

TEACHERS' RESPONSIVENESS TO THE LEARNING NEEDS OF A SELECT GROUP OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

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To my late mom, Ethel Mae Anderson-Scott, my dedicated and loving wife
Teresa Ann Blanton-Scott, five children, and six (present) grandchildren.
To my five sisters and two brothers who survived the times and taught me to never give up.
To my dad, Malcolm J. Scott who did not survive the times or the system.
May this dissertation serve as a symbol of all that I have learned from
each of you along this great journey, and a testimony of how
the power of God has sustained each of us every day.

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The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' beliefs and observe how teachers responded to the learning and social needs of a select group of African American middle school students in the classroom setting. Four core 7TH grade teachers (math, science, social studies, English) and four African American 7th grade students (2 males/2 females) participated in a full semester of observations, teacher interviews, surveys of teachers' instructional beliefs and student learning types. Using qualitative methods, five themes emerged: stereotype-colorblind racism, responsibility, strategies (behavioral/instructional), despair, and disconnect. Overall, all four teachers exhibited disconnections between their instructional practices and the preferred learning types of these African American students. These students also were denied access to the cultural capital of the school environment, and were positioned academically and physically in teaching and learning locations of least resistance and instruction. From a theoretical perspective, an overview of how this study's findings confirm or refute previous perspectives is provided. Professional development opportunities that result in teachers changing their instructional focus, offering cultural immersive experiences, and raising the expectations and outcomes of rigor, relevance, and relationships for African American students would render teacher responsiveness to their learning needs.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Research shows that when compared to their white peers, African American middle school students are less successful on measures of academic achievement. For example, in 1990, the National Assessment of Education Progress reported a 33-point mean score difference between 8th grade white and African American students' math scores. By 2000, it had increased to 39 points (Gewertz, 2003). In 2003, this gap had decreased to 36 points (NCES, 2004), which correlates to the data reported in the district where this study was conducted. Most of the reform efforts and intervention strategies such as “at-risk curricula”, “pull-out programs”, and “dominant culture development programs” have revealed positive, although minimal effects (Duncan, 2002). Other reforms such as the disproportionate tracking and placing of African American students into lower track and special education classes (Harry & Anderson, 1999), have shown little to no positive outcomes.

Researchers who typically focus only on outcomes, rarely consider how school experiences contribute to outcomes, and consequently miss crucial interactions (Lubienski & Bowen, 2002). Despite the challenges that African American students face on a daily basis, Stinson (2005) reported that some of these students have developed the ability to “accommodate, reconfigure, or resist the available socio-cultural discourses that surround African Americans for them to effectively negotiate these discourses in their pursuit of success (p. 478).” These students have become proficient in developing coping strategies against stereotyping and discrimination within their environments.

Nasir and Hand (2004) recommended that African American students be included in school honors and AP courses. While this recommendation has changed the façade of many school environments, it has not resulted in academic success for African American students.

Many times these students do not pass the AP exams. Of those that do pass, often they are unprepared for the college instruction that follows. Hale (2001) has argued that accelerating academic progress and placing African American students in classes for which they are unprepared puts them at severe disadvantages. She also pointed out that strategies that may work for white students who have had high-quality preschool experiences do not necessarily work with students who lack that background. She cautioned administrators and teachers to be aware that many African American students enter school without the social and intellectual profiles that the school (Eurocentric) depends upon to fulfill their functions. However, as Lochman and Wells (2003) have pointed out, schools that concentrate on providing consistently positive classroom environments are more likely to promote positive behaviors and get positive academic results for high-risk students.

Some teachers hold preconceptions of race that result in differential expectations for and interactions with their students. Students too have perceptions of themselves as learners and as members of a racial group where identification with one prevents or hinders identification with the other (Martin, 2004). In this case, a lack of learning may be an act of resistance rather than a lack of knowledge or ability. Hamre and Pianta (2001) reported that teachers' behaviors could increase or decrease children's confidence, academic self-concepts, and academic performance. Research has repeatedly shown that relationships and interactions with teachers are crucial to student success. Children with close teacher relationships scored higher on language and reading achievement tests over time than students without close teacher relationships (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta & Howes, 2002). In this study, the researcher examined the quality of education given to a select group of African American middle school students in a school located in the southeastern portion of the United States. In 2007-2008 data, the district's teacher

demographics included 88% Caucasian and 87% females. “Researchers have suggested that the predominance of white teachers creates few role models for minorities and fewer number of teachers that have the cultural frameworks to make instruction culturally relevant for students of color (Branch, 2001, p. 257).”

In a recent study at the University of Florida, Lok, Rossen, Johnsen, Deladisma, and Lind, (2008) found that 21 white medical students revealed significant bias by skin tone alone of virtual patients. Lok et al., reported that these students were less empathetic and gave lower quality care to the dark-skinned patient (even though the voice simulation was the same). Feagin (2006) refers to this kind of socialization as a systemic form of “colorblind racism”, in which whites carry a “racial frame” that encompasses perpetual stereotypes, images, and emotions toward people of color. While the racism is not overt, front-stage, or politically correct, it forms a silent phenomena known as “social alexithymia”, where teachers deny any racial biases because identification of their true feelings, emotions, and actions is hard to pinpoint, and extremely difficult to admit. They go about their daily instruction without awareness of their attitudes and beliefs towards African American students, while these students often continue to struggle and often fail.

African Americans have adapted characteristics conducive to success in the Euro-centric world to fit into schools, while others have rebelled and given up. Stinson (2005) refers to this as making accommodations and adjustments to the white world in order to succeed, while Ogbu and Fordham (1996, 1998, 2003) referred to this phenomenon as “acting white”. Their findings revealed that blacks took on a “raceless persona” in order to blend in and succeed in the white arena. Black students that chose not to lose their identity and conform to the Euro-centric model have had fewer opportunities for success in many cases. They are expected to dress, act, and

even talk based on the Euro-centric model. Singham (1998) argued, “it would also be presumptuous to assume that rejecting the white behavior model is an act designed merely to give perverse satisfaction to blacks, even though it might hurt their chances of economic and educational success in life (p. 11).” Several school reforms have been initiated to address this dilemma, however much of the research has focused solely on outcomes measured by economic, social, and class status variables, rather than the actual contextually lived classroom experiences of African American students (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 2001).

African American students presumably frustrated with the Eurocentric school system have become dropouts. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2001), reported that blacks and Hispanics are more likely to dropout compared to their white peers. Muwakkil (2006) reported that within the nation’s inner city schools, 50% of all black males drop out of high school, and of those ages 20 and older, 70% are out of work, while 30% have served time in jail. The poor tend to stay poor and underprivileged in fledgling educational systems, while whites have experienced an exodus to the suburbs known as, “white flight”. Birch and Ladd (1998) reported that low-income first graders had lower academic achievement than their white counterparts, experienced dependent and conflict-ridden relationships with their teachers and were less close to them. This same phenomenon continues for socioeconomically challenged African American students when they enter secondary schools as well. Funding based on property values rewards suburban schools, and penalizes already impoverished urban schools. This diminished amount of resources results in a lack of textbooks, quality teachers, and availability of extra curricular activities (West-Olatunji & Behar-Horenstein, 2005).

Also mirroring the drop-out rates, national prison statistics revealed similar racial disproportions: “Of the 246,100 state prison inmates serving time for drug offenses in 2001,

139,700 (56.7%) were African American, compared to 57,300 (23.2%) white, (Harrison & Beck 2004, p. 10). Among the more than 2.1 million offenders incarcerated by June 30, 2004, an estimated 576,600 were African American males between ages 20 and 39. Among imprisoned males aged 25 to 29, 12.6% were African American, compared to 3.6% of Hispanics and about 1.7% whites. Black females were nearly 4 1/2 times more likely than white females to be incarcerated in 2004 (Ibid. 2004 p. 11).” African American children were “nearly nine times more likely to have an incarcerated parent in prison than white children (US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000, p. 114).” Additionally Donziger reported that 33% of “African American men aged 18-34 were either in prison or under some form of criminal justice supervision (cited in Giroux 2003, p. 558).” Many of these same men were high school dropouts (NCES, 2005). Data shows that 80% of all American prisoners are high school dropouts. This same population (African American males ages 14-17 and 18-24) has contributed to an increase in homicide rates. A review of FBI data shows that while murders have leveled off nationwide, they have risen at an alarming rate from 2002-2007 for this population. The number of homicides involving African American juveniles as victims rose by 31% and as perpetrators by 43%. In terms of gun killings with this same population subgroup, the increases were even more pronounced; 54% of young African American males were victims and 47% of young African American males were perpetrators (Fox & Swatt, 2008).

Hale (2001) refers to these phenomena as the “mis-education” of African American children. She argued, although education is the place for African Americans to attain upward mobility, often the system fails them. External factors and reforms have made little difference in the lives of African American students. Coal miners used to take canaries into the mines as detectors of noxious gases. If the canary died, then the miners realized that they were in a region

of danger and took the necessary precautions. “The educational performance of the black community is like the canary, and the coalmine is the education system. The warning signals are apparent. Treating the problem by trying to make blacks "like whites" would be like replacing the canary in the coal mine with a bird that is more resistant to poisonous gases. It simply ignores the real problem (Singham, 1998, p. 5).” Statistics show higher academic achievement decreases childrens’ risks of delinquency later in life (Caprara, Barabaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000).

Rogoff (2003) believes that “minority students often have neither structural (the instrumental value of schooling to reach other ends) nor situational (relationships within the schooling environment) reasons for engaging in school (p. 466).” She has argued that many minority students are disengaged or resist schooling practices because of the politics of schooling. African American children are simply different from white children (Nasir & Hand, 2004). Critical pedagogists have argued that “while schools are often places where lower class and minority students are subjected to practices and attitudes that can reinforce their second-class status, they are also places where resistance to such hegemony can be collectively harnessed and made transformative (p. 455).”

Boykin (2003) stated many educators fail to take advantage of the cultural and personal assets of African American students. He reported that there is a measurable academic benefit to African American students when culturally consistent instruction is implemented in classrooms. According to Saxe (2005), social and historical shifts change the nature of the cultural activities within which people do school work. When these students were able to access elements that are familiar to their culture, academic and social development was improved. These items became a natural inclusion in the school’s instruction and culture, producing culturally responsive teaching

and learning. Wertsch (1998) posited, “cultural tools and artifacts are central in the cultural-development process. Individuals and the tools that they use to achieve their goals exist in an irreducible tension where one cannot be separated from the other (p. 461).” He reported that these tools could be computers, language, numbers, reading and writing, types of textbooks, physical configuration of the classroom, and even sporting equipment. Classroom practices that incorporate these tools and artifacts can serve as bridges towards positive interactions.

Another cultural tool employed by African Americans in navigating the Eurocentric world is resiliency. Masten and Reed (2002) found that the best-documented asset among resilient children was a “strong bond to a competent and caring adult, which need not be a parent (p. 78).” The teacher-student relationship can fulfill that role. This relationship can be an essential aspect of the learning environment for many children because they spend a majority of their school day together. Also, as Bromon (2006) contends, it should be an important variable in predicting academic success or failure. The characteristics of the teacher-student relationship are often similar to the qualities that characterized daily interactions that are commonplace in the African American community. Some of these activities include African Americans playing basketball, bid whist or tonk (card games), speed chess, fraternity and sorority step shows, and the emphatic game of dominoes. Nasir (2004) examines a form of reciprocal teaching in the game of dominoes. While players slam their dominoes in loud exhortation, expert players assist and support novice players in ways that allow the novice player to participate competently. Hand (2003) stated the practices inherent to games necessarily embody cultural practices because they sustain, encourage, and inhibit particular discursive and interactive patterns.

Nasir and Hand (2004) reported the importance of roles embedded within the philosophy of power and access, particularly those that contextual factors and cultural factors play in the

educational environment. “Contexts are static and handed down, but practices, values, identities, beliefs, and artifacts are constantly indexing and shaping their own development (Schwartz & Nasir, 2004) (p. 468).” They argue that the influx of these cultural factors influences the school environment as well as who has access and leverage to the cultural capital. By focusing on cultural practices, activities, and social interactions, a demonstration of how race affects access to these practices would be revealed.

While the research about race, culture, and learning has illuminated important links between social and cultural processes, racial identity, and academic achievement, it has failed to conjoin these links into a multilevel, multilayered portrait of human activity. Researchers know little about the tensions between agency and practice and how students and teachers manage the structure of practice (Schwartz & Nasir, 2004). This study will look at and describe these classroom level behaviors and the congruence between teachers’ beliefs and instructional practices and students’ learning needs. Previous studies have failed to show any sufficient explanations for issues of power and access, perhaps in part because of the limitations to operationalize and draw upon evidence to examine these constructs in practice. Cobb and Hodge (2002) argued that these issues are intimately linked to the positioning of cultural capital both in what gets counted and in how one is afforded access to it. Cooks (2003) refers to positioning as looking at one’s self-perception of their social location that also formulates their worldview. Not only do these students see themselves physically positioned in the back of the room, but also separated from the “smart kids”, relegated to special parts of the school called “the wing”, and self-fulfilling prophecy and negative outcomes perpetuate themselves.

Subjectivity Statement

Growing up as a poor African American student in southwest Georgia in the 60’s was very difficult. Segregation was the theme of the day, white and colored facilities, and schools

with no achievement gaps or racial diversity. My first grade teacher, Ms. Bennett lived next door, so punishment came swift and often at school and at home. In this village of “Black Only”, you were raised and governed by whichever adult was closest to the immediate situation. There was no “due process”, and when mama found out, you got disciplined again. My dad was like most colored fathers of his day, poor, discouraged, beaten-down, futureless, and confined to menial labor for “The White Man”. Not only did he work for the “Man” at his foundry, but he also cleaned his house, yard, or whatever needed to be done. His only place of self-worth came on payday, when he could drink and talk “trash” about the “White Man”, gamble, and feel empowered. The problem with this rationale was his neglect of eight hungry children at home, and his penchant for loving the drink and self-empowerment more than his family. Yes, mama raised us all, five girls and three boys. At lucky number seven, I was sort of everybody’s baby, and my four older sisters decided to name me after their favorite cowboy, Randolph Scott. Dad left when I turned eleven.

Mama made sure all eight kids knew the importance of education and religion. There was no missing school or church, and the punishment (even when you were sick) was just a little shy of military torture. She kept us clothed and fed for the amazing wage of 50 cents an hour. She worked for “white folks” as well, and this was our only exposure to diversity. Day-care for poor colored kids was unheard of, so the younger children would have to tag along with mama to the Karl’s home. We all played, ate, and even bathed together. It was so embarrassing at a recent funeral of one of the Karl’s when this 50-year-old white man introduced me to his kids as his bathing buddy. Yes, we could work for them, even bathe with them, but not go to school with them.

In 1966, racial relations in South Georgia were at a heated level. It was no longer safe to go out at night in fear of Klansmen and the like. Many young African American men were reported beaten and killed, and a teenager from our neighborhood was cut up (private part) on his return from the public library. In the midst of all this drama, we moved just across the tracks into a new school zone, a white school zone. Even though the government had forced other states to integrate, Georgia was a state not adhering to the plan. Governor Lester Maddox was in the line with George Wallace (Alabama) and all the radical southern governors suspected of Klansman ties. Even though this was the education plan for the south, mama still enrolled me at the age of nine into an all-white elementary school, Williams Heights. Over 400 white kids grades 1 – 5 and me. Teacher responsiveness was a much-needed aspect for mere existence in this setting.

Ms. Langford took my hand, and walked me through what seemed to be a crowd of thousands into my first day in 4th grade. These white students appeared never to have seen a colored person, and kindly asked to touch my skin and hair. Ms. Langford taught me instructionally and culturally. Above all else, she loved me. I had other teachers that also cared at the school (even an African American teacher), but Ms. Langford was it, the difference maker, and the responsive adult.

Later that year, my oldest brother and role model, Charles was sent to Vietnam. The outcomes for young African American men from our neighborhood were not promising. Many had returned wounded and disabled, while others never made it home. Racial tension and the Civil Rights Movement brought considerable opposition to this war, and as a pre-teen included my participation in riots, civil unrest, recruitment by the Black Panther Movement and the Nation of Islam. My brother did return three years later, emotionally and mentally wounded, unable to ever work again, and a lifelong outpatient of the VA hospital. He left as a proud

American with unlimited potential, and returned a confused African American male with little hope.

After elementary, Ms. Langford still kept up with me, but other teachers stepped in and continued the process, Coach Herrin, Coach Williams, and my principal Dan Stagner attended to my high school needs. I graduated in the top 5% of my class with numerous athletic and academic scholarships. Dr. Corrine Sawyer became the responsive teacher my first year at Clemson University. She was a small, unassuming white English instructor, who presented me with my first “F”. Being totally shocked that she could do such a thing, I immediately marched into her office. Until this day, I attribute much of my life’s success to that one meeting. Dr. Sawyer and I remain in contact, and she is one of my biggest fans as I pursue a career in Education. These are the people that helped a poor African American boy from South Georgia get a chance at something better. These are the teachers that helped spawn my research questions, what roles can teachers play in the lives of African American students?

As I pose this question, I must not forget the strength, perseverance, and resiliency of mama. All eight children graduated from high school. Four have college degrees with three being advanced degrees. What made the difference with this family? Was it genetics, luck, fate, or fear? As I talk to my brothers and sisters, a common theme always comes through, a responsive teacher that took the time. These experiences and interactions were the foundations and impetus that led to my life’s work (curricula and extra-curricula) and eventually this study.

My first qualitative action research examining racial inequities in education (Scott, unpublished, 2006), consisted of 5 participants, all white, 1 male, 1 assistant principal, 1 Exceptional Student Education specialist, and 2 classroom teachers were observed, interviewed,

and participated in a book club reading “Other People’s Children” by Lisa Delpit (1995). The study revealed the following:

- There is a lack of teacher classroom management skills towards African American students
- Educators did not understand African American males
- Schools do not resemble or mimic home environments and are not a primary focus of teacher education programs
- Teachers are primarily white females
- African American males are set up for failure because educators use problem-solving frameworks for students that are disruptive rather than responsive frameworks
- Students of color need direct, explicit, and real-world instruction
- There is no strong African American voice in schools among administration, teachers, students, or parents

The results of this action research continued the inquiry of meeting the needs of African American students. This pursuit continued in my qualitative research course and eventual pilot study.

In the pilot study, “Teachers’ Attentiveness to the needs of African-American Students” (Scott unpublished, 2006), I explored the relationship between four teachers and four students in a middle school sixth grade. The participants included 1 white-male/science – 30 years experience, 1 African American male/social studies – 8 years experience, 1 white-female/English – 23 years experience, 1 Hispanic-female/Math – 1 year experience, 2 male and 2 female African American students. Participants were observed, interviewed, and surveyed (student LTM). The completion of this study encouraged the participating teachers to re-examine and improve their practices toward African American students. The results of the pilot study revealed:

- that race of teacher was not a factor to the students
- teachers did not feel equipped professionally to teach African American students

- students felt that all teachers catered to white students over African American students
- students rated the stricter, meaner, direct, older male white instructor as their best teacher; rated the easiest, less structured, older female white teacher as their least favorite, because she “tried to be our friend, and does not teach us”
- students do not feel a part of the school
- teachers were apathetic and unaware there was a problem, felt that all students had equal opportunities, and that “blacks have even more.”

These are the experiences that help explain who I am, where I came from, and my position in relation to this study. It also shows my disciplinary training and theoretical perspectives that shaped the design of this research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess teachers’ beliefs and observe how teachers responded to the learning and social needs of a selected group of African American students in the classroom setting. In this study the researcher documented teacher-student interactions during teaching and learning, and how all participants managed power and access in the school setting.

Research Questions

1. What are the teacher’s instructional style beliefs about the needs of African American students?
2. What are the teachers’ observed instructional practices while working with the selected group of African American students?
3. What are the preferred learning styles of the select group of African American students? Least preferred?
4. How do teachers’ instructional styles correspond to the learning styles preferences of these African American students?
5. How do teachers’ instructional styles correspond to their beliefs about African American students?

Definition of Terms

The following terms used in this study are defined below:

African American – an American of African and especially of black African descent.

Alexithymia – is a term to describe a state of deficiency in understanding, processing, or describing emotions.

Cognitive Dissonance - an uncomfortable feeling or stress caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously. A theory that proposes people have a fundamental cognitive drive to reduce this dissonance by modifying an existing belief, or rejecting one of the contradictory ideas.

Cultural Intimidation Theory (C.I.T.) - Intimidation related to prejudice and discrimination and may include conduct "which annoys, threatens, intimidates, alarms, or puts a person in fear of their safety...because of a belief or perception regarding such person's race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation, regardless of whether the belief or perception is correct. Intimidation may be manifested in such manner as physical contacts, glowering countenance, emotional manipulation, and verbal abuse, making someone feel lower than you, purposeful embarrassment and/or actual physical assault. "Behavior may include, but is not limited to, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs and lewd propositions, assault, impeding or blocking movement, offensive touching or any physical interference with normal work or movement, and visual insults, such as derogatory posters or cartoons. (US Legal Definitions (harassment, threat-of-harm))"

Educational hegemony is the practice of cultural dominance in the school environment.

Efficacy – the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance. The power to produce an effect.

European American – of European descent; usually Caucasian.

Euro centric – centered on Europe or the Europeans ; especially : reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of western and especially European or Anglo-American values and experiences.

Hegemony- influence exerted by a dominant group over others, in the form of cultural, ideological, or socio-practices. 1 : preponderant influence or authority over other.
2 : the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group <extend their own hegemony over American culture as a whole.

Socio-economic – referring to economical status of a group in society that has common economic, cultural, or political attributes. : of, relating to, or involving a combination of social and economic factors.

White Flight – the departure of whites from places (as urban neighborhoods or schools) increasingly or predominantly populated by minorities.

White Racial Frame - At the most general level, the racial frame views whites as mostly superior in culture and achievement and views people of color as generally of less social, economic, and political consequence than whites—as inferior to whites in the making and keeping of the nation. At the next level of framing, whites view an array of social institutions as normally white-controlled and as unremarkable in the fact that whites therein are unjustly enriched and disproportionately privileged. At the lowest level of abstraction, negative stereotypes and images of the “inferior racial others” are constructed and accepted.

Significance

This study focused on teachers’ responsiveness to the learning needs of a select group of African American students in a middle school setting. This study will test and extend several theories, and make recommendations for further research and practice. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) theorized that African American students had to accept a raceless persona of “acting White” in order to succeed in our Eurocentric educational systems. This study will confirm or refute this theory by using four data sources, student preferred learning styles, teacher instructional beliefs, interviews, and observations. Revelations of what is actually happening in these teachers’ classrooms could convey some answers or messages that would be essential to modifications in our educational systems. Even though American education proclaims democratic instruction, data reveals an ever-growing disparity in learning and social gains for students of color. *Dreamkeepers* (Ladson-Billings, 1994), *Other People’s Children* (Delpit, 1995), and *Right to Learn* (Darling-Hammond, 1983) lamented the needs for culturally relevant and responsive teaching. Their findings were results of looking at teacher beliefs and matching those beliefs to their instructional practices. This study was significant to this phenomenon in that it will extend these findings, and include students’ preferred and least preferred learning styles and observed teacher-student classroom environments and interactions. Also, the principal selected his best four 7th grade teachers to act as participant. This triangulation of multiple data sources will contribute to research on the nature of instruction provided to African American middle school students.

Limitations

The observations represent only specific periods of instructional time and should not be construed to be representative of the instruction that occurs outside of the time of this study. The transferability of the findings should be limited only to those that were collected at this site.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' beliefs and observe how teachers responded to the learning and social needs of a selected group of African American students in the classroom setting. Using observations, interviews, and survey methodology, the researcher examined the teachers' beliefs and expectations, students' learning type preferences, and teachers' instructional styles. In this chapter an overview of the relevant literature is provided. An overview of the following topics: a) theoretical framework, b) teacher expectations and beliefs, c) learning styles, and d) instructional styles is presented.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that will drive this study is Fordham and Ogbu's (1986), raceless persona theory. This theory suggest that in order to achieve success in the Eurocentric world, African American students must distance themselves from black cultural attributes, and assume identities acceptable in that culture, i.e., "acting White". This theory has been vigorously debated over the past 20 years, and this study intends to extend this research by examining if American education still holds Eurocentric expectations for African American students. Nasir and Hand (2004) suggested that very little relevant research has been done in the area of developing a comprehensive conceptualization or theoretical model dealing with issues of race, culture, and learning. They strongly suggested that "race, as a social phenomenon, can be theorized at multiple levels of activity and development" (p.464). These are the elements that will be explored and observed as the researcher looks at the behaviors and interactions of a select group of African American students and their teachers.

The raceless persona theory begins with the premise that the idea or "burden of acting white", if African Americans are to be academically successful, is learned in the black

community at a very young age. This idea is then transferred to the school setting where often African American students equate “being smart” with being white. They shy away from higher academic tracks that tend to have high enrollment of white students. African American students find themselves in standard core curriculum classes with students that look like them. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) stated that this “twin phenomena” occurs at an early age and builds a “fictive kinship” where African Americans group themselves. These authors suggested that as a subordinate minority (involuntarily brought to America by way of slavery), African Americans have developed a sense of identity in opposition to white Americans. This opposition has developed protective devices to reactively promote African American identity by sustaining boundaries between themselves and the dominant white culture. Tatum (1997) reported on these boundaries in her book, *“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”* She also suggested by the age of three, African American children have been exposed to culturally stereotypical images that mold their future perceptions. Tatum argued that these perceptions create an “internalized oppression” that leads to the “social segregation of our communities, our schools, and even the cafeteria.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) theorized that African American students continued to do poorly in schools because they experienced conflict of their identity and tended not to want to be different than their peers academically. An earlier study by McArdle and Young (1970) of a group of African American students in Wisconsin refuted this theory of “acting white” as a belief system held by this group. Their African American participant group suggested that they did not define their success with “acting white”, but attributed educational inequities to a racists’ society. They believed that African American could find “adaptive ways” to cope with Eurocentric expectations without losing their “black and beautiful” identity. This study will observe

behaviors and interactions in order to ascertain if “adaptive ways” equate to “acting white”, and report cultural interactions occurring at this school setting. Ogbu and Simons (1998) argued that cultural interaction in school settings and the macrostructure of societal and racial politics treads this middle ground by employing a macroanalytic perspective of the social and political forces that have impacted the relationship between blacks and mainstream America. They believe that the “resistance of African American students against perceived and real oppression by the mainstream culture leads to cultural “habits” and stances that can undermine minority student performance in schools (p. 455).”

Teacher Expectations and Beliefs

Teachers’ expectations tend to be self-sustaining because they may affect perception, causing some teachers to be more likely to see what they expect and less likely to notice the unexpected (Good & Nichols, 2001). Many pre-service teachers bring their teacher educational programs’ beliefs about teaching and learning which have been heavily influenced by their childhood experiences to classroom settings. Later, some come to consciously understand and reexamine the effects of these beliefs on their decision-making about classroom practice (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). “Teachers are not apt to embrace diverse instruction as their own, particularly if the instruction or ideas clash with the views they bring into teacher education (Villegas, 2002, p. 21).” Ferguson (1998) reported that African American students, especially in early grades, frequently received less stimulating and supportive environments than white students. In addition, he suggested that many educators believe that school achievement is related to genetics, and that African American students have less academic intelligence.

Many teachers bogged down in standardized testing quotas and secondary school reforms have developed apathetic attitudes towards low-achieving African American students. They have become resistant towards diversity programs, multicultural curriculum, and defensive towards

any data that shows the achievement gap between their white and African American students. McFalls & Cobb-Roberts (2001) suggested that they have developed mindsets of “cognitive dissonance”. They suggested that teachers experience tension when new knowledge or information is incongruent with their previously acquired knowledge. This concept also extended to instruction, as teachers tended to believe that critical thinking rich activities were more appropriate for high-achieving learners rather than low-achieving learners (Torff, 2005). Evidence showed that teachers’ behavior toward high and low groups are marked by the provision of unchallenging and often less interesting work to low achievers. Higher educational tracks were generally more intellectually stimulating than lower tracks (Ferguson, 1998).

Many secondary school teachers also believed they should maintain the maximum amount of power over their students in order to secure control over the learning environment (Good & Nichols, 2001). They also reported that teachers’ differential beliefs and behavior could be related to student performance. Babad (1998) reported teacher’s affective reactions as well and cognitive beliefs partly determined their differential behavior. Moreover, he has argued that African American and white students are not equally susceptible to teachers’ differential behavior in the classroom. He further suggested that differences in students’ vulnerability to teacher expectations, in part, helps to explain the achievement gap commonly found between African American and white students. Casteel (1997) reported that African American students (81% girls, 62% boys) most wanted to please their teachers over their own parents when it came to their class work. In contrast to white students, these numbers were inversely proportionate with only (28% girls, 32% boys). This pressure on African American and low-income students to please their teachers may contribute to undermining the quality of teacher contact. “Will the teacher think that I’m listening or smart if I ask this question?” Also, teachers’ beliefs sometime

tend to overlap with those of the child's parent. When the two minds decided that the student's assigned grade is an accurate description of the child's abilities, it deeply influenced what the student thought about his own learning abilities (Good & Nichols, 2001).

Witcher and Travers (1999) suggested three categories of teachers; Progressive, Transmissive, and Eclectics. Progressive (Experiential) educators are teachers who believe that school is a social institution that seeks to align school programming with contemporary needs in order to make education meaningful and relevant to the knowledge, abilities and interests of their students. They believe in student-centered lessons, cooperative and active learning that aligns with many learning styles of low-achieving and minority students. Progressive teachers expect the learning process to be guided by students and believe in taking risk and learning "outside the box". These teachers believe that by doing, learning acquisition will equate to real-life application.

Transmissive educators believe that the purposes of school are to develop the intellect. They view their roles as one of dispensing important knowledge to students. They prefer lecture, demonstration, and recitation as teaching methods. They advocate curricula that are subject-centered, organized and sequenced, and focused on mastery of specific skills and content. Classrooms are business-like, better aligned for passive learners....idealism, realism, perennialism, and essentialism. Transmissive teachers believe that they are the purveyors of knowledge, and it is the job of the student to listen and acquire the information for the exam. This form of teaching is in direct conflict with many of the learning preferences among African American students, but is most prevalent in the Eurocentric style of American schools.

Eclectic educators are teachers who attenuate the relationship between educational beliefs and their perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. "They take central or moderated

positions and tend to lean towards either progressivism or transmissivism as they mature as a teacher (p. 7).” These teachers believe that instruction should be balanced, and they expect their students to learn both essential materials and hands-on cooperative materials. These teachers exhibit affective instructional styles when they differentiate instruction based on the learning styles of their African American students. Frequently when system overload occurs (negative school cultures toward low achieving African American students), eclectic educators’ beliefs and expectations are lowered for African American students, and busy work or worksheets are used to maintain quiet and order. This again leads to high discipline referrals for African American students, and low academic achievement in the classroom and on standardized exams.

Learning Styles/Types Preferences

This study will also examine the different learning styles preferences among this selected group of African American students, and observe the alignment between teacher instruction and student learning styles preferences. Dunn and Dunn (1999) define learning styles as the way an individual processes, internalizes, and remembers new and difficult academic information or develop skills. Dunn and Dunn’s (1999) learning style model incorporates 21 elements classified into five strands:

- immediate environment (sound, light, temperature, and furniture/seating designs)
- emotionality (motivation, persistence, responsibility-conformity versus nonconformity-and need for either externally imposed structure or the opportunity to do things in one’s own way)
- sociological preferences (learning best alone, in a pair, in a small group, as part of a team, with either an authoritative or collegial adult, and with variety as opposed to patterns and routines)
- physiological characteristics (perceptual strengths, time-of-day energy levels, and need for intake and mobility while learning)
- processing inclinations (global/analytic, right/left, and impulsive/reflective). Although this model consists of multiple elements, individuals tend to be affected by between 6 and 14 of

the 21 elements. Only those 6 to 14 elements comprise each individual's learning style (p.21).

The manner in which a person learns impacts his (her) performance. Learning styles are the different ways people process and perceive learning tasks. During learning activities, students may utilize different strategies. The difference between styles and strategies is that styles tend to be more automatic where as strategies are utilized more consciously (Hartley, 1998). "One learning style is neither preferable nor inferior to another, but simply different. Some students are comfortable with theories and abstractions; others facts and observable phenomena; some prefer active learning; others introspection; some prefer visual presentation of information and others prefer verbal explanations (Felder & Brent, 2005, p.58)." "Research shows that learning style indicators should not be used solely to identify a prescribed curriculum for each individual student. These indicators only provide clues for student strengths and preferences to help them succeed (Litzinger, Lee, Wise, & Felder, 2007, p. 310)." Teachers should strive for balanced instruction, making sure that the learning needs of all students are addressed to some extent. This is especially true for those students that do not find themselves as part of the educational hegemony of the school.

Dunn and Dunn (2005) suggested that many American classrooms typically adhere to the traditional model of analytical learning processes (cognitive). Even though the thinking and critical thinking process is appropriate for the acquisition of knowledge, Kunjufu (2002) contended that schools' emphases on what and how tends to be in constant conflict with many learners, especially African American students. Hilliard (2003) reported that the learning styles of many of today's classrooms are inconsistent to those of African American culture. He suggested that minorities tend to be more "relational" than analytical. Characteristic learning styles of minorities are, emotive behavior, looking for more meaning in text, shorter attention

spans, devaluation of linear relationships, and tendencies to search for personal relevance in content. Kunjufu (2002) also added that a major issue in meeting the instructional needs of African American students lies in the cultural mismatches between teaching and learning styles. He believed that the assignment of Euro-centric teachers to low achieving African American students, contribute greatly to their educational demise. Olga, Maxwell, Dickerson, Hoge, Davies, and Yetley (1998) concluded, “African American students tend to be motivated by active and hands-on activities (p. 123).” Further research on learning styles of students’ of color indicated that these students often have values, behavior, cognitive styles, and language patterns that differed from the school’s dominant culture, (Gay, 2000).

An example of the differences in student/school’s dominant culture is depicted in this example from Delpit’s (1995) *Other People’s Children* where a four year-old black boy is responding to his teacher:

“Teacher: Good morning, Tony, how are you?
Tony: I be’s fine.
Teacher: Tony, I said, How are you?
Tony: (with raised voice) I be’s fine.
Teacher: No, Tony, I said how are you?
Tony: (angrily) I done told you I be’s fine and I ain’t telling you no more!”
(p. 51).

This was an example of a teacher who had the intention of correcting the boy’s grammar, but because she misunderstood what the boy was saying to her, may end up referring him for what appeared to be anger rather than frustration. Students who speak non-standard English, such as shown in the above example can actually learn quite well. They may learn differently or in ways that teachers (and parents) find hard to comprehend.

Prashnig (2006) referred to natural/biological elements and conditioned/learned elements as it pertains to learning styles. Natural/biological elements reflect the following; Left-brained

dominant learners who process analytical information are reflective in their thinking styles. Right-brained dominant learners process information holistically while being impulsive thinkers. Prashnig found that some students were sensory learners (auditory/hearing), visual learners (seeing/watching), tactile learners (touching), while others learn kinesthetically (doing/feeling). Environmental needs consisted of light, temperature of room, sound, and comfort. Students that adhered to physical needs responded to mobility and intake such as drinking and chewing. Just the ability to chew a piece of gum is sometimes beneficial for these type learners. “These elements are considered the V-A-T-K Preferences/Non-Preferences Model (Visual-Auditory-Tactile-Kinesthetic). Conditioned/Learned Elements reflect attitudes and social groupings such as a preference for working in groups or alone (p. 2).” One finding that highlights the importance of kinesthetic learning among African Americans by Young (2005) observed a positive relationship between African American children’s academic achievement, frequency of computer use, a computer area in the classroom, child/computer ratio, and access to a home computer.

Banks (2001) posited that instructional programs in schools should be structured to reflect the learning style of the individual students. Darling-Hammond (2000) stated that effective teachers need a healthy respect for diversity in order to meet the learning needs of this population. She stated that although the traditional educational setting prides itself on national standardization, students are not standardized in the pace and manner in which they learn.

Teachers need to make changes in their instruction once when they have acquired knowledge, about their own learning styles as well as those of their students. Ineffective teachers are often the single most important factor in student learning difficulties because they provided little to no interventions or helpful assistance for these students. In many cases, these same teachers were relegated to teaching low achieving African American students in impoverished

urban schools (Jacob, 2007). Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) argued that using patterns of learning styles across racial groups carries with them implicit issues of power and access. “Race then becomes a part of a person’s experience – it is socioculturally situated and constituted instead of serving as the defining characteristic (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003, p. 466).” Keefe and Jenkins (2000) have suggested changing classrooms by offering personalized instruction plans to every student. The basic elements of their personalized instruction model includes a teacher who serves as both a coach and adviser, who determines students’ learning characteristics such as their development level, cognitive styles and learning styles, as well as their prior knowledge and skills. The personalized instruction model fosters collegiality in the school and is characterized by constructivist and collaborative learning arrangements.

Classrooms are interactive learning environments characterized when there are small school or small group (class) size and active learning activities. Student achievement is assessed using authentic measures. Classroom learning is characterized by flexible scheduling and pacing, but with adequate structure. Although students learn in different ways, they tend to learn more deeply when the subject matter and content is of interest. Washor (2003) found that students with personalized learning plans utilized their experiences, and determined their future goals for college and beyond.

Instructional Styles

Riding and Rayner (1998) have suggested, “cognitive styles are automatic and “in-built” at birth or fixed early on in life (p. 7).” Understanding cognitive styles and learning styles can help both teachers and students understand how and why they do better in certain situations and with certain instructional styles (Evans, 2003). How these concepts are incorporated into teachers’ instructional styles has to do a lot with several other demographic variables (Cohen & Amidon, 2004). Teachers need to know who they are, and understand that their perceptions of

instruction are ingrained based on gender, race, class, and age. Even though many students reported that they did not like the way they were taught in school, many find themselves teaching in those same styles (Evans, 2003). He reported that much of the instruction is teacher-focused and content-oriented, rather than student-focused and learning-oriented. For example, teachers who rejected their childhood selves, tend to be aloof, restrictive, severe, and sarcastic.

Teachers are also affected by the organizational and governing style of their own families as well as interpretations from past experiences. Their classroom teaching styles are indicative of many childhood perceptions of reward and punishment (Cohen & Amidon, 1999). Riding (2002) suggested that a teacher's natural teaching style reflects his or her own cognitive style. Saracho (2000) asserted that teachers' personal instructional styles reflect the specifics of their preparation, their instructional situation, and how they process information. Individual teachers respond to their students in their own unique way.

The teacher's cognitive style motivates his/her selected teaching styles, and this preference has an impact on their distinctive qualities (Riding & Read, 1998). The correlation between personal experience and cognitive style along with the selection of a teaching style is influential in how or whether students learn, especially minority students (Askew & Brown, 2001). Adams (1998) found that positive reinforcement and rewards tended to produce effective and self-disciplined children.

Cohen (1999) also reported that the use of rewards motivates increased independence and range of thought. He found that the use of rewards encouraged positive student-teacher interactions. In a study with Amidon (1999), they found that teachers who used rewards selected an "indirect teaching style". These teachers exhibited listening skills, acceptance, and allowed for student voice and input. Conversely, the teachers who preferred the "direct teaching style"

believed in dealing directly with student mistakes, were disciplinarians, and exhibited strong control. The latter study found a significant correlation between race and reward. They found that white students were rewarded highly while African American students related negatively to reward and positive to punishment. This negativity to rewards and positivity to punishment is a result of limited awards (academic, good citizen, science fair, etc.) given to African American students, but through punishment, some form of attention is given. Other research has shown a teacher's verbal behavior could influence student behavior and academic outcome. Verbal behavior is used in every aspect of interactions; delivering the task, conveying ideas, offering feedback, eliciting the learner's ideas and feelings, dealing with behavior deviations, and having ordinary discourse (Mosston & Ashworth, 1999).

In his Cognitive Style Analysis, Riding (2002) classified two dimensions of cognitive styles, Wholist and Analytical. Those teachers who exhibit the wholist characteristics preferred facts rather than principles, structured learning situations, verbal presentations, were receptive to ideas of others, risk takers, and team oriented (Sadler-Smith, 2000). The teachers that exhibit analytical characteristics, preferred to provide their own structure. They were controlling, rigid, less accepting, and more didactic in their instruction (Riding & Rayner, 1998), but at the same time more imaginative and stimulating. Many math and science teachers fell into the analytical category. Riding's study concluded that the majority of the American classrooms (over 62%) operate from the analytical model. The use of this approach exposes the academic mismatch between teaching and the learning needs of African American students in public schools. These researchers reported styles conducive for African American students are relational rather than analytical, hands-on, acceptance, discussion, and cooperative learning activities. Also, the

control discipline styles preferred by the analytic teachers are in direct conflict with the preferred learning styles of African American students (Sadler-Smith & Riding 1999).

Sprengr (1999) reported forms of assessment that could be compatible to students varied learning styles. He suggested the incorporation of student portfolios as a brain compatible assessment that provides information about student progress. Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witchche, and James (2000) concluded that teachers with effective teaching styles possessed the following qualities; demonstrated strong cognitive skills, were creative and proficient in selecting, organizing, and delivering materials, efficient and effective instructions, provided relevant assignments, asked skillful questions, were engaging, and promoted critical and creative thinking, monitored programs and student progress, used alternate assessments, and reflected about their own practices.

Saphier and King (1998) concurred and added that collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, appreciation and recognition, caring, celebration, and humor, involvement in decision making, protection of what is important, traditions, and honest, open communication reflected good teaching. Haycock (1998) acknowledged, six key teaching elements that are responsive to the instructional needs of African American students including; better teacher preparation, accountability, better and continuous professional development, quality teachers for low achieving, disadvantaged, and minority students, honest communication with parents, and rewarding and recruiting quality teachers. When teachers gain an awareness of how they teach and how it impacts individual students, then the possibility for enhanced educational outcomes is considerable. To achieve this, “teachers need to widen the lived space of learning for each individual and for themselves by introducing variation in teaching, enabling learners to see things differently and empowering them to explore

alternative options (Boulton-Lewis & Wilss, 2001, p. 158).” Villegas & Lucas (2002) suggested the following to prepare culturally responsive teachers. These teachers must develop an affirming attitude towards students from culturally diverse backgrounds, and see resources for learning in all students rather than viewing differences as problems to be overcome. They must make a commitment and use the skills to act as agents of change. Also, they must see themselves as both responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change in order to make schools more responsive to all students. Finally, they must incorporate constructivist views of learning, so that they understand how learners construct knowledge and the ability to promote learner knowledge.

Banks (2006) believed that schools should implement equitable pedagogy for all students. His definition suggested that instruction should provide all students with an equal opportunity to attain academic and social success in school. Hollins (1999) argued that culturally responsive teaching should be deliberate and systemic in developing competence for teaching in this type of environment. Reflection and inquiry should be key components that involve observations, investigations, documentations, and study. Teachers should be able to collaborate and study each other’s practices and make changes and adaptations as needed. She believed that schools provide cultural mismatches that affect the learning gains of African American students. She concluded that there is a disconnect between African American students’ academic achievement and the relationship between school practices and values, and these students’ home culture. Foster (1993) added that teacher backgrounds, in relation to education, needed to be aligned with knowledge of community norms and positions in order to contribute to student success.

Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and

effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (p.28).” Gay (2000) described culturally responsive teaching as teaching that acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. She stated that culturally responsive teaching “builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities. It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles, and teaches students to know and praise their own and each others' cultural heritages. It also incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools (p. 29).” Stickney (2003) contended that culturally responsive teaching “increased students' academic achievement by fostering student strengths. Teachers provided instruction that met learning styles of all their students. The classroom were student-centered versus teacher-centered, and all cultures were represented and celebrated. Another concept of culturally responsive teaching was its focus on the idea “warm demanding pedagogy”. This research promoted academic engagement for minority students through insistence. Instruction was led through caring, high academic expectations, and appropriate student behaviors. Leadership was not authoritarian, punitive, sarcastic, or demeaning. Teachers who insisted on academic excellence were respectful and firm (Ross, Bondy, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2008). Teachers able to modify and balance varied instructional styles may be beneficial in meeting the learning needs of African American students.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods used in this study including the setting, participants, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis. The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' beliefs and observe how teachers responded to the learning and social needs of a select group of African American students in the classroom setting. To obtain data for this study, the researcher observed teacher-student interactions, conducted teacher interviews, and administered a teacher instructional behavior and students' learning style survey.

The theoretical framework for the methods used in this study was interpretivism. Interpretivism assumes that the meaning of human actions is inherent in those actions, and that it is the researcher's task to unearth that meaning. The underlying assumption of interpretivism is that the whole needs to be examined, if a full understanding of a phenomenon is to be achieved (Schwandt, 2000). The epistemology that grounds interpretivism is constructivism. Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning; it describes both "what knowing is and how one comes to know (Fosnot, 1997, p. 6)." In the constructivist view, knowledge is emergent. Teachers and students in the classroom setting construct their own social realities – complex and ever changing (Glesne, 1999). Constructivist teachers believe that whole concepts cannot be broken into discrete sub-skills and taught out of context. Constructivist teachers also suggest that students need contextually meaningful experiences through which they can search for patterns, raise questions, model, interpret, and engage in activity, discourse, interpretation, justification, and reflection. Piaget (1945) explains that this is an "adaptive function" and results in producing independent realities rather than producing representations.

Access to the Setting and Participants

Tompkins Middle School (a pseudonym for the school where the study was conducted) in central Florida was selected for this study. The principal, Mr. Sutton (pseudonym) selected four of his best 7th grade teachers to participate in this study. The researcher contacted each teacher via email, and all agreed to participate. The teachers taught the following core subjects; Brooke-Geography, Frank-Math, Lauren-English, and Katie-Science (pseudonyms). The total middle school student population was 929. The researcher selected the seventh grade students (N=310) because this is their first year of real secondary experiences (sixth grade still has a lot of elementary instruction and interactions). More than twelve forms of consent were sent to students' homes. Eventually the parents of two female and two male students agreed to their participation. The student participants were four African American seventh graders with a GPA of 2.5 – 3.0 (on a 4 point scale). The ethnicity of Tompkins Middle School is 51% white, 32% African American, 9% Hispanic, 5% multiracial, 3% Asian, and <1% Native American (table 3.2).

Participants Profiles

Teachers

Brooke: Brooke is a white female completing her second full year of teaching Geography. She was raised in a middle-class to upper-class home, and attended a high achieving private school. Brooke was a high school athlete and took upper-level Honors and AP classes. Currently, she is single and engaged. Brooke plans to get married within a year and move to another part of the state with her future husband, who is a lawyer.

Frank: Frank is a white male completing his 23rd year of teaching middle grade Math. He was raised in a low to middle-class family, and his wife is also a teacher. Frank lives on the east side of town in a predominately African American neighborhood. His kids are now grown, but

attended the all-black elementary school in his neighborhood. The entire family has extensive interactions with African Americans, his wife as a teacher at a predominately African American high school, and his son was married to an African American female. Frank also has an African American granddaughter.

Lauren: Lauren is a white female filling in as a full-time substitute for the Language Arts teacher. She has been a full-time substitute at this school for over 10 years and is well acquainted with all of the students. She is middle-aged and has two sons, one in high school and another who is a sixth grader at this school. She was raised in a middle-class to upper-class home and only works part-time to be near the boys. She attended public school and took upper-level Honors and AP classes.

Katie; Katie is a white female completing her fourth year of teaching middle grade Science. She was raised in a middle-class family, went to public school, and took Honors and AP classes. Her husband is also a teacher, but in a very affluent white school in the suburbs. Katie is the grade team leader and holds other leadership roles at the school.

Students

Jodie: She had all of the core grade teachers except Katie (science) and a 3.0 GPA. She did have Katie in 6th grade science.

Buffie: She had all of the core teachers and has a 2.75 GPA.

James: He was observed in all four classes and at lunch. He has a 2.5 GPA, but struggles academically. He was enrolled in intervention reading class.

Bob: He was observed in all four classes and at lunch. He has a 2.6 GPA and was also enrolled in an intervention reading class.

Instrumentation

The teachers completed the TIBS (Teacher Instructional Behavior Survey) before the interview process and classroom observations. This instrument (developed by Behar-Horenstein

& Leite, n.p., 2007) was designed to measure teachers' preferences for particular instructional practices, teacher-centered and student-centered. The TIBS was selected because the 21 designed questions aligned very well with the four research questions used in this study, therefore providing a baseline empirical message of the teachers' beliefs. It also had implications for how teachers are likely to practice and the potential of their instructional practices that aligned with the student learning type measure (LTM) used in the study. The TIBS was developed to help teachers identify tacitly held beliefs about their instruction. It assesses frequency of behavior whereas teachers are asked to rate each item according to how frequently they behave according to a particular statement. Once the initial set of items were created, cognitive interviews, a focus group, and expert reviews were performed to improve item wording and eliminate items that were unclear or redundant. The scale was piloted on high school teachers with a response rate of 47% (N =37). Data was collected from 445 elementary, middle and high school teachers from a single school district. From this sample, 80.4% were female, 11.7% were male, and 7.9% did not disclose gender. Furthermore, 46.7% reported to teach Kindergarten to 5th grade, 22.5% reported to teach 6th to 8th grade and 23.6% reported to teach 9th to 12th grade, and 7.2% did not report teaching assignment.

The students completed the Learning Type Measurement (LTM, McCarthy, 1987, 1996) to determine the ways that they most and least prefer to learn. The learning style measure had been used effectively in the pilot study. It was also well aligned with each of the four research questions and the Teacher Instructional Behavior Survey. It was accessible to purchase on-line, parent-friendly (not complex), student friendly, and age appropriate for middle school students. It communicated how kids learned best, the preferable learning environment, how kids least learned and least preferable learning environment, and how students see themselves as learners.

More than 723,000 people have taken this assessment, and it has been normed by the KOLB (David Kolb) Learning Styles Inventory (LSI) and the Myers Briggs Indicator (MBTI).

Data Collection and Analysis

Individual teacher interviews were conducted to ascertain their perceptions, beliefs, and expectations using scenarios shown in Table 3.3. Interviews were completed at the end of the observation period to better understand the teacher-student relationship and to preserve the fidelity of the responses. Knowing that all of the observations were complete, and that they would not be observed again following the interview, may have decreased the possibility of the teachers displaying un-natural behaviors towards the African American students or performing for the researcher. Tucker (1999) found that “increasingly frequent and unobtrusive observations reduced the likelihood that they will influence what occurs before the researcher (p. 412).” Each interview lasted about 35 – 50 minutes, was transcribed, open-coded, and analyzed for common themes and phenomena. An unstructured/semi-structured (focused) protocol model was used in inquiry described by Rubin & Rubin (2006), to allow the researcher to ask the focused questions about each scenario, and to extend the conversation to learn about the participants’ unique cultural beliefs and opinions.

During the interviews, the researcher read each scenario to the teacher, and then asked them to respond to the questions that followed it. The researcher audio-recorded the interviews, and the data were transcribed verbatim. After reading all of the observations and interviews, open coding (microanalysis-line by line) was used because it represents an attempt to look at emerging themes while buffering them from predetermined assumptions (Hyde & Nannis, 2006). Next, the researcher searched for connections between the open codes and grouped them into tree nodes according to the research questions. This process resulted in tree nodes that semantically related back to the data. Patton (2002) describes tree nodes as meaningful

categories that are representative of data. Using the tree nodes, the authors looked for cross coding (where one chunk of text might be coded multiple ways) and a richer understanding of the connections between and within the participants (Behar-Horenstein, Mitchell, & Graff, 2008). As the findings coalesced, five themes emerged, stereotype-colorblind racism, strategies-instructional/behavioral, responsibility, despair, and disconnect (see figure 3.1). Conceptual definitions were developed to support the tree nodes and are described along with each of the themes in the results.

In conducting social inquiry, the most widely used technique is interviewing (Hyman, et.al, 1975). Treating interviewing as a social encounter in which knowledge is constructed means that the interview is more than a simple information-gathering operation; it is a site of, and occasion for, producing knowledge itself. Because interviewing is interactional, “it provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 3).” Using an unstructured interview design, with scenario questions rather than a structured questionnaire, allowed for discovery and room for respondents to answer in terms of what was important to them. This type of interviewing leaves “room for other answers and concepts to emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).” Mishler (1986) argued that interviewing might be designed so that the respondent’s voice comes through in greater detail, as a way of paying greater attention to respondent relevancies. This revealed the rich stories of the participants’ narratives. When we communicate our experiences to each other, we do so by storying. When in turn, we encourage elaboration, we commonly use such narrative devices as “go on” and “then what happened?”

In order to prompt this story-like communication, the researcher incorporated four scenarios (see table 3.3) rather than a standard questionnaire. By using these scenarios, different

alternatives and ways to expose the phenomena could be examined. Several scenarios made it possible to create various possible outcomes. The participants were able to respond as to how they would react to the scenario, and then remove themselves and respond to how other teachers would have responded in similar situations. This created a possibility space, and it was within this space that the outcomes emerged (Wiley, 1990). Wack (2002) suggested that scenarios are essential in creating a neutral space for discussion. He reported that scenarios offer an inclusive and consultative process, and can reflect the views and challenges facing all stakeholders. They are a useful tool for organizational learning, and using stories to describe strategic issues.

Scenarios allow detailed analysis to be woven into participants' responses. This was indeed the case in the interview process. The respondents were not bound by structured yes or no answers, but elaborated in detail about their experiences, good and/or bad. In scenario planning, Ringland (1998) stated that good scenarios are based on analysis of change drivers (participants). They allow critical uncertainties and predetermined elements to be distinguished during the interview process. Good scenarios should be compelling, credible, internally logical, and consistent. In using scenarios, Ringland contended that they invited people to lay bare their assumptions. Scenario thinking removes the rules and structures of today, which makes some people defensive. He concluded by positing that scenarios invite people to explore what might happen, and people want to control what will happen.

Van der Heijden (2002), added that scenarios could act as a checklist during planning to ensure that nothing has been forgotten. They could be used to give early warning to possible changes. Other benefits of using scenario inquiry is that it tended to removed some of today's constraints and assist in separating tangled issues. They helped to break "group think" and conventional wisdom. He concluded by stating that good scenarios created a rich and shared

picture of outcomes. These were the variables considered by the researcher in designing the scenarios for this study. The scenarios were proposed to a qualitative committee of peers, edited, debriefed with a similar but different core group of middle school teachers, and revised per recommendations from all pre-disposed stakeholders.

Observations were conducted to describe the congruence or incongruence between teachers' instructional beliefs, practices, and students' preferred learning types. Participant observations were documented using running notes during the course of this study. Each teacher was observed at least five times over the semester for a total of 20 observations. The researcher also observed teachers in other settings such as faculty meetings and their team meetings. Observations were conducted at least every other week, starting in November 2007 and concluded within a 12-week period.

Teachers – 1st Period – Frank (all kids) – 5 x 50 min. = 250 minutes
3rd Period - Brooke (all kids) – 5 x 50 min. = 250 “
5th Period - Lauren (all kids) – 5 x 50 min. = 250 “ (after lunch)
6th Period – Katie (all kids except Jodie) – 5 x 50 min. = 250 “ (after lunch)

Students – Bob, James, & Buffie – 5 x 4 teachers = 20 x 50 min. = 1000 min.
- Jodie (did not have Katie) – 5 x 3 teachers = 15 x 50 min. = 750 min.

Member Checks

Participants engaged in member checks to ensure researcher accuracy of interpretation. Member checks consisted of each participant's receipt of an electronic copy of their personal transcript, a document with the participant's responses categorized into the identified units of meaning, and the researcher's interpretive synopsis of the interview. Participants were asked to respond via e-mail or in person as to the veracity of the researcher's organization and interpretation of the interview. There were no substantial changes to any manuscript resulting in alteration of meaning. Debriefing was completed with three qualitative peer researchers. Each researcher was given 20% of collected interview and observational data. They were able to

independently code both and review and debrief with the researcher to help establish consensus, credibility, and reliability of codes, concepts, and theories.

Table 3.1 Conceptual Definitions for the study's five themes.

Stereotype-Colorblind Racism	Holding a white racial frame, unaware of prejudicial attitudes and behaviors
Strategies-Instructional/Behavioral	Teacher behavior that enhanced student learning and behaviors
Responsibility	Identifying individuals who would address African American students learning needs
Despair	A belief that nothing can be done to change the situation or conditions; sense of hopelessness
Disconnect	The incongruence between teacher beliefs and expectations and student outcomes.

Table 3.2 Student Ethnicity of Tompkins Middle School

Ethnicity	This School	State Average
White	51%	46%
Black	32%	23%
Hispanic	9%	25%
Multiracial	5%	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%

Source: FL Dept. of Education, 2007-2008

Table 3.3. Teacher Interview Scenarios

Scenario #1
<p><i>Teacher:</i></p> <p>1. As you imagine the following picture, you must decide the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photo A is the racial make-up of this class of students: 95% White/3% Asian/1% Hispanic/1%African American - Photo B is the racial make-up of this class of students: 10% White/0% Asian/35% Hispanic/55% African American - <p>In schools today, which photo would most reflect the AP classroom? The remedial or intervention classroom? Why?</p>
Scenario #2
<p>2. A group of 15 African American middle school boys crowd the hallways near your classroom and are noisy and boisterous. You decide it is time to address these students. What factors would you consider in deciding which approach you would take to confront these students? Do you believe that a different approach would be used for a similar group of white students? Why/Why not?</p>
Scenario #3
<p>3. Two students (1 African American/ 1 white) receive a numerical grade at the end of the semester of a 79.4, which is a C. The African-American student has been a behavioral problem and difficult all semester. There has been no parent involvement, response, or help from his parents. The opposite has been the case for the white student and his parents have requested some extra credit to move the grade to a B? How would you respond to this request? How would the average teacher respond to this request?</p>
Scenario #4
<p>4. Fourth grade students were assigned a science project to do on their own. One student (whose father is a technology professor at the university) constructs a transmitter from a kit that actually sends and receives a signal. An African American student (from a single parent household with little to no resources) constructs a non-working replica of Alexander Bell’s first telephone from scrap material at home. Both students write a brief explanation to accompany their projects. Both projects meet the teacher’s criteria of a creative science project. Grades of A and C are given respectively. Do you think the grading was fair? Why or why not? What would you do if you were this teacher?</p>

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The findings from the teacher surveys, students' learning styles surveys, the teacher interviews, and classroom observations are described in this chapter. These findings address the following research themes; stereotype-colorblind racism, strategies-instructional/behavioral, responsibility, despair, and disconnect. The data collected from these four measures was analyzed systematically with the four research questions (see figure 4.1) and summarized in the next chapter. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to triangulate emerging themes, research questions, and the research data measurements.

Teacher Instructional Behavior Survey

Each of the four teachers was given the 21-questions Teaching Instructional Behaviors Survey (TIBS) (Behar-Horenstein & Leite, n.d.). Teachers rated themselves on the strength of their preferences for particular instructional strategies. Of the 21 items, three of the four teachers rated the following items as occasional behaviors:

“I plan my lesson based on the ways that I prefer to teach.”

“My teaching addresses the needs of student with the most learning needs.”

“My lesson follows the exact steps that I had pre-planned.”

Three of the four teachers rated the use of the following items as almost always.

“My learning environment encourages students to cooperate.”

Three of the four teachers rated the use of the following items as always:

“I give students opportunities to use what they should be learning during the lesson.”

“I consider re-teaching based upon the results of the assessment.”

All of the teacher participants rated their use of the following item as always:

“I plan my lesson based on individuals' learning needs.”

The findings from the teacher survey showed that the teachers believed that they encouraged cooperative classroom learning, gave students opportunities to use what they were learning, considered re-teaching based upon the results of assessments, and planned their lessons based on individuals' learning needs of their students. Even though the participants believed these ratings, two of the teachers freely admitted during their interviews, that they were not meeting the needs of their African American population.

Learning Styles Inventory

The findings from the learning preferences measurement of the student-participants revealed a disturbing disconnect of how students preferred to learn and how they saw themselves compared to the actual delivery of instruction and organization of the classroom least preferred.

The final measurements used in this study were interviews and observations. In the triangulation of these data pieces, the researcher chose to analyze these measures through the lenses of the four teacher participants and the five emergent themes, stereotype-colorblind racism, strategies-instructional/behavioral, responsibility, despair, and disconnect.

Stereotype-Colorblind Racism

Brooke's Interview/Observations

In identifying a classroom as either AP or remedial, Brooke identified classroom A was my AP classroom (white) and classroom B was my intervention (African American). She also stated that you find more the percentage of African Americans in the intervention classrooms due to their experiences at home, out of the school. She attributed this to their home make up. She believed that African Americans always blame it on the system. She believed that white parents push and prod their children through school where as the black parents, other things have more of a priority. She did not believe it was a race issue. She believed it was socio-economic.

She continued by saying that her 5th period class was definitely her intervention class of the day. “And my intervention class, my 5th period, is more of the African American percentage and they do sports and they always can make practice, and they always have their gear for practice, but coming across with homework is an issue.”

I see the kids especially the African American kids, they’re predominately the sports athletes, they’re the sports heroes, basketball, football, not so much baseball, but I mean they’re everywhere and that’s a big part of culture and that’s a big part of support to them, but I mean I don’t think you could say you can’t play if you don’t do your homework because no principal or administration is ever going to say that because they need their athletes and African Americans run faster, they can jump high, it’s just something. But they are the ones that have...roll in with their wheel suitcase and they go spend the night at a friend’s house and have their football stuff during football season but they can’t do the one page of homework that I assign once a week. So I don’t think there is an answer. You can bribe, you can show them their grades, you can send them notes home for their parents to sign, but when I sent them home for the grades this nine weeks I hardly get anything back from the African American students and the white or the Asian students had them.

Brooke also reported stereotypical blindness in terms of grade expectations when asked the scenario of changing a grade of 79.4 from a C to a B for a cooperative white student with parent support compared to a problem African American student with no parent support. She stated that a “C” for an African American student was a “really good grade probably.” During every classroom observation, the four African American participants sat in the back of the classroom. Only during one observation when Jodie was continuously talking loud, she was asked to move to the front of the class. Another observation revealed students taking a test on naming state capitals. The passing test group did not have to retake the test (All white/1 Asian). This group moved on to a new critical thinking lesson and worked in a circle co-op group. None of the African American participants were in the cooperative learning center. They all four rated group learning as a preference.

Frank's Interview/Observation

In Frank's interview, he selected classroom A (white) as the AP classroom and classroom B as the intervention classroom (African American). He attributed the deficient learning needs of African American students to slavery. "Many people were brought here as slaves and they were broken apart in their families and their history and their links to the past, and it takes a very long time to get over that. It's not something that just disappears, Ok?" He continued by saying "the parents, if we have conferences with these parents, they are not very literate, they have great difficulties."

During the classroom observations, all four African American participants sat in the back of the class. Further observations revealed that 11 of 12 girls in this class were in the back of the room. The teacher read out results of math test and called out names of students that made 100's (all white and Asian). As Frank continued, all the students realized that scores were being called based on performance, with many of the African American students' names last. One student quickly asked, "What was the lowest score?" Frank responded, "19". When the last paper was handed out, James was the recipient and ran around the room laughing along with the other students. After the commotion, James asked to be excused.

Lauren's Interview/Observation

Lauren also selected class A as the AP class and class B would represent the remedial class. She stated that white kids come to school better prepared than African American students. "They have healthy food and parents who are willing to work with them, and the outside resources."

When asked about the 79.4 grade change from a C to a B, Lauren firmly stated that she would treat both students the same, but did admit that most teachers would probably change the

white student's grade based on the request, take the extra credit, give the B, and disregard the African American student.

During the classroom observations, all four participants sat in back of class. As the teacher passed back homework, it was observed that several students (white) received positive comments, "nice work", "very good". The four participants just received their papers with no comments.

Katie's Interview/Observations

Katie completed the consensus by choosing classroom A as the AP class and classroom B as the intervention class. She said that she sometimes felt sorry for those kids that are way up here (white), and are in a class (African American) that she had to drag along. She commented that in the AP classes, you only see maybe one or two black students and everyone else is white. She attributed this to socioeconomics and not race. She believed that white families are very involved parents, and they are the parents that are going to make sure that their kids get it done. She stated that it is higher socioeconomic families who have the resources to get it done.

you know, when they (white students) go home at night, their concern is homework where as where some of these kids (African American) go home at night, they're babysitting younger brothers and sisters, they're making dinner, they're cooking their own dinner, you know, they're one... they have other things that are going on and if your concern is math homework or dinner, a lot of times you're going to feed yourself first. And I just think there's a lot more...and they may be going home there may not be parents at home, um, and again that's across the board.

Katie continued by explaining more beliefs and expectations of her African American students. She commented that she does not expect different things out of them, but knew what she was going to get. She had pre-determined class expectations and knew which class she was going to have most of her science fair projects completed. She had also pre-determined the struggling class and could call them out by periods. She reported that her high-level students (white) would have these nice printed computers, nice straight lines on their boards, but her

intervention students (African American), would have to come in after school and scramble to get it together. She predicted that this would be the case of her 3rd period class with a larger majority of African American students. She summed it up by saying, “so I just kind of know that that’s the way the class is, that’s just kind of the make up of the class, that’s the way it’s going to go.” Katie only had three of the four participants in her classroom. She did teach Jodie in grade 6 and forged a very positive relationship with her. All three of these African American students sat in the back of the classroom.

Strategies – Instructional/Behavioral

Brooke’s Interview/Observations

A large part of Brooke’s instructional strategies centered on homework practice. She stated that when she looked at the grades, the students that completed homework or extra credit had better grades. She reported that this tended to be her higher level white students. Brooke attended a predominately white high school and college, and said that she could not relate to students that did not complete their homework. She continued by saying that intervention (African American) students were not her strong suit. “It is something I need to get better at, um, I just started learning as I go especially with inclusion.”

During a classroom observation, the two African American girl participants were being talkative in the back of the classroom. The teacher asked them to turn in their homework for extra credit. Neither of the girls had completed the homework and both were penalized academically. “If they do their extra credit which is on the easy side, and they make an attempt I will bump their grades up.”

The teacher used predominately a lecture-note taking format for each and every class session. Occasionally, the teacher used overhead notes, and on a later observation, power-point notes were incorporated. All of the desks in this classroom were in traditional rows, with the four

African American students in the back of the classroom. Brooke had a soft voice, and much of the instruction was distal in site and hearing to seating location of the African American student participants. One of the lessons observed multiple times were the identification of state capitals in the United States. The students that completed all of the capitols correctly were advanced to a cooperative learning group with higher order learning strategies. This group was composed of all white students and one Asian student. None of the four participants or the African American in this classroom advanced to the cooperative learning group during the span of this study (12 weeks). There were no observations of learning preferences reported from the LTM (Learning Type Measures) of the student participants, nor from the literature of African American learners such as hands-on, interaction, culturally relevant, relational, or energetic/enthusiastic. It was redundant, predictable, and suited for the analytical passive learner. This was also prevalent in the teacher's behavioral strategies towards these students.

When asked scenario #2 about dealing with the group of African American boys in the hall, Brooke quickly quipped that she looked the other way and went about her business. She said, "as a female, I have a little voice, but I do have the Look!" This "look strategy" for behavior has been apparently self-taught by Brooke, and she proudly stated that she was "not a smiler!" Brooke reported that in one classroom altercation, she got in an African American male's face, blocked his way, and demanded that he get out of her classroom. She followed this exhortation with a push of this student out of the door.

Frank's interviews/Observations

The instructional strategies in Frank's math classroom were also traditional, rote and note-taking, overhead math problems, homework, disconnected to the students' LTM findings (learning type measure), and the literature for African American students. In responding to strategies, Frank took the time to talk about district strategies to help low achieving African

American students. His first strategy was to bus African American students to better schools. He then contradicted this statement by saying that “there should be a minimum of busing and maximum neighborhood schools.” He also talked about implementing after-school tutoring.

That would be a good thing, you know. You could, you know, maybe have the kids come rub elbows with kids that are doing better work and then make something available at a neighborhood level so that they can develop parental involvement, pride in what they’re doing, in where they’re living and how they are living.

Frank admitted that African American students cannot take advantage of any of the after school tutoring because these kids walk to school, or they have to leave on the school bus immediately following school. They cannot come in for extra help, and neighborhood schools would be a solution. Frank insisted that some type of instructional assistance must be made available to African American students. He did believe that if the district provided it, “they would come.” You’ve got to go through a church or an elementary school in that area, you’ve got to offer something there to help those students.”

In terms of behavioral strategies, Frank incorporated conduct points into his grading system. Students would be able to help or hurt their grades based on their in-class behavior. When answering scenario #2 about the boys in the hallway, Frank used a punitive behavioral strategy of having them “hold up the wall!” This strategy required that the students would actually position themselves in a 90-degree sitting position against the wall for an unlimited time. This position was very painful after a period of time, and in most cases humiliating to the participants. In answering scenario #3 about altering a 79.4 to a B for a white student versus keeping it a C for an African American student, Frank commented that, “I know it does happen.” He stated that this is another major reason the instructional field for African American students was very difficult to balance. He concluded by saying that the best behavioral strategy was treating African American kids with respect. He said, “ if you treat African American kids with

respect, they know it and if you treat them without it, they know that.....sometimes I failed and got mad at them.....that was very unprofessional.”

Another instructional strategy observed in Frank’s math class was his numerical method (higher to lower) of returning test papers. Frank had reported that the strategy was intended to encourage higher academic achievement. He began by calling out and celebrating the students that achieve perfect scores of 100. This group included only white and Asian students. He was then asked, “What was the lowest score?” Frank reported to the class a “19” that received a loud roar of laughter from all. As he proceeded to continue calling out scores, the students quickly compared numbers at their desk and realized that scores were being called high to low. All of the African American students in the class began to realize that their scores were being called out in the latter portion of this process. Even though scores were not being called, it became obvious that name recognition matched the lower scores. When the teacher got to the final two papers, there was loud buzzing and anticipation of, “Who would get that last paper?” Who would receive the “19.” The teacher called out the name James (student-participant). There was an uproar of laughter in the room, including the teacher. James marched up to get his paper, showed it off to the entire class, and laughed along with the rest of the group. Once order was restored and transition made to continue the new lesson, James asked to be excused to the bathroom. This was a common move (bathroom pass) for James in every class.

Consistent with all the other classrooms, Frank’s African American student sat in the back of the classroom. An un-intended observation was that all of Frank’s female students (except one) also sat in the back of his classroom. Frank tended to be more engaged in his male students as well, and challenged them in math games and even push-up contests after class.

Lauren's Interview/Observation

Lauren's instruction as a full time substitute had been well scripted by the teacher of record before his leave. There were reading strategies, vocabulary, grammar, and standardized test (FCAT – Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test) strategies daily. Students listened to books on tape, and even teacher readings were observed. Student engagement was again limited due to the disconnect with these strategies, and those revealed by the literature and LTM (learning types measure) given to the students.

Lauren, like Frank, responded to district strategies for instructing African American students. She also believed that some type of mandatory support with after-school tutoring programs and mentoring was desperately needed. She also believed that some type of program that placed African American students in positions of leadership were necessary. She said, "it's really hard to have children (African American) who see the only people in their school are in the custodial and...cafeteria positions." She felt that these students needed to see people of color in leadership and successful roles in their schools and society.

When asked scenario #3 about altering a 79.4 grade to a B for a white student with an active parent, she said, "the squeaky wheel gets the oil...." She continued by saying life was not fair and that some teachers do respond by bumping up a white student's grade to appease an over-active parent. She boasted that she would not respond in this way, and would give both students the same opportunity to achieve the higher grade of B.

Lauren felt that there was a large instructional disparity throughout the entire school community. In responding to scenario #4, the aided science project, Lauren said, "I think that uh...um a large amount of the awards go to white students who do have the resources and produce these very nice looking well thought out, parent aided, science projects and um, you know it...with the judges who are from the community come in and they see the children next to

their projects and interview them and ask them questions and look at what they've done and see their results and know they were aided by their parents. It makes me mad as a parent of a 6th grader, because I make sure that my son does his own project.”

In terms of answering scenario #2 the boys in the hallway, Lauren's behavioral strategy was to approach these African American males from a mother's standpoint, firm, but loving. She reported that she was not afraid or intimidated by this group because of raising two boys and having many of their African American friends over to the house. Her only concern was her soft voice. “See, when you don't have a loud voice, you have to find other strategies to get a group of boisterous young peoples' attention.”

If there's one thing I can wish for myself, that I could turn on my male loud voice..... uh-huh. Oh I think they do respond to that. Um, I see it with my children, my own children that they respond to their father's voice level when in getting someone's attention and uh, so I think they respond to um, the...to the commanding loud voice, is what they are responding too.

During the second observation of Lauren's class, she started class with a stern warning about constant bad behavior. It had been the first day without the regular teacher, and the class was putting her to the test. James constantly raised hand, but was not called on. He even raised his hand when he had wrong answers. This behavior seemed to begin to agitate the teacher and even the class. James sat in the last row of class and constantly agitated Buffie and Jodie (African American participants) in front of him. James was addressed by the teacher to be quiet, leave the girls alone, and not shout out answers. James resorted to quiet drumming on his desk and again addressed by teacher to stop. He responded by laughing out loud and was asked to move to the front of the classroom. The teacher continued with her classroom reading, and James commented that the derogatory usage of “greaser” should be considered as racist. As the teacher continued the reading, James got up and moved back to his original desk. As he moved back, he stared at the teacher and no reprimand was given. He remained there and continued to

disturb the girls and class the remainder of the period (15 minutes). This classroom was also set up in rows with the African American students in the back of the class. Little to no technology was observed during the duration of the observations.

Katie's Interview/Observations

Katie's science classroom had four work-stations with sinks, but the students only used the stations periodically during science lab. During four of the five observations, the students were seated in the back of the classroom in traditional rows. Again, the African American participants were positioned in the back of the classroom. Katie did incorporate some hands-on instruction, but for the majority of the observations, rote and note taking were again observed. Katie did comment on an instructional strategy that took the form of reciprocal teaching.

I try to put them, like in a position where they can help other students, or they can teach other students, or they can get you know a sense of leadership if nothing else out of that. And I do sometimes feel sorry for them. Um, but at the same time I think...I think they all learn a lot from each other. I think they all (white and African American) learn a lot from each other and I really think that because they come from so many different backgrounds that they really do help each other out and they really can help each other out and they just have to sort of learn that they can do that.

Katie was also a major contributor to the science fair. She insisted that all of her students participated in the science fair. She provided extra help, after-school tutoring, and in many cases the materials and resources for her African American and low socioeconomic students to participate.

When asked scenario #3 about altering a 79.4 to a B for a white student, Katie stated that she would have never found herself in this situation as a teacher. "This is just how I personally do grades, I wouldn't have been in that situation. If they are at a 79 what I generally do, depending on...but...if they are at a 79 what I do whether they are black, white or whatever, I usually call them up and I say Ok, we're at a 79, we're almost there, now...you know and I'll talk about...so about the effort for next semester or...and I usually bump them to the "B" and I

say, Ok I'm giving you a point now but end up taking a point away 9 weeks, you'll have to work twice as hard in order to get that "B". I don't have that problem because I take care of it before it gets to that point, you know, I deal with it with the student, they and I talk about it where, you know we are that close, but because we were that close, we make that extra effort."

During one observation, the researcher notice and verified that the strategy of using acronyms for retention were prevalent in Katie's classroom. PMAT was used for the phases of mitosis; prophase, metaphase, anaphase, and telophase. Many of these strategies were claps, hand movements, and on one occasion, Katie quipped the class, "give me 3!", which resulted in immediate quiet.

When asked about behavioral strategies, Katie responded to scenario #2 (boys in the hallway), by saying,

it helps if you know the groups of kids, and you know the students and you know how to approach them. It does take a few weeks to figure out, Ok, who do I raise my voice to, and who do I need to make sure I stay calm with...it takes a while to figure that out." She continued by saying, "a lot of time what I would do is I'll go right in the middle of it and go, "so what are we talking about?" You know what's so funny...and they think it's hilarious, I don't know why, but they think it's so funny that I want to know what's going on. Um, if they're being loud a lot of times I'll just ask them to bring their voices down or I ask...a lot of my kids I'll say Do you have a volume, can I just turn the volume...I know you have great things to say, but we just can turn it down...I can hear you, they can hear you, the whole school doesn't need to hear you, you know, can you just turn it down for me. Um, the cursing would be addressed differently, you know.

Responsibility

Brooke's Interview/Observations

The major element of this study was to examine and assess teacher responsiveness to the learning needs of a select group of African American students. While responding to scenario #1, the AP classroom versus the intervention classroom, Brooke began discussing the responsibility of the student learning. She adamantly began by saying, "It's their fault although they do play a part because you do by middle school, you do make your own path. Somehow though the blame

always gets shuffled back to the teacher, I think.” As she continued, the conversation switched to teacher and parent responsibility. Brooke reported that she does make parent phone calls, but it was uncomfortable, she really did not like it, but it is part of the job. She also felt that a large portion of communicating with parents was the responsibility of the administration. She also said that somehow, the responsibility always fell back on the teacher. “So I feel like even the slightest, anything if you say well we do this, it’s always going to come back as we’re singling somebody out when it’s not....it’s not.”

In responding to scenario #2, the boys in the hallway, Brooke relinquished total responsibility for addressing these African American boys on any level. She boldly stated that,

yeah sometimes I turn the blind eye in the morning, I have places to be and I don’t feel like 8:15 in the morning, mean I’ll just move along. Administration, there’s PE on duty.

In addressing scenario #3 on altering a grade of 79.4 to a B for a white student and not for an African American student, Brooke stated that, “If he’s just oh I have a “C” or he doesn’t care, I’m not going to help especially after every single extra credit opportunity that I’ve already done. Um, and I send out letters, if you get your parents signature I will give you extra, and I do not accept homework late.” During multiple observations in this classroom, Jodie and Buffie (female African American participants) did not have homework assignments completed.

Frank’s Interview/Observations

In discussing responsibility, Frank continued his interview with a district responsive focus. He believed that the districts have to make these schools improve. They have to build it, put whatever you need in there, tutoring, and family assistance. He felt strongly that the district needed to strengthen these kids (African American) before the 6th grade. In being responsive to the group of African American students in the hallway, Frank’s approach would have been to

choose somebody in the group that he knew. He felt that he could wiggle his way into the group to help quiet down the situation.

When addressing contacting parents, Frank believed that most people would jump all over this as an opportunity to bring the parents in, to boost the kid up, and reduce the behavior problem of the child that's having trouble. He felt that the majority of responsibility lay with the classroom teacher.

Because my job especially at this level in middle school is to get these kids to have better habits in school so that they can make it when they go to high school, college or whatever. So, um, and I think many of my colleagues feel the same way is that they are looking for the opportunity to reach kids who are um, struggling. Any way to reach those kids, you know, I've got to be ready with the carrot and stick and mixing them up and do whatever you can to try to make a break through because...one thing you learn I think as you teach for a while is that change doesn't come about like instantly, but when you look at a kid who in the beginning seemed like unreachable and six months later you see that they've made significant progress, it helps you to stay more patient when you know that change takes time and uh...a lot of times the parents are despondent because they're trying to do these things with the kid that, you know I have this trouble at home, I have this, I have that, and I say well you know, you have to be patient because change takes time and...but it takes patience on your part and it takes maturing on their part and you don't give up!

Lauren's Interview/Observations

During Lauren's interview and observations, there was not a lot of dialogue on responsibility. She was working at the school as a full-time substitute because her children were attending school at Tompkins Middle School. Her approach to behavior and comments reflected a parental approach to instruction and learning. This was also evident when the discussion began about communication responsibilities. Lauren said that "teachers respond to students who respond to them and want to succeed, and parents are wanting their children to succeed and the teacher responds to that..."

She continued by saying that in order to help these African American students become more responsible, "you kidnap them at the end of the day and arrange to have them taken home

and realize that they're just a kid, they're just kids and you know sometimes through no fault of their own, you have to give them a little bit of a...boost. (Lauren began to tear up)

Katie's Interview/Observations

Katie had a similar response about responsibility. She and her husband are both teachers and she told him, "If I could adopt 50 of them, I would." She stated that he always had one or two every year he wants to take home, but you just can't (teacher began to cry). Katie believed putting effort in building relationships with her African American students was critical. She recalled that during one school altercation, these are the students that come to her defense.

a lot of times a lot of my black students are the ones that are going to step up for me. Like there was a fight out there and they were like yelling and screaming at each other, cursing at each other and they hadn't gotten physical yet, but I step in and said, Ok, you need to calm down, you need to go to this room, you need to go to that room, call the dean, those sorts of things and so you know they're upset, they're yelling and cursing at me and this little black girl, the one coming (Jodie), don't yell at Ms. Katie!

She continued by sharing her love for Jodie, "she's fabulous and can do so much better!"

Katie's responsibilities extended the normal school day. She conducted after-school tutoring and help on science fair projects on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. She had been a responsive teacher in Jodie's life the previous year. She recanted that Jodie would come in with her study guide, and she would help her with her work. "You know she would look up...and I would show her where in the chapter to look, she would look it up, she would read it, and I would say, "you know, what does it mean, but I think just...I think a lot of times when you show them that you care, if you help them get supplies together for their project, they're going to put the board together for you." Katie had personally supplied her needy students with a total of 30 boards so far this year. Whatever it took, paper, scissors, glue, or time, Katie was there for her students.

During one of the observations, it appeared that Buffie was having a bad day. She approached Katie for acknowledgement and a hug. Without fail, Katie gave her a big hug and a pat on the back saying, “let’s have a great day!” Buffie gave a big smile.

Despair

Brooke’s Interview/Observations

Brooke simply stated that there is no answer in meeting the instructional and learning needs of these African American students. “You can bribe, you can show them their grades, you can send them notes home for their parents to sign, and nothing is ever returned or changed.” She said that she does not pity these students. She felt that it was almost impossible to communicate with these families as well. She said that many times their (African Americans) phones have been disconnected, they don’t have Internet, so that limits email. She strongly admitted that there is no way to level the playing field between white and African American students.

She continued by saying that “I don’t think there is an answer because race will always come up as an issue on some level and everything.” She believed that things would “never change.”

Frank’s Interview/Observations

Frank also believed that it was very difficult to balance and level the playing field for African American students. He felt that if they were not prepared by 6th grade, it was almost impossible to catch them up by graduation. A large part of his despair centered on teachers that were not trying and in some cases had given up.

Um, there are that group of teachers that...I don’t know what happens to them. They start talking about what’s wrong with these kids, you know, what happened to these kids. Well, it’s not what happened to the kids, it’s what happened to you? What happened to you, the kids have always been like this. It’s just in the past you had more patience, more tolerance, more than you have now, you’ve worn yourself out on this somehow. You know because I’ve seen it with quite a few teachers that they once were much more capable with dealing with trouble without getting despondent and then they just like, Oh

this is impossible, I can't deal with it. So I know teachers reach that point and they start complaining that the kids have changed, but I don't think they have.

Lauren's Interview/Observations

Lauren's responses were again from a mother's standpoint as she despairingly said,

I wish that there was more, I know that there is, but I wish that um, it's just a fact of life that we're diverse in our culture, and we have to find a way to help these kids that are falling behind in huge proportions and so I wish um, that there were more on-site ways to help these students.

She continued by saying that it is probably mystifying to them when we (white people) don't understand, and they're just being who they are. She stated that sometimes we respond with, "you know you're being disrespectful, but for them it may not be disrespect or whatever." She believed that more on-site learning for teachers to bridge that gap with their kids of other cultures is desperately needed.

You know it's really hard to have children who see the only people in their school are in the custodial and...position and the cafeteria positions and when they see people like that are in leadership positions and mentoring them, it says to them that success is possible and that they are worthwhile people, and they count in the society which I think is a huge problem. They need to feel worthwhile.

Katie's Interview/Observation

Katie concluded her interview with throwing her hands up as well. When asked about meeting the instructional and learning needs of African American students, she answered the question with questions. "Does anybody? Seriously does anybody? I mean my only answer is like I can keep doing what I am doing in my classroom, I can keep trying to motivate my students. She closes with the reality that seems to have become the mantra for all of the teacher-participants: "I just kind of accepted it and gone with it. I feel like we're halfway there. I don't feel necessarily like we will ever get there. I think it could change, but has it changed, you know, over the past, It hasn't, you know, it's been this way. I think that the possibility is there, but I'm

not sure that it is going to happen. I don't want that job and I don't think it's an easy fix, and I'm not sure that it ever will necessarily be fixed."

Disconnect

Brooke's Interview/Observations

During the interview and observations, there was a considerable disconnect with Brooke's beliefs and expectations of her African American students. In responding to scenario #1 about the AP (white) class versus the intervention (African American) class, she quickly responded that she would prefer teaching AP kids. She admitted that she had a lack of training, and trouble teaching intervention students as a whole. She stated that she was learning as she went, and that inclusion of lower level students was a weakness for her instructionally and socially. She said candidly, "I don't really understand why a student would not want to do their homework or not come to class with a pencil. I don't get that mentality because I never hung around people like that." Brooke also admitted a major disconnect in that she had difficulty in reaching and communicating with African American parents. She felt that their interest lay in sports and not in academics. She also blamed economics in that many African Americans had no email, disconnected phones, and did not return paper communication sent home by the teacher.

Another major disconnect with the female African American participants was that this teacher admitted having problems with a "few" African American girls. In observing the classroom, the problem persisted as both teacher and students conflicted each other during every classroom observation. During one observation, Jodie had to be moved to the front away from Buffie. During the next observation, the two students were again sitting in the back by each other.

The instructional delivery and environment were disconnected to the preferred learning of the student participants.

Frank's Interview/Observations

An interesting disconnect that Frank utilized as a behavioral strategy was his ability to be loud. This tended to intimidate these students and in most cases negative responses were developed. As students responded negatively, they were issued punishment by having to brace themselves against a 90-degree wall for a minute or two. Frank suggested that these African American students had grown "accustomed to it." Another major disconnect (that will be discussed in the summary) is the idea of intimidation. Frank suggested the following when talking about this topic:

Um, I know that other teachers are sometimes definitely intimidated um, especially small white women seem to be intimidated because they are just nervous, you know I guess they feel helpless or threatened. I don't think they really are threatened, but I can understand it if they feel that way and if they have very little history of these relations, you know I can see that, but I hope they grow out of it. There'll be other teachers there doing it, female teachers, they're there like children it's time to go, let's go to class now. I'm like (louder) all right let's move out, it's time to go. You know broadcast it, you know, and walk over to them, it's time to move out you guys, let's go, come on. Wow, because I can be loud and so that tends to work I can see them struggling with it and especially since the other male teacher is not a real force in the hall, I can move them along and get the kids into class on time." Well, I definitely think some teachers are intimidated by blacks, you know African Americans.

Frank's instructional delivery was also disconnected to these students' preferred learning types. Buffie and Jodie sat in the back of class working on something else during several of the observations (disengaged).

Lauren's Interview/Observations

Even though much of Lauren's interview and demeanor was that of a parent, her biggest disconnect was knowing how to reach parents. She felt that a "cycle" has been put in place by the teachers in the school, that accepted little to no help or positive feedback from African American parents. She adamantly argued that "there needs to be some way to stop this cycle!"

Another major disconnect for Lauren was race. She felt that “it is very hard as you know for a white person to understand these cultural differences.”

Katie’s Interview/Observations

One interesting disconnect for Katie was the no cursing policy at Tompkins. She stated that it is a referral, period. She believed that this added to an already problem of high referrals for African Americans (especially males) because of the common use of profanity in their culture as well as middle school culture in general. She also contradicted Frank’s utilization of loudness by saying:

I mean different across the board, some are going to shut down if you yell and scream... This is the way I wanted to do it and this is the way my mom told me to....we did it my mom’s way with behavior sometimes it’s just the volume, just louder ..reaction’s loud and it is big and I...Um, I know...you know the teachers that are the yellers and the screamers and I know a lot of kids...I mean different across the board, some are going to shut down if you yell and scream. Some are going to get back in your face if you yell and scream. I mean it just depends on the kid. And some of them respond to yelling and screaming.

Katie finally admitted, “it takes a while to figure that out how to approach African American students.

Table 4.1 Student Learning Preferences & Least Preferred/Observed Learning Styles

QUESTIONS	PREFERRED	LEAST PREFERRED/OBSERVED
1. Environment	Discussion/collaboration	Logical reasoning/order
2. I learn best by	Self-discovery/in groups	Reflecting
3. People identify me as	Creative/responsive	Logical/productive
4. Strengths	Enthusiasm	Listening/reflective
5. I enjoy	Making personal connections	Organizing ideas/results
6. Generally, I am	Nurturing	intuition
7. I consider myself	N/A no frequency	N/A no frequency
8. People who are	Supportive	Productive/informed
9. I tend to be	Extroverted	Introverted
10. Type of learning task	Group	Individual learning

Table 4.2 Sources of Evidence by Research Question

Research Questions					
1	What are the teacher's instructional style beliefs about the needs of African American students?	TIBS (Teachers)			
2	What are the teachers' observed instructional practices while working with the selected group of African American students?	Interviews/ Observations	Strategies- Instructional Behavioral		
3	What are the preferred learning styles of the selected African American students? Least Preferred?		LTM (students)		
4	How do teachers' instructional styles correspond to the learning styles preferences of these African American students?	CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS	LTM (Students)		INTERVIEWS (Teachers)
5	How do teachers' instructional styles correspond to their beliefs about African American students?	TIBS (Teacher)	Classroom Observations	Strategies Instruction Behavioral	Interviews (Teachers)

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess teachers' beliefs and observe how teachers responded to the learning and social needs of a select group of African American middle school students in the classroom setting. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research of the study.

Research Question 1

- What are the teachers' instructional style beliefs about the needs of African American students?

The results of the teacher surveys showed that the teachers believed they encouraged cooperative classroom learning, gave students opportunities to use what they were learning, considered re-teaching based upon the results of assessments, and planned their lessons based on individuals' learning needs of all of their students. They also believed that they addressed the learning needs of their low level students including this select group of African American students. Even though no pre or post learning styles measures were administered, all of the teachers believed that their lessons were based on individuals' learning needs.

Research Question 2

- What are the teachers' observed instructional practices while working with the selected group of African American students?

The interviews and observations showed that the teachers did not address the students' learning needs. Their classrooms' instructional styles were actually "one-size-fits-all". There was no differentiation of instruction throughout the classroom observations. For example, what was depicted as cooperative learning was in reality a reward circles of high-achieving white and Asian students receiving higher level separate instruction (critical thinking), while the rest of the class spent time re-taking the 50 states/capital exam until mastery. The four African American

student participants never made it to the learning environment they most preferred. Most of the teacher-participants did not feel that the instructional playing field was equitable to African American students. Differentiating instruction with so many students and so little time would be difficult to accomplish.

When asked the question for scenario #3 about teachers showing equity in changing a white versus black student's grade a few decimal points from a "C" to a "B" based on behavior and parental involvement, all of the teachers hesitated. Even though all of them agreed that they would not treat either student differently, they admitted, "I know it does happen." They shared that most awards and leadership opportunities at their school were given to white students.

Classroom instruction reflected practices conducive to left-brain learners. Instruction was individual, analytical, and logical based primarily on learning specific facts and figures. All of the teacher-participants taught the same way to the whole group, although the student-participants reported a preference for group work and enthusiasm. Individual desks lined up in orderly rows were the arrangements in every classroom environment. The expectation was that students were to listen, take the notes, answer the questions, and be quiet. All four student-participants sat in the back of their classrooms. Strategically, this kept them away from the speaker, and likely contributed to disengagement with instruction. Neither the teacher nor student made an attempt to change their designated seating positions until one of the students became vociferous and was directed to sit in the front of the room.

Research Question 3

- What are the preferred learning styles of the selected group of African American students? Least preferred?

The findings from the learning styles inventory of the student-participants revealed a disturbing disconnect of how students preferred to learn and how they saw themselves compared to the actual delivery of instruction and organization of the classroom least preferred. The students preferred an environment of discussion and collaboration. Lecture, note taking, and homework (that was a part of their final grade) were the actual observed instruction. The students rated themselves as extroverted, but were asked to sit in rows, listen, and be quiet. Students reported that they enjoyed self-discovery, exploring hidden possibilities, and making personal connections. However, group work (which was also highly rated) was allocated to high achieving students, and perpetuation of least preferred types of learning experiences were given to the group of African American students in this study.

Research Question 4

- How do teachers' instructional styles correspond to the learning styles preferences of these African American students?

These teachers' instructional styles did not correspond to the learning styles preferred by this select group of African American students. For example, the students reported a preference for group work, but sat in orderly rows and worked individually in every classroom. All of them reported a preference for discussion and collaboration, and the teachers' instructional styles were lecture and note taking. Each classroom operated in an orderly teacher-led manner. The students also reported learning best in self-discovery, but the teachers' instructional styles were incongruent and based on content-discovery. The students preferred cooperative group instruction, but received whole group instruction. The students enjoyed making personal connections to instruction, but were given organizing ideas, facts, and results. All of the teacher-participants admitted difficulty in meeting the instructional needs of African American students. Even though they rated themselves as planning instruction based on their students' learning

needs, their instruction was benchmarked, standardized, and patterned to meet the statewide comprehensive exam given in the spring

Research Question 5

- How do teachers' instructional styles correspond to their beliefs about African American students?

This study provided a glaring lack of correspondence between these teachers' self-perceived instructional styles and their beliefs about African American students. Consensus from viewing the photo in which teachers had to determine whether the racial composition of a classroom was advanced placement or intervention. The teachers believed that the classroom of a majority of African American students was the intervention class. Based on this "white racial frame", these teachers responded instructionally to these students differently and in a less engaging manner. Good and Nichols (2001) confirmed this belief by stating that teacher expectations, like expectations in other social settings, tend to be self-sustaining because they may affect perception, causing some teachers to be more likely to see what they expect and less likely to notice the unexpected.

Implications of this Study

As noted by Hamre and Pianta (2001), teachers' behaviors increase or decrease children's confidence, academic self-concepts, and academic performance. Their attitudes regarding students are influential in their judgments, grading, and behaviors toward students because they spend more time with these students than their parents. If instruction is solely teacher-centered and focused on the dissemination of information, what opportunity do students have to reflect, hypothesize, and actively integrate what they are learning so that it becomes their own.

In the model of American schooling, these teachers believed that they were operating at a high level of instruction. They were very knowledgeable in their content areas, and each had

good classroom management strategies as well as good planning skills. Agendas were on the board, and the students knew the day-to-day routines. Selected by the principal as the best teachers in 7th grade, the implications of disconnect and disengagement of this select group of African American students is serious. If the best teachers in the system are not finding success with their African American population, what is happening with the remaining African American students in the school? These teachers and students confirmed the findings in cognitive dissonance, raceless persona, and cultural intimidation theories listed in table 5.2.

Cognitive dissonance was evident throughout the data collection process. These teachers were doing their expected and evaluative jobs, but experiencing the inner stress of knowing that they were not meeting the social and academic needs of their African American population. This was coupled with lack of pre and in-service training, as well as time to differentiate instruction. The teachers reported desires to teach in different ways, but the restraints and mandates of the district and school demanded that they stand and deliver the required state standards. This resulted in teacher and student despair and the perpetuation of these students failing and falling behind. These teachers realized that something had to be done in order to level the playing field and change the status quo. They suggested before and after school tutoring, mentorship programs, access to the cultural and academic capital of the school, and even adoption. These uncomfortable and stressful feelings confirmed this theory, but lends itself to further researcher, “Will anything be done?”

Another theory that was confirmed and revealed in this study was the raceless persona theory of “acting White.” It was obvious from the observations that these students did possess a different identity and personality with their friends and outside of these teachers’ classrooms. All of them were extroverted, enthusiastic, and used vernacular common to their peers, but were

asked to contain their spirits and personalities in the orderly classroom settings. Their language was corrected, their ideas refocused, and their preferred learning styles were never examined or tended to instructionally. At times their behaviors resorted to their desired personalities, but they were quickly reprimanded and often moved away from their peers. This was a crucial revelation in the study because this select group had an average grade point average of 2.75 which is a high C or low B. The implications for these students depend upon whether they will conform to the Eurocentric education system or choose to be defiant of its constraints. The student participants were purposely selected because this time in their schooling as well as their learning experiences will be critical for their future academic successes or failures. These students, many of whom have the potential of becoming honor students with G.P.A.'s of 3.0 or greater, can decide to oppose the system and graduate with just the minimum 2.0 G.P.A for graduation. African American students with resiliency, persistency, and strong wills, tend to be successful in this system. Others, fall prey to the pressure and at times fall to the intimidation of the majority population as well as their own community. Emerging from the latter, cultural intimidation was prevalent in this school setting.

Cultural Intimidation Theory is related to prejudice and discrimination through verbal, physical, or some impeding blocking or posturing towards someone to make them feel lower than you. This intimidation also can be emotional manipulation, purposeful embarrassment, as well as visual looks and insults. It became apparent through the data collection that many of the white female teachers were fearful of the African American students, especially the males. The teachers admitted difficulty in diffusing groups of African American males, and at times ignoring them, or allowing male teachers and administrators to deal with them. The teachers also admitted to punitive measures in dealing with African American students. These students were

embarrassed in front of their peers by having to posture themselves in a sitting position and “hold up the wall”. They were spoken to in demeaning tones with lack of respect and given abusive looks. They were even physically blocked and shoved and placed in the back of every classroom observed. They were further embarrassed in class by having their test scores called out and returned in numerical order from A to F.

The implications of this type of intimidation is either tolerated or opposed. In the case of this select group of African American students, they found their own ways of returning the intimidation. These students collectively found power in their positions in the back of the classrooms. Sitting there, they would visit with their friends, laugh, play, and many times shout out unrelated information to draw attention and sometimes to be funny. The detrimental implication is that they were not receiving or engaging in instruction they needed for success. Also, the teachers were content, because these students were less disruptive to the whole group by their positions in the back of the room.

Observations revealed that these students returned intimidating looks for the ones they received, demanded bathroom passes at will, and many times gave visual looks that dared the teachers to even address them. They grouped themselves together when possible, and an unapproachable line was drawn between teachers and African American students. The implications, as teachers we cannot reach these students, as students, these teachers are not teaching me the way I learn best. School is boring and a waste.

All four classrooms confirmed Riding’s (2002) findings that the American classroom’s analytical model is in complete opposition to the learning preferences of African American students. Sadler-Smith & Riding (1999) suggested that the type of opportunities that these students needed to exhibit should be around Project-Based learning, relational rather than

analytical, hands-on, discussion, and cooperative learning activities. What they received from this select group of teachers was completely the opposite. The actual delivery of instruction and organization of the classroom mirrored students' least preferred learning styles.

These teachers selected by their principal as the best among their peers extenuated the lack of responsiveness in the participants' classrooms. Teachers' lack of understanding about students' learning styles coupled with an emphasis on student outcomes only serve to perpetuate instructional practices focused on the transmission of knowledge only. Instruction was teacher-centered. Students' needs for relational, interactive, and student-centered teaching were not provided.

While all of these students received equal amounts of instruction and expectations, the inequities were illuminated when these African American students were consistently expected to adapt to this Euro-centric educational model. This form of educational hegemony is prevalent in the majority of American schools. This confirms Fordham and Ogbu's raceless persona theory. In order for these students to find success in this school, they must adapt to the majority environments, instructions, and culture.

Teachers' inability to meet the needs of these students may have been the result of a lack of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy and a belief in agency are crucial to teaching. These findings have implications for pre-service training in schools of Education. Sending interns out to urban schools to learn on-the-job training may help them short term, however, perhaps pre-service students should have year long experiences in these settings prior to graduation. Classroom management that focused on compliance, order and control, might have been useful for survival, however, over used continually, this approach perpetuates a lack of culturally responsive pedagogy and was in direct conflict with the learning preferences of this select group of African

American students. This type of instructional disconnection between teachers practice and some African American students is what is happening nationwide that ensures a constant achievement gap (West-Olatunji & Behar-Horenstein, 2005, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006).

Recommendations for Further Research

1. How would African American and majority middle school students describe their classroom instructional experiences?
2. How would inner city and rural middle school teachers differ in their instructional practices towards African American students?
3. How would African American teachers respond to the learning needs of a group of African American middle school students?
4. How would culturally relevant pedagogy affect the achievement and academic performance of a group of African American middle school students?
5. How would instructional practices differ for African American students if the study compared new or veteran teachers with culturally immersive training and those without this training?

Table 5.1 Findings of The Study Based on Theoretical Frameworks/Perspective

Key Points of Theory	Findings	Theory confirmed or refuted
<i>Cognitive Dissonance Theory</i>		
An uncomfortable feeling or stress caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously.	75% of the teachers desired to teach in a different way, but taught the expectations of the district and state.	Confirmed
Teachers have a fundamental cognitive drive to reduce this dissonance by modifying an existing belief, or rejecting one of the contradictory ideas.	All of the teacher participants believe that there was no answer in sight to level the playing field for African American students, but wanted desperately to provide tutoring and mentoring to help.	Confirmed
<i>Raceless Persona Theory (Fordham, Ogbu, 1996, 1998, 2003)</i>		
African Americans relinquish their racial identities, in order to succeed in the Eurocentric environment.	Even though students conformed to school environment, there was a natural rebelliousness and disconnect. These students sat in the black sections, used their language in and out of class, and intimidated “whites” as a show of power and position.	Confirmed
<i>Cultural Intimidation Theory (US Legal Definition-harassment, threat-of-harm, adapted by Scott, 2009)</i>		
Intimidation related to prejudice and discrimination. Behavior may include epithets, derogatory comments, racial slurs, assault, impeding or blocking movement, offensive touching or any physical interference visual insults, glowering, countenance emotional manipulation, verbal abuse, purposeful embarrassment, and making someone feel lower than you.	Teacher called out student scores in rank order from high to lowest. African American students positioned themselves and were positioned by teachers in the back of the classroom. Teacher intimidated students with the “Look” and shoved an African American boy out of the door. One student challenged a teacher’s use of the word “greaser” as racist, and disrupted instruction without intervention. A student moved back to his seat without teacher permission, and the teacher did not to address his behavior. Two students talked throughout the class period without consequences.	Confirmed

APPENDIX A
CONSENT LETTER

**College of Education
Department of Educational Administration and Leadership
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32601**

Parent Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student (William R. Scott) in the Department of Educational Administration and Leadership at the University of Florida. I am currently conducting research on Teachers' Responsiveness to the Instructional Needs of African-American Students under the supervisions of Dr. Linda Behar-Horenstein. The purpose of this study is to determine if the instructional practices, communication, and services provided to African-American students by their teachers have an affect on their academic progress. This information will allow other researchers and educators to realize their effect on the achievement gap between white and African-American students. The benefits from this study could be far-reaching because even though many studies have been done about the achievement gap, it continues to widen.

Your student will be given a comprehensive assessment instrument to determine their learning style. They will also be observed in their classroom setting approximately 16 times throughout the semester. Student identities will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. All names and data will be replaced with alphabetical and numerical coding. Results will be recorded in the form of group data. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect your child's grades or placement in any programs.

You and your student have the right to withdraw consent for participation at any time without consequences. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results of this study will be available December 2007 upon request. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at (352) 219-2369 or my faculty advisor, Dr. Linda Behar-Horenstein at (352) 392-2391 ext. 269. Questions or concerns about your child's rights as research participant may be directed to the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, Florida 32611, (352) 392-0433.

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my student,
_____, to participate.

_____ parent/guardian - date

_____ 2nd parent/witness - date

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT: TEACHER

Protocol Title: Teachers' Responsiveness to the Instructional Needs of African-American Students

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to determine if the instructional practices, communication, and services provided to African-American students by their teachers have an effect on their academic progress.

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to be interviewed for 1 hour and observed at least 4 times during the semester. You will be given the TIBS efficacy belief assessment instrument..

Time required: 30 minutes TIBS assessment, 1 hour interview, and 4 hours of observation.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks to the participant. There will be numerous benefits for the educational community.

Compensation: No compensation

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file in the faculty supervisor's office. When the study is completed and the data analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequences.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: William R. Scott, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Administration and Leadership, (352) 392-1544; (352) 219-2369.

Whom to contact about our rights as a research participant in the study: UFIRB office, Box 112250, University of Florida , Gainesville, Florida 32611-2250; ph. 392-0433

Agreement: I have read the procedure described above, I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT: STUDENT

Protocol Title: Teachers' Responsiveness to the Instructional Needs of African-American Students

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to determine if the instructional practices, communication, and services provided to African-American students by their teachers have an effect on their academic achievement

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to take a comprehensive assessment instrument measuring your learning style and observed at least 16 times during the semester.

Time required: 30 minutes taking learning style instrument and 4 hours of observation.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks to the participant. There will be numerous benefits for the educational community.

Compensation: No compensation

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file in the faculty supervisor's office. When the study is completed and the data analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequences.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: William R. Scott, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Administration and Leadership, (352) 392-1544; (352) 219-2369.

Whom to contact about our rights as a research participant in the study: UFIRB office, Box 112250, University of Florida , Gainesville, Florida 32611-2250; ph. 392-0433

Agreement: I have read the procedure described above, I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The researcher has racial experiences that span over forty years of personal and educational. From 1962 – 1965 the researcher attended an all-black elementary school in southeast rural Georgia. From 1966 – 1967, he was the only black student in an all-white elementary school in the same town. Following these two experiences, in 1968 – 1972, he was recruited and participated in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1963, 1968, and 1972, he endured the pain of the deaths of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert Kennedy respectively. These deaths were significant at the time due to the struggles of many Americans, especially those of low socioeconomic status and minorities. Integration, segregation, welfare, equal rights for blacks and women, voting rights, are some of the items that have structured our society and the racial achievement gap observed in this study and our schools today. In 1968, his only positive role model, his brother, returned from the Vietnam War lost and confused. His brother has never worked since that day, and remains as an outpatient.

The researcher received a bachelor's degree from Clemson University in 1980 in Secondary Education. This included approximately 60 hours of educational curriculum, including a full semester practicum in a middle school in Greenville, South Carolina. After an untimely death to the P.E. teacher, his mentor teacher took over P.E. and he had to finish the year alone. Several years following were spent in business, as a youth director at church, and as a local coach in the city and for Gainesville High School. The researcher returned to full-time teaching again in 1994 at Gainesville High School. He also coached football, softball, basketball, and eventually became the athletic director. All of these experiences continued his educational growth as well as academic and social experiences with young people.

In 2000, the researcher began teaching at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School @ the University of Florida. He also enrolled in a Masters Degree Program in Educational

Leadership. In 2002 – 2003, the researcher was chosen as Florida’s Teacher of the Year from amongst 135,000 teachers. This honor allowed him to travel the country as an educational representative for the state of Florida, and observe schools, teachers, students, and parents from a wide-range of experiences. During this time, the researcher was also a member of the Governor’s Literacy Team (Jeb Bush), and attended two conferences in Washington, D.C., one with President Bush, another with the Commissioner of Education.

In 2003, the researcher was accepted as a PhD. candidate in Educational Leadership. The researcher currently serves as the assistant principal at P.K. Yonge.