s colorful and unpredictable. I must allow them to see how sitting in this classroom can help them change or better their view on the world and themselves. But let’s be clear. I do not want them to think that something is wrong with them. I want them to see the societal ills as a whole and set out to fix them. Which often gets me off pace from the curriculum maps.

Faith had similar sociopolitical evocations when she began to talk about the historical notion of certain families being of “royal blood” and that being married into that line would mean that the offspring of those parents also would have royal blood. An interesting conversation ignited from that comment. Below is the conversation with sociopolitical overtones that speaks to the responsiveness of Faith.

Student: Well, the opposite is true. Rich people only marry rich people and poor people only marry poor people.

Student 2: Yeah, there’s no way Beyoncé would have married Jay Z if he wasn’t rich.

Teacher: Okay. Let’s look at that for a minute. Is that a bad thing? Marrying a person that is similar in many ways to you?

Student: I can’t explain it, but it’s kind of racist.

Student 3: It ain’t racist. It’s classist, stupid. This crazy, already rich Spanish family would rather marry a chick with hemophilia than marry a poor person in
their own country. That’s classism. And my girlfriend’s Pops don’t know that I’m dating his daughter for the same reason. I am Black and she’s Black, but he thinks I am ‘hood. So he ain’t having it.

Teacher: But is it right?

Student 4 (White): It is what it is.

Student 2: Yeah, but it’s jacked up!

Teacher: So, guys, you see, we have not come that far. Back in the day, they were obsessed with “royal blood.” And now it appears we still have issues with race and class.

Student 5: That’s why people get mad when you tell them that they are discriminating. Because they don’t see it that way. They are just thinking it would be cool to marry a rich chick. That’s why I don’t even look at White girls. They Daddy ain’t going to shoot me.

Student 1: Bro, if any girl looked at you, you better talk to them, ’cause you are ugly. But, ugly doesn’t matter, because all them in that Russian family looked beat up.

If viewed on the surface, this conversation would appear to have little depth and no academic merit. However, if the context of the topic was analyzed and checked for understanding, it is clear that the students had a clear understanding of hemophilia. Coincidentally, it also was clear the sociopolitical backdrop of a broader and more current explanation of classism is something that students (African American males) are aware of and sensitive to. It also was clear that the Black male students were
willing to engage in the learning and to be a part of the classroom because the teacher invited them in and encouraged them to share their experiences and understanding.

Doyle (1986) likened classroom order to conversation: it can only be achieved if both parties cooperate. Sheets and Clay (1996) observed that students are not “passive recipients” of teacher’s actions (p. 171); rather, they influence classroom events as much as they are influenced. During the researcher’s observation, it was noticed that the cooperative conversations between the Black males and other students focused mostly on family, society, and feelings. The allowance of sharing had to do with Sheets and Gay’s (1996) idea of culturally responsive discipline with the ultimate purpose of having teachers create caring and nurturing relationships with students grounded in cooperation, collaboration, and reciprocity rather than compliance and sterility. The ability for both of these teachers to find and anticipate moments that could catapult the lessons beyond sterility and into a space of passion and relevance was observed many times throughout my time in their classrooms. Realizing the conscientious depth of the African American male, both teachers were observed creating lessons that plugged into the depth of the young men’s thinking and feelings about the world in which they live. Table 4 illustrates abbreviated questions that the teachers asked their students, questions that had sociopolitical overtones.

The efforts to which the teachers seemed to apply to assuring that their [African American male] students succeeded was fluid and considerate of the students. The African American males often were anxious to discuss and challenge the teacher and their classmates. As the CRIOP reveals that both teachers were intentional about being
Table 4

Questions Observed with Sociopolitical Overtones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Hope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>How has the idea of limiting or arranging marriages impacted the way people think now?</td>
<td>What makes people so disengaged with what is right? Is there a time or situation when doing what is right is not what will allow you to survive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With science, we can now know if the child is going to have Down syndrome, or an extra or missing allele. We can even pick what the child looks like, before the child is born. Is that good or bad?</td>
<td>What role do you play in fitting the stereotypes or casting out the stereotypes that exist about your culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>View the idea of race. Is there such thing as race, based on what you know about alleles and adaption?</td>
<td>Police your own neighborhoods. Tell me what you see that’s good and bad. Tell me why? How has society contributed to that condition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Can’t we use this science to improve health care and improve the lives of everyone? Isn’t our president trying to do that?</td>
<td>Is there a bigger issue to the killing of unarmed men and police brutality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the breeding of horses to get the fastest, strongest horse ethical? (This question came after a Black male asked if slave owners really made physically Black people have sex to build stronger slaves.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

socially conscious, it also was evident that the teachers considered their classroom to be a haven for thought and acceptance.

**Colorblindness and Educational Invitation**

In describing the three-level hierarchy, Wartofsky (1979) stated that the third level of the hierarchy, Tertiary Artifacts, is important when teaching Black males,
because it is the cornerstone for providing understanding of the thinking and background of the student. Howard (2010) reported that teachers, similar to the ones those observed, are more likely to engage students, particularly Black males, if they understand the third rung of Wartofsky’s hierarchy (see Table 5).

Table 5

Wartofsky’s Three-level Hierarchy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Artifacts used in the production of a thing, rule, concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Artifacts used in preservation and transmission of the acquired skills or modes by which the action is carried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>Free construction of thought and understanding of the rules and concepts that is adhered to by those who have designed their own belief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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It is in this hierarchy, particularly the tertiary phase that the researcher observed, that the two teachers placed an inordinate amount of time and effort. Although the lessons were clearly prescribed and the demand for achievement was a driver, both of these teachers took the needed time to delve into the sociopolitical sentiments of their Black male students. The research showed that neither teacher subscribed to the notion of “colorblindness,” the practice of not acknowledging the racial identities of their students (Scholfield, 1986). Although it appeared to be discomforting for Faith to sometimes talk about race with her students, she engaged. In the follow-up interview with Faith, she was asked whether there was discomfort in talking about race or culture in class. Her response was as follows:

No. Unfortunately I know that there’s a time constraint to the dialogues regardless of how rich the conversation may be. I also know that discussing race is sensitive. I just want to make sure that I respect everyone’s opinions and let
everyone share theirs. It is not as much discomfort in the conversation. It is more so that I am crunched for time and have deadlines. Which is awful anyway.

There is a contradiction in Hope’s statement. Hope in an early discussion with her class dodged the conversation of race and later admitted to the researcher that there was discomfort. In the aforementioned statement she claimed that it is not discomfort. This contradiction may mean that she selected when to engage in race conversations. It also may suggest, that even though Hope is apparently proficient in engaging African American males, her comfort may be different depending on the class.

When Hope was asked the same question, she responded by saying:

We pretend to want to be culturally competent and focus on children’s needs; however, we don’t really put the time into it that we need. These kids need and want to talk about their issues, insights, and confusions. There is no real outlet for them to do that except in the classroom. Even then, we have to censor it—which I get. But we can’t dive as deep as I want to or as deep as they need to. I am just lucky to have a relationship with them where I can talk about it and make it connect with what I have to teach. It is a task. But they need it.

These responses suggest that both teachers utilized happenings in their students’ environments and brought the students’ experiences to the center of the learning. It is clear that the students and the teachers had a connection that had come about because of the teacher’s efforts to try to connect their understanding of the Black male’s reality to the reality of the Black male.

Purkey and Novak (1984) investigated the notion of inviting students into the conversation and participating in the learning process. They posited that it is important to
invite students in the learning and solicit/include their interests. It was clear in the current study that the observed teachers subscribed to Purkey and Novak’s notion of inviting the students into the learning.

One student in Faith’s class who was quiet most of the time, was asked to share after Hope noticed that he was clearly anxious about the lesson/lecture. She stated, “Student, I noticed that you have something to say. Do you want to share?” The student proceeded to speak of his dissatisfaction with the actions of the character and expressed his reasoning. The teacher did not negate the student’s sentiments or challenge them. She replied by saying, “Defending your answer as you did is why it was a proficient answer. You gave your statement, your reason, and your evidence. No foul there. Thank you for sharing.”

Inviting moments such as the aforementioned exposed the cultural thermometer of the teachers. There was an acute sense of anticipation and panoramic preparedness that ushered in engagement and high expectations. The ability to pull the trust and respect out of the Black males was typified in moments of dialogue, curriculum, adjustments, and validation. Both teachers said that noticing when to call on someone is a skill that they learned on the job. When the researcher shared that it appeared they seemed to invite students into the learning/lecture, Hope stated:

Yeah, that is just something you have to learn. And you have to learn that it is different for each child. I used to wait for hands to be raised, look for eye contact, but I got to a point where with some of my boys, their engagement and angst to answer came in the form of a raised eyebrow or a “psshh,” like that answer is silly. And of course some of my boys are chatter boxes. But, I have to watch
them and read them and know when to pull or push them in the conversation and
the learning. I think I have said this before, I have learned so much from
them. Probably more than they have learned from me. So now we trade. If I ask
them to share answers, they can ask me to share my answers. Sometimes they
catch me looking crazy, and they will say “What do you really think about that?”

Conclusion

In many instances it appeared that Hope and Faith were culturally responsive and
engaging teachers. Their lessons, demeanor, societal beliefs, and counter systemic way
of teaching appeared to lead them to become respected and successful teachers for the
African American male student. A recurring theme between the two of these teachers
was the fact that they did not adhere to the set curriculum or societal standard set to
engage African American males. Faith and Hope have limited resources in the area of
multicultural education; yet they thrived and reached their most underserved group of
students. Where there were no textbooks and materials that reflect the African American
male, they found their own.

When deviating from the core lesson often leads to not completing the lesson,
both teachers did so and still yielded the highest scores in comparison to the other
African American males taught by other teachers in their school. Faith created a unit that
she called Mad Scientist. She dedicated a week to letting students research how they
could destroy the world over the span of one thousand years. The research ended before
seeing the presentations; however, Faith shared that such a project took time away from
the lesson; however, she believed it would help students understand
science/chemistry. Near the end of the research/observations, Hope assigned students to
write a creative expository short story from the perspective of a street sign in the neighborhood in which they live. As the main purpose of the assignment was to assess the understanding personification as a literary device, she shared with the researcher that it also gave students another opportunity to share where they come from.

Faith and Hope also invited students into the learning. All [African American males] appeared to have access to the learning and were expected to be a part of the learning. This was consistent in every lesson. The African American males appeared to anticipate the invitation and often would engage. Last, the subjects challenged social constructs and colorblindness. They mitigated some of the strong sentiments of the African American males by allowing them to speak to the constructs, address race, and share emotions. This in turn led to culture/class that was engaging and inclusive of the African American male.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

This research has focused on two teachers that were intentional about being responsive multicultural educators who wish to reach all of their students, particularly African American males. Banks (2004) stated, “Students must attain democratic values in school if we ever hope to change the political, social, and economic structures of stratified societies and nation-states, because they are the future citizens and leaders” (p. 10). As this statement relates to African American males, it is important to note that teachers [schools] must consider their practice to be a means in which to equalize the access and outcomes of them. There is no easy solution to a problem that has manifested itself through years of oppression, privilege, and inequality. Nonetheless, there are teachers in schools throughout America who are trying to right the ills and improve the outcomes for African American males every day.

Berger (2003) argued that teachers that engage students in well planned, interesting, and complex projects that include high expectations in turn have students that achieve. McCombs (2003) supported Berger’s argument by asserting that, when low rigor is teaching in a rote fashion as to comply with state assessments and accountability, students become disengaged.

Prior Research Support

As this is not the first research of its kind, this study supports the work of other critical race theorists. For example, Sleeter (2008b) extolled two teachers, Rita and Nancy, who were making differences in spite of the fact that she believed the system was set up to disconnect and deny students of color, English Language Learners, and low income students. Sleeter stated:
Teachers like Rita and Nancy—particularly those working with low-income, students, students of color, and English Language learners—are being told what to teach, sometimes complete with a script to follow. Rita and Nancy illustrate how democratically minded teachers attempt to navigate such pressures. (p. 156)

This tells the researcher and practitioners that, in order to reach our African American male students, many teachers are taking detours from the prescribed curriculum and finding ways to engage them. This suggests that maintaining the status quo is acceptable, and to challenge the status quo often is frowned upon. Sleeter’s research drew out that multicultural education cannot be a byproduct of education or an afterthought; teachers like Hope and Faith must be allowed to flourish and become teacher leaders. Like Sleeter, this research illuminates the aforementioned challenges to achieving positive outcomes for African American male [students] that have a multicultural and responsive teacher. This researcher also exposed some of the frustrations many teachers face when trying to be responsive to the needs of their African American male students—which, in many cases, can be distilled into equity versus equality.

Summary of Research Findings

This qualitative investigation brought light to appropriate and responsive practices related to engaging the African American male. The researcher used self-reporting surveys, interviews, and classrooms observations with an attempt to discover how to engage the African American male. It was deduced that there are ways to successfully engage the African American male. Such practices shared in prior chapters provide a template as to how such is possible. Even further, it is clear that teachers must/can
establish healthy and productive relationships with African American males. In summary, exploration of the questions in this study led to the following conclusions.

Culturally responsive teachers believe that relationship building through relevant curriculum development is essential to facilitating the achievement of Black males. Culturally responsive teachers who have a high number of African American males in their class anticipate, investigate, and mitigate differences of culture and experience. They design or augment sterile prescribed lessons so that they are responsive and inclusive. In being intentional about augmenting content and building relationships with [African American male] students, successful teachers of these students embrace the responsibility of being in control, managing the relationship, and strengthening it by having rich conversations that invite and share worldviews, providing cultural relevance, code switching, and storytelling.

Successful teachers of African American male students set high expectations for the students. The rigor of the lessons are high, with clear objectives. The unrelenting expectation for the student to discover, share, and solve is not weakened; however, the route by which Black males achieve is in some cases [allowably] different. The expectation to perform well is set and made clear; however, the expectation for each student to get better trumps the demands of the tests. In turn, the African American males in Faith’s and Hope’s classes performed higher than their peers that had other teachers.

Teachers who successfully engage Black male students establish an inclusive culture and climate. They use a multicultural inclusion-based approach that unequivocally places the Black male squarely in the classroom community and, in turn,
allows the Black male student to be fallible, (in)correct, respectfully question(ed), learn in tandem, and accepted. When appropriate, the teacher shares their experiences and beliefs with Black male students.

Teachers who successfully engage Black males self-reflect. They review their lesson and consider each individual in the design, thus becoming adept at differentiation. They work fervently to improve by attending professional development courses that focus on engaging Black male students. They assess their behavior and practices before addressing a Black male’s reaction to them. Both Hope and Faith stated that they would attend more professional development that focused on engaging African American males. In turn, Hope attended a professional development lead by Dr. Donna Ford, eminent researcher in the field of gifted education, to get a better understanding of how to identify gifts and talents in African American males. She stated, “I wanted to see if there are the other things I could do in my class to expose the gifts that I believe all of my kids have. I think we often do consider certain gifts as gifts at all.”

Teachers that successfully engage African American males are race conscious. Although uncomfortable at times, teachers recognize the systemic racism that influences behavior and practices. They understand that the (mis)behaviors of some teachers is (un)intentional but detrimental. That understanding brings an opportunity to improve. Teachers such as Hope and Faith do not shy away from race or racism. When teachers have an opportunity to safely allow race to be a part of the discussion or curriculum, African American males engage.
Limitations

The limitations of this study arise from peculiarity and advantage. It is important to note that the researcher’s present professional station allowed him to have an in-depth understanding of the overall culture and climate of the schools in the district. These peculiarities may lead one to believe that there is room for bias. To that point, the limitations to this research are provided in subsequent paragraphs.

The limited time of observation did not provide evolution of engagement and relationship building. The researcher entered classrooms where systems, structures, and relationships were already active and made. Thus, one could assume that what the researcher witnessed was not easily forged. Understanding that it takes time to build relationships with students, there is room to assume that the students and teachers did not instantaneously start the school year with the apparent relationships the researcher noticed. Even further, it is clear that the research still provides a deep exposition of Faith and Hope. The authenticity of the teachers was evident throughout the observation, and the African American males had relationships with the teachers. The principal asked the students to poll their interest in being on teams and having the same teachers next year. Whereas the results showed that, as a school, many students preferred not to stay with the same teachers throughout their high school career, the students in Faith’s and Hope’s classes were very willing to stay with them.

That being the case, it is clear that the limited time the researcher observed did not stunt or impede the genuine engagement between the student and the teacher. Even further, this limitation offers potential for additional research with the same teachers for a longer amount of time. The researcher posits a longer time observing would illuminate
stronger relationships between the teacher and the student, as well as provide strong responsive strategies that improve the outcomes for African American males.

Crocco and Costigan (2007) interviewed over 200 teachers in New York and found that many were frustrated because they did not have time to forge relationships with the students in their class. The same research also showed that the lessons were prescribed and gave little room for teacher creativity. The argument can be made that that is counter inclusive to the African American male and counterproductive to the multicultural teacher. The implications for further study will reveal that argument more.

Having limitless access to the data of the school, students, and teachers may lead one to assume that the recommendations to come are smattered by district level agendas and state desires. This in turn could lead one to believe that many of the answers rendered by the subjects were responses they thought were expected. Further, the answers may be viewed as prescribed and disingenuous due to the position in which the researcher holds.

Such unlimited access did not weaken objectivity of the research. In fact, the researcher posits that it did the opposite. By being able to view the district level data and by having an understanding of the academic landscape of the district on a broader level, the researcher was able to see how Faith and Hope fared in comparison with other teachers that taught the same demographic. The researcher also could see the outcomes objectively because the data viewed generated apart from either subject or researcher. That allowed for the data to stand alone and not be considered to be tampered with by participants.
Another limitation that was afoot was the fact that the researcher not only worked in the district in which the research occurred, he also lived in the district. This could be considered a limitation, in that the researcher knew the community sentiment. Even further, the researcher had a historical understanding of the district, in that he lived in the same district all of his life. This could tilt the opinion and passion of the researcher not to be as objective as others.

The subjects in the research knew the researcher’s role in the district. As the Chief Equity Officer charged with assessing the implementation of differentiated instruction and multicultural teaching, this potentially placed the teacher in peculiar situations that may prompt them to be overly intentional about lesson design and setting a strong culture and climate. Thus, the authenticity of the responses and the activities in the classroom could arguably have been designed to appease the researcher instead of engaging the African American student.

Although living and working in the same district that the research took place, it is important to note that the quintessential purpose of qualitative research is what Bryman (1984) considered qualitative research to be. He stated:

Qualitative research is a commitment to seek the social world from the point of view of the actor, a theme which is rarely omitted from the methodological writings. Because of the commitment to see through the eyes of one’s subjects close involvement (observation) is advocated. Qualitative research is deemed to be much more fluid and flexible that quantitative research in that it emphasized discovering novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research. (p. 78)
This means that location, origin, and occupation of the researcher was a consideration more than a limitation. It further means that the core purpose of [this] qualitative research was to identify lived experiences of the subjects. Qualitative research, if done correctly/purely, is what epistemological researchers call “rich.” Rich data looks deeply at the subjects and their impact and on the societal surroundings to which they function. This research looked at the richness of the interactions and objectively dove deep into the (un)intentional outcomes of those interactions. Thus the admitted limitation of the location in which the research took place also was limited due to the deep investigation of the actions of the subjects.

Last, another limitation was some inherit distrust between the researcher and the teachers. This distrust apparently stemmed from systemic conflation and miscommunication. This in turn led to the researcher having to remind the teachers that the purpose of the research was to improve the field of education and see if there are practices and strategies that support and improve the outcomes for African American males. Nonetheless, due to the lack of trust that was clearly not directed toward that researcher, one could assume that the efforts made by the teachers were not genuine or normal.

As a former P-12 administrator, there was some room for bias. Even further, admittedly, there was great interest in wanting to find success in reaching African American males. As it was obvious that the teachers engaged the students, it became clear that the teachers worked very hard at doing so. To that point, when the researcher began observing the teachers, it was late in the school year. There was no way to
ascertain or detail the challenges they may have faced while trying to build those relationships earlier in the school year.

As the researcher, it is clear that more questions could have been asked to see if the teachers had difficulty forging the relationships that were noticed during the time of this research. Thus, one could assume that the researcher overlooked or did not pay enough attention to the genesis of the relationships that happened months before the research began.

**Recommendations**

The results of this research indicate that culturally aware, sensitive, and responsive teachers often are constrained by time limits in their efforts to reach the Black male students. Their inability to take deep, culturally responsive dives into lessons, lectures, and activities, hamstrings the teacher to have to choose when to address the plethora of teachable moments that happen daily. In spite of the time constraints imposed locally, regionally, and at the federal level, the two teachers were committed to what Bassey (1996) noted: “Every student can learn” (p. 47). If given more time to look into the knowledge that Black males have, achievement would improve. This lack of time also is concerning to researchers such as Modood (2007) who noticed that (inter)nationally school systems are retreating from multicultural education and are becoming more standardized in assessment and quantifying achievement in ways oppositional to the practices and efforts of teachers like Hope and Faith.

It is, therefore, recommended that the education system on the local, regional, and federal level consider allowing more time to engage African American males. By doing so, public school education will begin to serve more students of color and equip teachers
with appropriate research based instruction that is proven to work with African American males.

Even further, there is a belief in the educational world that to focus on the African American male or any particular group is, in fact, racist, reduces rigor, and unfair. This researcher wholly disagrees with that line of thought and posits that many who believe the aforementioned have missed the overarching premise of what education, particularly public education, is. Simply put, there is a difference between equality and equity. More so, equality will not close the proverbial achievement gap because equality suggests everyone needs the same tool to achieve.

Sleeter (2007) called for school systems to have/adopt an equity consciousness. This means that schools, teachers, administrators, and policy makers need to have a level of concern and understanding in providing not the same type teaching but a differentiated type of teaching that considers the needs of the student. She unapologetically suggested there are four beliefs that educators must accept and act upon:

1. All children (except only a very small percentage) are capable at learning at very high levels.

2. Academic success equitably includes all student groups regardless of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, learning differences, culture, languages, religion, etc.

3. Adults in schools are the primary person responsible for seeing that all students reach success.

4. Traditional school practices result in inequity for individual students and groups of students and these must be changed to ensure success for children.
The aforementioned four points suggest that the idea of all transcends providing all students the same book, a desk, and a school to attend. The points suggest, as does the researcher, that it is preposterous to assume that giving a child the same thing is all that is needed to ensure every child reaches successes.

The researcher agrees with Gay (2000), as she posited that many culturally responsive teachers struggle with pedagogical directives that focus on teaching every student the same. Gay’s research goes on to say that when schools and school systems focus on equality, it stunts student growth and often leaves certain students behind. This was echoed in this research. Both Faith and Hope felt rutted by the directives given to them. They in turn were sometimes limited in how they could address the African American males.

In support of Gay’s (2000) research, the researcher recommends that school districts throughout the nation create a clear working definition of what multicultural responsive teaching is. Ladson-Billings (1995) submitted three dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy: holding high expectations and offering appropriate support such as scaffolding; acting on cultural competence by reshaping curriculum, building on students’ funds of knowledge, and establishing relationships with students and their homes; and cultivating students’ critical consciousness regarding power relations.

Another recommendation is that school-level administrators receive ongoing culturally responsive training. Whereas both subjects in this research appeared to be effective in engaging African American males, many teachers are not. This is in part due to the belief that school level administrators do not know how to engage African American males; thus, the teachers that are somewhat successful at engaging them are
left to fend for themselves. This training could focus on the implicit and explicit bias of school teachers and administrators that inadvertently weakens the desire for African American males to be a part of the school community and achieve at high levels. Inasmuch as the demographic of urban schools continues to swell with African American males, this training will be needed to help teachers teach children who may not look like or have grown up like the majority of their students.

There is a contingency of education practitioners and researchers that believe that culturally responsive teaching ‘dumbs down’ education and rigor. Normally, it is the same group that thinks differentiated attention to each student is unfair. Inasmuch, the researcher disagrees with the idea that culturally responsive teaching dumbs education. Howard Zinn (1997) posited that educators are to save lives, expand happiness, and enable others to live fully and freely; however, he went on to say that the way the current school system is set up, when teachers try to be responsive they are considered “suspect” and encouraged to be equal, instead of equitable. The researcher agrees with Banks (1999) that current pedagogical designs and overarching curriculum in America has a Eurocentric worldview and is focused on equality. To be clear, culturally responsive teaching does not dumb down curriculum; it challenges the supremacy and better includes African American students. Culturally responsive teaching does not encourage favoritism, it refuses to allow one culture or one stream of thought to be absolute.

Although Hope and Faith are not familiar with Parson’s (2005) work that examined how teachers disrupt the cultural supremacy and hegemony of curriculum to include the African American male, they, too, are disruptors. They moved past equality and found ways to engage all students. Many times, as in Parson’s work, this was done
by allowing the African American to tap into his funds of knowledge that was not considered in the monochromatic lessons prescribed to them. To that point, the researcher posits that dumbing down the curriculum is polar to responsive teaching. It elevates discourse, heightens empathy, and brings feelings to a numb curriculum that is designed to maintain mediocrity.

A level of frustration seemed to be ever present. Both teachers seemed to be frustrated with the systematic and robotic ways they were to teach African American students. The frustration was so pervasive that at times the teachers seemed to intentionally disregard the rules/directives given to them from their administration. As the researcher understands the need to differentiate instruction and challenge hegemony and supremacy in the classroom and school system, teachers that wish to engage African American male students must conditionally support the teaching standards. To that point, the researcher recommends that teachers adhere to the administrative rules, while working with school administrators to change them.

In regard to addressing the ways and means to teach African American males, it also is recommended that departments of education modify and/or create policies that mandate teachers to be trained in responsiveness. It is only through policy that many of the strong practices displayed by Hope and Faith become common place as opposed to anomalous. In as much, teachers like Hope and Faith will not be considered to be rebellious. More teachers will then emerge as teacher leaders and culturally responsive.

In regard to engaging African American males, it is important that teachers striving to become culturally responsive do not make that desire any more difficult than it already is. Thus, the researcher recommends that teachers need to use the experiences
and questions that are raised from their African American males and embed them in her lessons for future classes. Although the students will change with each passing year, the questions could be used to evoke conversation and save time. Presently, Faith counts on questions to be asked. In the future, Faith could have classes not as engaged that could benefit from being asked set questions that she knows typically engage students. There is no need in regenerating relevant and relatable occurrences for each class each year.

When the researcher asked Faith if she keeps a log of the relevant questions posed by her African American males, she said, “No. But I will start. I’m just glad that they are willing to investigate other stuff than this stuff they have to learn.” Inasmuch, the researcher believes that investigative learning should continue; however, Faith need not hope that the African American male wants to make a connection with his relevant history. Faith could use the already asserted questions that were asked and imbed them in future lessons.

It also is recommended that colleges and universities improve their teacher preparation programs to address how to engage Black males and/or students from diverse cultures. This goal could be accomplished by first having a focus group of teachers who admit ineptitude in reaching Black males but who want to improve. By listening to and observing these teachers, teacher preparation classes/programs could offer classes that allow teachers to be more inclusive and responsive. This also could improve the quality of their own programs.

America’s universities must train teachers in introspection and cultural mismatches. Even further, American universities must have teacher training that investigates infrastructure and its detriment. Giroux (1983) addressed a “hidden
curriculum” of unstated values and beliefs embedded and transferred through unfair rules and practices that often exclude certain groups of students. Universities must look at cultural forms and practices in the schools that mute African American males. Classes that bring to light this deep rooted systemic problem are sure to move past equality and reach equity. Jackson (1993) posited that these underlying “ways” were inherent to socializing students to school. In turn, students who could not “see” the camouflaged curriculum could/cannot oblige it and are set up to struggle upon entering the schoolhouse.

Universities need to train aspiring teachers to be socially conscious and society challengers. If not, the constructs in place will remain and students will be forced to languish in a pseudo-sense of equality and that is far from equitable. Well written lesson plan, beautiful bulletin boards, and recitation of teaching standards are not the answer to improving outcomes of disadvantaged students. Societal agitators and evolved colleges of education will.

In Graceville County, public school teachers can apply to be a part of a cohort that receive their master’s in education with a certificate [endorsement] in Diversity Literacy. This program has classes that are not housed only in the college of education. Many are housed in the colleges of Pan African Studies, Juvenile Justice, and Psychology. The incentive to join the program has salient attributes: (1) It is a sponsorship, meaning that the selected teachers go back to school for free. This is professionally and financially beneficial for teachers because, in the state in which the research took place, teachers are required to acquire a master’s degree in five years. Presently, the teachers have to pay for this themselves. (2) Teachers that get accepted into the program are bound to stay in high
priority schools [like JM High School] for four years. This is helpful because teachers that receive their Master’s and Diversity Literacy certificate become trainers in their school and in the district. Even more important, teachers who complete the coursework stay in schools where there are high numbers of African American males.

Programs such as this must be created throughout the nation. Partnerships between the public school system and the colleges must be forged. If the education system is to improve, more accountability must be placed on the colleges of education throughout the nation. It is not fair that practitioners are the only educators held accountable for outcomes of African American males. Our colleges of education must be held accountable in preparing teachers. They need to insert real intent in ensuring that teachers are equipped to engage America’s African American male students.

It must be recognized what Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) considered universities to be: entities with agendas that often do not consider the future of the students. They stated:

Universities are, of course multimillion dollar enterprises governed by boards of trustees who oversee their operations. These boards are often the equivalent of millionaire clubs, overwhelmingly peopled by the owners of the means of production and information, the captains of the military-industrial complex. Such people are not neutral, and the disinterested university is a myth. The only question in this twisty, distorted, and always contested context is what and whose interests will served and by whom. (p. 89)

A prevailing question must be: Who are we training and what are we training them to do? Universities must embed responsive teaching into every teacher preparation class.
No longer can students afford to graduate and not be ready to teach a diverse group of students.

The researcher also posits that there must be better communication between the university and the schools. Discourse about what teachers must know is tantamount. The accountability of educational equity must be equally placed on/at the university level. Consideration of placement and the colleges from which aspiring teachers graduate must be evaluated. This evaluation cannot be like some college accreditation practices; meaning it cannot be an exercise of compliance and conformity. There must be visible and quantifiable connectivity between the entities that have set goals in achieving educational equity for African American males. It must focus on the preparedness of the teachers through the lens of equity. Universities need to cease pandering to the politics and selfish financial profits made from public schools and begin to address sociopolitical unrest and many of the teachers’ inability to identify inequity and modify their teaching to correct it.

This is important to the future success of teachers because, if there is no clear understanding of what cultural relevant pedagogy is, there is no way in which to measure whether the teachers are responsive. If teachers and schools leaders work using a strength-based approach and a working definition African American males will be more likely to engage.

**The Future Role of Critical Race Theorists**

Critical Race theorists must argue for a national decree for school systems to understand and employ multicultural education into every aspect of the schoolhouse. While there is momentum around initiatives such as My Brother’s Keeper,
an initiative set to improve the life outcomes for boys of color, we must argue for more school officials to not look at that initiative as supplemental, but rather instrumental, to including and raising the achievement of all students. Even more, critical race theorists must argue that multicultural education and engaging African American males cannot be left on the shoulder of an African American president and African American teachers. The focus on improving the outcomes for males of color, made under President Obama’s administration, is a starting point at best and has room for improvement. Assumptions that education can be left in the hands of non-educators can be problematic. Presently, “trained” teachers have deficits in recognizing how the educational system is swollen with inequities and bias. It stands to reason that teachers not trained could perpetuate a level racism and other isms that Critical Race Theorists seek to diminish.

Critical race theorists must argue that by abandoning hegemonic curriculum, recognizing privilege, and restructuring the system to be more inclusive, more is gained than lost. The phobia of losing rank in the global hierarchy of supremacy keeps African American male students at a disadvantage. The researcher argues that the infrastructure of the educational system is designed to retard the cognitive growth and station of the African American male student. The vestiges of slavery, antebellum, educational inequality, and half told historical accuracies belittle the African American male and (sub)consciously perpetuate a false sense of inadequacy and belonging. Critical race theorists must continue to argue that point.

Last, it important to continue to challenge and critique the baseless commentary and underpinnings of race, particularly those who posit African Americans males are inferior. Individuals must continue to oppose the dismissal of political pandering done by
policy makers, universities, superintendents, and teachers who do not see race as an issue. Researchers must also continue to unapologetically accelerate the rate of access for African American males to have culturally responsive teachers who do not believe that poverty and well-constructed hegemonic lesson plans will improve the outcomes of African American males. A league of leaders is needed who understand and/or are willing to understand the multidimensional aspects to engaging and empowering the African American male.

Bell (1992) asserted that racism is so enmeshed in the fiber of America that it is normal. Critical race theorists seek find a new normalcy in which equity leads decisions on policy, curricula, and behavior. Schools must begin to create safe spaces to discuss candidly and accurately the impact of racism and the unprecedented impact it has played on schools.

Hope and Faith recognized racism exists. Even further, they recognized that the race to which they belong impacted how they engaged the African American males. The researcher maintains that educational liberation, especially for African American males, happens when teachers do not shy away from race and racism. When Faith unapologetically admitted to being White and not knowing what it is like to be Black she was able to connect to with African American students. When Hope intentionally had discussions about race and racism, she invited her African American students into the conversation and the classroom community.

**Implications for Further Study**

This research leaves room to focus on Black males who are gifted and talented. By having a narrower focus, practitioners and researchers could ascertain if the same
practices employed by the subjects of this research work and/or are needed for African American males considered to be gifted. By focusing on African American males considered to be gifted and talented, researchers and practitioners can see if the same disconnects between very gifted African American males is the same as their peers (African American males) that are not in the gifted and talented programs. Practitioners and researchers can utilize such research to address the disproportionate numbers of African American males in the gifted programs. The findings of the study could also reveal the positives and negatives to labeling students.

This study could be repeated with the subjects being African American male teachers. This is important because, to a degree, building the relationship between the African American male teacher and student may not take as long remembering that there is concern that African American males are not given time or opportunity to relate to the curriculum or their often White teachers. Nykiel-Herbert (2010) reported minority student culture is not effectively utilized in the classroom. If the utility of the background is already embedded in the classroom led by African American male teachers, it stands to reason that practitioners, principals, and human resource departments in school systems could become more intentional in hiring African American male teachers. Even more so, it would provide a different lens with which to investigate the relationships between teacher and student.

There would be great utility in researchers and practitioners identifying colleges throughout the nation that have developed/embedded culturally responsive teaching into their mandatory course offerings. The utility of such a study could (dis)prove the impact of preparing teachers to teach African American male students. A comparative analysis
between a college of education that mandates culturally responsive teacher training verses one that does not could shed light on the merit of multicultural teaching, improve the retention of teachers that teach in schools with high numbers of African American males, and could highlight universities and colleges that understand the criticality of restructuring the educational system as to include African American males in the schoolhouse.

**Conclusion**

Former slave Frederick Douglass (1892) is quoted as saying:

> I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute.

The research rendered speaks to the virtue of two teachers who, although not perfect in practice, are working to be inclusive of a group of students by whom the nation has yet to wholly engage and in some cases has intentionally vilified. To that point, the future of this nation is not secure until the African American male and other underserved students are honestly and truthfully taught with zeal and appreciation. The researcher sought to bring to light the fact that there are teachers, although frustrated, that refuse to let the African American male student be marginalized and left to languish in nothingness.

Society can imagine a class, a school, and a nation in which Black males are truly a part of the success of the public school system. We can all pontificate and problematize the issues that segregate, demean, and vilify the African American male. It is hoped that
this research provides a partial solution to the problems that riddle the American school system.

The issues of racism, self-hate, White supremacy, genocide, and apathy must be addressed. Teachers who are determined to be inclusive, vulnerable, and advocates for the disenfranchised will be the heroes and menders of this almost broken system. To be clear, glimmers of hope spring from every school in this country. Presently, there are too few teachers who are adequately supported to do the heavy lifting required to overcome the shame of this nation.
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APPENDIX A

Multicultural Education Awareness Survey (MEAS)

for Public School Educators and Administrators

Developed by Dr. Deneese L. Jones

**Directions:** Read the following statements and circle one of the responses that indicates the relationship of the statement to your thoughts and feelings about multicultural education and academic achievement in public school settings. The response of choices ranges from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). Select one best answer that reflects the strength of agreement or disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>KEY:</strong> 1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sensitivity to other cultures and accurate assessments of similarities and differences are vital to preparing students for life in a diversified society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Multicultural education can be viewed as an antidote for many social problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The ultimate goal of multicultural education is to provide tolerance of individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-awareness of one’s own cultural background is paramount to effective instruction to all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The lack of minority group representation in the community and/or school is a valid reason to exclude multicultural education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Multicultural education provides for an interdisciplinary, cross-curricular education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The effective implementation of multicultural education maximizes the potential of all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If students are expected to fail, they will fail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. All students, regardless of race, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation or religion need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Effective instruction should include educational opportunities targeted toward issues of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and social differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The problem of the declining pool of minority teachers is important to issues of multicultural education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Textbooks and other teaching materials should include the significance of the diverse ethnic contributions to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Multicultural education as it relates to the Kentucky Education Reform Act is a process, not a product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Educational boards, commissions, councils, and other types of advisory or decision-making bodies should reflect reasonable minority representation of membership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The effective use of multicultural education will benefit some groups of students at the expense of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The exclusion of minorities, females, and students with disabilities in the curriculum and educational structure creates a false sense of superiority among mainstream populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Equality is a basic ideal of our American creed for public education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. By separating issues related to minorities and women from the main body of the text, one implies that these issues are less important than the cultural mainstream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. It is important to communicate to students that we often think others are strange simply because they are unfamiliar to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Pluralism is a reality of our society and the American public education system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Multicultural education facilitates students’ abilities to interact effectively and work cooperatively with the diverse groups of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Unrealistic coverage of content material denies students the information they need to recognize, understand, and perhaps, conquer the problems that plague our society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. The United States is becoming increasingly diverse, even in areas of the country that are relatively homogenous today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Membership in a cultural group is sufficient to have cognitive, affective, and experiential competence regarding the culture as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Students need to realize that not all students are alike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. If students are expected to learn they will learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Education that is multicultural can effectively teach through modeling the skills of problem-solving and conflict resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. In spite of many sources of bias in classroom interaction, most teachers and teacher educators are unaware of their own roles in promoting educational inequality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Controversial topics in educational settings have typically been glossed over while discussions of discrimination and prejudice have been avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Cultural competence is an ideal toward which we strive, yet at which we never arrive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Elements of multicultural perspective include economics, social, cultural, political, historic, physical, technical, aesthetic, environmental and personal factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Textbooks have perpetuated bias by presenting only one interpretation of an issue, situation, or group of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>33.</strong> Schools should develop their students’ abilities to possess a positive attitude toward self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>34.</strong> Students tend to live up or down to the expectations accorded them and thus actualize the self-fulfilling prophecy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35.</strong> Certain groups have been underrepresented in curricular materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Teacher Questions

The first question elicits a reflective response to set the backdrop for the research and potentially fortify discoveries in the classroom.

1. When you were a student in high school, what did teaching look like at your school?

The next is a broad question that could potentially invite deeper questioning. One of the major tenets of culturally responsive teaching is the understanding of “code-switching” and cultural acceptance.

2. To what factors do you attribute your school’s gap score?

3. What have you done to help reach African American males and ensure that they achieve?

4. Do you feel that there are significant barriers between you and the student that student your ability to teach them effectively?

5. What, in your opinion, is the most important charge of your job?

The next question takes into account that there was a districtwide initiative focused on cultural competence and the training of all employees. This was done to make sure that the training only fortified prior beliefs, not changed the teacher’s belief.

6. During this year has the cultural competence training changed or strengthened your opinion of how to teach the African American male in your class?
APPENDIX C
Student Interview Questions

1. Do successful teachers consider the background and culture of the African American male to be an asset or a deficit to their ability to learn and achieve at high levels?

2. Do students who have a teacher that employs culturally responsive teaching and inclusion have more African Americans with better images of themselves?

3. Do students with culturally responsive teachers have more positive interactions with classmates and other teachers whom they encounter in school?
APPENDIX D

Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol

Revised Edition


Revised by: R. Powell (Georgetown College), S. Cantrell (University of Kentucky), P. Correll (University of Kentucky), V. Malo-juvera (UNC-Wilmington), D. Ross (University of Florida) and R. Bosch (James Madison University)

School (use assigned number): ____________________________  Teacher (assigned number): _________________
Observer: ____________________________  Date of Observation: __________  # of Students in Classroom: __________
Academic Subject: ____________________________  Grade Level(s): ____________________________
Start Time of Observation: __________  End Time of Observation: __________  Total Time of Obs: _________________
DIRECTIONS

After the classroom observation, review the field notes for evidence of each “pillar” of Culturally Responsive Instruction. If an example of the following descriptors was observed, place the field notes line number on which that example is found. If a “non-example” of the descriptors was observed, place the line number on which that non-example is found.

Then, make an overall/holistic judgment of the implementation of each component. To what extent and/or effect was the component present?

4 – To a great extent
3 – Often
2 – Occasionally
1 – Not at all

Transfer the holistic scores from pp. 2 through 9 to the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Pillar</th>
<th>Holistic Score</th>
<th>CRI Pillar</th>
<th>Holistic Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. CLASS</td>
<td></td>
<td>V. PED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. FAM</td>
<td></td>
<td>VI. DISC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ASMT</td>
<td></td>
<td>VII. SOCIO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CURR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## I. CLASS  CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. The teacher demonstrates an ethic of care (e.g., equitable relationships, bonding)** | Generally Effective Practices:  
- Teacher refers to students by name, uses personalized language with students  
- Teacher conveys interest in students’ lives and experiences  
Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Teacher differentiates patterns of interaction and management techniques to be culturally congruent with the students and families s/he serves (e.g., using a more direct interactive style with students who require it) |  
- Teacher promotes negativity in the classroom, e.g., criticisms, negative comments, sarcasm, etc.  
- Teacher stays behind desk or across table from students; s/he does not get “on their level”  
- Teacher does not take interest in students’ lives and experiences; is primarily concerned with conveying content  
- Teacher uses the same management techniques and interactive style with all students when it is clear that they do not work for some |  |  |  |  |
2. The teacher communicates high expectations for all students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally Effective Practices:</th>
<th>Teacher has low expectations (consistently gives work that is not challenging)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- There is an emphasis on learning and higher-level thinking; challenging work is the norm. Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</td>
<td>- Teacher does not call on all students consistently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There is a “family-like” environment in the classroom and there are group goals for success as well as individual goals; every student is expected to achieve.</td>
<td>- Teacher allows some students to remain unengaged, e.g., never asks them to respond to questions, allows them to sleep, places them in the “corners” of the room and does not bring them into the instructional conversation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students are invested in their own and others’ learning.</td>
<td>- Teacher does not establish high standards; evaluation criteria require lower-level thinking and will not challenge students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher expects every student to participate actively and establishes structures (e.g., frequent checks for understanding) so that no student “falls through the cracks.”</td>
<td>- Teacher feedback is subjective and is not tied to targeted learning outcomes and standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher bases feedback on established high standards and provides students with specific information on how they can meet those standards.</td>
<td>- Teacher expresses a deficit model, suggesting through words or actions that some students are not as capable as others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The teacher creates a learning atmosphere that engenders respect for one another and toward diverse populations</td>
<td>Generally Effective Practices:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sets a tone for respectful classroom interaction and teaches respectful ways for having dialogue and being in community with one another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do not hesitate to ask questions that further their learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students interact in respectful ways and know how to work together effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and students work to understand each other’s perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Practices that are Culturally Responsive:

| Teacher shows impatience and intolerance for certain student behaviors |
| Lack of respectful interaction amongst students may be an issue |
| Teacher establishes a competitive environment whereby students try to out-perform one another |
| Teacher does not encourage student questions or ridicules students when they ask for clarification |
| Teacher does not address negative comments of one student towards another |
| Posters and displays do not show an acknowledgement and affirmation of students’ cultural and racial/ethnic identities |
| Classroom library and other available materials promote ethnocentric positions and/or ignore human diversity |
4. **Students work together productively**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally Effective Practices:</th>
<th>Students are not encouraged to assist their peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher implements practices that teach collaboration and respect, e.g., class meetings, modeling effective discussion, etc.</td>
<td>Students primarily work individually and are not expected to work collaboratively; and/or students have a difficult time collaborating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are continuously viewed as resources for one another and assist one another in learning new concepts</td>
<td>Teacher dominates the decision-making and does not allow for student voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are encouraged to have discussions with peers and to work collaboratively</td>
<td>The emphasis is on individual achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students support one another in learning and applying new concepts to assure that every student succeeds</td>
<td>Classroom is arranged for quiet, solitary work, with the teacher being “center stage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs/desks are arranged to facilitate group work and equal participation between teachers and students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | |
II. **FAM**  FAMILY COLLABORATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of example</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of non-example</th>
<th>Field notes: No example (✓)</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. The teacher establishes genuine partnerships (equitable relationships) with parents/caregivers | Generally Effective Practices:  
- Parents'/caregivers’ ideas are solicited on how best to instruct the child; parents are viewed as partners in educating their child  
- There is evidence of conversations with parents/caregivers where it’s clear that they are viewed as partners in educating the student  
- Teacher makes an effort to understand families and respects their cultural knowledge | Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Parents'/caregivers’ suggestions are not incorporated in instruction  
- No effort made to establish relationships with caregivers  
- There is evidence of a “deficit perspective” in which families and caregivers are viewed as inferior and/or as having limited resources that can be leveraged for instruction | | | | |
| 2. The teacher reaches out to meet parents in positive, non-traditional ways | Generally Effective Practices:  
- Teacher conducts home visit conferences  
- Teacher makes “good day” phone calls and establishes regular communication with parents  
- Teacher plans parent/family activities at locations within the home community | Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Communication with parents/caregivers is through newsletters, where they are asked to respond passively (e.g., signing the newsletter, versus become actively involved in their child’s learning)  
- Teacher conducts phone calls, conferences, personal notes to parents for negative reports | | | | |

**NOTE:** When scoring this component of the CRIOP, the family collaboration interview should be used in addition to field observations. Observations alone will not provide adequate information for scoring.
3. The teacher uses parent expertise to support student learning and/or classroom instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally Effective Practices:</th>
<th>Practices that are Culturally Responsive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school-related events and activities</td>
<td>• Parents/caregivers are never involved in the instructional program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents/caregivers are invited into the classroom to participate and share experiences</td>
<td>• Parents'/caregivers’ “funds of knowledge” are never utilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices that are Culturally Responsive</td>
<td>• There is no evidence of home/family connections in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher makes reference to parents'/caregivers’ careers, backgrounds, daily activities during instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher identifies parents’ “funds of knowledge” and incorporates into the curriculum and parents/caregivers are invited into the classroom to share their expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### III. ASMT ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Holistic score</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of example</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of non-example</th>
<th>Field notes: No example (✓)</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Formative assessment practices are used that provide information throughout the lesson on individual student understanding; students are able to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways, including authentic assessments | Generally Effective Practices  
- Teacher frequently assesses students’ understanding throughout instruction  
- Students are able to voice their learning throughout the lesson  
- Informal assessment strategies are used continuously during instruction, while students are actively engaged in learning, and provide information on the learning of every student (e.g. “talking partners,” whiteboards, journal responses to check continuously for understanding)  
Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Teacher uses assessment to determine a student’s potential for learning; teacher may implement “trial lessons” that use texts or require students to solve problems at a higher level than students’ performance might indicate  
- Students with limited English proficiency and/or limited literacy can show their conceptual learning through visual or other forms of representation | Assessment occurs at the end of the lesson  
- Assessment is not embedded throughout instruction  
- Assessment is regarded as a set of evaluation “tools” that are used to determine what students have learned (e.g., exit slips, quizzes, etc. that are administered after instruction has occurred versus examining students’ cognitive processing during instruction)  
- Teacher does not evaluate student understanding while engaged in challenging work in order to determine a student’s potential  
- Most or all tests are written and require reading/writing proficiency in English  
- Teacher expects students to tell “the” answer  
- Students have a narrow range of options for demonstrating competence (e.g., multiple choice tests, matching, etc.)  
- Assessments measure discrete, isolated skills and/or use short, disconnected passages | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | To a great extent | Often | Occasionally | Not at all | 185 |
### 2. Teacher uses formative assessment data throughout instruction to promote student learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally Effective Practices:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher modifies instruction or reteaches when it’s clear that students are not meeting learning targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goal is student learning, and formative assessment data is used throughout the lesson to adjust instruction in order to assure that every student learns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Students can demonstrate competence in a variety of ways |
| Students’ written and oral language proficiency is assessed while they are using oral and written language in purposeful ways |

<p>| Students’ linguistic competence is evaluated solely through standardized measures |
| Teacher follows the lesson script even when it’s clear that students are not meeting learning targets |
| The goal is to get through the lesson and cover the content versus assuring student understanding |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Students have opportunities for self-assessment</th>
<th>Generally Effective Practices:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are encouraged to evaluate their own work based upon a determined set of criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are involved in setting their own goals for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are involved in developing the criteria for their finished products (e.g., scoring rubrics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment is always teacher-controlled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### IV. CURR CURRICULUM/ PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of example</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of non-example</th>
<th>Field notes: No example (✓)</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. The curriculum and planned learning experiences use the knowledge and experience of students | Generally Effective Practices:  
- Materials and real-world examples are used that help students make connections to their lives  
- Learning experiences build on prior student learning and invite students to make connections  
Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Materials and examples are used that reflect diverse experiences and views  
- Families’ “funds of knowledge” are integrated in learning experiences when possible | No attempt is made to link students’ realities to what is being studied; learning experiences are disconnected from students’ knowledge and experiences  
- Skills and content are presented in isolation (never in application to authentic contexts)  
- Families’ particular “funds of knowledge” are never called upon during learning experiences  
- Teacher follows the script of the adopted curriculum even when it conflicts with her own or the students’ lived experiences  
- Learning experiences are derived almost exclusively from published textbooks and other materials that do not relate to the classroom community or the larger community being served | | | |  |
2. The curriculum and planned learning experiences integrate and provide opportunities for the expression of diverse perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally Effective Practices:</th>
<th>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students are encouraged to challenge the ideas in a text and to think at high levels</td>
<td>- The conventional, dominant point of view is presented and remains unchallenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Texts include protagonists from diverse backgrounds and present ideas from multiple perspectives</td>
<td>- Few texts are available to represent diverse protagonists or multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunities are plentiful for students to present diverse perspectives through class discussions and other activities</td>
<td>- Biased units of study that show only the conventional point of view (e.g., Columbus discovered America) are presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No or very few texts are available with protagonists from diverse cultural, linguistic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No opportunities are provided for students to present diverse views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## V. INSTR PEDAGOGY/ INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>Field notes: No example (+)</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Instruction is contextualized in students’ lives, experiences, and individual abilities | Generally Effective Practices:  
• Learning tasks and texts relate directly to students’ lives outside of school  
• Learning activities are meaningful to students and promote a high level of student engagement  
Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
• Teacher builds on existing cultural knowledge and “cultural data sets”  
• Instruction is culturally congruent with students’ culture and experiences | Learning tasks and texts reflect the values and experiences of dominant ethnic and cultural groups  
• Learning activities are decontextualized from students’ lives and experiences | | | | |
| 2. Students engage in active, hands-on, meaningful learning tasks             | Learning tasks allow students to practice and apply concepts using hands-on activities and manipulatives  
• Learning activities promote a high level of student engagement  
• Exploratory learning is encouraged | Students work passively at their seats on teacher-directed tasks  
• Passive student learning is the norm (e.g., listening to direct instruction and taking notes, reading the textbook, seatwork, worksheets, etc.)  
• Exploratory learning is discouraged | | | | |
### 3. The teacher focuses on developing students’ academic vocabularies
- There is an emphasis on learning academic vocabulary in the particular content area
- Students are taught independent strategies for learning new vocabulary
- Specific academic vocabulary is introduced prior to a study or investigation
- The teacher provides many opportunities for students to use academic language in meaningful contexts
- Little attention is paid to learning academic vocabulary in the content area
- New words are taught outside of meaningful contexts
- Students are not taught independent word learning strategies

### 4. The teacher uses instructional techniques that scaffold student learning
- Teacher uses a variety of teaching strategies to assist students in learning content (e.g., demonstrations, visuals, graphic organizers, modeling, etc.)
- Teacher models, explains and demonstrates skills and concepts and provides appropriate scaffolding
- Students apply skills and new concepts in the context of meaningful and personally relevant learning activities
- Teacher primarily uses traditional methods for teaching content (e.g., lecture, reading from a textbook) with few scaffolding strategies
- Teacher does not always model, explain and demonstrate new skills and concepts prior to asking students to apply them
- Students practice skills and reinforce new concepts in ways that are not meaningful or personally relevant to them

### 5. Students are engaged in inquiry and the teacher learns with students
- The teacher engages students in the inquiry process and learns from students’ investigations (e.g., project-based learning)
- Students are encouraged to pose questions and find answers to their questions using a variety of resources
- Student-generated questions form the basis for further study and investigation
- The teacher is the authority
- Students are not encouraged to challenge or question ideas or to engage in further inquiry
- Students are not encouraged to pose their own questions
- All knowledge/ideas are generated by those in authority (e.g., textbook writers, teachers)
| 6. Students have choices based upon their experiences, interests and strengths | • Students have multiple opportunities to choose texts, writing topics, and modes of expression based on preferences and personal relevance  
• Students have some choice in assignments  
• Students have some choice and ownership in what they are learning | • The teacher selects texts, writing topics, and modes of expression for students  
• All assignments are teacher-initiated  
• Students have no choice or ownership in topic of study or questions that will be addressed |
### VI. DIS DISCOURSE/ INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>Field notes:</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Line(s) of example</td>
<td>Line(s) of non-example</td>
<td>No example (√)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The teacher promotes active student engagement through discourse practices</td>
<td>- The teacher employs a variety of discourse protocols to promote student participation and engagement (e.g., call and response, talking circles, read-around, musical shares, etc.)</td>
<td>- The main form of classroom discourse is Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) where the teacher poses a question and individual students respond</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- All students have the opportunity to participate in classroom discourse</td>
<td>- The teacher controls classroom discourse by assigning speaking rights to students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The teacher uses various strategies throughout the lesson to promote student engagement through talk (e.g., partner share, small group conversation, interactive journals, etc.)</td>
<td>- Not all students have the opportunity to participate in classroom discussions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The main form of classroom discourse is Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) where the teacher poses a question and individual students respond</td>
<td>- Some students are allowed to dominate discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The teacher promotes equitable and culturally congruent discourse practices</td>
<td>Generally Effective Practices:</td>
<td>Discourse practices of various cultural groups are not used during instruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Students use collaborative, overlapping conversation and participate actively, supporting the speaker during the creation of story talk or discussion and commenting upon the ideas of others</td>
<td>- Students are discouraged from using their home language or dialect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The teacher uses techniques to support equitable participation, such as wait time, feedback, turn-taking, and scaffolding of ideas</td>
<td>- ELL students are discouraged from using their native language, both inside and outside of school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Practices that are Culturally Responsive:</td>
<td>- The teacher views topic-associative discourse, topic-chaining discourse, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students speak in their home discourse when it is situationally appropriate to do so; there is an emphasis on developing proficiency in students’ native language as well as in Standard English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students are supported in their use of culturally-specific ways of communicating, such as topic-associative discourse, topic-chaining discourse, and overlapping discourse patterns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom interaction patterns and communication structures match those found in students’ homes and communities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| overlapping discourse patterns as rambling talk |
| The teacher attempts to control and change student communication styles to match mainstream classroom discourse patterns |

3. The teacher provides structures that promote academic conversation

| Students engage in genuine discussions and have extended conversations |
| Students are engaged in authentic uses of language; structures are used that promote student talk |
| The teacher provides prompts that elicit extended conversations and dialogue |
| The teacher explicitly teaches and evaluates skills required for conducting effective academic conversations |

| Students are discouraged from talking together, or conversations are limited to short responses |
| The teacher rarely asks questions or provides prompts that would elicit extended dialogue |
| The teacher does not teach skills required for academic conversations |
### 4. The teacher provides opportunities for students to develop linguistic competence

- The teacher develops language objectives in addition to content objectives, having specific goals in mind for students' linguistic performance
- The teacher articulates expectations for language use (e.g. “I want you to use these vocabulary words in your discussion; I expect you to reply in a complete sentence” etc.)
- The teacher scaffolds students' language development as needed (sentence frames, sentence starters, etc.)
- Students are engaged in frequent and authentic uses of language and content (drama, role play, discussion, purposeful writing and communication using ideas/concepts/vocabulary from the field of study)
- Students are taught appropriate registers of language use for a variety of social contexts and are given opportunities to practice those registers in authentic ways

- The teacher does not articulate expectations for language use
- The teacher does not establish language objectives for students; only content objectives are evident
- Students' use of language is limited and they do not use language in authentic ways
- The teacher does not scaffold students' language development
- Students are not taught about the registers of language use; they are expected to use Standard English in all social contexts
### VII. **Socio-Cultural Sense of Self**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRI Indicator</th>
<th>For example, in a responsive classroom:</th>
<th>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of example</th>
<th>Field notes: Line(s) of non-example</th>
<th>Field notes: No example (✓)</th>
<th>SCORE for Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. The curriculum and planned learning experiences provide opportunities for the inclusion of issues important to the classroom, school and community | Generally Effective Practices:  
- Students are engaged in experiences that develop awareness and provide opportunities to contribute, inform, persuade and have a voice in the classroom, school and beyond  
- Community-based issues and projects are included in the planned program and new skills and concepts are linked to real-world problems and events  
Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Students explore important social issues (poverty, racism, etc.)  
- Teacher encourages students to investigate real-world issues related to a topic being studied and to become actively involved in solving problems at the local, state, national, and global levels | The focus of literacy and content instruction is to teach the skills and information required to “pass the test”: learning occurs only as it relates to the standard curriculum  
- Teacher does not encourage critical thought or questioning of social issues  
- Teacher does not encourage application to real-world issues; accepts or endorses the status quo by ignoring or dismissing real life problems related to the topic being studied | | | | |
| 2. The curriculum and planned learning experiences incorporate opportunities to confront negative | Practices that are Culturally Responsive:  
- Teacher facilitates students’ understanding of stereotypes  
- Teacher encourages students to examine biases in popular culture that students encounter in their daily lives (TV shows, advertising, popular songs, etc.) | | | | | |
| stereotypes and biases | Teacher helps students to think about biases in texts (e.g., "Who has the power in this book? Whose perspectives are represented, and whose are missing? Who benefits from the beliefs and practices represented in this text?" etc.) | Teacher challenges students to deconstruct their own cultural assumptions and biases | belong here; etc.), and/or fails to challenge prejudicial statements of students |  |  |  |  |
APPENDIX E

Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory

General Instructions: Please read each item carefully and mark the appropriate space or write your response in the appropriate space. Please respond to all statements.

A. Demographic Information

Race/Ethnicity
_____ White
_____ Black
_____ Hispanic
_____ Asian/Pacific Islander
_____ American Indian/Alaska Native

Gender
_____ Male
_____ Female

Level of Education
_____ Bachelor’s
_____ Master’s
_____ Education Specialist
_____ Doctor’s

Years Teaching Experience
_____ Less than 3 years
_____ 3 to 9 years
_____ 10 to 20 years
_____ Over 20 years

Did your collegiate program include a Multicultural Education course?
_____ Yes _____ No

Have you had other training in Multicultural Education? _____ Yes _____ No

B. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate letters following the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>I Believe…</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. My culture to be different from some of the children I serve.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. It is important to identify immediately the ethnic group of the children I serve.</td>
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<td>3. I would prefer to work with children and parents whose cultures are similar to mine.</td>
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<td>4. I would be uncomfortable in settings with people who speak non-standard English.</td>
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<td>5. I am uncomfortable in settings with people who exhibit values or beliefs different from my own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. In asking families of diverse cultures how they wish to be referred to (e.g., Caucasian, White, Anglo) at the beginning of our interaction.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<td>7. Other than the required school activities, my interactions with parents should include social events, meeting in public, places (e.g., shopping centers), or telephone conversations.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I am sometimes surprised when members of certain ethnic groups contribute to particular school activities (e.g., bilingual students on the debate team or Black students in the orchestra).</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The family’s views of school and society should be included in the school’s yearly program planning.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<td>10. It is necessary to include on-going parent input in program planning.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I sometimes experience frustration when conducting conferences with parents whose culture is different from my own.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The solution to communication problems of certain ethnic groups is the child’s own responsibility.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. English should be taught as a second language to non-English speaking children as a regular part of the school curriculum.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<td>14. When correcting a child’s spoken language, one should role model without any further explanation.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. That there are times when the use of non-standard English should be ignored.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. In a society with as many racial groups as the USA, I would expect and accept the use of ethnic jokes or phrases by some children.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. That there are times when racial statements should be ignored.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. A child should be referred for testing if learning difficulties appear to be due to cultural differences and/or language.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<td>19. Adaptations in standardized assessments to be questionable since they alter reliability and validity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Translating a standardized achievement or intelligence test to the child’s dominant language gives the child an added advantage and does not allow for peer comparison.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Parents know little about assessing their own children.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. That the teaching of ethnic customs and traditions is NOT the responsibility of public school programs or personnel.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. It is my responsibility to provide opportunities for children to share cultural differences in foods, dress, family life, and/or beliefs.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Individualized Education Program meetings or program planning should be scheduled for the convenience of the parent.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. I make adaptations in programming to accommodate the different cultures as my enrollment changes.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. The displays and frequently used materials within my setting show at least three different ethnic groups or customs.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. In a regular rotating schedule for job assignments which includes each child within my setting.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. One’s knowledge of a particular culture should affect one’s expectations of the children’s performance.</td>
<td>SD D N A SA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F
IRB Approval Letter

DATE: December 12, 2014
TO: John Marshall
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE: [680668-1] Teacher Practice and the Impact it has the Engagement of African American Males
REFERENCE #: IRB 15-245
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: December 12, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Exempt from Full Board Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt from Full Board Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an implied consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or irb@WKU.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.