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Robin Harden-Daniels

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**TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION: CULTURE-BASED PEDAGOGIES IN
URBAN, PREDOMINATELY BLACK AMERICAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

by
Robin L. Harden Daniels

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
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Dec 4, 2013

Dissertation Chair: Ane Johnson, Ph.D.

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Dedication

To my husband and daughters.

Thank you for supporting me, praying for me, and forgiving me for conversations missed while research was at hand. I have reached this milestone because of God's grace and you.

Acknowledgement

To Dr. Ane Johnson, my Dissertation Chair.

Thank you for being constructively difficult and unwavering in your commitment to academic excellence. The authenticity of this experience is due, in large measure, to who you are.

Abstract

Robin L. Harden Daniels

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION: CULTURE-BASED PEDAGOGIES IN URBAN,
PEDOMINATELY BLACK AMERICAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Ane Johnson, PhD.

Doctorate in Educational Leadership

Problems facing Black American students in underfunded urban schools continue to threaten the viability of public education for this and other nontraditional student populations. These problems, along with the growing diversity of American children, prompt a re-examination of extant data on the practices associated with the effective teaching of Black American students. This meta-ethnography illuminates the findings of four case studies and then explores their implications for teaching. By looking through the lens of critical race theory, this study explores how effective teachers use culture-based instruction to better engage Black American students in the process of learning. Findings identify core teacher behaviors and instructional practices that support the successful teaching of urban Black American primary school children.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Current efforts to educate Black students in American public schools have been fraught with documented inconsistencies and discouraging outcomes (Bell, 2004; Frisby, 1993; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). Despite monumental shifts in educational policy as sparked by *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Coleman Report (1966), and the School Excellence Movements (1970 -1980's), the hopes for the academic achievement of many Black American students remain unactualized (Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Milner & Howard, 2004). What has long been termed “the achievement gap” still exists with Black American students performing well below their socio-economic peers from other ethnic groups as indicated by standardized testing (Braun, Wang, Jenkins, & Weinbaum, 2006). Furthermore, the vast majority of Black American students are additionally affected by the underperformance associated with being economically disadvantaged (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011).

While these performance disparities are documented and oft debated (Robinson & Biran, 2006), the American educational community still struggles to develop comprehensive solutions to these concerns. Even in districts like Newark and Paterson, New Jersey, which have experienced State control since 1991 and 1995, student performance outcomes still offer no conclusive evidence of positive change (Librera, 2002; MacFarquhar, 2010). No local or State-mandated strategies for advancing Black American education have been designed, and Black American students in these communities continue to flounder.

In considering this dilemma, three considerations emerge. First, Black American students are not academically achieving at the pace or to the extent that their peers are from other ethnic groups (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Second, public school educators have an

obligation to explore how Black American children experience public school environments and what aspects of these experiences are both different and negative (Delpit, 2003; Tatum, 1997). And, third, American society and its public schools have become increasingly more diverse (Coats, 2010, Howard, 2007). If we fail to understand the contextualized learning needs of Black American students, how will we fare with children from other culture and language groups whose educational needs are as equally nontraditional?

In light of these realities, public school educators are now challenged to inventory assumptions and evaluate how these demographic variables should inform instructional practice (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Black American educationists believe that this reflective process must decentralize the hegemonic paradigms associated with traditional epistemologies (Asante, 1991; 2003; Irvine, 1991). They also contend that educators must understand instruction as a transformative work and engage this work by embracing “critical” theoretical frameworks (2003, Freire, 1971). By adopting this perspective, Black American educators have generated research that attests to the value of culturally centered learning (Irvine 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a). This contextualized approach to teaching and learning facilitates the success of Black American students in ways that the teaching of Euro-western norms has long supported the academic progress of White American children (Shockley, 2011).

In discussing the needs of Black American students, this study does not focus on the achievement gap, per se. While it rightly upholds the reality of this gap, it does so as a means of the stressing the obvious; there is an urgent need to view Black American education through a radically different and more progressive lens. This fact is supported not only by the presence of the achievement gap but also by statistics that highlight the struggles of uneducated Black American children. In 2009, for example, 9.3% of the nation’s Black American youths, ages 16-

24, dropped out of high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). As they did, 23% of these youths became part of the penal system either through youth detention centers or prisons (Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009). A Northeastern University (2009) study likewise revealed that 38% of the Black American girls between the ages of 16 – 24 who dropped out of high school also became single mothers. These facts, when coupled with a 38.5% unemployment rate for Black American teenagers, paint a daunting picture of how adrift these students are if they fail in public schools (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

This stark reality transcends traditional understandings of the achievement gap and discourse on standardized test scores. This reality has also led some emic researchers to conclude that the struggles facing Black American children are not the source of the achievement gap, but rather a manifestation of it. From this perspective, the achievement gap is a contrived racial phenomenon that has political, social and economic implications (Ladson-Billings, 2006). It exists not as a gap in Black intellectual ability, but as an “educational debt” owed to Black students (2006, p.5). The alleged achievement gap is the sum total of racialized educational policies and practices that have long defined minority education. Its existence is tethered not to the failure of Black American children but to a national history that includes compulsory ignorance laws, de jure segregation, unfunded schools, systemic racial bias and now re-segregation (2006).

With these truths in mind, then the existence of a race-based educational performance disparity should neither appall nor surprise. Instead, it should serve as a causal event that inspires decisive second and third order changes in educational policy, practice, and funding. This approach is needed to support the educational practices that will enable Black American children to function as viable and contributing members of a pluralistic society. According to emic

researchers (Gay, 2010; Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a), the widespread implementation of critical, culture-based educational practices will help to pave the way.

Critical Race Theory and Black American Education

In conducting this research, a critical perspective served as one of four conceptualizations that informed data selection and interpretation. By definition, critical ideology acknowledges the dominant and historic role that indicators, such as ethnicity, economic status, and gender, have played in shaping American society (Tatum, 1997). A critical race theoretical (CRT) perspective, for example, examines the dynamics of race, racism, power, and privilege. It explores the impact of social, psychological, political and economic variables on the realities facing the targeted group.

As it pertains to education, CRT has five major tenets central to effective policymaking and practice (Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010; Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). These tenets maintain that: (a) racism and racial dynamics are endemic to American culture and continue to influence the way people perceive themselves and others; (b) concepts espousing color-blindness and race-based meritocracy are destructive forces that both deny the presence of racism and affirms it by advancing beliefs in intrinsic merit; (c) critical perspectives are change and activist oriented; (d) critical perspectives promote the welfare of oppressed or disenfranchised peoples; and (e) critical perspectives are intrinsically interdisciplinary and analytical (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010).

Although there are numerous studies on Black American underachievement, there is comparatively little research on how effective Black American teachers infuse CRT into daily literacy instruction to promote Black American resilience and achievement (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This observation is significant in light of shifting demographics and the

relative absence of Black American and other ethnic minority teachers in public schools. Historically and as a group, Black American teachers have served as educational mentors and socio-economic role models (Fultz, 1995; Walker, 2001). These functions were commonly perceived as part of a religious calling, a calling that demanded a commitment to racial uplift by teaching Black American children how to navigate the dangerous terrain between self-sufficiency and the limitations imposed by systemic racism (Walker, 2001; 2005).

Evidence of this perspective is attested to by artifacts left by the various Black American teachers' associations that existed in the South as early as 1878 (Walker, 2005). The archival documents of the Georgia Teachers and Education Association (GTEA), for example, identify two agendas. The first overt objective was simply to educate Black American children (2005). Its more discreet agenda, however, was evidenced in its commitment to political activism. Through its demands for equal salaries, equal access to resources, a lengthened school year, Black American high schools, and school busses, the GTEA and other Black teachers' associations collectively advocated for the delivery of a Black American education without the limits imposed by alleged racial inferiority (2005).

Through their rejection of biased state-developed curriculum, Southern Black American teachers practiced a form of critical education (Foster, 1997; hooks, 1994; Kelly, 2010; Walker, 2001). The expression of which gave voice to social inequities, enabled Black American students to identify, evaluate, and understand the daily intersection of race and power and modeled how resilience and learning produces educational capital (2001; 2010). As defined by Kelly (2010), educational capital refers to the formal impartation of skills and knowledge that enables learners to achieve economic stability and social power. It is the process of modeling Black American achievement by connecting book smarts to a critical race consciousness (Carter,

2008). This process links formal schooling to the immediate need for economic independence—a goal deemed threatening to Southern Whites who resented public education for Black American people and the subsequent prospect of Black American advancement (Walker, 2001).

The early 1950s threatened, then realized, the termination of segregated schooling witnessed the wholesale firing of Black American teachers (Banks, 2007). In the years between 1954 and 1964, 82,000 Black American teachers provided instruction to over two million Black American students (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). By 1965, roughly 38,000 Black American teachers and administrators, across 17 states, were terminated in the wake of *Brown* (1994). In the years between 1975 and 1985, the number of Black Americans entering the teaching profession declined by 66% from the previous decade and between 1984 and 1989 the nation lost another 21,515 Black American teachers (1994). These combined terminations, from 1954 – 1989, resulted in a stunning loss of Black American teachers that still exists today.

In considering the historic contributions of Black teachers and their dwindling numbers in public schools, majority teachers are now challenged to fill this void by embracing the critical pedagogies that illuminate the racialized experiences of students from diverse populations (Coats, 2010). Responses to this observation have been politically polarizing and have resulted in a renewed interest in hiring Black American teachers, specifically in predominately Black communities (Fairclough, 2004), and increased calls for teacher trainings that mandate skills in cultural competency (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2001; Irvine, 1991). A brief elaboration on each of these responses is warranted.

Black American Teachers and Transformative Instruction

Calls for increasing the number of Black American teachers are largely attributed to the growing number of ethnic minority students in public schools (Foster, 1997; Kirby & Hudson, 1993); the widespread disappointment with post-*Brown* public schooling (Fairclough, 2004; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008); and the recognition of the positive contributions Black teachers have made as educators, role models, and advocates (2004; Foster, 1997; hooks, 1994; Walker, 2001). While the first fact is self-explanatory, the second is an obvious reference to the challenges posed by the racial and ethnic achievement gaps. And, the third refers to the high expectations placed on Black American teachers to educate Black students for racial advancement (Horsford, 2009).

These expectations have deep historic roots (Fairclough, 2004) particularly among schools sponsored by Black American church denominations which were also concerned with teachers' moral and spiritual integrity (2004). For the post-Civil War Black American community, at large, education was seen as a humanizing process, the birthright of a free people, and a fundamental "practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994, p. 4). In noting this expectation, Caliver (1935) succinctly iterated, "In the hands of the Negro teachers rest the fate of the race." (p. 99).

This perspective is expressed in a number of ethnographic and historiographic studies that contained the life histories of Black American educators during de jure segregation (Kelly, 2010). According to these case studies, the most essential things lost in de-segregated classrooms were critical teachings about navigating the dynamics of race and class in American society (Foster, 1994; Walker, 2001). This social navigation also refers to the generation of cultural capital. This type of capital is defined as the effective use of life knowledge and the development of social and economic competencies that are taught by family and community and are later

given broader application through formal schooling (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). In conducting student interviews on the factors influencing high achievement among African-Canadian college students, Codjoe (2006) identified two recurring capital building variables: a) having access to emotionally supportive environments that promote knowledge acquisition; and b) having mechanisms for developing a positive Black cultural identity. In extant literature, these two variables were consistently associated with the core characteristics of effective Black American teachers (Foster, 1997; hooks, 1994; Walker, 2001) and effective teachers of Black American students (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Racial Enculturation as a Precursor to Black American Education

Enculturation is the process by which ethnic communities impart values and beliefs based on shared racial experiences (Cokley & Helm, 2007; Tatum, 1997). It is the first component in developing the cultural capital needed to promote Black American student achievement (Kelly, 2010). While enculturation is endemic to developing a group's shared cognitive orientation, not all group members receive, interpret, or codify these ethno-paradigms in the same way. In the case of Black Americans, Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen (1990) surmise that there are three primary orientations that Black American children embrace. These orientations reflect "mainstream," "minority," and "Black American cultural" perspectives that influence individuals' responses to discreet ethnic socialization.

The "mainstream" perspective assumes a conservative ecological approach. It de-emphasizes the import of racial dynamics within one's environment by focusing on only those dynamics that lie within his or her ability to influence or achieve (Thornton et al., 1990). Those who embrace this perspective typically argue the merits of hard work, industry, and personal integrity as a means of overcoming racial bias (1990). Such a perspective is embedded in the

Industrial Model of Black American education which emphasizes the need for self-sufficiency. In contrast, the minority orientation emphasizes the need to confront marginalizing racial experiences (1990). This approach assumes an advocacy perspective that prompts more politically assertive behaviors in addressing racial issues (1990). This perspective was given voice by the proponents of higher education for Black American students who also believed in the relationship between Black American achievement and civil rights (Du Bois, 2005). The third orientation, called the Black American cultural approach, recognizes the debilitating effects of racial oppression and responds to it by deriving deep personal meaning and racial pride from historic Black American achievements (1990). This perspective is demonstrated in Afrocentric models of Black American education that frequently include a critical component.

Although these orientations are not exhaustive, they are significant in identifying a dynamic process of collective stimuli and response. Each orientation is developed as a protective measure to buffer the experiences of racial marginalization (Thornton et al., 1990). These buffers or protective factors enable Black Americans to influence, alter, or modify their behaviors in order to avoid risk. Here, risk is defined as the challenges faced by individuals as they pursue a goal or skill in a hostile racialized environment wherein vital resources may be limited or denied (Sandler, 2001). Effective enculturation facilitates resilience by helping Black children achieve a positive self-identity while cultivating skills deemed essential to function within Eurocentric environments (Tatum, 1997). In critical classrooms, these understandings are used to build cultural capital by honoring Black American patterns of socialization and using them to construct models for Black biculturalism (Howard, 2001a).

Cultural Deprivation and Culture- Based Learning Theories

According to the proponents of cultural deprivation theory, Black academic underachievement is attributed to the disparities between the enculturation patterns of impoverished Black children and middle class White children (Bazemore & Noblit, 1978). Embedded within this argument are two core assumptions: a) that Black American patterns of enculturation and dominant American cultural norms lack compatibility and are diametrically opposed (Robinson & Biran, 2006) and b) within their subculture, Black Americans are said to function at a deficit in areas such as language development, emotional stability, and the motivation to succeed (2006).

Although they initially emerged in the 1970s and 80s, cultural deprivation theories have experienced various reincarnations. One of the most noteworthy of which came from John McWhorter, an Black American professor from the University of California, Berkeley. McWhorter (2000) argued that Black American underachievement stems from culturally embedded paradigms that discourage academic advancement. This assertion echoes those posed by deprivation theorists who argued that the ethnic achievement gap is directly related to “discreet childhood and adolescent experience variables as intervening between social class origins and school success” (Bazemore & Nobility, 1978, p. 346).

Despite its popularity, the research surrounding cultural deficit theory possessed two flaws affecting data collection and interpretation (Bazemore & Noblit, 1978). First, deprivation theorists had difficulty isolating which aspects of school failure were attributable to ethnicity or social class (1978). And, second, theorists failed to separate ecological variables from individual attributes affecting school performance (1978). Because of this, deprivation theory’s primary assertion—that the relationship between Black American poverty and underachievement stems

from discreet childhood experiences—was never confirmed through formal qualitative or quantitative means (1978). In the end, this theory was cited as another racial inferiority construct that assumed a ‘blame the victim’ approach to explaining the ethnic achievement gap (Robinson & Biran, 2006).

In the 1970s and 1980s, emic educationists presented their findings on the relationship between Black American culture and learning (Gay, 2010; Irvine, 1991). While the results of these findings affirmed the time honored practices of southern Black American teachers, they also provided a new theoretical framework called the cultural difference paradigm (2010). Such a perspective enabled majority teachers to capitalize on extant research that highlighted the strengths of Black American culture in fostering student achievement.

Culture-Based Educational Theory

Cultural difference and culture-based educational theory emerged out the context of the Civil Rights Movement (Banks, 1995). Most prominent among these theories was multiculturalism which refuted deficit ideology by arguing the strengths of cultural diversity and the audacity of viewing such strengths through a hegemonic lens (Banks, 1993). With this perspective, multiculturalism embraced critical perspectives by exploring the intersection between education, culture, race, class and gender (1993). Its agenda was to enable discourse on the nature of American diversity and the responsibilities of public schools to educate with equity. Despite its intentions, however, multiculturalism’s reception within the national educational community was limited to its contributions to curriculum development (1993). This outcome was attributed to the emphasis on curriculum that existed at the time and the opposition posed by traditionalists who perceived multiculturalism’s inclusion of Black American, Third World and Womanist paradigms as unwarranted distractions from the European canon (1993). In the end,

multiculturalism helped promote discourse on diversity but failed to reach its potential as a movement for broad school reform (1993).

As presented by Black American researchers, culture-based education targeted the academic and psycho-social needs of Black American children. The results produced a body of literature on the relationship between Black American culture and learning (Asante, 1991; Hilliard, 1992; Irvine, 1991). Although labeled differently by various researchers, Black American culture-based theory argued that the educational process for Black American students must leverage the strengths of their history and culture in a way that promotes positive self-esteem, resilience, and academic achievement (Boykin, 1994; Shockley, 2007; Woodson, 1933).

Like multiculturalism, however, Black American cultural theory has also received opposition, particularly in regard to its most passionate expression, Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991; Shockley, 2007). While Ladson-Billing's (1995a, 1995b) cultural relevance theory and Irvine's (1991) concept of cultural synchronicity both argue the need for critical perspectives, Afrocentricity exceeds these theories in its demand for an African epistemology that places Black American students at the center of the learning process (Asante, 1991; 2007). The proposed dislocation of the European canon inspired rebukes from traditionalists and created opposition to theory implementation (Shockley, 2007). Nonetheless, this study illuminates Afrocentric theory, along with other Black American culture theories, because they arguably provide the most promising method of educating Black American children and addressing the still unresolved achievement gaps (Asante, 199; Irvine, 1991; Shockley; 2007).

Race, Racism, and Teacher Preparedness in Critical Instruction

Discussions about the dynamics of race as they impact the classroom experiences of Black American students are generally omitted from the professional development and

instructional delivery of White or “majority” teachers (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003; Tatum, 1997). Despite the data on ethnic underachievement and those that connect teacher expectation with student learning (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdson, & Dixon, 2010), discussions about majority teachers’ attitude towards Black American students have been largely confined to scholarly circles (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003; Tatum, 1997). Because of this, a brief discussion is warranted about the nature of race and racism in public schooling and the urgent need for teacher training in cultural competence.

Race and Racism in American Public Schools

The persistence of deprivation theory emphasizes the need to construct effective definitions of race and racism. Such an endeavor is essential in exploring the dynamics of culture-based education and the psycho-social agenda of effective Black American classroom teachers. The anthropological definition of race argues that it is a social, as opposed to a biological, construct (Burton et al., 2010). When joined with other identity indicators, such as gender or economic class, race has the power to shape self and social perceptions (2010, Spencer, 1990). Race, and its dynamic expression as racism, can also be defined as “an epistemology that privileges Eurocentric values, beliefs, and practices. It is the normative framework that defines ‘whiteness’ as the standard by which to evaluate others” (Niemonen, 2007, p. 161). Tatum (1997) also affirms this definition but, more succinctly, defines racism as “a system of advantage based on race” (1997, p. 7). These definitions were selected above others as they clearly differentiate between personal prejudice, which may exist without an ability to enforce racist views, and institutional racism that wields the power of a larger system (1997).

In his eloquent description of the impact of race on Black Americans, Black American scholar and educator, W.E.B. Du Bois identified the psychological intersection between self-perception, and a critical understanding of one's standing in American society:

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder....He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.” (Du Bois, 2005, p.3)

This conflict between one's inner and outer self is also referenced by Tatum (1997) in her research regarding identity formation. This tension stems from two salient variables that impact negatively perceived and readily identifiable minorities. The first variable is experienced when some aspect of one's being becomes the focal point of negative social observations made by the majority (1997). The ensuing “self-consciousness” produces a sense of “otherness,” as stated by Tatum, or “double consciousness,” as stated by Du Bois. The second variable is evidenced when Black children, now aware of themselves as “other,” realize how the culture, worldview, and collective behaviors of the majority are normed. In short, Whiteness is the normative referent in American culture; it is the standard against which all other subpopulations are measured (Spencer, 1990). Each variable presents Black children with a quandary as to who they are and where they belong within American society (Boykin, 1986).

Racism and the “Culture of Whiteness”

One of the hallmarks of Black American pedagogy, past and present, was and is its ability to discuss what mainstream ideologies typically cannot: race and socio-economic privilege (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003; hooks, 1994). This dynamic is missing from traditional classrooms where discussions about race are swallowed by political correctness and disconnected from Black students’ experiences (2003). As a result, racialized attitudes, beliefs, and practices remain unchallenged and embedded with American classrooms (Chang & Demyan, 2007). Among these unchallenged paradigms are the concepts of “Whiteness” and “ethnocentric monoculturalism” (Sue, 2004), two socio-political insights that cannot be separated from any meaningful discourse on Black education in American schools.

By definition, “cultural whiteness” (Lea & Grigg, 2005) refers to “the collection of norms, values, and beliefs, or cultural scripts that function in specific contexts to reproduce the practices and identities that support White institutional privilege and advantage” (2005, p. 93). These cultural scripts represent the sum total of the messages, images, and impressions we receive about ourselves and others and how we are motivated by these messages without conscious thought (2005). The unconscious nature of whiteness and White privilege, as it is normed and assumed in American culture, has led some researchers to speak of the “invisibility of whiteness” (Sue, 2004); it is the unconscious assumption of being the norm and the unchallenged assumption of being better than (2004). Teachers who are effective in teaching Black American students are those who have chosen to see the invisible (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This acquired skill enables majority teachers to reflect upon data that itemizes their impact on Black American children and the ways in which they perpetuate bias in the classroom (2005).

Like the concept of Whiteness, ethnocentric monoculturalism is also an unconscious paradigm (Sue, 2004). Evidence of its presence is found only by those who challenge cultural scripts and understand that these scripts were designed to support hegemonic interests (2004). The presence of hierarchy and superiority are the dynamics that separate monoculturalism from other ethnocentric ideologies. The difference is power, or as Sue (2004) contends, the ability to assert one's group agenda, will, and beliefs over another's. Hence, if majority teachers accept the sweeping cultural messages regarding Black American inferiority, then it will be difficult for those teachers to identify, challenge, and purge themselves of this bias (Lea & Grigg, 2005).

In considering the difficulty of this process, a question arises as to what catalytic event must take place in order to prompt, or even mandate, this level of introspection and the acceptance of critical culture-based pedagogies and practices (Lea & Grigg, 2005).

In asking this question, this study does not seek to blame majority teachers as being the sole cause of Black American underachievement. This question does suggest, however, that longstanding discussions about the deficiencies of Black American students represent one-directional thinking that avoids the educators' obligation to teach (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008). It also notes that since majority teachers comprise at least 87% of the current teaching force (Douglas et al., 2008), more discourse is needed about the impact of these educators upon Black American student achievement (2008; Hyland, 2005). The ability to pursue this discourse, however, is predicated on a commitment to critical pedagogies that actively challenge the dynamics of racial privilege in American classrooms (Hyland, 2005; Lea & Griggs, 2005).

Majority Teacher Training: Beyond Choice and Color-blindness

Sociological studies on Black American education and learning have frequently focused on the deficit ideologies presented above (O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007). Absent from contemporary research are studies about how the variables of race and socio-economic status (SES) should rightly impact teacher pre-service trainings and the professional development of the current instructional workforce. Instead of more studies in this area, national debates on the effectiveness of public schooling have focused on choice rather than reform and “color-blindness” instead of critical discourse.

The practice of these avoidance strategies has introduced new opportunities for re-segregation. Voucher programs and specialized charter schools siphon traditional learners and decrease schools' population-based funding (Hsieh & Shen, 2001). In the process, they also advance segregation and economic stratification (Bireda, 2011; Jones & Hancock, 2005; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011). This reversal of *Brown's* (1954) major achievement prompts concern in regard to the future of Black American public education for two reasons: 1) it suggests that public school reform is no longer a concern or attainable goal; and 2) the creation of different types of schools may change, but not improve, Black American education in this country if all other variables remain the same.

The paradigmatic shift in how public schools should be structured averts conversations about racial and economic dynamics in the classroom. Within these environments, teachers often see ethnic and cultural differences as weaknesses on the part of Black American students (Grantham & Ford, 2003). This observation is supported by qualitative studies that identify the student's socio-economic status (SES), ethnicity, and level of motivation as antecedents to teacher bias (Chang & Demyan, 2007). In regard to Black children, this bias is most commonly

observed through lowered teacher expectations, less time given to instruction and verbal encouragement, higher rates of discipline, and more frequent negative responses (Irvine, 1991). Although these examples of differential treatment do not present the full range of race-based expressions, some researchers argue that they are most emotionally damaging to Black American children because of their frequency, subtlety, and potential for ongoing psychological harm (American Psychological Association, 2008; Grantham & Ford, 2003).

In the early 1980s, conservative educators developed the concept of “color-blind education.” This seemingly neutral ideology has taken the place of the aforementioned deprivation ideologies that flourished in the decade before. By definition, color-blind education asserts the irrelevancy of race and culture in light of the belief that “people are people” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). This perspective nullifies distinctive ethnic histories, including those involving oppression, enslavement, or colonization. It also falsely denies the presence and benefits of White privilege and hegemonic practices (2010; Sue, 2004). Because of this, critical race theorists reject color-blind education as another form of racism and an avoidance strategy that enables the continued invisibility of White privilege (2010; 2004).

Color-blindness and the Cultural Continuum

In 1989, researchers Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs produced a seminal study which argued in favor of embracing cultural diversity as a means of improving service delivery within the field of healthcare. Their objective was to provide the conceptual foundations for creating a “culturally competent” system of care (1989). Here, cultural competence is defined as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together as a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (p.13). As such, cultural competence was presented as a developmental

process whose objective was the mastery of five essential skills: the ability to value human diversity; the ability to meaningfully reflect on one's own attitudes about cultural differences; the ability to cultivate inter-cultural sensitivity; the ability to understand institutional cultures; and the ability to adapt to cultural change (1989).

In devising this model for cultural competence, Cross et al. (1989) identified six culture-related operational paradigms frequently found among professional groups. When placed in tandem with each other, these paradigms became known as the cultural continuum model (1989). This model is illustrated below.

Table 1

A Synopsis of the Cultural Awareness Continuum

| Categories for Self-Assessment | Definition of Terms |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Cultural Destructiveness | Paradigms, practices, and policies which are destructive to other subordinate culture groups and the individuals within them. This paradigm, coupled with the unbridled power, can devastate minority populations |
| Cultural Incapacity | Paradigms, practices, and policies that recognize other culture groups, but are not equipped to respond to the needs of minority groups |
| Cultural Blindness | Paradigms, practices, and policies that support assimilation and argue that culture, ethnicity makes no differences in effectiveness of services. This perspective assumes that what works for the dominate group is effective for all others. |
| Cultural Pre-competence | Recognizes need to accept cultural diversity; intends to introduce change, but may lack a real plan. |
| Cultural Competence | Exudes respect for cultural differences, creates mechanisms for self-assessment; works for equity |
| Cultural Proficiency | Pro-active procurement of cultural knowledge; constant revision to meet current needs; whole system alignment to diversity; construction of new paradigms based on the need to serve diverse populations |

This continuum represents the range and relationships among cultural paradigms. The first three paradigms, for example, represent three negative expressions of cultural indifference- with cultural blindness being the most benign. The acceptance of such positions maintains that neither support for diversity nor the higher levels of cultural competence are needed in communities consisting of Black American students.

Problem Statement

Despite best educational practices and psycho-biological research on how children learn, Black American students continue to struggle in public classrooms. This well documented phenomenon has economic, social, psychological, and physical repercussions not only on the collective Black American community, but also on the larger American society. In the years following *Brown* (1954), American researchers, largely from the psychological sciences (Foster, 1999), have increasingly looked towards social and cultural variables to explain why Black American children fail to thrive (1999). These explanations have frequently rested on cognitive deficiency theories that ranged from Darwinist views of genetic inferiority (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) to beliefs that Black Americans lack the cultural integrity to assimilate the White middle-class norms promoted within American schools (1999).

Against these well published etic paradigms, Black American researcher-practitioners have presented a number of studies that acknowledge and affirm cultural difference. These studies are rooted in critical race theory (Carter, 2008) and an advocacy perspective that argue the needs of Black Americans, and other non-European children, to be educated through means that utilize their unique and collective experiences as an ethnic group (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Like White students whose educational experiences are supported by teachers, representative curriculums, and a value system that affirms home cultures, Black American students need the same (Irvine, 1991).

This argument is not new. It affirms the time honored practices of Black American teachers that dates back nearly 100 years (Woodson, 1933) and is backed by contemporary research (Boykin, 1986; Foster, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The problem is not that there is an absence of research on how Black American students learn, but that the proposed solutions to the achievement gap are having difficulty gaining deeper acceptance. While major educational

theorists argue the need for cultural competence (Danielson, 2007), the depth of this discussion has not reached the levels needed to achieve sustained, high profile discourse. Critical race theorists argue that race continues to be the problem (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003) as educators remain either uninformed or uncomfortable in discussing race and its associated reality of White privilege (2003; Lea & Griggs, 2005) .

In light of these realities, this qualitative study explores the comparatively few occasions where culture-based instruction has been embraced, beyond the celebration of food, festivals, and fashions, within urban Black American school communities. Of interest is the process of implementation or the means through which Afrocentric cultural norms have supplanted or are infused into traditional Eurocentric curriculums. As emic researchers contend (Asante, 1991; Hale-Benson, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Shockley, 2007), culture- based instruction, which is both pro-Black American and pro-advocacy, is the panacea to Black American underachievement. This meta-ethnography explores this contention; it illuminates extant research on critical and culture-based pedagogies and the effective instructional practices of the urban, elementary school teachers who used them in predominately Black classrooms. At issue is how these teachers embraced this genre of pedagogy and leveraged it to improve student achievement. In presenting this study's objectives, it is first necessary to establish a working definition of teacher effectiveness.

Defining Teacher Effectiveness

The process of defining an “effective teacher” or “effective teaching” is an elusive one (Stronge, 2007). Because of the complexities related to teaching and learning, there is no universal definition as to what constitutes effective instructional practice. This is especially true since teaching is not a “one size fits all” endeavor. In keeping with its conceptual foundations, however, this study defines “effective” teaching and teachers from an emic perspective. This approach is significant for three reasons. First, in a study that embraces an advocacy perspective, it is important for Black Americans to contemplate and voice their own vision of education which includes the pedagogical orientations and behaviors they deem most effective for their children. Second, emic definitions allow for the articulation of cultural values that help situate instruction and leverage home-school relationships (Irvine, 2002). And, third, emic definitions are not grounded in the status quo and transcend the limitations imposed by definitions of effectiveness as based on standardized test scores.

Because of these variables, this study’s working definition of effective instruction is derived from the works of emic researchers and the overlapping attributes listed in their findings. In citing the research of Ladson-Billings, Foster, and Walker, for example, Irvine (2002) offers the following attributes of effectiveness. Effective teaching of Black American children requires teachers to: a) demonstrate commitment to the health and well-being of the Black American community; b) affirm ethnic identity formation; c) facilitate student success despite the presence of racialized and otherwise adverse circumstances; d) deviate from the status quo if the status quo does not support Black American student achievement; e) take responsibility for student success; f) be competent in their subject area; and g) be demanding in implementing instruction and discipline.

Given these variables then effective teaching is a process that imparts academic and life knowledge. It requires knowledge of academic content and skills as well as the critical and cultural issues that enable the contextualization of teaching and learning. Effective teaching also requires affective competencies as expressed by having sensitivity to Black American community issues, values, and beliefs. Lastly, effective teaching is performance based. It requires teachers to engage Black American students in ways that accepts no excuses for lack of initiative or skills development.

Purpose Statement

In addressing this topic, the purpose of this qualitative study is to illuminate the educational ideologies and critical instructional practices of valued Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students in predominantly Black American, urban schools. Through a synthesis of extant research, it explores the culturally grounded strategies used by these teachers to support student achievement via critical discourse, positive self-esteem, and skills development. The effective interactions of these three variables are connected to Black American student achievement (American Psychological Association, 2008). In doing so, it contributes to on-going discussions about the needs of Black American students while providing an ideological platform that helps inform current educational practices.

In exploring this information, this study pursues three areas of interest: 1) the historic development of Black American educational perspectives; 2) the emergence of Black American culture-based learning models; and 3) the applicability of culturally sensitive teaching modalities in traditional and underachieving, urban public schools. This latter concern specifically targets how Afrocentric instruction advances student learning while addressing common challenges regarding discipline, motivation, and sustained academic engagement.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are culture-based pedagogies and how can they enable learning for urban Black American primary school students?
2. How can acquiring knowledge of Black American culture influence the process of teaching?
3. How can knowledge of Black American culture be integrated into Eurocentric public schooling?

Definition of Terms

In presenting this study, specific terms are presented that are unique to some of the research investigated. A glossary of terms is provided below:

Acculturation is the process that occurs when two or more different cultures come into contact with each other over a prolonged and consistent period of time (Cokley & Helm, 2007). In the case of Black American and White Americans, their cultural distinctions are attributed to the role that race has played in this country's history.

Antiracist education – is pedagogy and instruction that seeks not only to understand racism but to dismantle it. It transcends multicultural awareness that seeks tolerance and assumes a more activist role in stopping racism beliefs and behaviors that injures all (Niemonen, 2007).

Black a term used to denote a group of people who are also called African Americans. This term is used interchangeably with Blacks and Black Americans.

Critical race theory discusses racial issues in ways that are inclusive and holistic. Its basic tenets argue that race-based paradigms permeate American history and are embedded within our cultural norms, organizational structures, personal and collective relationships, political and social policies, and daily practices (Tatum, 1997; Burton et al., 2010).

Culture is “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 8).

Cultural racism refers to the “cultural images and message affirming the assumed superiority of whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color...” (Tatum, 1999).

Cultural dissonance is the tension that exists when different cultures come in contact with each other. This tension can be subtle or overt and may manifest itself through ideation, emotions, or behaviors.

Enculturation is the process by which individuals learn, adopt, and interpret the ways and manners of their culture group (Cokley & Helm, 2007).

Ethnicity is a term used to refer to “social groups with a shared history, sense of identity, geography, and cultural roots” (Coard et al., 2008).

Ethnic identity formation is one of several “identity domains” about which human beings seek and construct meaning (Tatum, 1997). These domains include other aspects of the human experience such as gender and religious identification that form the core of who we are as individuals and as members of a larger society. In the case of ethnic identity development, it is the process by which a member of a distinctive, identifiable ethnic group creates and shares meaning with members of that same grouping.

Risk factors are variables that threaten the acquisition of basic human goals and the development of vital skills and competencies needed to assume productive social roles (Sandler, 2001).

Pedagogy is the theoretical framework that influences how one teaches and how one perceives the art of instruction.

Race is a social and political construct; it is the grouping or categorizing of human beings based on a shared phenotype or genetic indicator (Burton et al., 2010); this group is further identified by shared histories, behaviors, or practices that add to its distinctiveness. In this study the word race, ethnicity, and ethnic group are used interchangeably.

Racial epistemology is the understanding we acquire about ourselves as persons from various ethnicities and our development of values and beliefs as based on racial experiences (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003).

Resilience theory is based on the idea that poor families experience very specific challenges. The way in which these challenges are faced influences a person's ability to function and achieve in American society (American Psychological Association, 2008).

Situated pedagogies refer to the actions taken by Black American teachers in delivering instruction that makes sense out of the daily struggles of their students (Kelly, 2010).

Research Limitations

Like other “meta” studies, this meta-ethnography is concerned with the evaluation of a specific human event and the integration of primary and secondary sources pertaining to that event (Bair, 1999; Noblit & Hare, 1983). In the process of synthesizing data, however, three major concerns arise. The first is indigenous to all “meta” inquiries which, by definition, require the comparison of data that is centered on a given subject, population, or experience (Bair, 1999). Because of the characteristics of this type of study, care must be given to ensure that the data being synthesized has comparability and clearly established patterns of thematic commonality (Noblit & Hare, 1983). The second problem concerns the task of preserving the

richness of the research sources within its original historic context as we explore areas of relevance in the present (Atkins, Lewin, Smith, Engel, Fretheim, and Volmink, 2008). To this end, efforts are made to retain the research details that aid understanding, interpretation, and applicability. The third challenge concerns the phenomenological nature of this study. In examining any group, past or present, there is a danger of oversimplifying shared experiences or generalizing a group as if it lacks heterogeneity. To avoid these pitfalls, this study synthesizes case studies on the practices of effective teachers of Black American students. These case studies include the teachers' perspectives which are subsequently represented in the original researchers' findings and used by the meta-ethnographer. This process enables each researcher to hear teachers' voices and explore their interpretation of their teaching experiences.

With these concerns and limitations identified, this study focuses on the findings of extant research that describe the practices and pedagogies of effective teachers of Black American students whose use of culture in the classroom provides a compelling model for supporting Black American achievement.

Significance of this Study

The underachievement of Black American children continues to be the most formidable educational challenge since the passing of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (Frisby, 1993). This assessment of Black American "failure" is taken from standardized testing in the core subject areas of mathematics and reading. According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2010), discrepancies between Black American and White children are consistently observed throughout elementary and secondary schooling where the average test scores in reading and mathematics for Black American students were generally lower than Whites.

Despite these outcomes and the negative effects of poverty, underfunded schools, re-segregation, and a litany of other variables, there is a body of research which argues the importance of high value, culture-based teaching (Foster, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995). This study synthesizes this research and illuminates the characteristics and practices of effective teaching for Black American urban students. Such an endeavor dislodges the current fixation on Black American underachievement and discovers areas where the critical implementation of culture-based theory has brought about consistent and pervasive progress.

Research and Practice

American racism was and continues to be physically and psychologically evident in public schools (Gay, 2010). Segregated schools mirror, in all fullness, the social beliefs of Black American inferiority (Bell, 2004). The under maintained physical condition of Black American schools, the lack of resources; the presence of aged textbooks; and the lack of seating, heating, cooling, or adequate roofing were symbolic expressions that Black Americans were not expected to achieve. Although such descriptions were once associated with Jim Crow education, it still prevails in segregated Black American urban schools today.

In regard to creating emotionally and psychologically supportive classrooms, the same is also true. Evidence of racialized practices are found in common school protocols involving, for example, academic tracking that assumes lower Black American intellectual capacity, a disparity in how discipline is administered with Black American students receiving more severe punishments for the same infractions, and lowered teacher expectations and the disinvested behavior that attends it (Irvine, 1991; Robinson & Biren, 2006). Variables such as these contribute to the academic progress of Black American children who, in the absence of

supportive role models and a critical context within which to interpret their experiences, struggle to see schools as a place of growth (Irvine, 1991).

The presence of these realities and the normalization of Whiteness have a debilitating effect on the self-esteem and subsequent academic progress of many Black American students (American Psychological Association, 2008; Grantham & Ford, 2003). By exploring the critical culture-based pedagogies of high-value Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students, this study pursues discussion on Black American education and the ways in which teachers can serve as catalysts for transformative schooling.

Dissertation Organization

This qualitative study is submitted as a manuscript dissertation; as such, it is intended to produce a doctoral dissertation and an article for publication. In fulfilling these objectives, the structure of this study is as follows. Chapter 2 consists of a synthesis of literature that further supports the need for this type of study in educational venues. Chapter 3 presents the study's methodology and delves into the data concerning situated Black American instruction and learning. Chapter 4 provides an overview and interpretation of findings; whereas Chapter 5 is submitted for publication.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review explores extant research on culture-based learning theories and their impact on Black American student learning. It begins with a discussion of the conceptual frameworks that inform both its selection and interpretation of research. It then proceeds with a review of Black American cultural pedagogies, their situated expression within urban communities, and an exploration of the Black American cultural norms that can be leveraged to promote Black student achievement.

The Case for Culture

The questions regarding Black American children's failure to thrive in our nation's public schools continue to plague the educational community (King, 2005). While true of Black American students from all socio-economic strata, this observation is particularly well documented in relation to students who are also urban and poor (Bailey & Boykin, 2001). In response to this reality, an increasing number of Black American scholars (Asante, 1991; Boykin, 1986; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994) have proffered emic perspectives designed to remediate the social, economic, and human rights challenges posed by the achievement gaps. As a result, their efforts have yielded a body of research whose conclusions have called for a time honored shift in how we conceptualize the education of Black American children (Bailey & Boykin, 2001; Boykin, 1986).

These conclusions produced new insights regarding the relationship between Black American culture and learning (Bailey & Boykin, 2001; Tyler et al., 2008). Culture is defined as the vehicle for a group's transmission of epistemological assumptions that support subsequent behaviors and beliefs (Boykin, 1994). As it pertains to Black children, however, the organic

connection between culture and learning was conceptually severed. The anthropological findings of “establishment research” (King, 2005, p.43) produced and proliferated deficit ideologies regarding the lowered cognitive capacity of Black American children (2008). This extension of social Darwinism (Boykin, 1986) facilitated the birth of deficit theory that, in turn, produced the concept of cultural deprivation, the idea that Black Americans lack the cultural cohesion needed to acquire new learning (1986; Salkind, 2008).

In her research on American schooling, King (1994) described the role of deficit ideologies in shaping public education. Deprivation or deficit concepts were anthropological paradigms which “confirmed” through scientific methodology that Black American culture was rooted in social dysfunction (1994). In educational venues, this alleged scientific truth was embraced in theory and in practice. The outcome was the validation of pre-existing racialized assumptions about Black American inferiority. In response, the mission of public education became the re-socialization of Black American children—a process designed to replace Black ethno-cultural expressions with Euramerican norms (1994).

Subsequent to the emergence of deficit theory, King (2005) and other emic researchers explored the association between culture and learning and identified the Black American cultural attributes that most positively affected student learning (Boykin, 1986). In doing so, these scholars (Bailey & Boykin, 2001; Boykin, 1986, 1994) generated descriptive research on Black American cultural integrity and the paradigms that reflected underlying ethnic worldviews, histories and experiences.

This discourse on Black American culture was accompanied by further evaluation of how Black American and minority cultures differ, in substance and process, from the Euramerican monoculturalism endorsed by public schools (Boykin, 1986; Gay, 2010). This difference has

been subsequently identified by several analogous terms including “cultural discontinuity” (Tyler, Stevens, & Uqdah, 2009), “cultural mismatch” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011), or “cultural dissonance” (Tyler et al., 2008). By definition, these terms refer to culturally valued practices, as taught by family and community, which impact the learning modalities of minority students but are rejected, maligned, or suppressed within public school environments (2008). Along with the increased diversity among school age children, this theory provides the rationale for culture-based instructional practices as found, for example, in culturally responsive pedagogy and Afrocentric theory. Both of which are explored in this review.

The theory that norms acquired through enculturation, the beliefs and behaviors that are taught and learned within one’s ethnic culture group (Tyler et al., 2008), can be leveraged to promote learning among Black American students’ is supported by extant literature (Boykin & Cunningham, 2002; Hale-Benson, 1982; Howard, 2001a). The adoption of this perspective, however, requires a break from traditional pedagogies and a re-conceptualization of how learning takes place for Black American children (Asante, 1991). As Gay (2010) contends, the expression of culturally identifying behaviors within public schools is generally shunned and is often perceived as an act of defiance against traditional school culture and its authority structure (2010; Sue, 2004). Emic scholars rally against this demonstration of bias. They contend that educators must learn and then leverage the distinctiveness of Black American culture, history, and collective experiences to facilitate the academic success of Black American students (Bailey & Boykin, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). This approach to educating Black American children represents our best most, hopeful strategy for addressing the educational debt (2006).

This chapter explores this premise. It provides a review of extant literature on the emic pedagogies and perspectives deemed most effective in meeting the educational needs and

positive identity development of urban Black American children. In doing so, this study contributes to filling a gap that exists between Black American cultural educational theory and its generalizability among urban Black American classrooms and schools. While much has been written about culture-based pedagogies, there are far fewer examples of how these theories can be integrated within established Eurocentric public schools. This study explores the intersectionality between theory and practice and provides the background for both.

Conceptual Frameworks

A conceptual framework is the underlying set of paradigms that are used in exploring various types of research (Smyth, 2004). It is the sum total of the beliefs, experiences, and theories that researchers bring to the studies at hand (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As such, it forms the foundation of qualitative studies since no such inquiries can take place without a human mind to assess and interpret them (1994). Given this study's interest in extant culture-based pedagogies and their application to real world settings, four theories comprise its conceptual framework. The first two—the cultural learning and cultural competence theories—enable discourse on the interpretation and application of the culture-based learning models under review. The second set of paradigms—critical race theory (CRT) and the advocacy-participant model—ensure that these pedagogies are situated within the socio-economic realities faced by urban, Black American students and that these realities are viewed with a transformative perspective. A brief introduction of each theory is as follows.

Culture and Learning Model

The cultural learning theory argues the intrinsic relationship between experience and cognitive development. Compatible with constructivism, this theory maintains that cognitive development is contextualized and learning occurs through daily social practices and experiences

(Biesta, 2011). Families, communities, and ethnic organizations thereby function as learning cultures. Through their interactions with adults, children acquire knowledge and skills through observation and practice. For decades, cultural deficit theories refuted this understanding. They argued that Black American families and, by extension, Black American communities, lack the social structure and cultural cohesion needed to impart the cognitive skills required by mainstream American culture (Salkind, 2008). The cultural learning theory rejects this view and argues that all social experiences are instructive; they are expressions of a learning culture wherein knowledge is transmitted through established patterns of enculturation (2011).

Incorporated into this concept of cultural learning is the premise that schools also create their own educational cultures which are, by definition, expanded learning cultures (Biesta, 2011). Educational cultures differ from those found in enculturation groups in that their learning objectives are clearly identified by content and outcome (2011). In order for schools to effectively serve students from diverse backgrounds, therefore, they must be able to: a) to support majority teachers in developing cultural competencies and b) establish what “good teaching” is and how to leverage students’ experiences to achieve it (2011).

These understandings are significant to this study. They support the argument posed by emic researchers that Black American students learn more when culture-based pedagogies are employed in the classroom (Asante, 1991; Au & Kawakami, 1994; Boykin, 1994). These theories also introduce an element of innovation as culture-based theories define effective schooling in regard to urban, Black American primary school students.

Cultural Competence Model in Education

The cultural competence, or cross-cultural, model in education is based on the understanding of pluralism in American public schools. As a rational model, it acknowledges the

ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity that exists among and between Americans and particularly school-aged children (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The salient shift in demographics has witnessed an increase in the percentage of ethnic minority children from 37.8% in 2000 to 42.4% in 2010 (NCES, 2010). At the same time, data reveal a decreasing percentage of White children, from 60.9% in 2000 to 53.5% in 2010 (NCES, 2010). Given the ethnic homogeneity within the public school teaching force and the relative absence of minority teachers, no serious study on the needs of Black American children can take place without making provisions for the development of cross cultural competencies (Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

The cross-cultural framework used in this study adopts the guidelines developed by Emory University's Center for Urban Learning/Teaching and Urban Research in Education and Schools (CULTURES). CULTURES was developed as a teacher training resource to help public school teachers effectively respond to the needs of culturally and ethnically diverse students in urban districts (Irvine, 2002). Based on its understanding of culturally responsive teaching, this model establishes the following five considerations for evaluating competency. These standards include: a) having a respect for diversity and affirming the potential and worth of every student; b) understanding how students' cultural background impact learning and cognitive development; c) providing rigorous instruction; d) situating instruction to make it relevant to students' individual experiences and cultural backgrounds; and e) having the sensitivity to fairly evaluate students from diverse backgrounds (2002). In addition to these standards, a sixth is added for this particular study that includes having an awareness of innate or latent biases that stem from one's own experiences or culture group (Tatum, 1997).

With these standards in place, cultural competence is understood as both a theoretical construct wherein a value is placed on acquiring knowledge of diverse cultures and a skill wherein teachers utilize said knowledge to support students' learning (Moule, 2012). This understanding includes a transformative element; it ensures a balance between theory and practice as both teachers and students function as learners (Freire, 1970). This instructional paradigm is both dynamic and two directional (1971). It provides a critical forum wherein students articulate their experiences and a means through which teachers evaluate their own assumptions about ethnicity and culture (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; 1971).

Critical Race Theory

Just as cultural competence theories demand the recognition of various cultural experiences, critical race theory (CRT) requires these experiences, particularly in the case of marginalized groups, to be evaluated from the standpoint of race, racism, power and privilege. By definition, CRT “represents ways of thinking about and assessing social systems and groups...” in ways that include the racialized practices, attitudes, and beliefs that permeate American culture (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010, p. 442). Its selection as an operational theory is based on its demand for transparency in matters pertaining to the hegemonic practices that influence Black American experiences.

The relevance of this theory to the current study is evident. Although race and racial issues have been traditionally avoided in educational venues (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003), its discussion in relation to Black American achievement, public schooling, and the growing number of ethnically diverse school-age children makes this avoidance even more unacceptable and dangerous to an educated democracy. A critical race perspective is needed to enable discourse on these realities and to support, through a progressively de-racialized educational

system, the development of positive self-esteem and personal resilience necessary for Black American achievement (Asante, 1991; Robinson & Biran, 2006).

By establishing CRT as a foundational theory within this study, this researcher acknowledges her assumptions that racism—as expressed through education, employment, economic opportunity, and community resources—serves as a primary contributor to Black American underachievement. The connection between personal beliefs and theory selection is important to identify because the frameworks we use in exploring a problem influence our solutions (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In exploring the extant theories, for example, various researchers have focused on the impact of poverty on Black American student achievement (Williams & Noguera, 2010). Such conclusions reveal the conceptual frameworks of these researchers wherein economic, psychological, and wealth distribution answers are sought in response to questions about Black American underachievement (2011).

Despite these examples of past practices, there is a conventional wisdom among field researchers that having pre-set conceptual designs run counter to the spirit of inductive inquiry (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Those who espouse this view believe that a researcher's pre-structured or embedded assumptions must be held at bay and should organically emerge only as the research itself unfolds. This statement is based on the complexities associated with phenomenological studies (1994). Exceptions can be made, however, when the research is focused on familiar phenomena and cultural contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In such cases, it can be argued that having an emerging conceptual design will likely be unproductive. Hence, "tighter designs are a wise course, we think, for researchers working with well delineated constructs." (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17)

In utilizing CRT, this researcher argues the need for this particular lens in ferreting out the racialized dynamics embedded within public school systems. In pondering the integration of Black cultural pedagogies within pre-existing systems, however, a fourth conceptual design is needed. This theory, called the advocacy-participatory perspective, enables the present study to move beyond academic discourse to include concerns regarding relevance, Black American empowerment, and social transformation.

Advocacy-Participatory Perspective

The advocacy-participatory perspective contends that human experiences, accompanied by a deep understanding of the variables and dynamics that shape them, can and should be transformative (Creswell, 2007). With this understanding, the advocacy-participatory worldview explores ways in which new and synthesized epistemologies can be used to generate second order change to the benefit of oppressed or disenfranchised peoples (2007). Given its emphasis on transformation, the advocacy worldview is politically engaged and has an agenda that is geared towards the liberation of marginalized groups and the democratic distribution of power (2007).

In establishing its conceptual framework, this study focuses on the intersection between advocacy-participatory and critical race theories. While CRT calls for the development of a knowledge base of the history and the current expression of race and privilege in American education, advocacy theory calls for the use of this information for transformative purposes. Whereas the former calls for discourse and evaluation, the latter calls for skills in implementation and empowerment. Albeit different, the two theories represent an intellectual continuum whose intended outcome is educational equity. Their presence and interaction are seen throughout this chapter and in the ensuing synthesis.

Historic and Theoretical Roots of Culture-Based pedagogies

The formal articulation of a culture-based approach to learning was initially presented by historian Carter G. Woodson (1933) as the most vital approach to educating Black American people. Credited with establishing the conceptual foundations of Afrocentric pedagogy (Asante, 1991), Woodson's culture-based approach argued for the inclusion of three essential ideals. First, Black American pedagogy must be rooted in African history through which Black Americans develop self-respect and positive esteem. Second, this expression of ethnocentrism should result in the creation of self-affirming Black communities. And, lastly, Black education must be indelibly committed to self-transformation (1933). The following paragraphs explore the interconnectedness of these three attributes.

In his seminal work, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Woodson (1933) presents his theory on how to effectuate Black American learning through the use and acquisition of cultural knowledge. His conceptualizations are among the earliest emic pedagogies to connect culture and learning for the purpose of building a greater sense of positive identity and humanism (1933). Woodson's understanding of Black American education emerged out of the aftermath of the Washington-Du Bois debate concerning the purpose and substance of Black American education. At issue were the primacy of either industrial or classical education and the vision of how Black Americans could thrive as ethnic minorities amid de jure segregation (1933). Because of the importance of this debate and its influence on subsequent Black American educators, a brief description of each educational concern is provided.

Black American Education: Pragmatism in Praxis

Washington's advocacy of Black American industrial education gained widespread support from 1880 until his death in 1915 (Gardner, 1975). This pragmatic pedagogy was

initially fathered by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a former Union officer and founder of Hampton Institute—an industrial school for Black American students (Spivey, 1978). In 1890, Armstrong presented this model of Black American education at the Mohonk Conference, a nationally recognized political forum which formally endorsed both the vision and embedded limitations of industrial education (Barrows, 1890). As a model for schooling, industrial education was founded on four premises: Black Americans must understand their place in American society; work to achieve self-sufficiency; remain uninvolved in politics; and refrain from any form of self-advocacy via the pursuit of civil rights (1890; 1978).

Although Washington did not develop this highly racialized pedagogy, his articulation of it was both powerful and timely (Spivey, 1978). His insistence that industrial education should provide laborers to support Southern economic interests was consistent with the aforementioned goals espoused by Armstrong several years earlier. Furthermore, it resolved the issue of race relations, in the wake of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, which conferred upon a newly manumitted people equal citizenship under the law (Foner, 2002). As Washington expressed, Black American subservience was required in the world after slavery and it was incumbent upon freedmen to forgive the past and learn the virtue of hard work.

Those who opposed Washington's vision of Black American education noted the absence of an advocacy perspective and its acceptance of Black American economic and political subservience (Du Bois, 2005). This position is clearly visible in his 1895 Atlanta Exposition Address, later surnamed The Atlanta Compromise:

...we shall stand by you with such a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one.

In all things that are purely social, we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress. (Washington, 2006, p.83)

Washington's acceptance of White hegemony and absence of a critical race perspective supported the rise of a non-liberatory model of Black American education. The fact that this model was supported by White leaders and endorsed by a former slave made industrial education for Black American people the most highly funded method for educating freedmen; it was also highly contentious among those who equated education with freedom.

Black American Education as Liberation

In contrast to Washington, Du Bois' conception of Black American education included academic achievement in all areas of classical and professional training and a strong advocacy for Black American civil rights (Du Bois, 2005). Although distinctive, these two attributes were conceptually intertwined. Du Bois' emphasis on higher education and classical training, for example, achieved two purposes. First, it affirmed his belief in Black American intellectualism—an expression of genius that would remain unactualized if limited by pedagogy of pragmatism that accepted the limitations of the dominant culture. This idea of Black American intellectual potential was expressed through Du Bois' concept of the talented tenth—the belief that the Black American “race” has a core of exceptional people who are morally obligated to contribute to racial elevation (2005). Second, Du Bois believed that intellectual development was a humanizing process especially important to those marginalized by slavery and racial segregation. Through effective schooling, Black Americans would find their humanity as they used these newly acquired skills to pursue their civil rights and “racial uplift,” a common term denoting Black American intellectual and moral development (Du Bois, 20005).

Woodson's (1933) argument for Black American education both affirmed and extended Du Bois' perspective of education. His emphasis on rigorous intellectual study, for example, was akin to Du Bois' support for higher education. The two Harvard scholars also shared a common understanding of racial elevation wherein the talented tenth (Du Bois, 1903) or the Black American upper class (Woodson, 1933) were expected to contribute resources and skills to facilitate the educational and economic rise of the Black American lower class. This interpretation of the civic responsibilities of the Black upper class echoed the thinking found in the Christian proverb: "where much is given, much is required."

By arguing for an African epistemology, Woodson (1933) affirmed the concept of racial uplift through academic and psychological venues. In doing so, he made significant connections between cultural learning and self-efficacy (1933). This process of integrating cultural, academic, social, and contextual variables to support Black American achievement is historically recursive and is repeated in the extant research and findings of emic researchers who support culture-based learning models.

The educational models purported by Du Bois and Woodson contain elements of what is now defined as liberation pedagogy. By definition, this theory promotes a vision of education wherein teachers and students build strong learning communities by respectfully and collaboratively sharing in the learning process (Freire, 1970). This process is rooted in praxis, principled actions that are designed to liberate, uplift, and humanize the oppressed (1970). Because of this, liberation pedagogy constitutes what some scholars describe as "pedagogy of opposition" (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p.160); it offers a vision of education that runs counter to the hegemonic interests supported by the dominant culture (1970).

The realization that a paradigm shift is needed in public education as it pertains to Black American students is a historic and recursive one. The culture-based learning model articulated by Woodson, for example, resurfaces in modern research. It is presented as the most viable means of educating Black children not only to pass standardized testing, but, more importantly, to inculcate values, such as self-worth and community, that will ultimately enable the transformation of self and society.

Culture-Based Theories

The understanding that Black American students need racially affirming education has been expressed by contemporary Black American researcher-practitioners for more than 30 years (Asante, 1991; Gay, 2010; Irvine, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shockley, 2011). While these educators use different terminologies, they express a shared vision. Irvine (2001), for example, calls for education based on cultural synchronicity; this concept argues the need for majority teachers to understand the cultural divide that exists in public classrooms and to use acquired knowledge about their own and other cultures to bridge this gap. This section isolates two such theories, culturally relevant teaching and Afrocentricity, as the focal point of further discussion on culture-based pedagogies. These two are selected because of their degree of difference in both nuance and application.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

The concept of cultural discontinuity—the discordant values, behaviors, and paradigms between ethnic minority homes and Eurocentric schools—has been the subject of research since the 1980's (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Its conceptualization has prompted several researchers to investigate the cultural attributes of ethnic minorities and their real and perceived experiences in public schools. Culture-based concepts have emerged to address this

understanding of cultural discordance and the documented bias in teacher practices—particularly in regard to Black American and brown students and in the areas of curricula, academic tracking, and student discipline (Irvine, 1991).

As purported by Ladson-Billings (1995b), the concept of cultural relevancy refers to instructional practices that are contrary to traditional public schooling. As such, it shares similarities to critical pedagogies but, like Woodson (1933), stresses both individual and communal empowerment (1995b). In describing her theory, Ladson-Billings (1995b) identifies the three propositions on which cultural relevancy rests: (a) all students are entitled to experience successful schooling experiences; (b) diversity learning must become an intricate part of public school curricula and practices; and (c) instruction must be infused with a critical perspective wherein students embrace both a critical consciousness and a transformative approach to society at large. A brief discussion of each proposition is as follows.

The argument that all students must experience academic success presupposes that each teacher, school, and district have a clearly articulated view of what constitutes good teaching and differentiated instructional delivery. Given the demographic shifts in American culture and the increasing minority student populations (NCES, 2010), the definition of “good teaching” must embrace a conceptual framework that includes cultural competence (Irvine, 2002). Further, this framework must possess clearly defined objectives, such as those provided by CULTURES, to provide benchmarks for teachers’ professional development. The adherence to a cultural competence model enables teachers to support student learning by connecting culture and learning and by leveraging skills acquired from home/community to utilize and expand upon them in school settings (Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Despite the body of research on culture-based pedagogies, the findings from these studies were not initially applied to Black American students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Of issue was and remains the widespread assumption that Black Americans have no distinct cultural identity to which to refer. Black American culture, therefore, is presumably the same as White students' despite differences in history, political and economic standing and social perception (1995b). Culturally relevant pedagogy remediates this concern by establishing mandates for diversity training and the infusion of critical race perspectives (1995b).

Afrocentricity

Among the contemporary culture-based pedagogies, Afrocentricity emerged as one of the earliest (Asante, 1991; Tillotson, 2011). As defined and introduced by Asante (1991), Afrocentricity is a social theory- an approach to education that argues the value of experiencing human events from an African perspective. As such, it provides a non-traditional epistemology that places African knowledge, worldviews, and experiences at the loci of intellectual query. In such a position, members of the African Diaspora, including Black American children, serve as subjects within African intellectual paradigms as opposed to being objects within the hegemonic paradigms that comprise the European canon (1991).

An Afrocentric approach to teaching helps Black students develop resilience, contextualize learning, and remediate the negative messages they receive as ethnic minorities (Asante, 1991; Dei, 1994; Shockley, 2011). In such an environment, Black students experience cultural congruity as they explore the genius and successes of Black people and the implications that this knowledge has for their lives.

The process of imparting knowledge through means that supports the positive identity formation of students is not uncommon. Such a practice is witnessed among the various religious

and immigrant groups who have affirmed the relationship between culture and learning by privately supporting Catholic, Hebrew, Chinese, or Episcopalian schools (Shockley, 2011). The only difference in regard to Black American students is the reluctance to acknowledge Black cultural attributes and to use these attributes to facilitate student achievement.

Despite this reluctance, support is being given to the idea of cultural competency as a benchmark for teacher professional development. Such a standard is not only proffered by emic scholar-researchers but also by majority researcher-practitioners who argue the need for strong teacher-student classroom relationships. Danielson's (2007) widely acclaimed research on professional frameworks, for example, has been adapted in 24 contiguous states (NEA, 2012). It includes four domains and 22 descriptive components for evaluating professional practice. The second domain concerns the Classroom Environment and its component 2a elaborates on "Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport" (2007, p.64). In demonstrating proficiency in this area, teachers are encouraged to respect their students' lives and home cultures. "For some teachers, this requires significant new learning, because ways of showing respect in one culture may be offensive in another" (Danielson, 2007, p. 64).

While Danielson's (2007) language lacks the tone and racial analysis associated with a critical race or advocacy perspective, her widely used framework for professional standards have been adapted by districts across the nation. Her success facilitates further, more critical discourse on what constitutes cultural competency.

Divergent Views on Black American Culture-Based Instruction

Despite the logic of culturally relevant pedagogy and Afrocentricity, the implementation of these theories within public schools has elicited divergent responses, particularly in regard to Afrocentricity (Bekerie, 1994). Reasons for this opposition are undoubtedly related to the radical

epistemological shift that this concept requires (Asante 1991; 1994) and its implications for teacher training, curriculum development, discipline, and community relations. While both theories are culture-based and support critical race perspectives (1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995), they differ in ways that make cultural relevance theory more politically palatable and Afrocentricity more concerning to existing public school systems (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). The reasons for this distinction are as follows.

The concept of cultural relevancy has immediate applications to all ethnically diverse populations. To this end, this theory not only empowers Black American students, but all students from non-majority backgrounds because of its broad focus on transformation (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This broad application enables its incorporation into non-critical frameworks such as those introduced by Danielson (2007). In addition, cultural relevancy, as a theory of opposition, seeks to transform public schools through partnership and dialogue (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011). This approach and level of applicability decentralizes discourse on Afrocentric paradigms. In contrast and by definition, Afrocentricity promotes a distinctly African epistemology that explores the global struggles of African peoples in order to forge Black American self-determinism (Asante, 1991). This characteristic promotes a more intensive focus on African history, culture, and knowledge in ways that may find resistance in public schools. Further, while Afrocentricity is also transformative, it does not assume a transformative perspective when addressing public schools. Instead, it requires schools to differentiate between schooling and education by incorporating an African cultural ethos that will empower Black American students to transform themselves (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011).

Black American Culture and Culture-Based Theory

Afrocentricity in American education is predicated on the idea that Black American children must know and draw strength from their history and cultural heritage (Woodson, 1933; Asante, 1991) This knowledge and subsequent leveraging of positive self-esteem facilitates academic achievement by eliminating negative stereotypes, highlighting past and present role models, and bridging the cultural divide between home and school (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Inherent within these Afrocentric understandings is an advocacy not only for Black American culture, but for cultural knowledge as well. As King (1994) contends, “cultural knowledge “includes the skills awareness and competence that permits Black American people to participate meaningfully in their culture—in all of its changing regional and socioeconomic variety” (p.22). To further our understanding of cultural knowledge and its impact on Black American student learning, a discussion about the substance and expression of Black American culture must first ensue (Dei, 1994).

Scholarship arguing the existence and vitality of Black American culture was published in 1958 with the seminal works of Melville Herskovits. In contrast to his contemporaries, Herskovits argued against the prevailing beliefs that slavery had stripped Diaspora Africans of all vestiges of culture. Instead, Herskovits (1958) concluded that cultural remnants survive even when dominant institutions are lost; cultural elements are perpetuated and transmitted to subsequent generations through rituals, values, songs, folklore, and religious practices (1958). These elements of culture help define Black Americans as a cultural group that is particularly prone to social and economic isolation (Irvine, 1991).

In the 1970's, Lawrence Levine (1978) produced highly acclaimed research on Black American culture and consciousness. In doing so, he offered two precautionary statements. The

first is in regard to culture itself. While Black Americans still retain African cultural remnants, these remnants should not be seen as broken pieces of a whole, once viable culture (1978). Here, the focus is not on what has remained immutable over the centuries, but rather what and how cultural elements had been creatively retained, adapted, and fused with other cultures to create new paradigms (1978). And, second, in discussing any culture group, it is important to acknowledge intragroup diversity, particularly among native Africans whose history is marked by colonization (Dei, 1994). Yet, these shared experiences of oppression produce common paradigms that enable a unity among diverse African peoples (Asante, 1990). This common strand is what is referred to in this study and extant research as Africanism within Black American culture.

Adding to these insights are those offered by A. Wade Boykin (1994) who argues that educators must also transcend “surface structure” or first order understandings about non-European cultures. Surface understandings confine academic inquiry to the study of cultural celebrations, attire or foods while ignoring critical discourse wherein substantive diversity issues are found (1994, p. 241). To achieve “deep structure” understandings, educators must establish sensitivity to their own cultural norms and ethnic identities (1994); after knowing oneself, an educator is better prepared to embrace the deeper issues that emerge when cultures engage each other from different norms and beliefs. The intersection of these dynamics eliminates cultural aversion, the tendency to avoid uncomfortable truths as they pertain to race, power, and privilege (Irvine, 1991), and enables critical dialogue and analytical understandings to occur (1994). With this caveat, this study proceeds with a discussion of the salient Africanisms embedded within Black American cultural expression.

“In its most fundamental form, culture entails the way a particular group codifies reality (Boykin, 1994, p. 241). It is comprised of the shared beliefs, practices, and paradigms that groups use to create systems of knowing (Boykin, 1986). Gay (2010) extends this idea by stating that “culture provides the tools to pursue the search for meaning and to convey our understanding to others...” (p. 76). Whereas, Nobles (n.d.) proffers the idea that no human activity can be pursued that is devoid of cultural influence. Culture, therefore, is the foundation that underlies all human thought, purposes, values, epistemologies and cosmological understandings. These definitions highlight the power of our educational system in molding perceptions and beliefs. It also wields power in shaping how we understand ourselves and others. This observation raises concerns because, as Shockley contends:

[I]f culture is the way a people define, create, celebrate, sustain, and develop themselves, Black American children are in trouble because the public education system does not teach them about the significance of their historic journey or the accomplishments that Black American people have made. (Shockley, 2007, p. 109)

The primary task of Afrocentric education is to challenge post-colonial paradigms and redefine what constitutes learning for Black American children (Shockley, 2007). In doing so, critical educators must investigate nontraditional models of education that enable Black American children to experience with the cultural integrity and academic genius of Black American people. Woodson (1933) and, more recently, Shujaa (1994) presented this idea in arguing the differences between education and miseducation and between education and schooling. For the latter (1994), schooling is defined as a social construct, a social design. It is the “process of molding and fashioning minds and behavior according to the interests and beliefs of some particular group” (Schostak, 2008, p. 1). This process is “intended to perpetuate and

maintain the society's existing power relations and the institutional structures that support those arrangements.”(Shujaa, 1994, p.15). Since schooling is a vehicle for acculturation into the dominant culture, it is present, in some form, in every society (Shockley, 2007; 1994). It prepares students to function in the way things are. Education, however, differs from schooling. While the two may share common features, they differ in regard to objective and outcome. As Shujaa (1994) contends,

Education is the process of transmitting from one generation to the next knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and all things that give a particular cultural orientation its uniqueness. Every cultural group must provide for this transmission process or it will cease to exist. (Shujaa, 1994, p.15)

This distinction is significant. It establishes a comparative argument that schooling and educating are not just different; they are overlapping, polar opposites (Schostak, 2008; 1994). Whereas schooling supports the teaching of canonized information and the following of normed, behaviors, education supports exploration and critical analysis in a world where knowledge is not legislated and solutions to complex problems are not fixed (2008). This interpretation is compatible with cultural relevancy theory and Afrocentricity, as each paradigm argues that the transformative power of creative thought resides with the learner (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In exploring the African vestiges within Black American culture, therefore, we seek the psychologically affirming ways in which this transition from schooling to education can take place within Afrocentric classrooms. The table below assists in this process.

Table 2

A Comparative View of African and Euramerican World Views

| Salient Paradigms | |
|---|--|
| Afrocentric | Eurocentric |
| Internal-knowledge, self-knowledge is foundational to all other learning. Learning is derived through experience. | External-knowledge is the basis of all knowledge. One learns through logical cognitive processes. |
| Spiritualism, harmony with nature | Materialism, mastery over nature |
| Inclusive mode of reasoning | Exclusive form of reasoning |
| “Verve” expressive energy and movement | Impulse and physical control |
| Oral-based culture | Print-based culture |
| Communal orientation | Possessive individualism |
| Interconnectedness | Separateness |
| Uniqueness valued | Sameness valued |
| Respect is gained through beliefs, relationships, personal conduct | Respect is gained through material acquisitions, ownership, and politics |
| Change is a natural process to be embraced; change is cyclical | Change is to be feared or controlled. Change can occur to meet immediate goals. Change is arbitrary. |

Note: Adapted from “The Triple Quandary and the Schooling of Children,” by A. W.

Boykin, 1986. In J.J. Irvine, *Black Students and School Failure*, New York, Praeger Publishers.

Adapted with Permission.

The development of an African agency imparts a sense of belonging and importance for Black American children who cannot find themselves in Eurocentric schooling (Asante, 1991).

This understanding is critical to Afrocentricity and any culture-based pedagogy whose orientation promotes self-understanding. As researchers contend (Boykin, 1995), this philosophical tenet is one of several expressions indigenous to the West African world view. Other vestiges of which are also offered for further illumination.

Africanisms within Black American Culture

Current research reveals (Boykin, 1986; Dei, 1994) that there are several salient orientations embedded within traditional Black American culture that bare a relationship with West African world views. These Africanisms are also found in the Diaspora and provide a cultural continuity among African peoples who share in a common history of exploitation (Asante, 1990). This continuity is evidenced through such mediums as child-rearing, folklore, beliefs, rituals and family structures (Dei, 1994; Herskovits, 1958). The identification of these cultural dimensions is illustrative and help establish why so many researchers, both emic and etic, (Asante, 1991; Boykin, 1986; Dei, 1994; Irvine, 1991; Kochman, 1981) see cultural discontinuity as a major contributor of Black underachievement. This disconnection between world views and operational paradigms cannot be fully appreciated until more is known about the relations among the culture groups involved.

Boykin (1986) contends that cultural discontinuity is best understood as a “triple quandary”—a term used to express how Black Americans simultaneously navigate through three overlapping realities that reflect their struggles as members of a defined ethnic group, an oppressed social group, and as citizens within a racialized Euramerican society. These layers of discordant realities introduce stressors that undermine the success of Black American children and introduce a world of hidden or unspoken meanings that often run counter to their enculturation (Boykin, 1986; Irvine, 1991). By leveraging African paradigms and cultural

elements within the classroom, teachers can facilitate learning, self-esteem, and resilience in their students (1991; 1986).

Central to these African paradigms, are the concepts of spirituality, harmony with nature, verve, communalism, affective and oral expression, and expressive individualism (Boykin, 1986). These salient culture traits are listed in Table 2 and juxtaposed to European cultural paradigms. When taking a comparative view, it is understandable how Black American children might experience mainstream Eurocentric classrooms as cognitively foreign places (Boykin, 1986; Irvine, 1991). Embedded within traditional Black American culture, for example, are provisions for collaboration, community, and a tolerance for highly stimulating environments (1986). In contrast, Eurowestern culture and Euramerican schools favor individual competition and a preference for environmental control (1986). Whereas the former favors the release of energy through creative movement, the latter inculcates physical and emotional restraint (1986). And, the high stimulation associated with Black American cultural expression runs counter to the silence, physical restraint, and mechanistic view of time that characterizes public school environments.

In drawing these comparisons, this study proceeds with a synthesis of findings from educators whose research offer insights on how to leverage Black cultural attributes to assist students most at risk. As Hale-Benson (1982) contends, these attributes influence learning pathways and are best likened to Gardener's theory of multiple intelligences. In his seminal work, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Gardner (1983) challenges the educational community to acknowledge and validate the array of human intelligences that extend far beyond the expression of logic and linguistic skills. Hale-Benson (1982) argues that, just as there are multiple intelligences, there are multiple cultural influences that each contributes to the

creation of intellectual pathways and associated skills. This analogy is particularly useful in exploring how culture-based pedagogies can be integrated into classroom practices without the threat of stereotyping urban Black American children (1983). Just as some students may be more kinesthetic learners, other Black students may also be more communal in their learning behaviors or more spiritual in their conceptualizations. By exploring the skills acquired through culture and enculturation, educators can utilize culturally engaging metaphors and meanings to facilitate learning among urban, Black primary school students.

Conclusion

For over one hundred years, Black American educators have proffered contextualized, pro-Black pedagogies to address the persistent challenges associated with the education of Black American children (Woodson, 1933). As synthesized from the writings of both historic and contemporary educational researchers (Asante, 1991; Boykin, 1986, 1994; Dei, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995a), these culture-based ideologies have two primary characteristics. First, they provide a transformative model for Black American education that extends beyond yearly benchmarks and normed testing. This is achieved by embracing an ethnically affirming pedagogy that validates the past and present contributions of African people and models how Black American children can utilize the strengths of their collective histories to achieve in public schools (1991; 1995). This approach to education requires a radical shift in and from traditional paradigms. Long prevailing deficit ideologies and the myth that Black Americans lack cultural integrity must be replaced with a deep knowledge of salient Black cultural elements and a commitment to teacher enlightenment in supporting these elements within the classroom (Boykin, 1986).

Second, culturally relevant pedagogies commonly advocate for oppositional instruction that defies traditional teaching modalities and favors the use of prevailing Black cultural norms and experiences (Asante, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Afrocentricity advocates for such a purpose and outcome. Yet, it differs from cultural relevance through its call for an expansive understanding of the African Diaspora, its overt agenda for self-governance, and the formation of an African identity (1991; Shockley, 2007). Black students' engagement in Afrocentric thinking, therefore, invites critical and global perspectives on the many variables, past and present, that shape their current self-understanding and inform their need for empowerment. This current research is helpful in identifying these cultural paradigms and discussing how they can be used to inform instruction.

In the upcoming chapters, this study explores meta-ethnographic methodology in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, it presents the findings of extant research on the classroom practices of effective, culturally relevant teachers of Black students. And, in Chapter 5, it provides a synopsis of the findings from Chapter 4 as required for publication.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this meta-ethnographic, qualitative study is to illuminate culture-based pedagogies and their implementation among high value Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students. This is done to explore how critical ideologies and culturally attuned instructional practices can be normed and utilized to increase Black American student achievement. In doing so, the following research questions are posed.

1. What are culture-based pedagogies and how can they enable learning for urban Black American primary school students?
2. How can acquiring knowledge of Black American culture influence the process of teaching?
3. How can elements of Black American culture be integrated into Eurocentric public schooling?

Assumptions of and Rational for Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research illuminates how human beings operate within, respond to, and subsequently understand the social orders and cultures in which they live (Atkins, Lewin, Smith, Engel, Fretheim, & Volmink, 2008). Qualitative methodology often assumes an interpretivist paradigm which proposes an alternate point of view to the positivist approach to using data to predict human behaviors (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). Instead of seeking to predict, interpretivist researchers seek understanding and the knowledge with which to interpret human behaviors based on the contexts from which these behaviors emerge.

Critical theory is a framework closely associated with interpretivism in that it also seeks to understand human experiences. The focus of its research, however, is the oppressive or

marginalizing experiences of a targeted group (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). Because of this, critical theorists use standpoint epistemologies, knowledge based on the emic perspectives of underrepresented or exploited peoples, to argue the need for advocacy and emancipation (Bodgan & Bilken, 2007; 2012). Their focus, as their title suggests, is often on the experiences of ethnic minorities and the impact of race, racism, and hegemonic ideologies on their lives (Bonilla-Silva, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010).

There are several salient characteristics of qualitative research. These features include a commitment to obtaining data naturalistically through field or on-site research, obtaining descriptive data from emic perspectives, obtaining data from context, working inductively, and following data collection procedures that acknowledge human processes—namely, how experiences are interpreted and the factors that motivate beliefs and patterns of behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). These attributes of qualitative research define its strengths as a methodology and enables further discussion about the specific theoretical assumptions of the researcher.

Within the context of a specific study, qualitative methodology reveals the epistemologies of the individual researcher (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Epistemology refers to the researcher's known or hidden beliefs about what constitutes knowledge, meaning, learning and the process by which human beings obtain this knowledge (2007). To this end, qualitative methodology is defined as the philosophical orientation of the inquirer and the specific techniques she uses to collect and analyze data with that orientation in mind (2007; Glesne, 2007). Hence, how an inquirer thinks influences how data is subsequently collected, interpreted, or evaluated (2011).

In regard to the conceptual framework that underlies this particular study, I identify two basic assumptions. First, there is a marked difference between knowledge and understanding

(Noblit & Hare, 1988). As defined by the positivist framework, knowledge is both accumulative and predictive (1988). Through numerous investigations, knowledge moves from being informative to predictive (Glense, 2011). In contrast, meta-ethnographies emerge from the interpretivist tradition; their purpose is to acquire understanding about human events with the goal of being able to anticipate human behaviors (1988).

From this lens, knowledge is the ever changing understanding of human behaviors, cultures, and social events (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Walsh & Downe, 2005). Through inquiry and discourse, we gain a greater understanding of pre-existing social conditions while developing new questions for emerging social conditions (1988). This explanation reveals the inductive nature of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Genzuk, 1999; 1988). It identifies specific events, gathers relevant data, and uses this data to create alternative understandings (1988).

The second assumption that underlies this study concerns its strategy of inquiry. As an ethnographic work, this study is also phenomenological; it illuminates specific experiences of a targeted group at a certain period in its history (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). This approach reveals my preference for the interpretivist tradition and my interest in cultural anthropology. At the core of this study is my desire to understand how a specific group of teachers connected Black culture with education and how this group subsequently modified their practice to promote racial elevation through learning and critical discourse.

Meta-ethnography as a Strategy of Inquiry

By definition, a meta-ethnography is the process of comparing and synthesizing the textual analysis of pre-existing ethnographic or interpretive data (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Weed, 2005). Its purpose is to explore the findings of these studies in order to derive new meanings

(1988; 2005). This means of data selection and synthesis is significant as it identifies the defining characteristics of the meta-ethnographic methodology (2005).

As a member of the ethnographic family, this study explores the data rich findings of previous researchers and ethnographers (Weed, 2005; Creswell, 2012). These findings are based on the observed patterns, rituals, shared behaviors, and collective worldview of the members of an identifiable group. Creswell (2012) uses the term “culture sharing group” to define such members (p. 91). In ethnographic studies, the field observations of group regularities—its common patterns of behavior, values, and responses to shared challenges—provide the raw data that is subsequently interpreted by the original researcher (2012). These regularities are observed and recorded; they may consist of a ritual used in an isolated event or the group’s responses to a prolonged condition (2012).

In recording these behaviors, the researcher writes from an emic perspective, but incorporates her own conceptual frameworks into a final analysis (2012) This process ends with the development of a “holistic cultural portrait” (2012, p. 96) that includes both emic and etic perspectives. In meta-ethnographies, the final conclusions of this process become the raw data that is reciprocally translated and summarily synthesized for interpretive purposes (Weed, 2005; 2012). In this study, the etic perspective will also incorporate critical race theory as one of four conceptual frameworks. As such, this study could rightly be described as critical meta-ethnography, meaning one of its intended outcomes is to advocate for the emancipation of the subject culture group.

Meta-ethnographies provide a unique approach to data synthesis. As initially designed by Noblit and Hare (1988), they provided a method for interpreting the findings of various ethnographers on the status of desegregation in American public schools. Meta-ethnographies

were created, therefore, to provide an organized means of synthesizing findings from multiple, single-subject datasets (Noblit & Hare, 1988). In doing so, meta-ethnographies do not require the use of primary data, such as field notes or interviews; instead, they use the interpretations and findings of other researchers as raw data (Doyle, 2003; Weed, 2005). This characteristic is one of several reasons why this method was chosen for this study. To achieve the objective presented in the purpose statement, analytical summaries and a firm contextual understanding of the context out of which they emerged are required.

This method design confers two primary research advantages (Weed, 2005). First, researchers typically explain their findings and articulate their own interpretive response to the data they have collected (2005). This readily available information enables the identification of common themes and conclusions (2005). Such is not the case with researchers' raw data. Although Weed (2005) admits that this is an advantage due to pragmatic concerns, he also contends that "it is no different from the pragmatism of excluding studies on the basis of what are often arbitrary criteria in order to achieve manageable numbers of studies in systematic review" (2005, p. 9).

The second advantage of meta-ethnographies is the retention of meaning in context (Weed, 2005). By synthesizing the findings of extant interpretive research, the meta-ethnographer avoids re-analysis or submitting a secondary interpretation that is now separated from its original context (2005). For example, if a meta-ethnographer was to possess the raw data from every synthesized work, there would be no guarantee that she would produce the same interpretations as the initial researchers (2005). In such a case, contextual meaning is lost. It is preserved, however, when the findings of the original researchers are accepted as the meta-ethnographer's raw data.

In keeping with its commitment to meaning in context, meta-ethnographies work with smaller sets of synthesized data (Doyle, 2003). Some researchers see this restriction as a shortcoming within this type of qualitative inquiry noting concerns about the generalizability of the findings (Weed, 2005). Its restriction, however, is due to two factors. First, meta-ethnographies are not intended to make predictions about human behaviors (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Instead, they use smaller samples in order to anticipate and interpret human affairs. As the study unfolds, meta-ethnographies value depth in exploring data, rather than the breadth that comes in working with larger datasets (1988; 2005). This observation is of particular concern in regard to this study's use of the critical race framework. By definition, such a framework requires in-depth inquiry into multiple operational variables involving race, racial identity formation, socio-economics as well as hegemonic ideations and the exercise of privilege (Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). Hence the philosophical frameworks that underlie this study are consistent with the orientation of meta-ethnographic study.

The Role and Assumptions of the Researcher

The meta-ethnographic method begins with a single interest on the part of the inquirer (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The nature of this interest is open ended and may consist of a problem of practice, a controversy, or a topic of concern (1988). As the inquirer reads and reflects, she becomes more attune to an interest she wishes to pursue and from what perspective. In regard to this present study, my own status as a statistically rare Black American administrator was a point of interest along with my present work within a low income, community based school.

During the 2011-12 school year, the school's student population was 55% Black American, 33% Latino and 10% Haitian, and 2% White. Through de facto segregation and economic disadvantage, the school is losing its ethnic diversity. When I assumed the

principalship in the summer of 2012, our most recent standardized test scores were 50% partially proficient (failing) and 50% proficient (passing). My responsibility was to develop a long term plan for raising the academic proficiency of students who are presently unprepared for the world in which they live.

In conducting a meta-ethnography, I read narratives, case studies, abstracts, and books. I explored pedagogies of past and present educators who once walked the path I was on. Over the months, my interests fixed on “Jim Crow” teachers, Black American teachers who taught during de jure segregation. Despite flagrant inequities, these teachers were able to build educational capital in direct defiance of generational poverty, lack of opportunities, and legally sanctioned racism. After researching, I found myself wondering: What did they have that we do not?

This study, therefore, is not just an academic exercise. It is a search for answers, a true exploration through which I seek actionable, data-supported information with which to develop programs, curricula, and instructional practices that will empower my students to see beyond their circumstances. In pursuing these answers, this study’s process of data selection, translation, synthesis, and interpretation are all conducted in compliance with the meta-ethnographic model established by Noblit and Hare (1988).

The Meta-Ethnographic Process

The goals of meta-ethnographic data collection are to identify and locate research that is subject-relevant (Thomas & Harden, 2008). In interpretive methods that require data synthesis, specific types of data collection are pursued for their ability to retain meaning in context, utilize clear recording practices that facilitate transparency and enable the generation of new perspectives (2008). Among these methods are those proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988) who,

in their seminal work, presented a 7-stage process for data collection, synthesis and interpretation. A listing of these stages and accompanying actions is found in Table 3 below.

Table 3

7-Step Model for Meta-ethnographic Research

| Phases | Noblit & Hare (1988) | Description of Action |
|--------|---|--|
| 1 | “Getting Started” | Researcher identifies an area of interest. Selected topic represents a sustainable interest |
| 2 | “Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest” | Determine the relationships among studies Assess audience. Select relevant research topic Identify and locate relevant case studies Determine number of limited sources |
| 3 | “Reading and Researching articles” | Repeat close readings of case studies Note details of each case Identify first order themes |
| 4 | “Determining how the studies are related” | Determine the relationships between studies Create metaphoric reductions Identify second order themes |
| 5 | “Translating data into one another” | Conduct relevant translations Identify patterns and themes |
| 6 | “Synthesizing translations” | Compare, contrast, analyze, and synthesize data to create a new interpretations Identify third order themes |
| 7 | “Expressing the Synthesis” | Researcher presents findings in a format compatible to the needs of the audience |

Stage 1: Identifying a Topic of Interest

In Stage 1 of this study, a topic of personal and professional interest was selected and a review of extant research was conducted. In this initial investigation, the literature review was confined to post-Civil War narratives and the development of Black American educational ideologies. Of interest were the accounts of clandestine slave schools and the emergence of Black American public schools during the Reconstruction period. This historical review helped to historically situate my reflections on Black American education and facilitated observations regarding the contrast between emic and etic views of Black American education, the historical debate between Washington and Du Bois, and the early widespread association between Black American education and Afrocentric liberation ideologies.

As the literature survey continued, my interest was further piqued by the life history narratives of Black American teachers and the descriptions of how they infused critical race frameworks into standard, yet racialized, curricula (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Levine, 1997; Walker, 2003). These actions introduced the idea of education as a subversive process that exist in opposition and contrast to the status quo. Questions were subsequently formed: How did critical race perspectives influence the historic development of Afrocentric curricula? How have contemporary teacher-researchers advanced the idea of an Afrocentric curriculum as the panacea for Black American underachievement?

The desire to pursue answers to these questions solidified my interest in this present study and satisfied the first of seven steps in the Noblit and Hare ethnographic model. The sustainability criteria inherent within this first step stems from of my interests as a school administrator, teacher, and Black American parent. As inspired by these roles, I seek to explore the content of critical race educational ideology. These pedagogies found common expression during de jure segregation and continue to be a focal point in current discussions about the

learning needs of Black American students. Of concern is the not only the substance of a pro-Black American instructional style, but also its applicability. This latter concern is based on the continued inability of public school officials to discuss issues of race, privilege, and power (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003).

Stage 2: Identifying Sources

In Stage 2 of the 7-step model, I focus on essential studies and determine what sources are most relevant to my study. This is done by following three guidelines established by Noblit and Hare (1988). The first guideline involves limiting my sources as to prevent the ‘gross generalizations” (p. 27) in my final synthesis. While in quantitative studies, such as meta-analyses, emphasis is placed on conducting exhaustive studies (Doyle, 2003), meta-ethnographies do not. Instead, Noblit and Hare (1988) cautions that “unless there is some substantive reason for an exhaustive search, generalizing from all studies of a particular setting yields trite conclusions” (p. 28). Likewise, in their discussion on research saturation, Miles and Huberman (2002) contend that “while there is no ideal number of cases, a number between 4 and 10 cases usually works well. With fewer than 4 cases, it is often difficult to generate theory...with more than 10 cases it quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity and volume of data” (p. 27). Based on these insights, the sample size for this study was limited to 4 case studies.

In regard to identifying the most relevant sources, meta-ethnographers take into consideration their audience when making sampling selections (Fetterman, 2010; Noblit & Hare, 1988). This consideration is especially important in this study because of its potential for future implementation and because of the ethnic and political diversity of the stakeholders involved.

Because of this, care was taken in conducting purposeful sampling, or sampling wherein the researcher intentionally selects her data sources based on specific criteria to support the intended study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Table 4 below identifies the selection criteria used. Once eligible studies were identified, final consideration was given to selecting case studies that enabled ethnic and gender diversity among the original researchers and their participants. This final round of selection was deemed important in potentially uncovering a wider range of generalizable strategies used by effective teachers of Black American students.

Table 4

Case Study Selection Criteria

| Description | Attributes Needed for Study Inclusion |
|------------------------------|---|
| Research Design | Qualitative |
| Research Approach | Case Studies, Narratives, Ethnographies |
| Conceptual Frameworks | Culture and Learning, Advocacy, Critical Race, Culturally Responsive, Afrocentric |
| Research Question | How culture-based pedagogies support the teaching and learning of urban Black American elementary school children |
| Date of Research | Studies conducted 1995 and later |
| Data Collection | Observations, interviews, documents, or lived experiences |
| Data Analysis | Holistic approach to assist in identifying themes |

In searching for potential data sets, a survey of literature was conducted that included searches in electronic databases, books, chapters in books, and a careful review of citations. The most frequently used databases included ERIC and JSTOR, both of which contain peer-reviewed articles. Google Scholar was also used and was particularly helpful in locating articles not available through other databases. Finally, the Digital Dissertations database provided examples of meta-ethnographies and works that provided a historical perspective on the emergence emic-based Black American education starting with clandestine slave schools in the antebellum South.

In utilizing electronic sources, descriptors such as “urban education,” “culturally relevant teaching,” “critical race theory” and “Black American students” were used as part of the first round of inquiry. This was done to achieve two ends. First, this initial round of investigation was essential in identifying researchers whose areas of expertise include Black American education, Black American history, and educational theory. By backtracking citations, this process also uncovered recent Task Force reports, such as those commissioned by the American Psychology Association, whose research included a multilayered analysis of raw data from multiple datasets. These datasets represented studies in several social sciences including psychology, sociology, ethnic history, and cultural anthropology. The initial choice of descriptors was influenced by the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

Stage 3: Selecting Research

By Stage 3, research has been selected through purposeful sampling (2007). Interpretative methodologies have received criticism about being soft or too fluid (Doyle, 2003). Certainly this has been the case regarding meta-ethnographies because of their emphasis on using findings versus raw data and their open ended approach to data selection (Doyle 2003; Noblit and Hare, 1988). In being sensitive to this perception, this study initially included an

additional parameter in regard to data selection. This parameter included the original researchers' field credibility as indicated by "widespread acceptance" – a term used to "...indicate that the researchers' works have been "extensively and favorably cited over a long period of time..." (Doyle, 2003, p. 329). This criterion, however, eliminated more recent scholars whose findings on culture-based pedagogies may deviate from or add depth to the studies conducted by previously known and established researchers. Because of this, an evaluation matrix was needed that would provide a selection criteria that did not discriminate against substantive, but more recent studies.

In keeping with the inclusion criteria referenced in Table 4 and the data set limits referenced by Miles and Huberman (2002), this study synthesizes the works of four selected researchers. Beyond these restrictions, attention is given as to how the selected topic is presented and discussed in the literature—the goal of which is to engage in close readings in order to ascertain "interpretative metaphors" (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 28). The charting of concepts and identification of key themes via the creation of specific coding matrices will assist in this process. The matrices also provide visual representations of recurring themes and metaphors which are essential in meta-ethnographic studies. Matrices enable the retention of complex ideas and meanings in context that subsequently enables data comparisons, syntheses, and creative interpretations (1988; Weed, 2004).

The use of metaphor in interpreting human experiences is prominent in the works of other researchers (Brown, 1977; House, 1979). Some of whom argue that all knowledge is metaphor (1977; 1979). It involves the translation of what is experienced and is placed into a form of reflection and speech that communicates meaning (1977). Brown (1977) contends that there are five principal metaphors that solicit comparisons of society as a living organism or an impersonal

machine. Dominant metaphors also include the translations of observed human behaviors into images of language, theatre, or game. All of these metaphors are useful when making phenomenological observations about human experiences while employing a critical race framework. In order to be useful, however, these metaphors must have certain characteristics (1988).

Noblit and Hare's (1988) references to optimal metaphoric attributes are taken from the works of multiple researchers (Brown, 1977; House, 1979) and include the following characteristics: cogency, economy, range (1977), and credibility (1979). Cogency refers to a seamless translation of thought that is clear and unambiguous (1977). The metaphor requires no explanation due to its clear relationship with the event or finding described. Economy refers to a metaphoric reduction (1988); the metaphor is unencumbered and is reduced to its simplest form of expression and phenomenological representation (1977). And, range refers to the metaphor's power to capture other symbolic meanings and to extend beyond its immediate point of reference (1977). House (1979) adds that metaphors must also be credible; they must make sense in representing a cited belief, thought, summary, or observation (1997).

Stage 4: Determining Metaphors and Relationships

Case studies are reviewed at Stage 4 with the goal of assessing how they relate to each other. This level of analysis is facilitated by the continued use of matrices as they enable ready identification of the recurring metaphors, themes, and patterns encountered in the review process. Since these relationships may present themselves in ways previously unexpected, their continued review permits the researcher to respond to the data as it unfolds. Generally speaking, however, there are three possibilities in regard to data relationships: 1) they may support each

other and underscore each other's validity; 2) the data may contradict or refute each other; or 3) the data may produce a "line of argument" (1988, p. 36).

In cases where the findings are neither in agreement or refutation, a line of argument synthesis is warranted (1988). This process consists of two steps: the first is to translate the data or review their points of agreement and disagreement and the second is to develop a grounded theory that provides an interpretation of the harmonious and discordant data. In any of the three scenarios, the meta-ethnographer comes forward with a social theory that interprets the observed phenomena while honoring its original context (Noblit & Hare, 1983; 1998).

Table 5

Types of Translations: Noblit & Hare (1988)

| Type of Translation | Conditions When Used | Action |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Reciprocal | Used when synthesized findings are compatible and harmonious | Meta-ethnographer synthesizes data and produces an interpretation |
| Refutational | Used when synthesized findings reveal conflicting conclusions. | Discordant findings are included in the new interpretation |
| Line of Argument | Used when data cannot be synthesized. | Grounded theory is used to develop an interpretation that explains divergent findings while respecting the context out of which they emerge. |

To assist in organizing both metaphors and themes, four classification categories were used based on the aforementioned conceptual frameworks. These categories pertain to how concepts are relationship based, culturally situated, politically contextualized, and transformative.

Stage 5: Data Translation

In Stage 5, collected and grouped data are “translated into one another,” a process that can involve reciprocal and refutational translations or line of reasoning translations (1988). By definition, a translation is the act of comparing one case study with another by noting how one study is like and/or dislike another (1988); it is a process that represents the core of meta-ethnographic research (Weed, 2005).

Reciprocal translations take place when there is harmony among the findings from single subject research. In such cases, the final synthesis is seamless and an interpretation is made based on the consistency of the individual findings (1988). Refutational translations are made when there is dissimilarity or “competing explanations” (1988, p. 47) among the findings of single subject research. In this case the meta-ethnographer examines the conflicting data and incorporates them into her final synthesis. Line of reasoning translations is warranted when various, and seemingly irreconcilable, themes emerge in the researcher’s findings (Atkins, Lewin, Smith, Engel, Fretheim, & Volmink, 2008). When this occurs a new conceptual model or interpretive position is constructed, such as in grounded theory, that examines and reconciles conflict in primary and secondary themes, patterns, or paradigms (Atkins et al., 2008; 1988).

One of the mandates regarding any type of synthesis-based research is the need for reconciliation (Miles & Huberman, 2002). One of the strengths of the “meta” studies, such meta-ethnography and meta-synthesis, is the possibility of developing new interpretive theory (2002; Bair, 1999). “Building theory from case study centers on reconciling contradictory or paradoxical evidence.” (2002, p. 29). Hence, these options for noting and synthesizing various

findings is essential to the completion of meta-ethnographic studies and their ability to creatively re-interpret existing data (2002)

Through translations, Noblit and Hare (1988) encourages the use of analogous thinking and requires the meta-ethnographer to contemplate how one researcher's findings either support or refute others. This process of using metaphors and analogies represents the first stages of data synthesis (Bair, 1999). An adequate translation maintains the central metaphors and/or concepts in one account in relation to the same elements in another account (1988).

After selecting, reviewing, grouping, and translating findings in Stages 1 -5, data is then synthesized and packaged for presentation in Stages 6 and 7.

Stage 6: Data Synthesis

As Noblit and Hare (1988) contend, the act of synthesizing involves comparing, contrasting, and analyzing data in order to create a whole—a new interpretation, which is more encompassing than its individual parts. At each several stages during the data gathering and accessing process, data is coded and evaluated for first order themes in Step 3, second order themes in Step 4, and third order themes in Step 6. This third order level of analysis is achieved via close readings, multiple levels of review, and the requirement to consider data in different ways through metaphor and analogy. Through this multi-step process, generalizations can be made that are directly related to and traceable back to the original, individual findings.

Stage 7: Presenting Research Findings

The Stage 7 in Noblit and Hare's (1988) model, the researcher interprets synthesized data. The criterion for how this done involves several variables including: checking theoretical assumptions, reviewing translations, documenting the process, and presenting the final results in ways appropriate to one's audience (1988). Through this 7-step process, I will explore the

substance of a culture- based curriculum as it emerged within segregated schools and continue to be supported by contemporary Black American researchers-practitioners.

Validity, Reliability, and Comparability

With the increase of interpretative methodologies comes a concern about the integrity of information submitted (Kvale, 1996). This concern has been actively directed towards interpretive research, like ethnographies, whose research design allows for smaller groups of subjects, meaning in context, and the inclusion of subjective experiences (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Because of these defining characteristics, the methods of ascertaining validity and reliability in ethnographic work differ from other research designs (1982). A brief discussion is hereby warranted.

Validity, or trustworthiness, asks the fundamental question: Is the study authentic in its source and truthful in its content (Glense, 2011). Its concern is about the credibility of the research submitted (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Reliability is also concerned with integrity, yet it asks a different question: If subsequent researchers were to review these same sources, would they arrive at the same interpretations or conclusions? (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007) This query refers to external reliability wherein persons other than the original researcher can confirm the findings of a study and the credibility of sources used (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982)

Internal reliability in ethnographic studies refers to the researcher's findings and whether these findings are truly representative of an observed reality (1982). In discussing these distinctions within ethnographic research, Le Compte and Goetz (1982) present three areas wherein validity and reliability can be established in the development of: the "research problems, the nature of research goals, and the application of research results" (p. 33).

Whereas some research methods focus on establishing cause and effect by controlling or eliminating contextual variables (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982), ethnographic research emphasizes the relationships among a variety of variables common to a particular context (1982). Such a process ensures validity by producing complex interpretations that are rooted to the observed phenomena (1982). It also ensures external reliability by enabling other researchers to arrive at the same or similar conclusions as based on meaning in context (1982).

Applying research results is a process associated with generalizability. This occurs when the findings of a study can be applied to a wider population (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). In ethnographic research, that examines some aspect of daily living or experience, subjects are often chosen through purposeful sampling (2005). This type of sampling enables the ethnographer to focus on the subject associated with the selected phenomena (2005). This approach sharply contrasts with studies that utilize random selections within an entire population (1982) and, because of this, argue broad based applicability. Instead of arguing for generalizability, however, ethnographies speak of comparability and translatability (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). The former requires rich contextual descriptions that allow the researcher to compare findings with other groups (1982). Whereas, translatability refers to in-depth descriptions of the processes used in obtaining, organizing, and presenting data that also allow for comparison with other studies (1982).

In addition to its distinctive qualities that support validity, reliability and comparability, this particular study also uses the following mechanisms to ensure credibility: communication validity, triangulation, and disconfirming data. The first concerns communication validity – a term that refers to the accurate understanding of what is being communicated from subject to researcher (Kvale, 1996). In a meta-ethnographic study, communication is in print and allows for

the researcher to review for accuracy. The use of metaphor development, pattern recognition, and thematic coding requires several layers of review before synthesis is achieved. This minimizes the prospect of researcher bias as findings are grounded in clearly identified themes and relationships.

A second check for integrity is conducted through triangulation, or the process of confirming data accuracy by using multiple sources and methods to verify the same data (Glesne, 2011). In this study, information supplied by various case studies is cross-referenced with each other to verify themes and to synthesize findings on what constituted effective instruction and Black American student achievement. Furthermore, this study incorporates a final check, the use of negative case analysis, which ensures integrity by requiring the inclusion of disconfirming case studies (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). This activity enables pro- and con-, emic and etic perspectives that create a more dynamic assessment of data (2005).

Understanding the properties of ethnographic studies is important in examining, synthesizing and applying extant findings in Stages 3 -7. Within these stages, data is selected, coded, translated into metaphors, and synthesized for interpretive purposes. At the end of this process, this researcher seeks to offer an interpretation of Black American culture and Afrocentric pedagogy that has real world transferability in urban, public school classrooms. This chapter establishes the strengths and limitations of ethnographic research design and the means through which data will be gathered and assessed.

Conclusion

This study explores culture-based pedagogies as developed by emic researchers and the use of these pedagogies by high-value Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students. This emic perspective of education provides a nontraditional lens through which to

consider the teaching and learning of Black American students. The selection of a meta-ethnographic methodology provides a means of illuminating the practices of multiple teachers and synthesizing their collective experiences help to address the research questions posed.

In pursuing this goal, this study seeks a means of addressing the well-published educational challenges facing Black American children. In past centuries, Black teachers in segregated schools situated instruction to promote academic rigor, impart learning, and instill a sense of agency (Foster, 1997, hooks, 1994; Walker, 2005). With the loss of these teachers, and the many services they provided to their communities, Black students struggle to receive the kinds of affirming education they need to thrive. The introduction of critical and culture-based pedagogies represents our best hope in restoring to Black students the cultural familiarity, positive sense of self, and academic vitality they need to break the present cycle of persistent underachievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b).

Chapter 4

Meta-Ethnographic Data Sets

Review of Analysis Approach

This chapter explores the expression of culture-based instruction in the professional practice of effective Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students. It achieves this goal by illuminating the findings of four case studies by following the aforementioned 7-step model for meta-ethnographic data selection, collection, and synthesis. As designed by Noblit and Hare (1988), this model requires the cyclical exploration of data by employing a variety of coding strategies. In Step 3, for example, descriptive coding is conducted after data identification. Such coding enables the discovery of first order themes that are later reviewed for translation. In Step 4, data set relationships and second order themes are identified through the use of relational coding. In Step 5, translations are performed and metaphors created which allow for synthesis via cross comparisons. In Step 6, metaphors from all four case studies are gathered to facilitate synthesis and the discovery of third order themes. This process is then followed by Step 7 which consists of a public presentation. In regard to each step, readers are reminded that meta-ethnographic studies synthesize the findings of extant research as opposed to re-evaluating raw data apart from its original context. Some references to raw data are provided, however, for purposes of clarity. In such cases, the interpretation of the original researcher is always referenced to safeguard meaning in context (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

The four case studies under review were selected using the evaluation matrix referenced in Chapter 3. This matrix identified four core characteristics that were essential for case study inclusion.

1. the articulation of a critical race or advocacy perspective on the part of the original researcher(s);
2. the identification of the participants' conceptual frameworks as being culture-based, or culturally relevant;
3. the involvement of primary school teachers of Black American students;
4. the practice of instruction in predominantly Black and urban environments.

In addition, subject relevant modifications were made to support data comparability.

These modifications included guidelines to compare only qualitative designs, to include more recent data, and to include data obtained through classroom observations, interviews, and/or lived experiences. These pragmatic modifications were made in keeping with the focus and methodology of this study.

Attention was also given to studies whose researchers and subjects represented emic and etic perspectives along with ethnic and gender diversity. This consideration was deemed essential for cross-referencing data with other studies and in creating possibilities for negative case analysis that allows for the inclusion of divergent perspectives about the practices of effective teachers of Black American children.

Before proceeding, we begin with a review of this study's research questions.

1. What are culture-based pedagogies and how can they enable learning for urban Black American primary school students?
2. How can acquiring knowledge of Black American culture influence the process of teaching?
3. How can elements of Black American culture be integrated into Eurocentric public schooling?

Data Sets

In building on the concepts presented in Chapters One -Three, Chapter 4 introduces and explores four selected case studies. The first case study involves a Black American researcher and subjects (Howard, 2001a). The second involves ethnic minority researchers (Latina and Black American) and Black American subjects (Esposito & Swain, 2009); the third involves an inter-ethnic research team and a Black American teacher (Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright, 2012); and the fourth involves a White American researcher and three White American subjects (Cooper, 2003).

In regard to participant selection, two out of four researchers (Howard, 2001a; Cooper, 2003) used a form of “community nomination” to identify high value teachers. As developed by Foster (1994), this selection method required the involvement of Black American community members (parents, students, pastors, administrators, colleagues, etc.) in defining effective teaching. The strength of this process lies in the community’s expression of “voice” – a valued component of culture-based pedagogies. With this voice, the community is free to define the values and attributes it deemed most advantageous in educating Black American children. In contrast, Esposito and Swain (2009) utilized purposeful sampling in selecting urban teachers who possessed critical, culturally relevant, and social justice orientations. Whereas, Cholewa et al., (2012) based their definition of high-value teachers on performance assessments as determined by standardized test scores. Table 6 below profiles these and other attributes of the studies selected.

Table 6

Profile of Selected Case Studies

| Author | Year | Conceptual Foundation | Strategy of Inquiry | Participants | Situated Theory | Focus |
|--|-------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| Howard | 2001 | CRT | Case Study | 4 | Critical, Culture Based | Teachers' ideology, practices |
| Esposito & Swain | 2009 | CRT | Case Study | 7 | Social Justice, Critical, Culture Based | Teachers' use of culturally relevant theory |
| Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright | 2012 | CRT | Case Study | 1 | Cultural Relevancy | Teachers' use of culturally relevant theory |
| Cooper | 2003 | Cultural Relevance | Case Study | 3 | Cultural synchronicity | Teacher beliefs and practices |

The first case study (CS1)(Howard, 2001a) featured the work of a Black American man whose research focused on the practices of four Black American primary school teachers. His study illuminated how culturally relevant and critical race theories influenced the daily pedagogical practices of these effective teachers. Of importance was the introduction of an ethic of caring that was used to elicit student engagement and introduce a working metaphor of the classroom as the locus of communal learning (Noddings, 1988). As a mindset, an ethic of caring is relational; its orientation is “tied to experience because all its deliberations focus on the human beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relationship to each other” (1988, p.218). As exhibited by the subjects in this study, having this relational ethic enabled teachers to extend themselves beyond the technical confines of their jobs and establish its precepts within

daily instructional practice (1988). Actions expressing this ethic were witnessed consistently among effective teachers (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard 2001a).

The second case study (Esposito & Swain, 2009) was situated in social justice theory and involved two minority researchers (Latina and Black American) and seven Black American primary school teachers. The research investigated how urban teachers implemented culturally relevant pedagogy and affirmed its connection to social justice issues. In doing so, this study introduced an overt instructional agenda, to cultivate a “socio-political consciousness,” that is compatible with the conceptual foundations of this meta-ethnography.

The third case study (CS3) (Cholewa et al., 2012) featured a Black American woman in an urban 5th grade classroom. Although this case study described the work of a single teacher, its focus on the relational dynamics that affect student learning provided a strong example of the relational aspects of the ethic of caring. This teacher-students dyad engendered metaphors of the class as family and leveraged the communal aspects of culture-based learning (Boykin, 1986; Cholewa et al., 2012). Evidence was also provided as to how this teacher managed verve in the classroom, another West Africanism, and positively channeled the movement and energy of her students (1986). In addition to highlighting the use of cultural components in the classroom, this study was distinguished by its emphasis on self-sharing and transparency as means of connecting relationships to learning.

The fourth study (Cooper, 2003) provided an etic perspective on the teaching of Black American children by highlighting the effective teaching of three White American teachers. Its inclusion in this synthesis was inspired by three variables. First, with Black American teachers representing only 7% of the public school teaching force, there is a high probability that Black

American children will be educated mostly, if not exclusively, by White American teachers (2003). While there is a growing body of literature regarding Black American teacher effectiveness with students from their own ethnic group, there is less research about the influence of effective White teachers on Black American students (2003). Given existing demographics, there is a need to understand the experiences and conceptualizations of valued White teachers. Second, the inclusion of ethnically diverse teachers helps establish transferability and asserts that orientation and skill, rather than ethnicity, are the operative dynamics in successfully educating Black American students (Gay, 2010). And, third, the inclusion of data from effective White teachers broadens discourse and provides opportunities for divergent data to emerge regarding the attributes of successfully teaching Black American students.

These four studies formed the data set from which this meta-ethnography developed its interpretive stance. In keeping with Noblit and Hare's (1988) 7-step model, this chapter proceeds with a description of each researcher's findings and an illumination of first, second, and third order themes and metaphors as obtained through multiple levels of analysis.

Introduction to Case Study 1

The first case study (Howard, 2001a) is hereafter referred to as Case Study 1 (CS1) with the same abbreviations given to subsequent studies (CS2, CS3, and CS4). The objective of CS1 was to explore the pedagogical practices of four Black American primary school teachers. Each teacher, whose pseudonyms are Hazel, Dorothy, Marilyn, and Louise, expressed an affinity for cultural relevance theory as defined by Ladson-Billings (1995a). Of particular interest were teachers' pedagogical stance—or the instructional decisions and interventions made within their respective classrooms (Savin-Baden, McFarland, & Savin-Baden, 2008) –and the conceptual foundations that influenced their implementation of culture-based theory (2001a). All four

teachers were selected through community nomination and a matrix developed by the original researcher that listed 20 instructional practices deemed most essential for teaching Black American students. This evaluative tool enabled the original researcher to achieve the desired sample size of four teachers all of whom used or empowered students to use a minimum of 15 of the 20 instructional strategies listed in his matrix. Data for CS1, as a qualitative study, was obtained through structured interviews and classroom observations—the recordings and transcripts from which served as field notes. The final interpretive product was achieved through grounded theory.

Table 7

Conceptual Framework for Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices

| Communication Styles | Culture & Learning | Perceptions of Knowledge |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Expressive individualism | Community Solidarity | Subjective View of Knowledge |
| Straightforward/Direct | Warm demanders | Critical View of Knowledge |
| Signifying | Affirmation of student’s cultural identity | Emphasis on Skill Development |
| Use of Black English Vernacular | High Expectations | |
| Oral Expression | Emphasis on Collaboration and Collective Good | Use of students’ Cultural Knowledge |
| Spontaneity | Learning as Social Process | Universal Literacy |
| Social Interaction Styles | | Creating New Knowledge |
| Non-Verbal Communication | | |

Note. Reprinted from “Pedagogy for Black American Students: A Case of Four

Teachers,” by T.C. Howard, 2001, *Urban Education*, 36(2), 179-202. 2001 by the Corwin Press, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Original Researcher’s Findings

Based on multiple interviews and classrooms observations, Howard's (2001a) data identified three recurring themes involving: "holistic instructional strategies, culturally consistent communicative competencies, and skill building strategies to promote academic success" (Howard, 2001a, p.186). Further discussion about each theme is as follows.

Holistic Instructional Strategies

The use of holistic instructional strategies revealed an underlying assumption that effective teaching for Black American students required an active and sustained concern for the development of the entire child (Howard, 2001a; Irvine, 2002). This observation is supported by CS1 teacher's recollections of the dearth of problems faced by her primary school children. As she commented,

The problems they (the students) bring to class are getting larger...these kids are dealing with more things in their lives than you and I could ever imagine in a lifetime and they are getting worse. You just can't ignore them because they are making marks on them already. Many teachers don't extend themselves beyond the role of a teacher. Of course, the way things are right now, you are afraid to step over the line. But for Black American kids, there's a certain amount of (nonacademic) teaching that we need to do. (Howard, 2001a, p.186)

This assessment of student experiences and their need for academic instruction and non-academic guidance were factors that influenced the adoption of a culturally responsive instructional model (Howard, 2001a). While teaching the three R's represented an overt agenda, a discreet agenda also prevailed—one that attended to the emotional needs of Black students in deference to the harsh realities they faced beyond the classroom (2001a). This acknowledgement on the part of CS1 teachers prompted the infusion of life wisdom—teachings and exhortations on

self-respect, social etiquette, and resilience—that enabled students to cultivate the personal attributes needed to thrive. In citing this phenomenon among other Black American teachers, Irvine (2002) contends that such behaviors are attributed to a type of caring that bonds teacher to child. This bond, however, does not exist in and of itself. It is fundamentally geared towards racial elevation (2002).

Culturally Relevant Communications

The adoption of culture-based communication styles represented a conscious pedagogical choice on the part of CS1 teachers. This decision was informed by an appreciation for the verbal acumen of Black students and the fact that Black English Vernacular (BEV) was and remains a communication modality that bridges school to home (Howard, 2001a; Hilliard, 1983). Three of the four CS1 teachers supported the use of BEV, used it in the classroom, and saw it as a vital part of their ability to nurture the whole child (2001a). Students who entered these culturally relevant classrooms immediately recognized the references, cadences, and imagery that enabled the acquisition of new learning by connecting it with the familiar and known. The use of BEV in the classroom also enabled discourse on the need to develop proficiency in Standard English (SE). As Dorothy stated,

I don't have any problems with that (Ebonics), but I also want them to know that Ebonics and Standard English are two different things. Both are just as valid, but Standard English is what's going to get through this world...and what you have to do is to learn how to jump back and forth... (Howard, 2001a, p. 193)

This strategy for recognizing both BEV and SE was significant in two ways. First, it identified BEV as an expression of students' identities (2001a; Hilliard, 1983). As Howard (2001a) summarized, "...any attempt to invalidate or denigrate the use of nonstandard English

might have detrimental effects on the academic prospects for African American students” (p. 200). This recognition of the relationship between language and students’ self-perceptions establishes why BEV warrants respect particularly in a culturally sensitive classroom (1983). Second, the CS1 teachers recognized that the classroom use of BEV represents a place to begin and is not a destination; its use among Black teachers and students does not ensure learning just because of its presence. What BEV provided for CS1 students was a cognitive and affective point of entry—a safe introduction into a learning environment that supports relationships and respects the fact that learning is the mission of schools (2001a). Although the classroom use of BEV could be perceived as being counterproductive to academic achievement, three CS1 teachers utilized this form of communication to promote students’ skills including those associated with Standard English proficiency (2001a).

Building Essential Skills

For the teachers in CS1, the acquisition of core academic skills and the development of social and moral maturity were the primary objectives in their work as educators (2001a). This perspective was clearly articulated by CS1 teacher, Dorothy: “What good does it do to teach about Black history and cultural pride if these kids don’t know how to read, write, or spell?” (2001a, p. 194). Another teacher, Hazel, commented that the development of foundational academic skills took priority over the affective variables associated with good teaching. For her, the promotion of academic skills required knowledge of the strengths and challenges of each student. It involved being able to identify learning styles, learning preferences, and the ability to “hook” students into the lesson (2001a).

An example of engaging students into the learning process was provided by Louise who re-contextualized the story of the Trojan War. By using the names of her students to re-cast

Greek characters and by depicting another classroom as the rival country, she retold the student in ways that piques student interest. Through dramatic and animated tones, students learned the story without being initially encumbered by the differences in cultural references. This use of holistic teaching through language, oration skills, and kinesthetics all occurred within the context of a culturally relevant classroom.

Meta-ethnographer's Analysis

As Howard (2001a) indicated, the data obtained in CS1 revealed the pedagogical stances of each subject and their respective understanding of effective culture-based teaching. These personal paradigms generated descriptive data and the ability to see movement from first to second order themes.

Steps 3 and 4: Descriptive Data and First and Second Order Themes

The teachers in CS1 were a dynamic group whose instructional practices were reflective, pragmatic, and highly contextualized. These characteristics placed CS1 subjects in conflict with the traditional mode of instructional delivery and district issued curricula. These conflicts were particularly evident in areas pertaining to instructional priorities (the district's focus on standardized testing as opposed to holistic teaching); use of time (the emphasis on "bell to bell" instruction as opposed to spending 20 minutes a day on personal/current events); absence of critical perspectives in the classroom (as opposed to teaching students about racial stereotypes and how to publicly present themselves); and instructional deviation (in allowing the use of BEV in the classroom). The relationships among these variables to first order themes that support existing practices and second order paradigms that alter existing norms are succinctly presented in Table 8.

Table 8

First and Second Order Themes as Extracted from Case Study 1

| Descriptive Data | First Order | Second Order |
|--|--|---|
| Teach Greek Mythology | Teachers must implement district approved curriculum | Teachers revised/supplanted approved curriculums to meet students' learning needs |
| Issue assessments of student knowledge | Administer traditional pen and paper tests | Student knowledge is also proven by oral skills; created alternative assessments |
| Teach writing | Standard procedures for writing | Use of oral skills to inform written communication skills |
| Provide printed text | Primacy of book knowledge | Academic and life knowledge |
| Achievement is defined as academic | Proof of achievement is found through standardized test scores | Achievement is holistic; includes character, morality and caring |
| Use of Standard English (SE) | The primacy of SE in supporting monoculturalism | The primacy of bicultural linguistic expressions that include BEV and SE |
| Provide instruction | Provide "Bell to Bell" Instruction | "Morning Circle Time" allows for class sharing |
| Classroom Management | Chain of command; students do as they are told | Chain of command, some "verbiage" that may border on disrespect |
| Citizenship | Students should obey authority. | Students must understand authority, know how to conduct themselves, represent their community. No reinforcement of stereotypes. |
| Students must learn | Students must learn what is taught to them | Students must learn academic and critical life skills that enable self-governance and independence. |

Step 5: Themes and Metaphors

Based on CS1 data, there are four themes involved in the effective education of Black American children in urban, primary classroom settings. Here, all four are presented as

metaphors. The first concerns relationships that equate the classroom to family and school to a village. The second compares education to community building. And, the third presents education as risk-taking, a task that involves knowing the rules and assessing when and which of these rules can be broken. Lastly, the fourth metaphor identifies education as a tool for self and social transformation.

Underlying all four metaphors is an understanding that effective teachers must possess an ethic of caring (Nodding, 1988; Ware, 2002). This ethic is defined as a conscious moral decision to demonstrate care and concern for other persons in ways that extend beyond one's formal position or relationship with those persons (1988). Within the classroom, this ethic presents itself through the emphasis on relationship formation and the teacher's emotive style. This style can communicate caring through a variety of means that are designed to students' lives at home and school or through strict discipline or academic challenge (2001a). However, it is genuinely expressed, the ethic of caring emerges as the prerequisite paradigm in successfully educating young urban Black American children (2002).

In acting upon this moral paradigm, CS1 teachers expressed caring predominately through the promotion of three core concepts: holistic education, personal responsibility, and the impartation of life wisdom. All three warrant further discussion as they are also present in upcoming case studies.

The first concept pertains to teachers' commitment to an all-inclusive approach to education. This inclusivity involves the head, the hand, and the heart each corresponding to the impartation of knowledge, the development of skills, and the life training Black students need to navigate within a highly racialized society. It also involves an understanding of students as members of a larger community that is also in need of critical knowledge about social and

political navigation. Hence, for CS1 teachers, making demands and enabling achievement in these three areas were central to their identification as successful educators of Black primary school children and as members of an oppressed ethnic community. This understanding produced the metaphors of education as family, community building, risk, and transformation.

Embedded within this inclusive approach to education is a liberatory agenda that sees education as a vehicle for changing the condition of oppressed people and elevating the masses (Freire, 1970). This agenda enables a critical, yet common sense, approach to education that recognizes the need for Black children to have both academic skills and the socio-emotional intelligence needed to apprehend underlying dynamics of race, power, and privilege. This observation leads to the identification of a second core value- the inculcation of the beliefs and behaviors associated with personal responsibility. As articulated by CS1 teachers, this instructional decision was designed to achieve two ends: to defy existing stereotypes that negatively impact the minds and self-esteem of Black children and to contribute to the attainment of racial elevation. Embedded within this view of education is a commitment to civil rights activism by imparting a sense of agency in Black children starting at the primary school level.

A third core value expressed by CS1 teachers concerned the role of education in preparing Black students for social engagement and potential social change. This agenda challenged even young children to see themselves as members of a Black community and a larger society. The urgency of this message is evidenced in the teachers' emphasis on personal conduct in public situations. It is also evidenced in their resolve to impart life wisdom and social navigation skills in managing what that society often assumes about young Black children. As Hazel once stated "...education is not just what happens in class. Education also takes place outside of the class" (Howard, 2001a, p. 187).

This perspective empowered CS1 teachers to see themselves as those with a special calling akin to Woodson's (1933) concept of the educated Black upper class. With this concept, CS1 teachers took it upon themselves to embrace an advocate's voice that speaks against things that are wrong both within and outside of the classroom. Such a perspective embraces both critical paradigms and those drawn from an ethic of caring. It also affirms all four metaphors and builds upon the cultural aspects of West African spirituality that sees the energy and intersectionality among persons, families, and communities (Boykin, 1986).

CS1 provides an initial set of data and themes on which to build an understanding of how critical and culture-based instruction supports the achievement of Black American students. In exploring subsequent case studies, this meta-ethnography builds on the findings of both the original researcher and meta-ethnographer to generate new interpretations of extant research.

Introduction to Case Study 2

Case Study 2 (CS2) represented the qualitative work of two ethnic minority researchers (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Their work centered on how seven urban Black American primary school teachers utilized culturally relevant pedagogy to promote social justice awareness. The Black American teachers in CS2 were recruited by purposeful sampling. Data collection methods included a series of semi-structured interviews and a focus group session. Each subject held a Master's degrees and a commitment to teaching within a culturally relevant framework.

In teaching to advance social justice, CS2 teachers intentionally worked against the dynamics of social reproduction, a process by which schools serve as acculturation sites that perpetuate hegemonic power structures and subsequent abuses of power (Esposito & Swain, 2009). In doing so, CS2 teachers revealed their overt commitment to an advocacy-participancy mindset and a desire to use teaching as a venue for social change (2009).

Original Researcher's Findings

Based on their data collection, Esposito and Swain (2009) identified three dominant themes associated with the instructional practices of their subjects. These themes concerned: social justice and the element of risk, methods for teaching social justice, and the use of cultural relevance as a vehicle for building a social justice consciousness. The outcomes of their study revealed the relationship among these conceptual frameworks and how social justice issues, when situated within a culturally relevant classroom, increased students' awareness of the larger hegemonic issues that impact their lives (2009).

Social Justice and the Element of Risk

As indicated by CS2 subjects, teaching social justice from within a cultural relevance framework required navigation and political risk (2009). This navigation included the ability to develop students as critical thinkers, to build a "sociopolitical consciousness," and to impart a sense of agency. This forward thinking had two immediately repercussions. First, it required additional research on the part of the teacher in order to infuse culturally relevant and social justice materials into traditional curricula. An example of this was provided by Treneka, one of the CS2 teachers, who described a lesson she had prepared about the incarceration rates of Black American men who once lived in her students' zip code. Treneka described this lesson in the following manner.

The other day we were talking about research (that) found that the highest level, the highest percentage of Black American males in jail, in jail or prison in our state was at zip code 12345. "What zip code do you all live in?" 12345" (the students responded)"So ...do you think that's true? And then everybody rattled off a good ten, twenty names they knew who were in prison or in jail. And they're like, "Yeah, I could see that." So why do

(you) think it's so high here? "Well, they don't ever have an opportunity, they're not doing nothing. A lot of 'em dropped out." Right, and so we just got into talking about that, (I am) getting them thinking... It definitely made them think...Some of them really started to look at (themselves) in a different way. We use our language, "Would you like to end up that way? So...what is it that you could do so you will not end up in a situation like that? (Esposito & Swain, 2009, p. 42)

In discussing agency, Treneka assumed a risk-taking posture by introducing 4th grade students to a controversial subject on race and the penal system. As with any critical lesson, however, political sensibilities are always present and, at any time, in someone's estimation, a teacher may go "too far." This reality introduces a political risk for CS2 teachers while raising anxiety among traditionalists that if student knew the truth about hegemonic structures they would rebel against authority (Gutstein, 2003).

Methods for Teaching Social Justice

As an outcome of their respective personalities, each CS2 teacher identified preferred instructional strategies for introducing critical perspectives. For example, Jabari, a teacher with six years of experience, was decisively Afrocentric in his support of culture-based instruction. In his classes, students were often challenged to think critically about axiomatic themes. Often, this knowledge included racialized assumptions that were demeaning to specific ethnic, culture groups. An example of this was found in a class discussion about Africa in which students described their image of a continent filled with black, starving, uneducated, shoeless people. In response, Jabari led a teaching on the riches of Mali and Kemet, on Africa as the birthplace of humankind, and on European colonization. In this particular lesson, American racism, both

projected and internalized, became the subject of a social justice teaching. This lesson was then expanded to explore the global impact of racialized power.

Cultural Relevance as a Vehicle for Social Justice

There is an inseparable ideological connection between culture-based and social justice teachings (Esposito & Swain, 2009). This connection is such that in creating culturally relevant classrooms, CS2 teachers also increased their ability to introduce social justice issues. The intersectionality of these two theories resides in their commitment to rich critical discourse that illuminates wrongs and identifies systems and patterns of oppression (2009). For this reason, teachers in CS2 took liberties in supplementing district approved curricula with culturally affirming materials and those that would support the development of a social justice consciousness among their students (2009). These supplements were secured through their own means and were used to assist the development of global and analytical thinking skills and ethnocentric pride among urban Black elementary students.

Meta-ethnographer's Analysis

The conviction to teach from culturally relevant and social justice frameworks enabled CS2 teachers to engage students in critical thinking about the dynamics of race, racism, power and privilege—variables to which we all have daily exposure. While this conviction inspired CS2 teachers to engage in socially conscious teaching, it also created substantive risks that demonstrated their own interpretation of an ethic of caring. These risk taking behaviors were expressed in three ways: through the inclusion of potentially controversial instruction; the use of supplemental materials that often deviated from curricula; and the overt rejection of materials deemed unproductive or biased against Black American students.

Controversial Discourse and Advocacy

Critical discourse can be defined “as reflective dialogue among students, or between students and teachers, about an issue on which there is disagreement” (Harwood & Hahn, 1990). In a critical cultural or social justice classroom, this type of definition is welcomed; it provides a venue for rich discussion on complex and often polemic concerns that prompt analysis and debate. Because the infusion of critical discourse represents a departure from the standard canon, its use involves political risk (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Within a public school arena, these risks may include censure due to parental complaints, verbal or written reprimands from a supervisor and a subsequent withholding of salary increases, or a discontinuation of employment. More passive reprimands may include a withholding of resources, a delay in receiving them, or being assigned a more difficult schedule or class roster.

Despite these perils, however, effective teachers in CS1 and CS2 routinely supplanted or supplemented district approved curricula in order to develop critical and culture-based classrooms (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). With this in mind, then it can be argued that the very infusion of critical and social justice issues is exactly what assists the implementation of a more rigorous academic program. This contention is supported by a growing body of literature that connects the exploration of controversial issues with the effective teaching of any student population and the development of higher level thinking skills (Giroux, 1988; Hess, 2009). It is also supported by research that shows that the attenuation of academic rigor is an expression of bias in schools (Irvine, 1991). Hence, the curricular modifications made by effective teachers can be interpreted as an example of professionalism and an expression of an ethic of caring that places students’ learning above possible personal reprisals.

While the researchers in CS1 and CS2 did not mention receiving any active resistance to critical or social justice teachings, other researchers (Lusk & Weinberg, 1994) have argued that

said resistance, when it does occur within any student population, is often the outcome of three concerns: depending on their personalities and experiences, some students are uncomfortable discussing any topic that involves polemics; students may fear peer social reprisals if their opinions run counter to those of key individuals; and students may have anxieties about disagreeing with their teachers (1994). One of the virtues of having critical discourse within culturally relevant classrooms is that instruction is contextualized; it occurs within a supportive environment that not only enables disclosure of divergent perspectives but mandates it. Students in such classrooms explore pluralistic ideologies as standard fare within their learning experiences.

Subverting Curriculum and Advocacy

In each of the aforementioned case studies, teachers noted the restrictions that existed in providing culturally relevant instruction and learning environments for Black American students. In demonstrating their own understanding of responsive professionalism, each subject group consciously rejected the phenomenon called the “narrowing of curriculum.” More euphemistically called curriculum alignment, this narrowing is the public school response to the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its mandates for high stakes testing (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011). In simplified terms, it is a rational process wherein schools pre-design, pre-pace, and pre-script instructional materials with the goal of ensuring that each child develops core understandings and skills (2011). This distillation of learning experiences is vehemently opposed by researchers and educational leaders (Cawelti, 2006; Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002) because of its re-allocation of time and resources to those subject areas (language arts and mathematics) that are tested. The result is a loss in instructional time in social studies, foreign language, music, physical education, and art. This

shift in educational terrain is particularly pronounced in urban schools with high minority populations and where failure to make annual yearly progress (AYP) according to NCLB standards can result in a loss of federal funding.

Steps 3 & 4: Descriptive Data and First and Second Order Themes

Like those in CS1, the teachers in CS2 shared the same conclusions that urban Black American students needed instruction beyond the confines of prescribed curricula (Esposito & Swain, 2009). In each study, teachers agreed that this extended learning must include a critical component that pragmatically addresses the lived experiences of this student population. To this end, holistic instruction acquired the discreet agenda of building cultural capital that provided formal, in-school reinforcement of the truths and values learned at home (Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

This process of situating instruction within the lives and experiences of Black children is rooted in an ethic of caring, a moral conviction to extend oneself beyond academic concerns in order to facilitate students' success in school and life (Nodding, 1988). In CS1, this ethic was expressed through teachers' emphasis on academic achievement, personal responsibility, and racial advancement. In CS2, this ethic was expressed less affectively and more cognitively through the exploration of real world scenarios (the research on incarceration rates), critical thinking exercises (the Africa discussion) and a focus on cultural affirmation (curricular supplements). Table 9 below helps to highlight this descriptive data and their relationship to first and second order themes.

Table 9

First and Second Order themes from Case Study 2

| Descriptive Data | First Order | Second Order |
|--|--|--|
| Teachers teach | Teachers implement district approved curricula | Teachers infused/supplemented district approved curricula with cultural and social justice materials |
| Teaching is a legislated activity | Teaching is prescribed by state and district | Teaching is an interactive, responsive process |
| Teaching is a profession | Teaching is a profession | Teaching is a commitment to improving society/the world |
| Teachers are employed by school districts | Teachers are certificated employees | Teachers are reformists/revolutionaries |
| Standard curricula | Uniform instructional Delivery | Instructional delivery and content is based on students' needs |
| Schools are Eurocentric | Schools impart knowledge to support the status quo | Schools impart knowledge for social reform |

Step 5: Themes and Metaphors

The thematic metaphors in CS2 allow us to see the conceptual foundations of this particular group of effective primary school teachers. Like those in CS1, the metaphors from CS2 also compare education to family and schooling to village or community activity. Also familiar is the presence of risk and the underlying ethic of caring. Differences between CS1 and CS2 teachers are seen, however, in the ways in which this ethic was expressed, how learning was culturally situated and needs prioritized.

The overt agenda of CS2 teachers was to introduce primary school students to a critical social consciousness and to use this emerging consciousness to promote academic rigor, agency, and self-esteem (Esposito & Swain, 2009). The rationale for this instructional choice was for

students to develop the analytical skills needed to understand the dynamics of oppression and to see their ethnic history in ways that connect with other oppressed peoples (2009). With this understanding, CS2 teachers reasoned that their students would receive support in developing the agency, positive self-esteem, and the impetus to serve as future catalysts for change. Because of the critical orientation of this agenda, the teachers in CS2 presented an ethic of caring that was more Afrocentric and global. Within CS2 classrooms, for example, teachers cultivated an environment of inquiry that routinely challenged the familiar. Classroom discussions about Thanksgiving became debates on who really discovered America and the recitation of the words “indivisible, with justice for all” prompted explorations of American pluralism.

While both CS1 and CS2 teachers established classrooms where critical and culture-based instruction were normed, there was a nuanced difference between how agency was envisioned. In CS1, for example, teachers referenced the concept of racial uplift by promoting personal responsibility, racial pride, and by rejecting behaviors that perpetuate racial stigma (Howard, 2001a). Concerns about avoiding stereotypical behaviors are reminiscent of historic American racism. Hence an impression is given that the conceptual locus of CS2 teachers may be both historically and locally situated. In contrast, the teachers in CS2 also espoused aspirations for racial elevation. This was achieved, however, through the inclusion of Afrocentric epistemologies that ventured into global understandings of race, racism and patterns of oppression (Esposito & Swain, 2009). This focus reveals subtle differences in teacher orientation. For CS1 teachers, the emphasis was placed on developing agency and carried with it the hope of Black students transforming their lives despite domestic opposition. In CS2, the expectation of agency was also present but carried with it a vision for transforming global communities by first understanding how patterns of oppressions work.

This observation gives rise to the fourth metaphor of education as a vehicle for social transformation. This metaphor is important as it affirms the liberatory ideologies posed by Freire (1970) and Giroux (1988), the latter of which affirmed critical instruction and social justice initiatives via the following observation.

Similarly, the need to develop at all levels of schooling a radical pedagogy concerned with critical literacy and active citizenship has given way to a conservation pedagogy that emphasis technique and passivity. The stress is no longer on helping students to “read” the world critically; instead, it is on helping students to ”master” the tools of reading... The question of how teachers, administrators, and students produce meaning and whose interests it serves is subsumed under the imperatives to master the facts. (Giroux, 1988, pp. 1-2)

Introduction to Case Study 3

The objective of CS3 was to explore the culturally responsive instructional practices of a high value Black American 5th grade teacher in a Title I urban school. Specific attention was focused on teacher-student relationships and their impact on student motivation and achievement within a culturally relevant classroom. The subject of this study is identified as Ms. M., a veteran teacher of 29 years. Because of her specific successes in raising the math scores of Black American students, Ms. M. was appointed math teacher for all 5th grade students in her school. Data regarding Ms. M.’s instructional practices were obtained via videotaping and was subsequently evaluated using open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding was conducted three times, each time with a different focus. These three areas included the teacher’s use of language, the teacher’s non-verbal actions and behaviors, and teacher-student interactions.

Subsequent coding techniques involved the review for emergent themes, sub-categories, and relationships (Cholewa et al., 2012).

Original Researchers' Findings

In conducting research for CS3, Cholewa et al. (2011) established how a culturally responsive Black teacher cultivated relationships with her Black American students. In pursuing an answer, Cholewa, et al. (2012) ascertained the presence of three relational dimensions involving emotional connectedness, relationship building, and student affective responses. Of these three, CS3 researchers focused on the first dimension which facilitates the expression of the other two.

Emotional Connectedness

Emotional connectedness is defined as that which engendered a sense of “attachment and emotional bonding between the teacher and the students” (Cholewa, et al., 2012, p. 255). As conceptualized by Cholewa et al. (2012), this connectedness consisted of three major variables: the creation of teacher relationships with individual students; the creation of teacher-class relationships; and the practice of transparency in creating a community of learners. The teacher’s focus on these three components of socio-emotional connectedness was evidenced in her observed behaviors. In working with 5th grade students, for example, Ms. M. consistently practiced active listening—a skill that requires teachers to listen to students’ concerns while understanding their patterns of thinking, expressing, and doing. In demonstrating this skill, Ms. M. helped establish a “culture of learning” (Danielson, 2007) wherein the teacher articulated achievement expectations, aroused a joy for learning, and demonstrated tenacity in refusing to allow students to academically disengage.

Evidence of these components was witnessed in daily interactions. When a student hurt his finger and was distracted from his work, for example, Ms. M. inquired about his well-being then provided both a Band-Aid and guidance as to how to he was expected to proceed. On a separate occasion, a boy experienced difficulty completing his multiplication problems. Ms. M. addressed the student's lack of initiative by commenting that she had found him outside sleeping, instead of studying, the day before. She then promptly assisted him in completing his task. This combination of confrontation, support, and expectation were characteristic of Ms. M's teaching style and the strategies she used to build individual and group relationships. More of these characteristics are succinctly presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Observed Behaviors in Teacher-Student Relationships in Case Study 3

| Individualized attention | Re-engaging students | Believing in students | Ensuring student success |
|--|---|--|---|
| Active listening | Would not permit student emotional withdrawal; Use of confronting words to redirect | Invited students to share their opinions and to encourage the development of “voice” | Established high expectations |
| Use of empathy | Use of verbal or behavioral cues to re-engage student | Supported students’ sharing of knowledge by offering extended time | Scaffolds teaching so that students could meet said standards |
| Use of clarifying statements or questions | Leading students into the work and affirming their need to participate | | Taught, questioned to measure student comprehension, re-taught when necessary |

As Chowela et al. (2012) ascertained, the art of establishing strong teacher-student dyads are essential to the instructional practice of effective teacher of Black American students. In supporting this goal, Ms. M. utilized active listening, exercised empathy, and conveyed a belief in students’ ability to succeed.

Creating Teacher-Group Connections

The respect, concern, and interest shown to individual students engendered positive dynamics between the teacher and students. This cultivated rapport provided the venue through which the uses of culturally based instructional strategies were most evident. For example, Ms. M.’s use of linguistic rhythms, such as call and response, and pneumatic rhyming to assist in “math dancing,” all supported the metaphor of the class as a village. Students who struggled with new information or skills received assistance from the class which now functioned as a learning

community. Chowela, et al., (2012) interpreted this dynamic as a means of attending to the needs of the whole class and the whole child by positively directing group dynamics.

Empathy was also shown as Ms. M. appropriately commented on the difficulty of the material and the fact that the students were trying (Cholewa et al., 2012). Discourse served as a means for formative assessments in both the academic and affective domains. Here, formative assessments are defined as the technique used to monitor students' learning and feelings about learning as the lesson unfolds. While conducting assessments, Ms. M. continued to communicate her expectations that students stay engaged, give their best, and take responsibility for their learning. A visual presentation of common teaching strategies is listed below in Table 11 and Table 12.

Table 11

Observed Behaviors in Building Teacher-Class Relationships in Case Study 3

| Defining the class as a community | Attending to the class as a whole | Believing in the class | Ensuring class success | Using the class' knowledge and culture |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Encouraged class dialogue, learning is a communal process | Monitored the social and emotional climate of the class | Expressed positive feelings about students' abilities | Checked on the progress of each student (while students worked) | Used rhythms and music as a mnemonic device (called math dancing) |
| Included each student in discourse, affirming students' worth | Showed empathy for students' difficulty | Complimented the class as a whole | Conducted formative assessments (during whole group instruction) | Used call and response, narratives, and storytelling to support instruction |
| Made provisions for material needs | | | | |

Building Class Community

Ms. M. incorporated a number of techniques that were summarily categorized by the original researchers as building class community. In doing so, she employed the cultural norms of her students and the knowledge obtained through her own enculturation to leverage instruction. As Chowela, Amatea, West-Olatunji, and Wright (2012) described, for example, Ms. M. incorporated into her lessons culturally specific images of family. When discussing the equation “ $\frac{3}{9}$ of 27 =”, Ms. M. asked if 9 and 27 were in the same family. She then continued the lesson using familial references. Through this means, she connected new knowledge, multiplication and number values, with that which was familiar and pertinent to her students.

In addition, kinesthetic teaching was conducted by using movement to impart the degrees in various angles. Singing, dancing, and choral responses were also culturally familiar devices used to support instruction.

Other aspects of community building included Ms. M.’s means of relating to her students. Chief among these strategies was her willingness to become a part of the group while maintaining her authority as a teacher. One of the ways in which this was achieved was by participating in learning and purposeful play. For example, Ms. M. introduced classroom dancing and singing as a means of supporting instruction; she also engaged in telling jokes and readily confessed to making mistakes in her endeavors as a teacher and learner. This latter technique allowed students to see her humanity in a way that did not venture inappropriateness. Table 12 below highlights the strategies employed.

Table 12

Relationship Building through Transparency and Community

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Teacher extends herself to the class (joins in dancing and singing) | Voicing her thought process | Sharing her imperfections |
| Encourages students to both participate in and contribute to the learning process | Does not subscribe to the “banking approach” to teaching | Admits mistakes when they occur |
| | Explains, discusses, illuminates | Apologizes to students when mistakes are made |

Meta-ethnographic Analysis of Case Study 3

The instructional practices of the subject in CS3 are in keeping with teaching strategies that are commonly known as “best practices.” An example of this is the need for teachers to understand their students as individual learners and to connect new with previously learned knowledge to advance students’ understanding. The benefits of having positive relational dynamics between teacher and students are also known and well researched (Noddings, 1988). Yet, according to Chowela et al., (2012), it is only recently that researcher-practitioners have begun to connect specific teaching strategies with specific student populations. In regard to CS3, Ms. M.’s multilayered emphasis on relationship building was consistent with the culture-based research of both Boykin (1986) and Murrell (2002). For Murrell (2002), communalism, constructivism, and verve are three core dynamics that influence the effective teaching of Black American children. Whereas communalism argues that learning is a social construct, verve is understood as the energy and intellectual vitality that takes place within these places of communal learning (1986; 2002). Boykin (1986) agrees but adds other cultural dimensions, such as spirituality, affect and paradigms of inclusion, which were also evident in Ms. M.’s instructional decision making.

As with the subjects in CS1 and CS2, the effective teacher in CS3 also displayed an ethic of caring. This ethic included themes of community and self-determinism through the impartation of agency and personal responsibility. In building a sense of class community, for example, Ms. M. used a combination of BEV and SE as primary modes of communication. Although the original researchers in CS3 did not cite this form of code switching, their data did include the following information:

Ms. M. [asking the whole class] What is six times nine?

Student: 63

Class: 54

Ms. M. [turns to student] My question is, you yelling out 63, how you coming up with 63? In your mind you are saying six times nine is what?

(Cholewa et al., 2012, p. 259)

This observation is important as it connects the practice of using familiar language with learning, thereby making the classroom less formal and more familiar. This, coupled with the incorporation of familiar rhythms, styles of discourse, and informal interaction reinforces the learning of Black American children by building community—the proverbial village that is needed to educate a child.

Steps 3 and 4: Descriptive Data and First and Second Order Themes

The interaction between relationships and cultural expression form the core ideas in CS3. Through her use of a cultural relevance paradigm, the subject in CS3 places an emphasis on family, the creation of a classroom community, and a focus on relationships to impact students' learning. Noticeably absent from Ms. M.'s pedagogy and practice is a critical race perspective. While her teaching affirmed African cultural remnants through its emphasis on community and the effective management of verve, this particular data set lacked a critical component. This observation leads to the question as to if culture-based pedagogies must embrace a critical framework in order for them to be effective. CS3 argues that this is not the case, although it also acknowledged that the teacher's role was limited to math instruction as opposed to social science courses that lend themselves to more controversial discourse. In comparing CS3 with the two previous case studies, however, the following first and second order themes emerge.

Table 13

First and Second Order Themes as Extracted from Case Study 3

| Descriptive Data | First Order Themes | Second Order Themes |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Teach math | Teach math using district approved curricula and methods | Teach math concepts using whatever means necessary |
| Assess student learning | Use standardized testing to assess student learning | Use rhythms, dance, linguistic mnemonic to ascertain and support students' learning |
| Teach students | Teach Students using known instructional strategies | Teach students using relationships and cultural knowledge as vehicles for instructional delivery |

Step 5: Themes and Metaphors

Like the effective primary school teachers in CS1 and CS2, the 5th grade teacher in CS3 also embraced an ethic of caring that compelled her to cultivate affirming relationships between and among herself and her students. In expressing her own style of care, the teacher developed metaphors of the class and school as active learning communities. Within this communalistic paradigm, attributes such as openness, candor, accountability, and personal industry were modeled and highly valued. These attributes were further supported by the teacher's insistence on equity—a process that ensures that every student receives what they need emotionally, physically, and academically. Examples of classroom equity were found in the scenarios involving the child who needed a Band-Aid and the child who was unprepared for class. In each case, teacher M. practiced active listening and employed her knowledge of the children involved to address needs, express expectations, and advance learning.

Ms. M's behaviors presented metaphors of the class as extended family and learning as a familial activity. Within this concept of family, however, was a strong emphasis on building educational capital—the process of imparting knowledge that will enable future socio-economic independence (Kelly, 2010). This message was communicated in two ways. The first was through teacher M.'s emphasis on re-directing disaffected children. In doing so, she conveyed the message that learning is valuable, important, and worth the challenge it takes to conquer new knowledge. Second, it conveyed to her students that they are also valuable, important, and worth the challenge it takes to keep them directed. Such a message reinforces the metaphor of the class as family by demonstrating that even the most resistant child will not be left behind to internalize failure. This sentiment is especially powerful to vulnerable student populations who, as a group, have been told the exact opposite by the dominant culture.

In exploring this particular case study, uniqueness was observed in teacher M.'s pedagogical stance. While the teachers in CS1 and 2 incorporated discourse on local and/or global ethnic histories, Ms. M. did not do so during the instruction observed. Although her style of speech, emphasis on relationships, and direct method of engagement, contained cultural cadences familiar to her students, Ms. M.'s lesson were contained no explicitly stated agenda for racial uplift. Instead, teacher M.'s consistent instructional message was that achievement builds self-esteem by confirming ability and personal agency (Cholewa et al., 2012).

This observation is important to note as it identifies a core characteristic of effective Black teachers. While the teachers in CS 1-3 (Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a) all possess a relational ethic towards their students, they also articulate the primacy of academic achievement. This primacy establishes a clear understanding that while the affective domain impacts learning and the socio-political domain impacts self-esteem, effective

teachers teach (2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). All other variables are significant because they contribute to the learning process. A culturally sensitive teacher, therefore, who lacks high academic standards or fails to develop students' skills, is not considered effective. This perspective summarizes the ethic of caring and places it in a single statement: the degree to which you care about Black children is the degree to which you will work to know and teach them.

Introduction to Case Study 4

CS4 (Cooper, 2003) highlighted the work of three effective White American primary school teachers. These teachers were nominated for study participation by their school's administrative team that consisted of two Black American administrators. Black parents familiar with the work of CS4 teachers also participated in the nominations. In regard to research, two questions motivated the nature and scope of CS4: What are the teachers' beliefs and practices? How do the beliefs and practices of these particular teachers compare with the literature on other high value teachers of Black American students? The second question is of particular interest. It allows comparisons between emic and etic teaching styles to develop impressions of what constitutes effective instruction for Black American children regardless of the ethnicity of the teacher. This along, with comparisons to the literature, assists in generalizing data in the final synthesis.

Like CS1-3, CS4 also met the selection criteria described in this present study. Its inclusion is attributed to its setting within a predominantly Black urban primary school and its use of culture-based instruction through cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1994a) and cultural synchronicity (Irvine, 1991). By definition, cultural synchronicity refers to the need for classroom teachers to culturally align instruction to bridge the gaps among their own personal

culture, the culture of school, and the cultural orientation of their students (1994a; Ladson-Billings, 1994b). Both theories support using emic perspectives in assessing the needs of Black American children and in affirming the Afrocentric emphasis on learning global Black cultures and histories (1994a; 1991). Data for CS4 were collected via teacher interviews and classroom observations. As per the original researcher (Cooper, 2003), CS4 focused primarily on classroom instruction and the relational dynamics between teachers and students, two areas on which teachers have an impact and daily control.

Original Researcher's Findings

Subjects' beliefs were categorized and placed into two groups: operational beliefs and practices and conceptual beliefs and practices. Operational beliefs and practices were defined as beliefs that were given expression through observable actions, events, or discourse about instructional practices (Cooper, 2003). Conceptual beliefs were defined as “talk about practice and those that were discussed in the abstract or were inferred from practice” (2003, p.418). These paradigms found expression through daily instructional practices which Cooper (2003) defined as the means and methods through which social, emotive, and academic knowledge were imparted to students within a classroom setting.

Operational Beliefs and Practices

Two major themes were associated with the operational beliefs and practices of highly effective teachers of Black American students. Cooper (2003) identified these themes as curriculum and teaching style. The former was defined as “the curricular objectives prescribed by the district” (2003, p. 419); whereas, the latter “as the speech or actions, largely explicit, that were used to impart specific knowledge, values, and other information or that appeared to impart children's opportunities to learn” (2003, p. 413). Associated with each major theme were a series

of subthemes which were not all specifically discussed in the original case study due to space concerns. For the purposes of this meta-ethnography, only the salient themes and subthemes within CS4 are referenced. Under operational beliefs and practices, the subthemes pertaining to reading, writing, and classroom discipline are explored. And, under conceptual beliefs, the teachers' instructional practices and personal orientations are referenced.

Developing Proficiency in Reading and Writing

The three high-valued teachers in CS4 each perceived reading and writing as the loci of students' learning and need for skills development. Of major concern was the amount of time needed to build multiple subskills in language arts literacy – particularly in the areas of phonics and phonemic awareness. In building these skills, CS4 teachers emphasized daily repetition through rhymes, rhythms and games that engaged students and reinforced learning. Teachers also identified a shared practice of modifying curriculum in order to meet specific learning objectives. These efforts often resulted in a reallocation of time from literature studies to skills development. This decision also resulted in a loss of flexibility in regard to use of instructional time and student input.

Evidence of this practice was recorded in an interaction between “Mrs. Nelson” and a student named “Jamar.” During a Reading Recovery session, Jamar expressed a desire to read a book different than the one selected by the teacher. Jamar inquired about a different book, was told no. Jamar protested and was ordered to use the book selected by the teacher. No explanation was given as to why the student wanted a different book and no negotiations or bargaining ensued thereafter. This observation identifies two characteristics of CS4 teaching styles—an emphasis on structure and organization in meeting learning goals and a straight forward approach to addressing students' inquiries that impact or alter instruction. The strictness of Mrs.

Nelson's response provides a glimpse in to an authoritative disciplinary style often associated with effective teachers of Black American children (Cooper, 2002; Irvine, 2002).

Authoritative Discipline

All three teachers in CS4 employed authoritative disciplinary styles (Cooper, 2003). This expression of classroom management differs from authoritarianism as its focus is on correction, learning, and the students' well-being (2003). In contrast, authoritarianism is the self-serving use and application of power that neither considers nor incorporates an ethic of care. Despite their use of forceful tones and direct confrontation, CS4 teachers' use of authority had distinctive boundaries. Care was given, for example, to avoid shaming or publicly embarrassing a child and teachers were adept at returning to friendlier tones after reprimands were given and the re-directed child back on task (2003). An example of this type of discipline is provided below.

“Mrs. Parker...put an end to the children's interruptions
with a silencing, “I'M talking. YOU'RE listening.”...

At group time ..., she caught Timothy's eyes as he began to fool around with another child. Looking at him sternly, she admonished just as sternly, “Don't even think about it!” She paused. “Don't even!” (Cooper, 2003, p.421)

This direct style of correction was also evident among teachers in CS1 and 3 who all commented on the need for effective classroom management to keep students on task and engaged in learning (Cholewa et al., 2012; Howard 2001a). Although it can be interpreted as being inappropriately harsh or rude, the authoritative disciplinary style was arguably sanctioned by the Black parents and administrators who nominated CS4 teachers (2003). This style is also often referenced in available literature (Cooper, 2002; Ware, 2002).

Conceptual Beliefs and Practices

Three major themes were associated with the conceptual beliefs and practices expressed by CS4 subjects: teaching style, teacher characteristics, and personal norms. Included in this data were the teachers' cognitive and affection orientations regarding classroom equity and students' holistic well-being. Evidence of teachers' affective orientation was found in their discussions about fairness and in behaviors that supported a culture of caring (2003). This aspect of effective teaching is also included in what Cooper (2003) described as the subjects' personal norms. As a concept, personal norms is defined as the "traits that guided the teachers' behavior above or beyond their teaching responsibilities" (2003, p.419). Its perspective is akin to current discussions on the ethic of caring. Within the context of conceptual beliefs and practices, personal norms represent the paradigms teachers bring to their understanding of vocation and instructional practice.

The subjects in CS4 introduced both familiar and alternative paradigms in regard to establishing culture-based classrooms and instructional practices. These similarities will be discussed in the final synthesis. In the interim, attention is given to the distinctive features of CS4 that broaden our understanding of the attributes of effective teachers. These features also introduce new terminologies that help illuminate the nurturing roles assumed by the effective teachers in all four case studies. These alternate paradigms include an overt expression of "other" or "second mothering," and the expression race-based consciousness and cultural relevance.

Othermothers

The term "othermothering" was first coined by Collins (2000) to describe a genre of women who serve as vital nurturers and extended family in times of dire need. It is both a term and a reality that strengthens family ties and supports communities (Ware, 2002). As expressed

by all CS4 teachers, this act of othermothering is considered a form of the ethic of caring (2003). Its presence within CS4 classrooms reveals teachers' personal beliefs about effective teaching and the needs of their students. As one CS4 teacher explicitly stated: "I talk to them as if they were my own children, ... I tell them from Day One, I'm going to be like a second mom to you" (2003, p. 422). As a phenomenon, othermothering has historic roots that date back to American slavery wherein biological mothers and children were commonly separated (Case, 1997). In such cases, othermothers, Black women and older girls, would serve as surrogates to provide the nurturing needed (1997). In the teaching profession, men have also served in this capacity (Ware, 2002).

In presenting themselves as classroom mothers, CS4 teachers conveyed a sense of personal trustworthiness while establishing the metaphor of the class as family and the school as a village. This metaphor intersects with other operative paradigms such as warm demanders and holistic caregivers. And, while the effective teachers in CS 1-3 did not coin this phrase, their actions would justify their use or application of it.

Racial Consciousness and Cultural Relevance

As an important subtheme, Cooper (2003) defined racial consciousness as the explicit and intentional discussion of the dynamics of race and racism in American society and the infusion of critical race perspectives into the standard instructional practice. It also includes a reflective component wherein the teacher explores how racism affects her personal life and professional practice. While the physical presentation of their classrooms reflected a multicultural awareness through posters and ethnically affirming materials, the CS4 teachers choose not to weave critical themes into their practice. Concerning this, they unanimously offered two rationales. The first pertained to their subscription to color-blind pedagogy which

argues the intrinsic worth of all students to the point where discourse on ethnic or cultural differences are deemed irrelevant (Ullucci & Battey, 2011). The presence of this ideology runs counter to CS4 teachers' adoption of culture-based instruction. Its presence also contradicts the teachers' reflections on their own observations of race-based discriminatory practices within the classrooms of their peers (2003). Despite this, CS4 teachers upheld color-blindness as the "most equitable stance towards race..." (2003, p. 424). The second rationale for excluding critical discourse involved a reluctance to risk stakeholders' ire should such discussions on race offend.

Meta-ethnographic Analysis

Steps 3 and 4: Descriptive Data and First and Second Order Themes

The high-value teachers in CS4 all agree that urban Black primary school students need educational experiences that differ from traditional norms (Cooper, 2003; Howard 2001a). Effective teachers understand this and extend themselves to learn more about their students' needs (Howard, 2001a; Ware 2002). In CS4, the "extension of self" is seen through instructional practices that include securing culturally specific materials, establishing high achievement standards, and exercising a no-nonsense approach to discipline. All of these efforts are common characteristics of effective teachers of Black children. These practices also identify CS4 teachers as warm demanders—teachers who set high academic and moral standards for their students while working to facilitate their success (Ware, 2006). In considering these defining attributes of CS4 teachers, the following first and second order themes emerge and are indicated in Table 14.

Table 14

First and Second Order Themes from CS4

| Descriptive Data | First Order | Second Order |
|--|--|---|
| Students have academic and personal needs | Students' academic needs are to be served through Board approved curriculums | Students' needs are served through the teachers' development of various supportive roles (Other mother and warm demander) |
| Teachers are employed by school districts | Teachers are certificated employees | Teachers are othermothers |
| Standard curriculum is taught | Uniform instructional delivery; Banking concept | Instruction should be modified to meet learning objectives and students' needs |
| Teaching is a legislated activity | Teaching is a regulated profession prescribed by state and district | Teaching is an act of caring, professionalism is a delivery tool |
| Schools are Eurocentric | Teachers teach from the standpoint of Eurocentric traditions and norms | Teachers incorporate non-European cultures and norms to support student learning |
| Teachers follow rules | Teachers follow rules | Teachers follow rules, but bend them within the classroom to support achievement outcomes |

Step 5: Themes and Metaphors

The salient themes in CS4 are consistent with those found in previous case studies. All four produced thematic metaphors of the class as family or community, the school as community or village, and education as a vehicle for change in self and/or society (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). Within this family environment, learning is facilitated by teachers who serve as warm demanders, who enforce high standards for learning and discipline, and othermothers, who exude a level of caring that extends beyond their traditional roles as classroom teachers (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Before moving into a synthesis,

this study pauses to revisit the relationship between Black culture and learning in order to illustrate how the described instructional practices and styles of teaching connect with African cultural remnants.

The Culture-Based Instruction and African Cultural Elements

Researchers, past and present argue the need for teachers to know and respect their students (Danielson, 2007; Noddings, 1988; Walker, 2001). This assertion is based on the understanding that an ethic of caring should motivate teachers to discover their students learning styles, family backgrounds and cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1994a, Noddings, 1883, Ware, 2002). By adopting culture-based pedagogies, the effective teachers in CS1-4 also realized how Black students' culture and patterns of enculturation can be used to create classroom practices and environments that are culturally analogous and conducive to learning. These cultural norms are dynamic variables (Irvine, 1991). Their use within the classrooms of effective teachers is illustrated Table 15, which illuminates how the beliefs and practices in CS1–4 teachers found intersectionality between their explorations of culture- based instruction and West African cultural dimensions.

Table 15

Effective Teachers' Beliefs and Cultural Referents

| Study | Behavior/Attitude | Cultural element |
|---|--|--|
| Cooper, 2003 Howard, 2001a | The class as family, other-mothering | Communalism Affect |
| Cholewa et al., 2012 Howard, 2001a | Public Behaviors and Social Etiquette | Communalism |
| Howard, 2001a | Caution not to reinforce negative stereotypes | Communalism |
| Cooper, 2003 Esposito & Swain, 2009 | Values based teachings | Affect |
| Howard, 2001a | Students' preference for oral, as opposed to written, expression | Oral Tradition |
| Cholewa et al., 2012 Cooper, 2003 Esposito & Swain, 2009 Howard, 2001a | Authoritative discipline style, Warm demanders | Communalism Verve Affect |
| Esposito & Swain, 2009 Howard, 2001a | Critical race/social justice perspectives | Communalism |
| Cholewa et al., 2012 Howard, 2001a | Use of BEV and SE | Expressive individualism Oral Tradition |
| Cholewa et al., 2012 | Use of rhythms and/or dance in instruction | Movement Verve Affect |
| Cooper, 2003 Esposito & Swain, 2009 Howard, 2001a | Modified or adjusted curriculum to infuse culturally relevant pedagogy | Affect Communalism |
| Cooper, 2003 | Color-blind and culturally sensitive instruction | Communalism Affect |

Among the nine primary dimensions of Afrocentric culture (Boykin, 1986; Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997), communalism emerged as one of the most frequently incorporated cultural elements. By definition, communalism “denotes awareness of the

fundamental interdependence of people. One's orientation is social rather than being directed towards objects. There is an overriding importance attached to social bonds and social relationships..." (Boykin et al, 1997, p. 41). Its presence within predominately Black classrooms and use by culturally sensitive teachers provides a core characteristic of effective teaching (Cholewa et al, 2012, Howard, 2001a; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The high-value teachers in this study were attentive to how this cultural dimension could be used to facilitate achievement and resilience among their students (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). This attention was demonstrated in the emphasis placed on relational dynamics in the classroom and the persistent metaphors of class as family or community (Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009). Since communalism suggests the positive expression of interdependence and group affirmation (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997), Black American students were exposed to the idea that there is value in the discovery of a collective voice (2001a).

Synthesis

As demonstrated in the literature, the practices of high-value teachers of Black urban, elementary students have both salient and supporting characteristics. Chief among their primary attributes are an ethic of caring and the insistence on high academic achievement (Cholewa et al., 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). Tacitly embedded within these core characteristics is the teacher's belief in her own professional efficacy (2012; Irvine, 2002). Since this study focused only on the practices of high-value teachers, it began with an assumption of teachers' competence. Hence, in identifying academic rigor as a core characteristic, it is also assumed that the teachers deemed effective are capable of supporting such rigor.

Caring functions as a mechanism for reflection and change (Noddings, 1988); as such, it imparts an empathy that enables teachers to see the plight of urban, Black children. This empathy is not idle; it does not remain within the affective domain. Instead, it inspires supportive responses which may include the adoption of culture-based pedagogies. Although effective teaching can take place in traditional classrooms if teachers maintain high academic standards (Hilliard, 1994), emic researchers cite that teacher competency is not the immediate point of focus. Instead, the loci of concern and the rationale for the previously referenced educational debt are due to teacher biases in instructional delivery (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Irvine, 1991). These biases have historically manifested themselves in lowered performance expectations and less rigorous instruction which, in turn, contribute to testing disparities and a continued narrowing of the curricula (1991; Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011).

The adoption of culturally sensitive practices expands the parameters of effective teaching by requiring teachers to understand and leverage the culture and experiences of their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally relevant classrooms thereby create a venue for holistic instruction (Howard, 2001a, Ladson-Billings, 1994). Through educational holism, effective practitioners extend themselves by situating instruction within the culture, life, language, experience, academic and personal needs of Black children (Howard, 2001a).

In this sense, the presence of caring creates a catalytic dynamic that allows teachers to construct culturally sensitive classrooms wherein operative metaphors, such as the class as family or community, prevail and enhance instruction (Noddings, 1988). Literature reveals that these dynamics have tell-tale signs in regard to instructional delivery. The morning circle time identified in CS1 (Howard, 2001a), for example, provides an example of communal learning among peers. This form of instruction, called peer cooperative learning, reinforces existing

metaphors (2001a). The benefits of this type of instruction are twofold. First, it recognizes that academic individualism is one of several methods of learning and that Black, or otherwise diverse students, may thrive in learning environments that are communally based (Boykin, 1986). Second, communal learning activities assist the development of core academic skills, such as the language arts skills associated with listening and speaking. They teach respect and physical self-discipline as students wait, actively listen, and articulate ideas. They also impart the social skills, positive sense of identity, and character needed to network with others (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994). All of these are vital skills that are needed as students mature and enter the larger society.

In considering an advocacy-participancy position, the shift from Eurocentric individualism to Afrocentric communalism is significant. Whereas, the former conveys a politically skewed message that one can make it one's own, the latter rightfully acknowledges the strengths and sense of agency that comes from working collaboratively for a common goal (Ware, 2002). This is a particularly powerful message for Black American students and a reality that has historically motivated Black teachers to work for racial empowerment (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a; Irvine, 2002).

Emphasis on Academic Achievement

Embedded within each case study was a resounding emphasis on the primacy of academic achievement for Black American students in culture-based classrooms (Cholewa et al., 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). Whether this priority was established through authoritarian discipline that insisted on focused learning or through teachings on personal responsibility and racial elevation (Howard, 2001a), the centrality of learning and developing analytic thinking skills were the articulated goals of teachers in all four case studies.

Such an observation is consistent with the literature regarding the effective teachers of Black students (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). It is also a perspective that has historic ties to segregated schools whose primary focus was to foster a love for learning while inculcating agency and racial pride (hooks, 1994, Walker, 2001). It is interesting to note that through culture-based learning, effective teachers are returning to these same practices and priorities that were lost through desegregation (Bell, 2004). As part of this process, they have assumed roles within their culturally sensitive classrooms as othermothers and warm demanders with the goal of effectuating students' achievement.

The Ethic of Care: Othermothering

Othermothering was a concept expressed or described in the findings of all the case studies reviewed (Cooper, 2003, Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, Howard, 2001a). As a term, it was initially introduced by Collins (2000) in discussions pertaining to Black feminist ideologies. Given the change in regard to where and how this term is used and the fact that high-value teachers come from both biological genders, this study offers the term "sheltering" in referring to the holistic practices of effective teachers. Such a change in terms also demonstrates sensitivity in how "other or second mothering" might be perceived as being racially condescending when separated from its original context and when it extends outside of one's ethnic/culture group.

Within these acts of sheltering, effective teachers made provisions for students' emotional, academic, moral, and physical well-being. Like othermothering, sheltering requires an understanding of the many variables that accost and affect young learners. It also involves an advocacy perspective that seeks the well-being of the child. In CS 1-4, sheltering behaviors were manifested in acts that imparted a sense of agency through personal responsibility and communal

affiliations (Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a) and in the development of a social or racial consciousness (2001a, 2009). As demonstrated in the synthesis, sheltering can be understood as having two expressions: intrinsic and extrinsic. The former refers to the acts that effective teachers perform in order to build students' sense of agency through academic achievement (2001a); the latter refers to teachings and practices that effective teachers impart to cultivate students' skills in character development, resilience and social navigation (2001a; 2009; 2012).

The Ethic of Caring: Warm Demanders

“Warm demanders” is a term first coined by Kleinfield (1975) in a study of effective teachers of Alaskan Indian students. As originally presented, the term refers to the active demands and caring toughness that effective teachers exhibited (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012). This toughness is presented through an “in your face” style of corrective interaction that observers may deem inappropriate, but students interpret as a form of caring (Bondy & Ross, 2008). This observation affirms that what defines a warm demander is not what the teacher does in regard to building relationships or classroom management; it refers more to how it is done (2008). With warm demanders, classroom discipline is directed, personal, and focused on achievement (Irvine, 2002). Included within its pedagogy is the conviction that all students can, should, and will learn—without exceptions or excuses. As Foster and Fraser (1998) contend, effective teachers' warmth and performance demands are each expressed through culturally affirming means that support their students' personal resilience and sense of self-worth.

The subjects in all four case studies were deemed high-value teachers of urban Black American elementary students (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). Their election as such is due to their respective expression of an ethic of caring

that established and meets high academic standards. Data from all four cases, therefore, are confirming and are consistent with the larger body of literature that pertains to the effective teaching of urban Black children (Foster, 1997; hooks, 1994; Irvine 2002). Unique to this study, however, was the inclusion and subsequent discovery of disconfirming data in regard to the intersectionality of culture-based and color-blind ideologies. Such an ideological mix was unexpected and warrants discussion as to its implications for majority teachers who teach Black children.

Racial Consciousness and Color-blind Pedagogy

Color-blind education maintains the irrelevancy of critical instruction based on the belief that all people are fundamentally the same (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). This perspective, as seen by emic researchers, provides a continuation of the deficit theory that was popularized by the social sciences in the 1960's (Salkind, 2008). By citing the colloquialism "people are people," color-blind pedagogy denies the relevance of distinct ethnic histories while ignoring specific acts of oppression, enslavement, or colonization. It also falsely denies the benefits to those favored by White privilege and hegemony (2010; Sue, 2004). Because of this, critical race theorists reject color-blindness as yet another form of racism, another venue for enabling the continued invisibility of Whiteness (2010, 2004). Researchers Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) agree as their continuum places color-blindness within the lower levels of cultural intelligence.

As stated by Cooper (2003), the articulated commitment to color-blind pedagogy among CS4 subjects introduced a contradiction in the personal norms and paradigms of these high valued teachers. Given this observation, and the fact that these subjects were selected through community nomination, a question arises: How important is a critical race perspective to the

effective teaching of African-American students and the identification of effective teachers via community nomination?

This two-part question is significant as it points to the complexities surrounding actual and perceived teacher effectiveness. It also suggests that there is a tolerance for paradigmatic variations among teachers deemed effective. This tolerance allows for White teachers to interact with Black American students in ways different from critical Black American teachers while still producing high levels of effectiveness. The unwillingness among CS4 teachers to take risks, however, is conceptually consistent with the absence of critical discourse and the selection of a color-blind pedagogy. In CS1 – 2, risk-taking behaviors were directly associated with an overt articulation of critical perspectives (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a).

Explanations on why CS4 teachers were deemed effective rests within the community's interpretation of good teaching and its expectations concerning teachers' expression of racial consciousness. While intriguing, such an exploration lies beyond the purview of this particular study. Cooper (2003) contends, however, that despite the variations in the conceptual frameworks of CS4's high-value White teachers, her subjects had more similarities than differences with those studied in the larger body of available literature. This observation is supported by the previously referenced standards set by Emory University's CULTURES program (Irvine, 1991; 2002). As taught to pre-service teachers, these standards consist of five criteria for establishing culturally competent teaching and include: demonstrating a respect for diversity, maintaining rigorous and relevant instruction, knowing the relationship between learning and culture, and having sensitivity to the unique circumstances facing ethnically diverse students (Irvine, 2002). Teachers in CS4 demonstrate these traits despite their support of color-blind ideology.

This quandary raises questions regarding the struggles of majority teachers to fully embrace culturally relevant pedagogy and its critical race perspectives. This observation is important. In requiring majority teachers to be reflective practitioners, we are asking them to grow in their personal and professional commitment to an ethic of care. However, to encourage this process and eliminate fear, this same growing ethic of care must be expressed on an institutional level within schools and districts. Institutional caring would endorse the culturally sensitive work of classroom teachers and enable teacher trainings on to how to navigate previously avoided terrain that has now become racialized for them. For this process to fully occur, a breaking down of previous misconceptions, such as the safeness of color-blind ideology, and a reconstruction that include situated instructional paradigms must take place.

Interpretations: A Case for Didactic Reconstruction

As evidenced by CS4 teachers, it is possible for an effective, well-intentioned teacher of urban Black children to be both culturally relevant and culturally uninformed at the same time (Cooper, 2003). Here, the term “culturally arrested” refers to this phenomenon. It recognizes the complexity of the human psyche and the possibility that culturally sensitive teachers may also possess areas, within their own paradigms and practice that remain unaffected by an ethic of care or challenging reflection. This premise finds support in the literature regarding White teachers’ racial biases in the classroom and the biases of Black teachers in regard to students’ socio-economic status (Cooper, 2002; Irving, 1991; Lee, 1989; Rist, 1970). The fact that areas of arrested cultural consciousness can be uncovered regarding any issue is why a process is needed that insists on intrapersonal reflection and change.

Didactic reconstruction is a term introduced in this study that refers to a transformative process. Within this process, teachers identify personal beliefs and practices and then evaluate

these beliefs for usefulness and relevance to their urban, Black primary students. Like reflexivity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), didactic reconstruction is an internal process with external ramifications. It requires teachers, who would be highly effective amid diverse classrooms, to identify personal biases and then challenge these biases in order to extend to their students holistic care (2003). Although this study does not explore the individual life histories of effective teachers, the fact that these teachers have distinguished themselves as such among urban Black communities speaks to their participation in this reflective process. Reconstruction, therefore, refers not to what effective teachers do. Rather, it refers to the prerequisite beliefs and experiences that facilitate their adaption of critical and/or culture-based pedagogies and the acceptance of the risks therein (McAllister, 2002).

This definition of reconstruction is akin to the core assumption embedded within Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs' (1989) model for cultural competence development. As teachers reflect on their own identities and associated privileges, they develop a better understanding their own racial biases and the journeys of those from historically oppressed groups (McAllister, 2002). This movement from first order practices to personal discovery is what hooks (1994) calls "engaged pedagogy." By definition, this pedagogy requires teachers to be "actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (1994, p. 15). This concept is consistent with the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." It is also consistent with the racial identity theory espoused by Tatum (1997) which contends that the road to critical understandings begins with the teachers' realization of her own ethnic and cultural biases.

This process of reflective practice and forward action was particularly evident among the teachers in CS4 (Cooper, 2009). Although they articulated a color-blind ideology, these teachers

were also successful in maintaining a culture-based classroom and in building relationships within the school's Black community (2009). These actions are signs of an increasing ethnic/cultural awareness that (Irvine, 1991), if continued, may lend itself to a fuller expression of culture competency that includes critical discourse and a greater development of personal and collective agency.

Adding to the complexities posed by teachers in CS4 is the understanding that while teachers can be asked to know and respond to the needs of their students, they cannot be required to take risks that may invite politically negative repercussions or to deviate from district approved methods or curriculums. This observation helps explain the current state of affairs in regard to teaching Black American children. There is always an option to do nothing and for the teacher to safely remain the same. In the absence of a clear mandate to develop more inclusive curriculums, the only variable resolution to this problem is for effective primary school teachers to continue illuminating the path to student learning through the use and proliferation of Afrocentric epistemologies and culturally responsive classroom practices. Once the strengths of this instructional practice are verified through students' performance benchmarks, then the acceptance of these second order paradigms will increase.

Discussion

The problems facing urban Black American children are pervasive (Howard, 2001a). For those children who fail in public schools, these problems are compounded by the prospect of unemployment, poverty, teen pregnancy, and incarceration. Despite these challenges, however, public schools continue to trend in ways that ignore the obvious through color-blind ideology (Ullucci & Battey, 2011) and a "stay the course" mentality that seeks to blame the victim (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Moving against this trend, however, are the efforts of high-value

teachers who have welcomed personal epiphanies, taken professional risks, and discovered culture-based instruction as a means of reaching urban Black primary school children (Cholewa et al, 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a).

Using Culture-Based Pedagogies to Reach Black American Students

Three research questions guided this study and its approach to data gathering, interpretation, and synthesis. The first posed the query: What are culture-based pedagogies and how can they enable learning for urban Black American primary school students? Answers to this question were found in the literature and in the reflections of the effective teachers under review. By definition, culture-based pedagogies are intellectual products. They emerge when teachers serve as reflective practitioners who apprehend the presence and impact of racial bias in the classroom (Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). This realization, coupled with an ethic of caring, enables teachers to consider the process of teaching and learning from the perspective of ethnically diverse students (Ware, 2002). Instruction and classroom environments were then transformed as teachers modified curriculum and practice to allow students to see themselves at the center of learning (Howard, 2001a, Cooper, 2009). These actions coincide with the teachers' understanding that Black students learn best when school is familiar— meaning when the culture of the classroom honors the strengths of the students' primary home culture (Howard, 2001a). In such settings, Black students are given the same cultural advantages of their White peers who have traditionally found themselves, their cultural paradigms, and ethnic histories fully represented in American schools (Shockley, 2011).

Acquiring Knowledge of Culture and the Process of Teaching

The second research question asked: How can acquiring knowledge of Black American culture influence the process of teaching? As demonstrated by the literature, the acquisition of Black cultural knowledge prompted effective teachers to modify how and what they taught (Ware, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). These changes often included the adoption of othermothering strategies, warm demander styles of teaching, and the re-creation of classrooms based on communal metaphors such as a family or a village (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). In addition, many high-value teachers developed critical race and advocacy perspectives which were subsequently infused into their practice (2009; Howard 2001a).

Integrating Elements of Black Culture

The final research question asked: How can elements of Black American culture be integrated into Eurocentric public schooling? As demonstrated by these 15 effective teachers, the integration of culture-based instruction seems contingent upon the ethnic awareness and caring of the individual teacher. None of the subjects in the case studies reviewed expressed any difficulty in developing culturally responsive classrooms or in using materials that would support the positive identity formation of young Black students. In fact, the outcome of improved student learning would support the integration of this instructional approach. Political risks were mentioned, however, among the Black teachers whose culturally relevant teachings deviated from the standard curriculum to include critical race, Afrocentric, and social consciousness teachings (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). This observation is significant not only in terms of its content but also in regard to its timing. Given the present calls for increased teacher accountability and the new teacher evaluation systems being employed (NJEA, 2012), there is a

new impetus for teachers to explore tested, yet non-traditional means of engaging all learners and to treat cultural differences as avenues to student achievement. This trending in American public education creates a causal event, a window of opportunity, wherein culture-based instruction may find greater and more frequent expression.

Implications for Teacher Pre-Service and Professional Development

Although there is a clear moral imperative to educate with equity all persons within a democratic society, this imperative has not been sufficient enough to inspire educational reform. Recent national changes in teacher evaluations, however, may produce a much needed impetus for reexamining the applicability of culture-based research. Under new legislation (NJEA, 2012), teacher and administrative tenures are now tethered to student performance. This increased focus on teacher proficiency enables renewed discussions on how to engage all learners (Danielson, 2007). The present research offers tangible examples of how some public school teachers have taken the initiative to serve as catalysts for change and, in doing so, have increased student learning. Their example provides both encouragement and hope that public schools can adopt a transformative perspective of education by first transforming itself.

The findings surrounding the effective teaching of Black American and other ethnically diverse children, therefore, should become the loci of pre-service and in-service professional development training. In addition, recruitment efforts to attract teachers from diverse backgrounds should also be more aggressively pursued following studies on the means through which school systems alienate minority candidates. If these actions are pursued in earnest and with the necessary impetus and resources, all classroom teachers can be empowered to experiment and experience the value of culture-based instruction.

Conclusion

The studies explored in this meta-ethnography provide a window through which the paradigms of four sets of effective teachers of Black American students were explored. Although their instructional styles varied, all four groups of effective teachers demonstrated an ability to reflect, grow, and change in response to the needs of their urban Black primary school students. Teachers' responsive instructional choices included the adoption of culture-based pedagogies and an insistence on academic achievement. In utilizing culturally relevant and Afrocentric paradigms, critical race teachers leveraged cultural congruence and challenged students to develop a both a personal ethic and a socio-political consciousness. The adoption of culturally sensitive practices enabled the urban Black students in CS1-4 to experience schools as familiar learning places where their language, history, needs, and goals were reflected in daily practices.

While, some effective teachers revealed areas of emerging racial consciousness, their acceptance and leveraging of Black cultural norms and their insistence on high academic standards is consistent with what we know about Black students' learning needs (Boykin, 1986; Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). More work is needed, however, in regard to identifying and addressing areas of cultural arrest. This continual need to challenge ethnic/cultural assumptions should not only invite teachers into the didactic reconstructive process, but schools and districts as well. Such collaborations are essential to cultivating both the interpersonal and institutional caring that teachers need to fully implement all aspects of culture-based pedagogies in public classrooms.

Chapter 5

The Culture-Based Instruction of Urban, Black American Primary School Students

Robin L. Harden Daniels

Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey

Robin L. Harden Daniels, College of Graduate and Continuing Education,

Rowan University.

Great appreciation is given to Dr. Ane Johnson for her sharp insights and challenging critiques of this article.

Correspondence concerning this article should be directed to Robin Harden-Daniels, College of Graduate and Continuing Education, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

Email: rlhdaniels@gmail.com

Abstract

Robin L. Harden Daniels
THE CULTURE-BASED INSTRUCTION OF URBAN, BLACK AMERICAN
PROMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Ane Johnson, Ph.D.
Doctor of Education

Problems facing Black American students in underfunded urban schools continue to threaten the viability of public education for this and other nontraditional student populations. These problems, along with the growing diversity of American children, prompt a re-examination of extant data on the practices associated with the effective teaching of Black American students. This meta-ethnography illuminates the findings of four case studies and then explores their implications for teaching. Through the use of critical race theory, this study explores how effective teachers use culture-based instruction to better engage Black American students in the process of learning. Findings identify core teacher behaviors and instructional practices that support the successful teaching of urban Black American primary school children.

Keywords

Black American students, culture-based pedagogies, Afrocentricity, meta-ethnography, culturally relevant teaching

There are many colloquialisms in American culture, one of which is framed as both a question and a response: “What is the definition of insanity? Doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results.” Such an exchange represents the operational paradigm that has dominated public school practice in regard to teaching Black American children. The insanity, if we dare use this word, does not lie in children’s normed test scores; it lies in the fact that educators and policy makers have failed to untether themselves from the traditional practices that are proven to be biased against Black American children (Hooks & Miskovic, 2011; Irvine, 1991; Sue, 2004). These long understood biases present themselves in lowered teacher expectations (Chang & Demyan, 2007), higher levels of discipline (Irving, 1991), and negative academic tracking (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, & Dixon, 2010)). Underlying these behaviors are normative beliefs about the virtual incorrigibility of Black American students due to their lack of cultural integrity (Boykin, 1986).

These biases are consistent with the deficit ideology that prevailed during the 1960s. Its acceptance within educational circles supported the myth that Blacks lacked a cultural center. This conjecture resulted in the origination of “cultural deprivation” theory, which, by definition, refers to “children who are ... lacking or wanting in, the cultural tools, backgrounds, and perception of our cultural orientation” (Lipton, 1962, p. 17). Embedded within this very definition are the markings of monoculturalism or the belief in the dominance of one’s own cultural paradigms (Sue, 2004); the reference to “our cultural orientation” is an example of this and immediately raises questions as to who are “we” and “our.”

Despite its core assumptions, cultural deprivation theory thrived (Lipton, 1963). Its theoretical assertions countered the more established understandings that cognitive development is contextualized and learning occurs through daily social experiences (Biesta, 2011). Families,

communities, and ethnic organizations function as learning cultures. Through interaction with adults, children acquire the knowledge and skills deemed significant by their communities and, hence, participate in rich cultural transmission (Schein, 2004; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990).

Given the increasing ethnic diversity among American school children, a question arises as to what justifies this keen focus on one specific culture group. A clear and sobering answer is found in the dire outcomes that statistically await Black American youths who fail in public schools. In 2009, for example, 9.3% of Black American children, ages 16 – 24, dropped out of school (US Department of Education, 2011). Among this group, 23% entered the penal system through either youth detention centers or prison and 38% of the Black American girls between ages 16-24 who dropped out of school also became single mothers (Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009). These statistics become even more daunting when considering the 38.5% unemployment rate that effected the economic viability of Black American teenagers, ages 16 – 19, in 2012 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

This meta-synthesis illuminates how effective Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students defy deprivation mindsets through the daily use of culture-based instruction. At the heart of this study is the recognition that young Black children need pedagogy devoid of racist ideology (Asante, 1991; Irvine, 1991), a pedagogy that is situated in their experiences and is bold and truthful enough to be relevant to their history as an ethnic group. These experiences cannot come through a teaching force that is wedded to the same ineffective practices that produced the ethnic achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Neither can it proliferate in a system that, in response to failure, assumed a “blame the victim” approach through skewed ideology (2006; Robinson & Biran, 2006). In addressing these concerns, this

study summarizes the works of teachers who are also reflective practitioners – those who have embraced what *emic* researchers have argued for over three decades: Black children achieve in classrooms where their cultural styles and perspectives are connected to learning (Asante, 1991; Irvine, 1991; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This study shares the stories of high-value elementary school teachers of African American students in urban, predominately Black school communities. In doing so, it provides examples on the gains that can be made when sanity invades the classroom.

In its original form, this qualitative study illuminated the culture-based pedagogies and instructional practices of 12 Black American teachers and three White teachers of Black American students as recorded in four separate case studies. Data regarding these 15 teachers were obtained through observations of their instructional practices. As a meta-ethnography, this study reviewed the findings of original researchers and then continued by synthesizing data from all four case studies to produce new interpretive insights. In doing so, it pursued the following goals: (a) to illuminate the application of culture-based instruction in urban, predominately Black elementary classrooms; (b) to demonstrate effective practices and variations of effective practices among successful teachers; and (c) to emphasize how new trends in teachers' professional evaluations further accentuates the need for culture-based instruction in American public classrooms.

This meta-ethnography highlighted opportunities for pre-service and current teachers to broaden their understanding of the cultural needs of urban Black primary school children. This information is significant not only to Black students, but also to classroom teachers as they respond to the cultural competency demands embedded in newly adopted evaluative frameworks for professional practice (Danielson, 2007). This article provides a summary of the four cases

explored in the original meta-ethnography. The findings from which are presented in this article in summary form due to space limitations. These findings focus on the salient themes and metaphors that emerged from the data that characterize the high-value teaching being studied. This effort is pursued in order to illuminate how effective teachers leveraged their students' diverse cultural paradigms to connect culture to learning.

Historic and Theoretical Roots of Culture-Based pedagogies

The formal articulation of culture-based instruction was initially presented by historian Carter G. Woodson (1933) as the most viable approach to educating Black American children. Credited with establishing the conceptual foundations of Afrocentric pedagogy (Asante, 1991), Woodson's vision for a culture-based pedagogy argued for the inclusion of teachings on African history through which Black Americans can situate themselves as leaders and catalysts in world affairs (1933). In his seminal work, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Woodson (1933) presents his theory on the relationship between Black American culture and learning. His conceptualizations are among the earliest *emic* pedagogies to connect these two variables (1933). Woodson's understanding of Black American education was forged during the Washington-Du Bois debate. This historic national contestation concerned the purpose and substance of Black American education, the primacy of industrial or classical education, and the vision of how Black Americans could thrive amid *de jure* segregation (1933).

As conceptualized by Black Americans, Black education was also intended to be progressive. It was treated as a symbol of freedom and a birthright as a fully recognized human being (Ye, 2007). Embedded within early Black pedagogies, for example, was the concept of "racial uplift"—a commonly used term denoting the impetus to advance Blacks through educational, economic, intellectual, and moral development. Woodson articulated this concept

through discourse on the prospering Black upper class (1933). Given to this group of high achieving Blacks was the responsibility to elevate the race by facilitating the education of the Black lower class.

Sentiments like these still remain in the Black community (Ladson-Billings, 2009). They were given expression in the instructional decision making of the Black American teachers studied (Howard, 2001a). Based on their understanding of their students' needs, these teachers believe that effective education instills a sense of racial pride, community, and agency (2001a). This paradigm also reinforced their conviction that Black education must be situated within the lived experiences and cultural norms of their students. For some teachers, this conclusion prompted the infusion of critical race ideology in to daily discourse (Howard, 2001a). For others, it gave rise to the need for supporting Afrocentric epistemologies (Esposito & Swain, 2009). For others still, it was expressed through the development of strong relational ties that were used to encourage academic achievement (Cholewa et al, 2012).

Culture-Based Theories

Contemporary Black American researchers concur with Woodson and argue that Black American students need racially affirming education (Asante, 1991; Gay, 2010; Irvine, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shockley, 2011). While these researchers use different terminology, they articulate a common message that there are significant differences between Black American and traditional public school cultures. The presence of these cultural discontinuities, and their effect upon Black American children, warrant the acceptance of culture-based pedagogies and the prerequisite knowledge needed to leverage these pedagogies in public classrooms (Boykin, 1986) Here, two prominent culture-based pedagogies, cultural relevancy and Afrocentricity, are briefly discussed.

The concept of cultural discontinuity—the discordant values, behaviors, and paradigms between ethnic minority homes and Eurocentric schools—has been the subject of research since the 1980s (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Its conceptualization has prompted several researchers to investigate the cultural attributes of ethnic minorities and their real and perceived experiences in public schools (Boykin, 1988; Irvine, 1991). In their research on Afrocultural expressions, for example, Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, and Albury (1997) confirmed the presence of a Black cultural legacy whose worldview favors spirituality over materialism, communalism over individualism; and creative high energy environments over those that are controlled and mechanistic. Teachers who embrace culture-based pedagogies recognize how cultural dissonance has prompted biases in teacher practices—particularly in regard to underprivileged, urban Black American students in the areas of curricula, academic tracking, and discipline (Irvine, 1991).

The concept of cultural relevancy is the belief that public schools should reflect the cultural paradigms of its diverse student populations and thus connects culture with learning for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). As it pertains to children from marginalized ethnic groups, cultural relevancy is conceptually tied to critical race theory – a critique that stresses the evaluation of human experiences from the standpoint of race, racism, privilege, and power (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). In presenting her theory, Ladson-Billings (1995b) identified three propositions on which cultural relevancy rests: (a) all students are entitled to supportive school experiences; (b) critical dialogue and diversity learning must become standard fare within public school practices; and (c) instruction must be infused with a critical perspective that enables Black students to better understand their world as they experience it as ethnic minorities. These three tenets formed the basis of evaluating the cultural practices of successful teachers of Black American elementary school students.

Afrocentricity emerged as one of the earliest among contemporary culture-based pedagogies. (Asante, 1991; Tillotson, 2011). In 1980, Molefi Asante introduced “Afrocentricity,” rekindled interests in an African epistemology, and inspired others to consider this theory as an educational strategy (2012). As an approach to education, Afrocentricity is a social theory that demands an understanding of world and human events from the perspective of African descendants and their collective experiences (Asante, 2012). Sefa Dei (1994) defined this term as a worldview that serves as “an alternative, non-exclusionary, and non-hegemonic system of knowledge informed by African peoples’ history and experiences” (p. 4). As such, Afrocentricity provides a non-traditional epistemology, a new way of looking at human events and knowledge. For Asante (1991), this new epistemology is Afrocentric because of the prominence given to African knowledge, worldviews, and experiences. Since these paradigms serve as the focal point of intellectual inquiry, Black Americans and other members of the African Diaspora are situated as the subjects within culture-based learning modalities (1991).

Culture-Based Practice

The process of imparting knowledge from a perspective that inspires agency and positive identity formation is not uncommon. Such a practice occurs daily in public schools to the benefit of Euramerican children across the nation (Shockley, 2011). Each day, Euramerican children come to schools whose curricula is about other Europeans, whose contributions to world history is celebrated, whose intelligence is canonized, and whose values are presented as the litmus test for ascertaining the worth of non-European civilizations (2011). This continual affirmation of one’s own culture group provides a psychological foundation on which White American children stand. Similarly, various religious and immigrant groups have also capitalized on the relationship between culture and learning by privately supporting Catholic, Hebrew, Chinese, and

Episcopalian schools (2011). The only difference in regard to Black American students is the widespread ignorance regarding their culture. Although admittedly, this culture contains intra-ethnic group variations, Asante (1990) contends that there is a consistency among peoples who have shared experiences. Such experiences create an underlying unity in culture that is witnessed among members of the African Diaspora as well as with Europeans, despite their cultural variations. This contention is further supported by the core cultural elements or West African remnants identified by Boykin (1986). Together, these understandings provide both a conceptual and performance base that enables teachers to pursue their exploration of the specific elements of Black culture that are present in their classrooms. This process, however, begins with the renunciation of deprivation mindsets that have dominated American educational paradigms. Teachers can instead embrace the premise that Blacks have cultural integrity, then they can learn and leverage that integrity to impact student learning regardless of the cultural or ideological variations that may exist.

Despite increasing demands for “cultural competency,” discussions about student diversity tend to be quietly embedded within newly emerging instructional standards as opposed to being overtly mandated, benchmarked, and included in teachers’ pre-service training. Etic researchers who argue the need for such skills, approach diversity from the standpoint of building strong teacher-student classroom relationships as opposed to challenging racialized practice or exploring alternative epistemologies (Danielson, 2007).

Danielson’s (2007) widely acclaimed work *The Framework for Professional Development* provides an example. This framework, which has been adopted in 24 contiguous states (NEA, 2012), includes four domains, 22 components, and a host of performance rubrics. One of these components, in Domain 2 (Classroom Environment), refers to “Creating an

Environment of Respect and Rapport” (2007, p.64). In demonstrating proficiency in this area, teachers are required to incorporate instructional practices that demonstrate knowledge of and respect for their students’ lives and home cultures. “For some teachers, this requires significant new learning, because ways of showing respect in one culture may be offensive in another” (Danielson, 2007, p. 64). While Danielson’s (2007) language lacks the tone and racial analysis associated with critical race or advocacy perspectives, her success makes discourse on what constitutes cultural competency an increasing possibility. New legislation that connects her framework with teacher proficiency and possible loss of tenure, further accentuates the need for teacher development in areas of cultural competency.

Culturally relevant and Afrocentric theories in American education are predicated on the idea that Black American children must know and draw strength from their history and cultural heritage (Woodson, 1933; Asante, 1991) This brand of knowledge facilitates academic achievement by eliminating negative stereotypes, highlighting past and present role models, and bridging the cultural divide between home and school (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Embedded within these emic understandings are an advocacy not only for Black American culture, but for the global body of cultural knowledge as well.

Method

This qualitative meta-ethnography is defined as the collection and synthesis of extant research in order to develop new interpretative insights about a human experience (Noblit & Hare, 1988). As such, it explores how high value Black American teachers and teachers of Black American students employ culture-based pedagogies to facilitate student learning. The objective of this research is to illustrate how culturally attuned instructional practices with critical race paradigms can be normed to increase the achievement of Black American primary school

children in urban communities. In fulfilling this objective, this study poses the following research questions:

1. What are culture-based pedagogies and how can they enable learning for urban Black American primary school students?
2. How can acquiring knowledge of Black American culture influence the process of teaching?
3. How can elements of Black American culture be integrated into Eurocentric public schooling?

To this end, I illuminate, translate, and synthesize the findings of four extant case studies in pursuing answers to these questions. In doing so, care was given to preserve the meaning *in context* established by the original researchers while enabling the creation of new interpretive meanings.

The Meta-Ethnographic Process

The goal of meta-ethnographic data collection is to identify and locate research that is subject-relevant (Thomas & Harden, 2008). In interpretative methods that require data synthesis, specific types of data collection are pursued for their ability to retain meaning in context, utilize clear recording practices that facilitate transparency, and enable the generation of new perspectives (2008). Among these methods are those proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988) who, in their seminal work on desegregation ethnographies, presented a 7-stage process for data collection, synthesis, and interpretation. A listing of these stages and accompanying actions are found in Table 16 below.

Table 16

7-Step Model for Meta-ethnographic Research

| Phases | Noblit & Hare (1988) | Description of Action |
|--------|---|--|
| 1 | “Getting Started” | Researcher identifies an area of interest. Selected topic represents a sustainable interest |
| 2 | “Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest” | Determine the relationships among studies Assess audience. Select relevant research topic Identify and locate relevant case studies Determine number of limited sources |
| 3 | Reading and Researching articles | Repeat close readings of case studies Note details of each case Identify first order themes |
| 4 | Determining how the studies are related’ | Determine the relationships between studies Create Metaphoric Reductions Identify second order themes |
| 5 | “Translating data into one another” | Conduct relevant translations Identify patterns and themes |
| 6 | ‘Synthesizing translations” | Compare, contrast, analyze, and synthesize data to create a new interpretations Identify third order themes |
| 7 | ‘Expressing the Synthesis” | Researcher presents findings in a format compatible to the needs of her audience |

In Stage 1, a topic of interest was selected and a series of literature reviews pursued. Through this process, I discovered an abiding interest in the life history narratives of Black American teachers and their descriptions of how they infused critical race frameworks into standard, yet racialized, curricula (Ladson-Billings, Levine, 1997; Walker, 2003). This discovery resulted in the selection of this present topic and the completion of the first of seven steps.

In Stage 2, I focused on essential sources that are most relevant to my study. This was done by following three guidelines established by Noblit and Hare (1988). The first involves limiting my sources as to prevent ‘gross generalizations’ (p. 27) in my final synthesis. Unlike quantitative meta-analysis research that emphasizes exhaustive reviews (Doyle, 2003), meta-ethnographies caution “unless there is some substantive reason for an exhaustive search, generalizing from all studies of a particular setting yields trite conclusions” (p. 28). Likewise, Miles and Huberman (2002) contend that,

...while there is no ideal number of cases, a number between 4 and 10 cases usually works well. With fewer than 4 cases, it is often difficult to generate theory...with more than 10 cases it quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity and volume of data. (p. 27)

Therefore the sample size for this research was limited to four case studies. Table 17 identifies the inclusion criteria on which data selection was based.

Table 17

Case Study Selection Criteria

| Description | Attributes Needed for Study Inclusion |
|------------------------------|---|
| Research Design | Qualitative |
| Research Approach | Case Studies, Narratives, Ethnographies |
| Conceptual Frameworks | Culture and Learning, Advocacy, Critical Race, Culturally Responsive, Afrocentric |
| Research Question | How culture-based pedagogies support the teaching and learning of urban Black American elementary school children |
| Date of Research | Studies conducted 1995 and later |
| Data Collection | Observations, interviews, documents, or lived experiences |
| Data Analysis | Holistic approach to assist in identifying themes |

Once individual studies were identified, purposeful sampling was used with the goal of creating a combined data set that allowed for ethnic and gender diversity among the original researchers and their participants. This decision was deemed necessary for three reasons. First, with Black American teachers representing only 7% of the public school teaching force, there is a high probability that Black American children will be educated mostly, if not exclusively, by White American teachers (Cooper, 2003). While there is a growing body of literature regarding Black American teacher effectiveness with students from their own ethnic group, there is less research about the influence of effective White teachers with Black American students (2003). Given current demographics and increased teacher accountability, there is a growing imperative

to understand the conceptualizations of valued White teachers. Second, the inclusion of ethnically diverse teachers helps establish transferability and asserts that orientation and skill, rather than ethnicity, are the operative dynamics in successfully educating Black American students (Gay, 2000). And, third, the inclusion of data from White researchers and effective White teachers broadens discourse and creates more opportunities for potentially divergent data to emerge regarding the attributes of successfully teaching Black American students.

In examining the literature in Step 3, close readings were conducted and first order themes identified. Searches for these case studies included electronic databases, books, chapters in books, and a careful review of citations. ERIC, SAGE, and JSTOR were among the most frequently used databases, all of which contain peer-reviewed articles. In addition, Google Scholar and Google Books were particularly helpful in locating articles not available through other databases.

Case studies were reviewed at Stage 4 with the goal of assessing interrelationships. This level of analysis focuses the identification of the recurring metaphors, themes, and patterns encountered in the review process. In Stage 5, data is “translated” – the act of comparing one case study with another to uncover deeper relationships. Once data is uncovered, meta-ethnographic synthesis, which occurs in Stage 6, provides for three potential outcomes. First, the data may be reciprocal meaning there was harmony among the data obtained. Second, the data may be refutational meaning contradictions were uncovered and the meta-ethnographer must supply an interpretation that honors discordant data. And, third, the data obtained is irreconcilable. When this occurs, a “line of reasoning” argument is constructed that is akin to grounded theory (Atkins, Lewin, Smith, Engel, Fretheim, & Volmink, 2008; 1988). After completing this process, Stage 7 occurs at symposium.

Validity, Reliability, and Comparability

With the increase of interpretative methodologies come concerns about the integrity of information submitted (Kvale, 1996). This concern has been actively directed towards interpretive research, like ethnographies, whose research design allows for smaller groups of subjects, meaning in context, and the inclusion of subjective experiences (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Because of these defining characteristics, the methods of ascertaining validity and reliability in ethnographic work differ from other research designs (1982). A brief discussion is thereby warranted.

Validity asks the fundamental question: Is the study authentic in its source and truthful in its content (Glesne, 2011)? Its concern is about the credibility of the research submitted (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). Reliability is also concerned with integrity, yet it asks a different question: If subsequent researchers were to review these same sources, would they arrive at the same interpretations (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007)? This query refers to external reliability wherein persons other than the original researcher can confirm the findings of a study and the credibility of sources used (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

Although some research methods focus on establishing cause and effect by controlling or eliminating contextual variables, ethnographic research emphasizes the relationships among a variety of variables common to a particular context. Such a process ensures validity by producing complex interpretations that are rooted to the observed phenomena. It also ensures external reliability by enabling other researchers to arrive at similar conclusions as based on meaning in context (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982).

The application of research results is a process associated with generalizability. This occurs when the findings of a study can be applied to a wider population (Wiersma & Jurs,

2005). Instead of arguing for generalizability, however, ethnographies speak of comparability and translatability (Le Compte & Goetz, 1982). The former requires rich contextual descriptions that allow the researcher to compare findings with other groups and the latter refers to in-depth descriptions of the processes used in obtaining, organizing, and presenting data that also allows for comparisons with other studies (1982).

Positionality of the Researcher

This meta-ethnography represents both a personal and professional journey. As an emic researcher, school administrator, and Black American teacher, I have encountered the layers of instructional decision-making illuminated in this analysis. At several points during data collection, evaluation, and synthesis, internal suppositions were checked and visceral responses, particularly in regard to color-blind pedagogy, were consciously held at bay. Essential to my work as a researcher was the application of reflexivity; a term used by Rossman and Rallis (2003) that affirms the researcher's relationship to the study being conducted. It is the understanding that personal interests, biases, and preferences can influence the interpretative nature of qualitative study (2003). It is incumbent upon the researcher, therefore, to develop a subjective awareness that places in check the imposition of personal biases in data interpretation (2003). The acceptance of this reality challenged me to conduct metacognitive reviews about the criteria on which my thinking was based. This action constituted a recursive process as new data was collected, examined, and synthesized.

The following section provides a summary of the four case studies that comprised the original meta-ethnographic research. This information provides readers with a general understanding of the instructional orientations and subsequent practices of 15 effective teachers of Black American children and the findings submitted by the original researchers, which studied

them. Of interest are the themes and metaphors about teaching and learning that emerge from each case study and the final synthesis that yields new interpretive paradigms.

Data Summary

Case Study 1 (CS1)

The first case study (CS1) (Howard, 2001a) focused on the practices of four Black American primary school teachers. This study illuminated how culturally relevant and critical race theories influenced the daily practices of these effective teachers. Of importance was the introduction of an ethic of caring that prompted student engagement and offered a working metaphor of the classroom as the loci of communal learning (Noddings, 1988). By definition, an ethic of caring is relational; its orientation is “tied to experience because all its deliberations focus on the human beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relationship to each other” (1988, p.218). As exhibited by the subjects in the original study, having this relational ethic enabled teachers to extend themselves beyond the technical confines of their jobs and infuse its precepts into their daily instruction (1988). Such an ethic was seen consistently among these and other high-value teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2002).

As illuminated by Howard (2001a), the primary themes that emerged from CS1 included the teachers’ emphasis on holistic instructional practices that he discerned as “a desire to teach students academic, moral, and social competencies” (2001a, p. 186). This holistic approach placed a premium on academics and character with the goals of developing students’ who are cognitively capable and socially mature. A second theme concerned patterns of communication wherein teachers noted the high degree of student “verve” – a term coined by Boykin (1986) that indicates a preference for interactive, high-energy learning environments. In capturing this energy, teachers used communication as a means of self-expression. For some teachers, this

meant that students were allowed to use oral, as opposed to writing skills, to complete assessments and demonstrate comprehension. For others, it meant that the teachers used Black English Vernacular (BEV) to illustrate points and ideas while affirming the need for biculturalism and proficiency in Standard English (SE).

The third most prominent theme in CS1 pertained to skills development. “Although having a connection to and awareness of the cultural context... was important, what seemed to be equally important in the development of these teachers’ teaching practices was a belief that their students were capable of being academically successful” (p. 198). This priority prompted CS1 teachers to function as “warm demanders”—teachers who set high standards for their students while providing the means for their personal and academic success (Bondy & Ross, 2008). Despite the relational aspects of this concept, its central focus was on the academic success of Black American students. This priority led one CS1 teacher to contend that, she would readily sacrifice her relationship with her students if that were a prerequisite for them being able to academically thrive.

Case Study 2 (CS2)

The second case study (CS2) (Esposito & Swain, 2009) was situated within a social justice framework and involved seven Black American elementary teachers. Its purpose was to investigate how urban teachers implemented culturally relevant pedagogy while cultivating a “socio-political consciousness” among their students. The findings of this case study revealed three dominant themes. The first maintained that effective teaching on social issues required risk and an exploration of one’s own orientation as an educator. For the teachers in CS2, this orientation included a conscious decision to digress from traditional practice and the scripted curricula that had no connection to the lived experiences of Black students (Esposito & Swain,

2009). This professional digression was deemed necessary to leverage culture as a vehicle for learning and, because of the risk involved in deviating from the norm, it was presented by CS2 teachers as an expression of an ethic of caring.

The second theme involved teaching for social justice. For CS2 teachers, discourse on social issues provided a means of promoting academic rigor and personal agency by enabling students to explore the dynamics of oppression from both local and global perspectives. In doing so, critical thinking skills were imparted that enabled students to interpret their own experiences and to see these experiences as part of a larger system of power and privilege. CS2 teachers supported this approach to education for two reasons. First, these teachers understood how power and racism impacted the lives of their students. And second, they wanted their students to have the agency to understand, and eventually overcome, these dynamics. Hence, as CS2 teachers articulated, effective education is liberatory. It is the means through which students learn academic rigor and self-empowerment. The third and final theme in CS2 was the teachers' affirmation of culturally relevant instruction. For these teachers, said instruction provided the most effective vehicle through which an advocacy agenda could be promoted. This assessment and the teachers' subsequent use of this instructional method constituted their expression of holistic care about their students and the world these children will inherit.

Case Study 3 (CS3)

The third case study (CS3) (Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright. 2012) featured a Black American woman in an urban 5th grade classroom. Although this case study identified the work of a single teacher, its focus on the relational dynamics that affect student learning provided a strong example of the ethic of caring in a culture-based classroom. This teacher-students dyad engendered metaphors of the class as family and leveraged the communal aspect

of culture-based learning (Boykin, 1986; Cholewa et al., 2012). Evidence was also provided as to how this teacher managed *verve*, another West Africanism, and positively channeled the movement and energy of her students (1986). In addition to highlighting the use of cultural components in the classroom, this study was distinguished by its emphasis on self-sharing and transparency as means of connecting relationships to learning.

As with previous case studies, the findings in CS3 revealed three primary themes that were each based on the affective/relational aspects of the teacher-students dyad (Cholewa et al., 2012). The first pertained to emotional connectedness or the teacher's ability to foster a sense of genuine caring between herself and students as individuals and between herself and the class as a group. Also included in her use of relational skills was the teacher's willingness to express her own humanity. This transparency was evidenced in her proclivity to admit mistakes, play, express a sense of humor, and include students into her thought processes. In doing so, she built relationships by presenting learning as a mutual process and humanity as a shared experience (Cholewa et al., 2012).

The second major theme concerned teacher's skills in creating an environment where positive relational dynamics could thrive. This theme emerged as researchers considered the teacher's emphasis on collectivism. The appeal and use of the idea of community was evident in the teacher's inclusion of student input, her insistence that they all learn and support each other's learning, and in the fact that both material and emotional provisions were made for students' success. The third theme, facilitating students' affective responses, concerned the teacher's ability to guide student behaviors. This theme included the teacher's work in providing for classroom management, communicating support, and building student motivation.

Case Study 4 (CS4)

The fourth case study (CS4) (Cooper, 2003) involved the effective practices of three White American teachers of urban Black American children. Like those in CS1 and 2, these teachers were deemed effective via community nomination—meaning they were identified by members of the Black community as being highly requested teachers (Foster, 1994). Although the original researcher pursued this case study from the standpoint of cultural relevance, the subjects, themselves, subscribed to an unexpected mix of culturally relevant instruction and color-blind ideology (2003). This ideological mix introduced a contrasting variable that moved the post-synthesis interpretation from reciprocal to refutational. The case study itself was retained for several reasons. First, the study met the inclusion criteria previously established and provided a welcomed etic perspective. Second and early on, this meta-ethnographer identified a willingness to include potentially disconfirming data. Once having received this data, it became a point of integrity to retain it if inclusion criteria applied. And, third, the members of the communities in which CS4 teachers worked deemed them to be effective teachers. To discard this case study would be tantamount to silencing this community’s “voice”—a concept that greatly defines the advocacy position that this present study supports. Hence, this researcher “followed the data” and continued even with this significant paradigmatic disparity.

In her findings, Cooper (2003) identified five major themes. The first two, curriculum and teaching style, were deemed operational – those beliefs that were manifested in the teachers’ observable behaviors or classroom events. In defining this theme, Cooper (2003) presented a series of associated subthemes that included authoritative discipline and high academic standards. These themes were also observed in the previous case studies (Cholewa et al, 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009, Howard, 2001a). The next three themes, involving

teaching style, personal norms, and teachers' attributes, were labeled conceptual beliefs. Core dynamics that fall under this rubric were "other or second mothering," empathy for Black children, and a respect for the Black community. Like the teachers in CS1-3, those in CS4 demonstrated a holistic concern for their students. This concern extended well beyond their formal job descriptions to embrace a caring for students' emotional, physical, and psychological well-being along with their academic progress.

Translating Data

The subjects in CS 1 – 4 (Cholewa et al, 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a) introduced both common and dissimilar paradigms. This section explores this observation by illuminating the relationships, common themes and metaphors that have emerged from the data. Following this review, this section then proceeds with the synthesis of data needed to generate new conceptual understandings and interpretations

Common Themes and Metaphors

An ethic of caring, the emphasis on holistic education, othermothering and warm demander disciplinary styles permeated the extant literature under review. Combined, these themes created a functional mosaic as to what constitutes the effective teaching of Black students and the teaching styles deemed most engaging.

As previously defined, the ethic of caring is a moral orientation, a relational ethic whose values are based on the well-being of others (Nodding, 1988). When situated within culturally responsive classrooms, then caring assumes the posture of "caring about instead of caring for" the child (Gay, 2010, p.48). Whereas *caring for* someone involves affect that may motivate acts of kindness, *caring about* conveys intent, reflection, decision making, and planning (2010). It denotes a conscious moral undertaking to positively engage a student's life (2010). This

definition of caring conveys a holistic orientation to educating Black children, while enabling variations in how this perspective is expressed. For some teachers, holistic caring included the need to develop a critical consciousness that assisted students in navigating racialized situations (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). For others, it included a culturally supportive environment that stressed relationship building (Cholewa et al, 2012; Cooper, 2003).

Through the dynamic of caring, all four case studies presented metaphors “the class is family” and “the teacher is second mother” (Cholewa et al., 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). In embracing these metaphors, both cognitively and affectively, culturally relevant teachers developed common behaviors such as supplanting curricula, taking political risks in deviating from normed practices or in advocating for their students, and by ensuring that students were exposed to critical discourse that would enable them to think morally, responsibly, and analytically (2001a; 2003; 2009; 2012). The emphasis on teachers as “warm demanders”—those who set high standards for students and then make provisions for their achievement (Bondy & Ross, 2008)—was consistent with the concepts of othermothers and holistic educators. Combined, these compatible paradigms helped shape the delivery of culture-based instruction in the classrooms of highly effective teachers of Black American primary school students.

Although the effective teachers in all four case studies behaviorally affirmed these particular themes and metaphors, there were other themes that introduced significant differences. Most prominent among these variations were paradigms that represented a co-mingling of culturally responsive, racially conscious, and color-blind pedagogies among the teachers in CS4. As stated by Cooper (2003), this articulated commitment to color-blind pedagogy among the three CS4 teachers posed an unexpected contradiction in the personal norms and instructional

practice of these highly effective teachers. Given this inconsistency and the fact that CS4 teachers were selected by community nomination, two questions arose: How important is a critical race perspective to the effective teaching of Black primary school students? And, how informed is this particular Black community about the history and detriments of color-blind ideology? These questions are significant as they point to the complexities surrounding actual and perceived teacher effectiveness. They also suggest that there is a tolerance for ideological variation within urban Black communities and/or a lowered expectation for racial awareness among non-Black teachers as long as an ethic of caring and evidence of student learning are present.

Synthesis

As demonstrated in the literature, the practices of high-value teachers of Black urban, elementary students shared core characteristics. Chief among these characteristics were the acts of situating instruction within the cultural context of the student, demonstrating an ethic of caring, attending to the holistic needs of the child, serving as a “warm demander,” and inculcating values that promote responsibility, personal industry, and future agency (Cholewa et al., 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009, Howard, 2001a). While these characteristics exist independently, together, they created powerful functional metaphors. These metaphors communicated how culture-based instruction transforms classrooms into learning communities by: fostering academic achievement, honoring communalism; providing intrinsic and extrinsic psycho-emotional shelters, and enabling the didactic reconstruction of effective teachers.

Emphasis on Academic Achievement

Embedded within each case study was a resounding emphasis on the primacy of academic achievement. Whether this priority was established through authoritarian discipline that insisted on focused learning (Cholewa et al., 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a) or through teachings on personal responsibility and racial elevation (Howard, 2001a), the centrality of learning and developing analytic thinking skills were the articulated goals of teachers in all four case studies. Such an observation is consistent with the literature regarding the effective teachers of Black students (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). It is also a perspective that has historic ties to segregated teaching for Black students whose primary focus was to foster a love for learning while inculcating agency and racial pride (hooks, 1994, Walker, 2001). It is interesting to note that through culture-based learning, effective teachers are again providing Black American students with the same instructional priorities that were lost through desegregation (Howard, 2001a, Cooper, 2009).

Communalism

Communalism emerged as a dominant dynamic within culture-based classrooms. By definition, it “denotes awareness of the fundamental interdependence of people. One’s orientation is social rather than being directed towards objects. There is an overriding importance attached to social bonds and social relationships...” (Boykin, Jagers, Elison, & Albury, 1997, p. 411). Although communal thinking is not exclusive to the African Diaspora, it is a valued paradigm within it (Boykin, 1986; Boykin et al., 1997). Its presence within predominately Black classrooms and use by culturally competent teachers is a core characteristic of effective teaching (Cholewa et al, 2012; Howard, 2001a; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The high value teachers in this present study were attentive to how this cultural dimension could be used to

facilitate achievement and resilience among their students. This attention was demonstrated in the relationship building that occurred among teachers and students (Cholewa et al, 2012), in the dialogue about racial uplift and respect for one's ethnic group (Howard, 2001a), in the development of a positive racial consciousness (Cooper, 2003); and in impartation of knowledge about oppression and liberation (Esposito & Swain, 2009.) Since communalism suggests the positive expression of interdependence and group affirmation (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, & Albury, 1997), Black American students participated in constructing the proverbial village in which they grow. Within this village, a class is family, the teacher is other mother, and learning utilizes the cooperative strategies that highly benefit Black American children (1997; Irvine, 2002).

In all case studies, the insistence on class as family also provided a forum within which teachers intentionally challenged students' perceptions of self and society (Cholewa et al., 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard 2001a). This process is demonstrated by critical Black American teachers' emphasis on understanding the dynamics of race and racism in American society (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). Such an approach is essential to cultivating the whole child (Howard, 2001a) and in producing persons who are socially effective – persons who understand how race can be “a potential barrier to their schooling and life success” and are equipped to challenge it (Carter, 2008). This is perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of communalism. The positive affiliation with a culture-honoring group serves as a stabilizing variable that enables achievement (American Psychological Association, 2008) and provides a buffer against discouragement (Robinson & Biran, 2006; Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2007). Communalism helps to establish a positive “African identity” that fosters pride in one's African heritage and uses the

strengths therein to support the motivation to achieve (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Communalism, therefore, provides a “fundamental sense of interdependence and primacy of collective well-being, and offers the drive for connection and promotion within and across diverse groups” (Task Force on Resilience and Strength, 2007 p. 3).

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Shelters

Othermothering was a theme that appeared often in the literature and was exemplified by the teachers in the case studies reviewed (Cooper, 2003). Evidence of this theme was demonstrated in teachers’ protective behaviors such as taking a holistic approach to teaching that included care for the child’s academic, mental, and physical well-being. Protective behaviors were also seen in acts to impart agency through critical discourse (Howard, 2001a) and the development of a social consciousness (Esposito & Swain, 2009). As demonstrated in the synthesis, sheltering has two expressions: intrinsic and extrinsic. The former refers to the acts that effective teachers perform in order to build students’ sense self-sufficiency (Howard 2001a; Esposito & Swain, 2006); the latter refers to the understandings that effective teachers impart in order to cultivate students’ skills in social navigation (Howard 2001a). By introducing positive images of Black Americans, for example, and by emphasizing the strengths within Black culture (Cooper, 2003), effective teachers help students resist racialized myths and stereotypes by expanding their understanding of self and ethnic identity. The teachers in CS2 (Esposito & Swain, 2009) were particularly effective in modeling this skill by introducing Afrocentric themes that inspired the analytical thinking that directly confronted racial stereotypes. The fact that critical Black American teachers emphasized these two skills is important to note (Howard, 2001a; Esposito & Swain, 2009). Their emphasis is a wake-up call on how vital this type of teaching is to underserved Black urban student populations.

Interpretations: A Case for Didactic Reconstruction

As evidenced by CS4 teachers, it is possible for an effective, well-intentioned teacher of urban Black children to be both culturally relevant and culturally uninformed at the same time (Cooper, 2003). Here, the term “culturally arrested” refers to this phenomenon. As a concept, it recognizes the complexity of the human psyche and the possibility that culturally sensitive teachers may also possess areas, within their own paradigms and practice, which remain unaffected by an ethic of care or challenging reflection. This premise finds support in the literature regarding White teachers’ racial biases in the classroom and the biases of Black teachers in regard to students’ socio-economic status (Cooper, 2002; Irving, 1991; Lee, 1989; Rist, 1970). The fact that areas of arrested cultural consciousness can be uncovered, regarding any issue, is why a process is needed that insists on intrapersonal reflection and change.

Didactic reconstruction is a term introduced in this study that refers to a transformative process. Within this process, teachers identify current practices and paradigms to evaluate their usefulness and relevance to their urban, Black primary students. Like reflexivity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), didactic reconstruction is an internal process with external ramifications. It requires teachers, who would be highly effective amid diverse classrooms, to identify personal biases and then challenge these biases in order to extend to their students holistic care (2003). Although this study does not explore the individual life histories of effective teachers, the fact that these teachers have distinguished themselves as such among urban Black communities speaks to their engagement in this reflective process. Reconstruction, therefore, refers not to what effective teachers do. Rather, it refers to teachers’ prerequisite beliefs and experiences that subsequently facilitate their adaption of critical and culture-based pedagogies and the acceptance of the risks therein (McAllister, 2002).

This definition of reconstruction is akin to the core assumption embedded within Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs' (1989) model for cultural competence development. As teachers reflect on their own identities and associated privileges, they develop a better understanding of their own racial biases and the journeys of those from historically oppressed groups (McAllister, 2002). This movement from first order practices to personal discovery is what hooks (1994) calls "engaged pedagogy." By definition, this pedagogy requires teachers to be "actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (1994, p. 15). This concept is consistent with the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." It is also consistent with the racial identity theory espoused by Tatum (1997) which contends that the road to critical understandings begins with the teachers' realization of her own ethnic and cultural biases.

This process of reflective practice and forward action was particularly evident among the teachers in CS4 (Cooper, 2009). Although they articulated a color-blind ideology, these teachers were also successful in maintaining a culture-based classroom and in building relationships with the school's Black community (2009). These actions are signs of an increasing ethic/cultural awareness that, if continued, may lend itself to a fuller expression of culture competency that includes a capacity for critical discourse and a greater development of personal and collective agency.

Adding to the complexities posed by teachers in CS4 is the understanding that while teachers can be asked to know and respond to the needs of their students, they cannot be required to take risks that may invite politically negative repercussions or to deviate from district approved methods or curriculums. This observation helps explain the current state of affairs in regard to teaching Black American children. There is always an option to do nothing and for the

teacher to safely remain the same. In the absence of a clear mandate to develop more inclusive curriculums, the only variable resolution to this problem is for effective primary school teachers to continue illuminating the path to student learning through the use and proliferation of Afrocentric epistemologies and culturally responsive classroom practices. Once the strengths of this instructional practice are verified through students' performance benchmarks, then the acceptance of these second order paradigms will increase. Such a process was observed in CS3 where teacher M., who was deemed effective on the basis of test scores, was selected to teach math to all 5th grade students in her school (Cholewa et al., 2012). Her success was influenced by a teaching style that embraced culture- based instructional strategies.

Discussion

The problems facing urban Black American children are pervasive (Howard, 2001a). For those children who fail in public schools, these problems are compounded by the prospect of unemployment, poverty, teen pregnancy, and incarceration. Despite these challenges, however, public schools continue to trend in ways that ignore the obvious through color-blind ideology (Ullucci & Battey, 2011) and a “stay the course” mentality that seeks to blame the victim (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Moving against this trend, however, are the efforts of high-value teachers who have welcomed personal epiphanies, taken professional risks, and discovered culture-based instruction as a means of reaching urban Black primary school children (Cholewa et al, 2012; Cooper, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a).

Using Culture-Based Pedagogies to Reach Black American Students

Three research questions guided this study and its approach to data gathering, interpretation, and synthesis. Each is also presented below. The first posed the query: What are culture-based pedagogies and how can they enable learning for urban Black American primary

school students? Answers to this question were found in the literature and in the reflections of the effective teachers under review. By definition, culture-based pedagogies are intellectual products. They emerge when teachers serve as reflective practitioners who apprehend the presence and impact of racial bias in the classroom (Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). This realization, coupled with an ethic of caring, enabled effective teachers to consider the process of teaching and learning from the perspective of ethnically diverse students (Ware, 2002). Instruction and classroom environments were then transformed as teachers modified curriculum and practice to allow students to see themselves at the center of learning (Howard, 2001a, Cooper, 2009). These actions coincided with the teachers' understanding that Black students learn best when school is familiar—meaning when the culture of the classroom honors the strengths of the students' primary home culture (Howard, 2001a). In such settings, Black students were given the same cultural advantages as their White peers who have traditionally found themselves, their cultural paradigms, and ethnic histories fully represented in American schools (Shockley, 2011).

Acquiring Knowledge of Culture and the Process of Teaching

The second research question asked: How can acquiring knowledge of Black American culture influence the process of teaching? As demonstrated by the literature, the acquisition of Black cultural knowledge prompted effective teachers to modify how and what they taught (Ware, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These changes often included the adoption of other-mothering strategies, warm demander styles of teaching, and the re-creation of classrooms based on communal metaphors such as a family or a village (Cooper, 2003; Cholewa et al., 2012; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a). In addition, many high-value teachers developed

critical race and advocacy perspectives which were subsequently infused into their practice (2009; Howard 2001a).

Integrating Elements of Black Culture

The final research question asked: How elements of Black American culture can be integrated into Eurocentric public schooling? As demonstrated by these 15 effective teachers, the integration of culture-based instruction was accompanied by their observations of ethnic biases in the classrooms of their peers and the presence of an ethic of caring (Cooper, 2003). These two variables enabled subjects in CS1 -4 to develop culturally responsive classrooms without opposition. The outcome of improved student learning supported the integration of this instructional approach. Political risks were mentioned, however, among the Black teachers whose culturally relevant teachings deviated from the standard curriculum to include critical race, Afrocentric, and social consciousness teachings (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Howard, 2001a).

This observation is significant not only in terms of its content but also in regard to timing. Given the present calls for increased teacher accountability and the new teacher evaluation systems being employed (NJEA, 2012), there is a new impetus for teachers to explore tested, yet non-traditional means of engaging all learners and to use cultural differences as avenues to support student achievement. This trending in American public education creates a causal event, a window of opportunity, wherein culture-based instruction may find greater and more frequent expression.

Implications for Teacher Pre-Service and Professional Development

Although there is a clear moral imperative to educate with equity all persons within a democratic society, this imperative has not been sufficient enough to inspire educational reform. Recent national changes in teacher evaluations, however, may produce a much needed impetus for reexamining the applicability of culture-based research. Under new legislation (NJEA, 2012),

teacher and administrative tenures are now tethered to student performance. This increased focus on teacher proficiency enables renewed discussions on how to engage all learners (Danielson, 2007). The present research offers tangible examples of how some public school teachers have taken the initiative to serve as catalysts for change and, in doing so, have increased student learning. Their example provides both encouragement and hope that public schools can adopt a transformative perspective of education by first transforming itself.

The findings surrounding the effective teaching of Black American and other ethnically diverse children, therefore, should become the loci of pre-service and in-service professional development training. In addition, recruitment efforts to attract teachers from diverse backgrounds should also be more aggressively pursued following studies on the means through which school systems alienate minority candidates. If these actions are pursued in earnest and with the necessary impetus and resources, all classroom teachers can be empowered to experiment and experience the value of culture-based instruction.

Conclusion

The studies explored in this meta-ethnography provide a window through which the paradigms of four sets of effective teachers of Black American students were explored. Although their instructional styles varied, all four groups of effective teachers demonstrated an ability to reflect, grow, and change in response to the needs of their urban Black primary school students. Teachers' responsive instructional choices included the adoption of culture-based pedagogies and an insistence on academic achievement. In utilizing culturally relevant and Afrocentric paradigms, critical race teachers leveraged cultural congruence and challenged students to develop a both a personal ethic and a socio-political consciousness. The adoption of culturally

sensitive practices enabled the urban Black students in CS1-4 to experience schools as familiar learning places where their language, history, needs, and goals were reflected in daily practices.

While, some effective teachers revealed areas of emerging racial consciousness, their acceptance and leveraging of Black cultural norms and their insistence on high academic standards is consistent with what we know about Black students' learning needs (Boykin, 1986; Irvine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). More work is needed, however, in regard to identifying and addressing areas of cultural arrest. This continual need to challenge ethnic/cultural assumptions should not only invite teachers into the didactic reconstructive process, but schools and districts as well. Such collaborations are essential to supporting both the interpersonal and institutional caring that teachers need to fully implement all aspects of culture-based pedagogies in public classrooms.

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