EXAMINING HOW RACE MEDIATES TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

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This study focused on the role that race plays in Teacher-Student Relationships (TSRs). The study took place at a North Texas Middle School. A racially diverse group of teachers at the school was interviewed regarding their stances on establishing relationships with their students as well as their experiences and views of race and racism in education. A racially diverse group of students completed a questionnaire regarding the quality of TSRs they experienced in the classroom and the role that race played in these experiences. The data from the teacher interviews were coded and cross-referenced with the student questionnaire data. Data analysis revealed that the Black, White and Asian students appeared to be generally content with the TSRs that they experienced and did not see race as an influential factor in the formation of these relationships. The Latino students showed some indications that their race impeded the formation of successful TSRs with the teachers at their school. The study concludes with suggestions on ways in which research should continue to move beyond the Black/White Binary when examining student experiences concerning race.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling, policymakers at the state and national levels have sought to further reinsure the academic success of all students. Despite these efforts, the academic performance of students of color continues to lag behind those of their White counterparts (NCES, 2016). While the racial achievement gap has been examined from several perspectives such as teacher quality, poverty, test bias, and even genetics (Viadero, 2000), the influence that race has on teacher-student relationships a may be a crucial perspective from which the achievement gap remains under-examined.

Researchers have found that positive teacher-student relationships lead to higher academic success (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Davis, 2001; Davis, 2003; Doddington, Flutter, & Rudduck, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001 Hargreaves, 2000; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008). However, researchers have also reported that students of color often feel marginalized by their teachers and therefore are less likely to experience successful relationships with their teachers (Douglas, L., Douglas, A., Scott, & Carrison-Wade, 2008*;* Milner, 2006; Warikoo, 2004*).* In many of these instances, it seems that students who do not mirror the race of their teacher appear to have unsuccessful teacher-student relationships (TSRs). The aforementioned literature suggest that weak or failed teacher-student relationship could lead to lowered student achievement.

Problem Statement

Researchers have shown that positive relationships between teachers and students predicts increased student achievement (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Davis, 2001; Davis, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). However, there is evidence that race may disrupt the sustenance

of successful relationships with their teachers, particularly for students of color (Douglas et al.,

2008*;* Milner, 2006; Warikoo, 2004). Most of these previously cited studies involved Black

students who voiced concerns about being judged by their White teachers because of the color of

their skin. Studies exploring the relationships between Black students and White call attention to

social justice and cultural sensitivity on the part of teachers. However, those studies come from

the perspective of a Black-White binary that may not be able to speak to the broader racial,

ethnic, and cultural diversity that currently characterizes United States classrooms. Although

literature references the issues of marginalization among students of Latino and Asian descent

(for example), an overwhelming majority of the literature is concerning Black students. The

United States is developing into a society that is heavily representative of people of color from

racial groups other than Black. Taking into consideration the roles that race and ethnicity have

played in recent years of political discourse about immigration, racial profiling, and religious

affiliations, it appears that study of teacher-student relationships (TSRs) that go beyond the

Black-White binary is due.

Researchers have shown that while the student bodies of US schools are becoming more

racially diverse (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2014), this rate of change is not reflected among

teachers (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). White teachers still comprise the majority of educators

in the United States (NCES, 2016). If, as previously cited literature suggests, students of color

may feel that their race impedes the establishment of successful relationships with White

teachers, then the disparity in racial representation between our nation's student body and the

teacher workforce warrants further exploration. Such exploration is especially important given

the relationship between TSRs and student achievement. To best represent the diversity that

characterizes the student bodies of public schools in the US, research must extend beyond the Black-White binary to include all students of color.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to observe the role that race plays in the relationships that exist between students and teachers of a variety of races. To explore the possible connections between a student's race and the type of TSR experienced by the student, it is important to consider the perspectives of both the student and the teacher. Also, such information may shed light on ties between a student's race, the race of their teacher, the type of TSR experienced by both parties, and the affect that these relationships have on the student's academic success.

Research Question

The following research question was use to guide the present study: How does race mediate teacher-student relationships within a racially-diverse, suburban setting? The purpose of the research question was to understand the level of awareness teachers may or may not have when it comes to the role that race plays in establishing TSRs. The research question also deals with the student perspective of how race is involved in the development of TSRs. By obtaining both points of view, I developed a better understanding of how both parties experienced and participated in the TSR.

Significance

The 2014-2015 school year marked the first time that students of color outnumbered White students overall in the United States (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). The US Department of Education projects that public-school populations will be comprised of 57.4% students of color by 2022. The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) projects that the percentage of teachers of color in 2022 will be at or below 20%. Together, these figures suggested that a

vast disparity between the racial composition of teachers and the racial composition of students will remain for the foreseeable future. This disparity in racial representation between students and teachers is a crucial educational issue and may contribute to the Black-White achievement gap (Sweller, 2012). Since there is no indication that this disparity will change in the foreseeable future, it is critical to study the possible connections between race and the formation of TSRs. If students of color are experiencing failed TSRs with their teachers, it may result in lowered academic success rates. This study could shed new light on the manifestations of race in public schooling. Findings may inform a variety of educational policies and practices aimed at establishing positive teacher-student relationships for all, in an era of increasingly diverse student bodies.

High Points of Literature

In this study, I highlighted literature regarding relationships between students and teachers of differing races *(*Benson et al.,2005; Borman, & Overman, 2004; Bowen, & Bowen, 1998; Douglas*,* Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Carrison-Wade, 2008; Milner, 2006)*,* as well as literature that provides insight into how TSRs are constructed (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Cornelius-White, 2007; Federici & Skaalvik, 2013; Hattie, 2009; Wubbels et al., 2006). The authors of many such studies suggested that teachers often form negative assumptions about students of color. Such assumptions are reflected in the negative treatment of students of color in the classroom, which can have a catastrophic effect on the academic success of the student. For example, Milner (2006) conducted interviews with minority high school students who had White teachers and found that racism had negative effects on teacher-student relationships. Milner's (2006) also suggested that teachers address marginalized students (e.g., Black students) based on

their personal experiences. Therefore, if a teacher grew up believing Black people represented an inferior race, they would treat Black students as such.

Benson et al. (2005) administered a survey to 3,981 secondary students, revealing that teacher encouragement and support were directly related to the increased achievement of students of color. Douglas et al. (2008) demonstrated that many students of color feel that their teachers form race-based assumptions that put the students at a disadvantage as soon as they enter the classroom. Despite this demonstrated need, Douglas et al. (2008) also revealed that students of color are the least likely to form successful relationships with their non-minority teachers, which can, in turn, lead to decreased student achievement (Borman, & Overman, 2004; Bowen, & Bowen, 1998). Borman and Overman (2004) found that students of color might face roadblocks due to their differing ethnicities and lack of teacher acceptance. While the expected assumption is that the students' teachers could have done more to encourage a healthy relationship with these students, it is also important to question the initial mindset that students of color have upon entering the classroom of a teacher who does not share their background. More specifically, Milner (2006) contended that students who have experienced discrimination from an adult perceived as representative of a particular group, the student may interpret the actions of a well-intended teacher as discriminatory (Milner, 2006).

In reviewing the studies involving race relations between students and teachers, I have identified five gaps in the literature that require further exploration. First, there appears to be a lack of exploration beyond the Black-White binary. Most research is focused on Black students and White teachers. However, much may be learned by comparing the experience of Black students with other racial and ethnic groups such as Latinos and Asians (more discussion on the problem of the Black-White binary will be presented in the literature review). Second, taking

into consideration that teachers of color are equally susceptible to failed student/teacher

relationships, both teachers of color and White teachers will be interviewed as part of this study.

By doing this, crucial insights on the relationships between teachers of color and White students

may be gathered. Third, less than 5% of the reviewed studies took place in the Southern Region

of the United States. This is surprising considering the historical role the south has played in the

marginalization of people of color.

The present study took places in Texas, home to one of the last school districts in the

United States to integrate (Hanson, 2011). Fourth, most of the extant research involving student

interviews is focused on high school students. The middle school years, ages 12-14, are

considered a critical age in both academic and social development (American Psychological

Association, 2002), yet little attention has been paid to this population. It is possible that more

may be learned about educating middle school students if a platform is provided for them to

voice their needs and concerns regarding their education (Howard, 2001), as the middle school

population represents a diverse group of people. Fifth, many of the studies reviewed in

preparation for this dissertation were conducted in urban areas consisting of a high concentration

of Black secondary students. Little emphasis is placed on students of color in suburban areas;

such a study could bring new understandings of the influences of place and socioeconomics on

the racial achievement gap.

To address these gaps in research regarding race in TSRs I chose what will be henceforth

called Edwards Middle School (EMS) to be the site of the study. EMS is in a racially diverse

North Texas suburb and houses a racially diverse group of students (grades seven and eight) and

teachers. The level of racial diversity maintained on this site helped provide insight into the role

of race in the TSRs maintained between teachers of varying races and their students of varying

races.

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between teachers and students

of varying racial backgrounds in a North Texas, suburban, middle school setting. To answer the

research question, a qualitative approach was necessary. By conducting interviews with teachers

and administering a questionnaire to students, I was able to ascertain the experiences of parties as

they relate to the formation and sustenance of TSRs. Interviews allow participants to freely

express their attitudes and opinions. Questionnaires allowed the researcher to gather opinions

from large numbers of participants in a reasonable amount of time.

After gaining appropriate permissions from both my university's Institutional Review

Board (IRB) and the participating school district, I petitioned for teachers from the participating

campus site to volunteer to be interviewed. The campus that I selected had an excellent

representation of diversity among students and teachers. The racial makeup of the student body

was roughly 40% Black, 30% White, 20% Latino and 10% Asian and Pacific Islander. The racial

makeup of the teachers on this campus was not as diverse as the student population. On this

campus, the race of teachers is 35% Black, 56% White, 7% Latino, and 2% Asian. To provide a

data source that was reflective of the multicultural make-up of the United States, I selected a

group racially diverse group of teacher participants (Black, White, and Latino) as well as a

racially diverse group of students (i.e. Black, White, Latino, and Asian representation) from the

courses taught by the teacher participants. Accordingly, I identified a group racially diverse

students who shared racially diverse teachers. Information regarding the site, sample, and data

collection are presented in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Assumptions and Limitations

As with all research, there are limitations to this study. As an African-American researcher, personal biases were bound to occur as I reflect on my own experiences as a student of color. To maintain my objectivity, I have shared my study and method with colleagues of a different race in debriefing sessions. I also applied reflexivity when creating the interview protocol. Given my perspective, I understand that it is my responsibility to phrase all questions with the aim of not influencing any themes and not leading the conversation based on my prior experiences.

It is also important to consider that this study took place at a single site. Therefore, despite the diverse makeup of the students, the findings are not be generalizable to other schools and contexts. This study contributes to the conversation of race and teacher-student relationships, and possibly will encourage future studies on this topic.

Definitions

To ensure understanding of the key terms used in this study, I provide definitions below:

1. Teacher–student relationship (TSR) – the positive, negative, or neutral relationship between teachers and students (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011).

2. "Of color" – relating to any person or group that is not of Caucasian descent.

3. Student Success - the academic improvement a student experiences as referenced by report card grades and test scores.

4. Race – for the purposes of this dissertation, "'race" will refer to the socially constructed way in which people are categorized by phenotypes such as skin color. However, within Chapter 2, I will explain how the concept of race has no scientific basis for classification.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the subsequent chapters, I review the literature that relates to the purpose of the study and discuss the theoretical framework in which this study is grounded: critical race theory (Chapter 2). This is followed by the methodology for the study (Chapter 3). I then transition to a detailed analysis of the data (Chapter 4) and conclude with a discussion of findings and an exploration of their implications for policy, practice, and research (Chapter 5).

Summary

It has been shown that TSRs can impact academic success, and that race may play a role in the relative of a TSR. This means that TSRs can contribute to either the narrowing or widening of achievement gaps. While studies have referred to the between White teachers and Black students and their academic performance, very little has been written about the experiences of other ethnic and racial groups, such as Latinos and Asians. In addition, few studies have been conducted in a non-urban environment. To reflect the quickly growing population of people of color in the United States, and to address gaps in the TSR knowledge base, this study took place in a suburban middle school that provided a representation of several racial and ethnic groups of students and teachers. While virtually all previously cited studies remained within a restrictive Black-White binary of White teachers and Black students, I examined how teachers of color related to students of a diverse make-up. While literature indicates that students of color might be better off taught by teachers of color (Dee, 2004; Oates, 2003), it is this could not be the case for everyone, everywhere, all the time. Theorists such as Theoharis (2007) stress educating current and pre-service teachers of all races in social justice to ensure equity in the classroom for all students. Through qualitative research in the form of

teacher interviews and a student questionnaire, I hoped to provide insight into the experience that

students of color encounter when relating to their teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic achievement of students of color frequently lags behind that of their White peers (NCES, 2012). The role that teacher-student relationships (TSRs) play in education could be a factor in this disparity. Maintaining a successful TSR is fundamental to ensuring student success (Reis & Sprecher, 2009). Failed TSRs may hinder academic success (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Davis, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008). Studies have shown that some TSRs fail due stereotyping that might arise when racial congruence does not exist between students and teachers (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, A., Scott, & Carrison-Wade, 2008; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Milner, 2006; Warikoo, 2004). Racial congruence occurs when a teacher and student are of the same race. Much of the literature regarding TSRs between students and teachers of differing races focuses on the urban, public school setting. However, in Texas, 24.6% of students attend public school in an urban setting, meaning that the vast majority of students attend school in a rural or suburban setting. The purpose of this study is to examine the role that race plays in TSRs in racially congruent and incongruent teacher/student pairings within the suburban, middle school setting.

In this chapter, I will focus on literature addressing the key components of the research question. I begin by defining TSRs and their characteristics. Several elements play a part in establishing successful TSRs, such as communication, relatability, trust, and positivity. After explaining the benefits of these elements, I will discuss the role of race in establishing successful TSRs. I conclude the chapter by explicating Critical Race Theory (CRT), the theoretical framework that informs the present study.

Understanding TSRs

Previous researchers have defined TSRs based on a diverse number of characteristics, such as emotional support, trust, respect, and level of comfort that students have with their teachers (Brookfield, 2015; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; Montavlo et al., 2007; Reis & Sprecher, 2009). Wubbels et al. (2014) described the teacher-student relationship as "the generalized interpersonal meaning students and teachers attach to their interactions with each other . . . that occur in the day-to-day interactions between a teacher and his/her student" (p. 364). For the purposes of this dissertation, I define TSRs as the social and emotional relationship that can exist between a teacher and a student.

Benefits of Positive TSRs

Research has shown that students who are in involved in successful TSRs with their teacher, thrive socially, emotionally and academically (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Cornelius-White, 2007; Federici & Skaalvik, 2013; Hattie, 2009; Wubbels et al., 2006). Further, when a student has positive TSRs, they are more likely to avoid conflicts that occur in the classroom, and demonstrate advanced social skills (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Bowen & Bowen, 1998). Successful TSRs depend on several factors, such as the level of comfort a student has with the teacher, the confidence that the student and teacher have in each other, as well as motivational factors that encourage the student to succeed (Downey, 2008, Hughes et al., 2008; Silver et al., 2005).

Elements of TSRs

There appear to be multiple ways that successful TSRs are established. For some successful TSRs, the teacher and student have a casual relationship where the student feels comfortable discussing both academic and non-academic issues with the teacher. Students in

such relationships may refer to such a teacher as being *real* and down to earth (Brookfield, 2015). The teacher's role in this relationship is that of a non-judgmental listener, shoulder to cry on, or source of advice (Ennis & McCauley, 2002). Other successful TSRs come in the form of academic respect. This happens when a teacher has set high expectations for a student, and the student meets those expectations (Montavlo et al., 2007). Both parties are happy as the student thrives and the teacher can take ownership of playing a major role in ensuring the student's success. Among the literature regarding the effects of positive TSRs on students, are several repeated elements that seems to stand out: communication, positivity, relatability, and trust. These topics are further explored below.

Communication

The ability for teachers and students to successfully express themselves and comprehend each other is crucial to the establishment of successful TSRs. Aside from the necessity for students to understand lessons taught by their teachers, there is power in the teachers' ability to provide immediate feedback. Researchers have found that immediate verbal feedback has a positive association with the increased motivation and engagement of the student (Davis & Dupper, 2011; Witt et al., 2004). A sense of increased emotional support occurs when a line of communication exists between the teacher and student. Verbal praise and acknowledgement go a long way toward enhancing a successful TSR, especially if it is done in the presence of other students. When a student is given positive praise, it can encourage them to continue the desired behavior, as well as reinforce that the student is valued by the teacher. Positive communication between teachers and students (whether verbal or non-verbal) need not be limited to academic discussions. In fact, studies have shown that students respond well academically to teachers who create an environment where both parties are able to share a little about themselves with the hope

of developing a rapport (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Federici & Skaalvik, 2013; Raufelder, 2016; Wubbels et al., 2006). When this happens, bonds between students and teachers are created, thus enhancing the TSR experience.

Positivity

Teacher positivity is associated with successful TSRs and is also linked to increased student attendance (Fine, 1991; LeCompete & Dworkin, 1991; Lee, Ready, & Ross, 1999; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, & Lesko, 1989). Davis and Dupper (2004) stated that teachers who express confidence in their students and praise them when they do well set the foundation for building positive relationships and learning experiences. This type of positive regard enhances student motivation and contributes to the development of a bond of loyalty between teachers and students (Davis & Dupper, 2004). Positivity yields increased confidence in students. When students are more confident in their academic abilities, they are more likely to be academically successful and respond to their teachers with respect and loyalty–which, in turn, encourages a more successful TSR (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Relatability

To maintain successful TSRs, it is important that students can relate to their teachers. Research has shown that the relatability of a teacher motivates students to perform well academically, despite the level of rigor involved in a task (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). When students can relate to their teacher, there is a sense of closeness that is established. Warmth and encouragement serve as motivational factors that may result in increased student achievement (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Federici & Skaalvik, 2013, Raufelder, 2016; Wubbels et al., 2006). Emotional support experienced by students may also motivate students to stay in school until graduation (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta, 1999; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997).

For the purpose of this study, I define the concept of relatability as the teacher's ability to form a TSR based on experiences and/or characteristics that both the teacher and student share. For example, a teacher who shares with their students that they enjoy reggaetón music may appear more relatable to certain students who also enjoy that same genre of music. The simple situation of both the teacher and student enjoying the same music can bring about the potential for the development of a successful TSR.

Trust

Trust is a crucial element in TSRs (Reis & Sprecher, 2009; Watson & Ecken, 2003), as students who feel they can trust and are valued by their teachers will work diligently. Trust manifests itself in healthy TSRs whereby the student has a voice, the teacher maintains high expectations, and the relationship is consistent (Ennis & McCauley, 2002). Trusting relationships between students and teachers allow the student to feel safe to develop academically. The students feel free to operate in an environment in which they can safely make mistakes in the learning process without losing the support of their teacher (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Federici & Skaalvik, 2013).

Negative TSRs

Students who do not experience effective communication, positivity, relatability, and trust are less likely to maintain successful TSRs with their teachers. Davis et al. (2001, 2003) reported that students who fail to establish good relationships with their teachers underperform academically when compared to those who maintain successful relationships with their teachers. Therefore, a student who feels unnoticed and undervalued by their teacher is less likely to be academically successful (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). A negative TSR is believed to hamper and interfere with

students' attempts to cope with school demands (Roorda et al., 2011). Davis and Dupper (2004)

reported that failure to establish successful TSRs may negatively affect the student to the point of

dropping out of school entirely.

Teachers who express confidence in their students and praise them when they do well set

the foundation for building positive relationships and learning experiences (Davis & Dupper,

2004). However, this is not always true for all students. Often, teachers fail to establish

successful TSRs because they lack confidence in their students (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999;

Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2005). Douglas et al.

(2008) suggested such failed TSRs may be more likely to occur when the teacher is White, and

the student is of color. Unfortunately, teachers have beliefs about the inherent academic

inferiority of students of color (Boykin, 1992; Darder, 1991; Scheurich, 1993). When educators

project this belief on their students, the results can be damaging to the point of causing the

student to drop-out (Claessens et al., 2016).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is evidence that TSRs comprised of positivity,

trust, relatability, and effective communication may increase students' academic achievement,

motivation, and engagement. However, when a teacher enters the classroom with low

expectations of their students of color, they are more likely to fail to provide these elements of

successful TSRs. This could negatively influence students' engagement, motivation, and

academic performance–therefore becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy of the teacher.

Accordingly, a closer consideration of the influence of race upon TSRs is warranted.

Race as a Mediator of TSRs

One of the recurring themes in studies regarding negative TSRs is the influence of racial mismatch. A racial mismatch occurs when the student and teacher are not of the same race. Researchers have shown that many teachers enter the field with preconceived notions for the expected performance of students of color (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Carrison-Wade, 2008; Milner, 2006). A teacher who maintains negative preconceived notions about a student's academic potential will likely fail to develop intentionality in nurturing the characteristics of successful TSRs. Racial incongruence between teachers and students, therefore, might influence the quality and effectiveness of TSRs. Studies have shown instances in which failed TSRs have occurred in everyday classrooms for this very reason (Douglas et al., 2008; Milner, 2006; Warikoo, 2004).

Douglas et al. (2008) reported that many students of color who have had White teachers feel that their race inhibited them from forming successful TSRs. They also reported on the narratives of Black students who felt as though their White teachers did not attempt to form effective relationships with them. The students reported feeling judged by their skin color the instant they walked through the classroom door. According to Douglas et al. (2008), the students felt as though their merits, potential, and behavior were pre-judged by their teachers merely because they were Black students. This, in turn, lead to decreased motivation among the students, as they assumed that their teachers did not care about them because of the lack of any attempt of rapport between the teacher and his/her Black students (Douglas et al., 2008).

Moving Beyond Black and White

While much of the research regarding failed TSRs relates to those between White teachers and Black students, researchers have shed some light on the experiences of Latino

students with teachers who were not receptive to their culture and language. It seems that in

many ways, the experiences of Latino students of White teachers are similar to those of Black

students of White teachers. This similarity further supports the necessity of the present study, in

that over 2.8 million Latino students are enrolled in Texas public schools (NCES, 2016).

Students interviewed by Diaz-Greenberg (1998) reported that their White teachers "perceive

Latinos as students that never do anything, except misbehave" (p. 9). The students felt as though

their culture, and often their very existence, was muted by their teachers and administrators

(Diaz-Greenberg, 1998). Cammarota (2014) interviewed Latino high school students who

reported experiencing discrimination by their White teachers and administrators, not just due to

their race, but also due to their immigrant status and use of a language other than English. These

teachers may have failed to take the necessary steps to form successful TSRs with their Latino

students due to preconceived notions about the students' background (Cammarota, 2014).

It seems then, that it is possible that perceived discrimination, or unfair treatment due to

race or ethnicity may be part of the lived reality of many students of color (Benner & Graham,

2001; Oates, 2003). Coupled with the fact that the majority of public-school teachers in the US

are White (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015), if discrimination truly is a common experience for

students of color, there is cause for alarm at the potential damage that these failed TSRs can have

on the future of students of color. Furthermore, many students in situations where they feel their

race is cause for failed TSRs may decide to drop out of school (Davis & Dupper, 2004). It

follows then that a student who has failed to graduate from high school will not have the

opportunity to attend college and earn a degree. Without a degree, students (in most cases) are

less likely to experience economic advancement through legal employment. Further, those

students who do not obtain a college education may not have an opportunity to break the poverty

barrier and could possibly fall victim to the consequences that result from pursuing wealth

through illegal means. Therefore, to help break this cycle, it seems to be of upmost importance

that educators do their best to form successful TSRs with all students, regardless of their race or

ethnicity (Goldenberg, 2014).

   Although it appears that a significant part of the responsibility for establishing successful

TSRs falls on the teacher, it is important to keep in mind that a relationship in any context is

certainly a "two-way street" that can sometimes lead to convoluted ends when one party has

allowed themselves to fall victim to preconceived notions about the other. For example, while

some White teachers may have negative preconceived notions about students of color and treat

them in a way that mirrors these notions, many students of color may not give their White

teachers an opportunity for establishing a successful TSR. This can be due to the discrimination

and marginalization that such students may have experienced in the past, due to their race or

ethnicity (Davidson, 1996; Douglas et al., 2008; Van Petegem et al., 2008).

   Albertini (2004) studied students of color who had experiences with racism in the past

and found that such students will likely form assumptions about their White teachers without

giving the teachers an opportunity to prove them wrong. Within the sample group in this study,

Albertini (2004) found that the attitudes of mistrust that the students held towards their teachers

was a contributing factor to lower academic achievement, and a growing number of the students

being classified as *at risk*, resulting in the further marginalization of students of color.

   So far in this chapter, I have discussed the significance of TSRs and their potential

influence on a student's academic and social experience in school. Communication, positivity,

relatability, and trust are all crucial elements that encourage successful TSRs. Without the

presence of the aforementioned elements, negative TSRs can occur. Some negative TSRs can

occur when the race of the teacher does not match the race of the student. Douglas et al. (2008) provided a student perspective of how racial mismatch in the classroom can lead to negative TSRs when the teacher enters the TSR with preconceived notions related to the race of a student of color.

Theoretical Framework

The source of these preconceived notions formed by a teacher may be better understood when viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). In the following section, I will describe the components of CRT to help explain the role that race plays in the formation of TSRs. CRT questions existing social structures as they relate to and are shaped by race, equality, and power. CRT examines issues relating to racism and discrimination experienced in various areas such as history, economics, the legal system, and education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT attempts to disprove the notion that racism is an individual act or antiquated practice, and instead exposes it as a system that continues to operate, and place persons considered to be "minorities" in marginalized positions when compared with their White counterparts (Harris, 2012). In the sections that follow, I provide my definition for race and provide further insight into the ways in which I view race in this study. I then expound upon the elements of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that serves as the framework for this study.

Defining Race and Racism

Race often gets confused with ethnicity when discussing issues of discrimination, racism, and prejudice. While I discuss later in this chapter the ways in which the notion of race has been historically misused; for the purpose of this study, race is used to define the color of a person's skin. The term *ethnicity* will be used to invoke place, and commonly ties back to the country, region, or area of origin from which a person is descended. Racism is often described as

ignorance, a system of prejudice, or as a disease that afflicts some individuals and causes them to

discriminate against others because of the way they look. This act of ignorance is a first

impression event that occurs when a person decides to form negative assumptions about how

someone will behave, based on mere skin color.

But racism should be understood as much more than just prejudice operating at the level

of individuals. Bonilla-Silva (1997) explained how race is a social construct that originated in the

15th and 16th centuries with the advent of slavery. According to Bonilla-Silva, racism is tied to

racialization. While the concept of racialization is addressed later in this chapter, for the purpose

of this study I define racialization as the process that occurs when a group of people are ascribed

with racial identities by entities other than themselves (i.e. the dominant race in the social

hierarchy). Bonilla-Silva proposed that racism is an always hierarchical system that operates in

in the United States in such a way that:

> the racial practices and mechanisms that have kept Blacks subordinated changed from
>
> overt to eminently racist to covert and indirectly racist. The unchanging element
>
> throughout these stages is that Blacks' life chances are significantly lower than those of
>
> Whites, and ultimately a racialized social order is distinguished by this difference in life
>
> chances. (Bonilla-Silva 1997, p. 470)

This system in which "the race ascribed with the superior position enjoys social, political,

economic, and psychological advantages over the group or groups ascribed with inferior

positions" (Bonilla-Silva 1999, p. 2), transcends all aspects of society, including education. With

the help of CRT, I examine the ways in which racism could impact the formation of a successful

TSR.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is comprised of several tenets regarding the role that race and racism play in society. While the specificity of CRT's tenets may differ from author to author, they are generally understood to include the following: 1) ordinariness of racism/racial realism (this will be followed by related subsections on White Privilege and White Supremacy), 2) the theory of interest convergence (Bell, 1980), 3) race as a social construction, 4) racialization, 5) intersectionality, and 6) counter-narratives/storytelling (Tyson, 2014). I further define these tenets in the sections below.

The Ordinariness of Racism

Whether due to race, socioeconomic status, or nationality, people of color continue to be marginalized and isolated from mainstream America. Although slavery and blatantly racist policies such as Jim Crow have been made illegal, the systematic marginalization of people of color persists and continues to result in decreased opportunity for minority communities. Scholars of CRT contend that racism is a real and fluid issue that persists in everyday life (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Harris, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tyson, 2014). For the purpose of this study, racism was approached as an ordinary occurrence that pervades American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Examples of racist "norms" are visible in the hiring practices of employers and the admissions decisions made by colleges and universities. People of color have historically struggled for equity in employment and in education. Instances such as the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, and initiatives like Affirmative Action are examples of the attempts to level the playing field between people of color and Whites. These policies help ensure that people of color are allowed equal opportunities when applying for employment or seeking admittance to an educational institution. While such policies attempt to

assure equitable ends, this may not always be the case. For example, once a person of color has

made it past the racial boundaries and obtained a desired employment position, they may then be

faced with the frequent problem of having their merits called into question. This can occur when

White colleagues seek to discover whether the successfully employed person of color has earned

his/her success based on their merits, or on the color of their skin (Leslie et al., 2014). Therefore,

a person of color, despite their socioeconomic status or education, will often find that they are

being judged, one way or another, according to their race or ethnicity.

More recent examples of the way in which racism plays a regular role in everyday society

can be seen in the reaction to the race-involved police shootings that occurred in 2016. When the

news and social media were replete with instances in which young Black men had been shot and

killed by White police officers (Legewie, 2016), the riots and demonstrations that took place in

response to such injustice are a depiction of the racial tensions that still persist. Unfortunately,

even in the year 2016, many Whites continue to form grand assumptions regarding a person's

level of education, level of intelligence, financial standing, and criminal history—all based on

mere skin color. There is, therefore, much evidence that supports CRT's presumption that racism

is alive and well in the United States.

While it is certainly common to view issues of racism and discrimination as though they

take place solely between Blacks and Whites, it must be acknowledged that racism can be

experienced by *all* people of color—though these experiences may differ from individual to

individual. Perea (1997) cited the fallacy of assuming that all people of color undergo the same

social experience, and further, how such an assumption can potentially contribute to

the marginalization of all non-Black people of color. He explains the dangers that occur when the

focus is on one ethnic group and the experiences of other ethnic groups are ignored. Taking into

consideration the importance of moving beyond the Black-White binary (Perea, 1997), I also

considered as part of this study the experiences of students of color who may not identify with

the racial classification of Black. Doing so may better inform the knowledge base as to how

marginalization affects all people of color, particularly in the field of education.

White Privilege

CRT researchers relate racism to materialism or interest convergence to describe the

common scenario of the privileged Whites in society actively (or passively) exploiting people of

color by denying them the same opportunities that are afforded to Whites. In order to further

understand this concept, we must first examine the idea of White privilege. The term White

privilege relates to social advantage that Whites experience due being White, they do not suffer

from issues of prejudice and discrimination, as people of color do (Rothenberg, 2008). Because

the struggle for equality and justice is not a regular experience for Whites, White privilege

suggests a level of ignorance that occurs toward issues of social injustice. Because of the

advantages experienced by Whites, they are unaware of many everyday issues that afflict people

of color. For example, Whites do not have to worry about representation of the White race in the

media. They do not have to worry about racial profiling while behind the wheel as Whites will

not be treated as assumed criminals because of the color of their skin (McIntosh, 1988). For

people of color, the notion of living in a world where one is not judged by the color of their skin

continues to be the *dream* described by Dr. King during the Civil Rights Movement. For most

Whites, the freedom from judgement based on skin color is a lived reality. In the realm of

education, pre-service teachers and even veteran teachers are slowly beginning to be educated on

recognizing the pitfalls of White privilege. However, in society where world leaders can

blatantly dismiss crucial issues, such as racism and discrimination, it becomes apparent that there

is still much work to be done.

White Supremacy

White privilege is derived from the race power system of White supremacy (Rothenberg,

2008). While the term *White supremacy* often is used to describe extremely racist organizations

and their acts such as the Klu Klux Klan, CRT theorists define White Supremacy in a different

way. Members of the CRT community define White Supremacy as a political, economic, and

cultural system in which Whites overwhelmingly control power and resources (Gillborn 2005).

White Supremacy matches Bonilla-Silva's (1997) description of the hierarchy that occurs in a

racialized society. In the United States, for example, Whites represent the top of the racial

hierarchy. Therefore, in many ways, Whites benefit from racial injustice. When people of color

are denied employment or educational opportunities, those opportunities are typically afforded to

Whites instead, thus reinforcing their position of power. In the section that follows, I explore the

role that White Supremacy plays in education from the perspective of interest convergence.

 Interest Convergence

CRT theorists describe interest convergence as what occurs when the interests of people

of color converge with the interests of Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Derick Bell (1980),

one of the founders of CRT, posited in the *Harvard Law Review* that positive changes in policy

that benefit people of color are only possible when Whites benefit from the policy changes as

well. He provides an example of this in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

According to Bell, this court ruling occurred not in the interest of civil rights for people of color,

but rather because it would allow the United States to position itself as a progressive and free

country when compared to its Russian counterpart during the controversy of the Cold War.

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) explain Bell's argument thusly:

> Furthermore, with the forces of international communism for the loyalties of the
>
> uncommitted Third World, much of which was black, brown, or Asian. . . . It would ill
>
> serve the U.S. interest if the world press continued to carry stories of lynching, racist
>
> sheriffs, or murders like that of Emmett Till. It was time for the United States to soften its
>
> stance toward domestic minorities. The interests of whites and blacks, for a brief
>
> moment, converged. (p. 19)

The Social Construct of Race

Despite scholarly warnings against the use of current racial classification systems

(Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Smedley, 1998), society persists in tying phenotypes to race. Therefore, a

female student of color, for example, may not be called a *girl*, but rather a *Black girl* if she is

Black or a *Mexican girl* if she is Brown (regardless of whether the child is even from Mexico).

Additionally, certain ideas about physical characteristics, such as skin tone, can lead to more

issues of discrimination–which is ironic considering the melting pot of colors and ethnicities that

comprises the United States. While there are several shades of *Black*, at what point does one stop

being Black? At what point is one considered to be White? What about people who consider

themselves Brown? Delgado and Stefancic (2012) pointed out that at one point, neither Italian,

nor Irish, nor Jewish people were considered to be White, and were therefore marginalized in a

similar fashion as Blacks and Latinos. Thus, these physical characteristics seem to determine the

place that one holds in society. The American Anthropological Society's (1998) statement on

race suggests that there is no scientific basis for racial classification:

Given what we know about the capacity of normal humans to achieve and function within

any culture, we conclude that present-day inequalities between so-called "racial" groups

are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and

contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances. (para. 11)

Bonilla-Silva (1997) described the system of racial classification that has a taken a toll on

American society since before the 17th century as a social mechanism. Prior to that time, people

referred to themselves by their ethnic heritage, and whatever their heritage was served as a

factual basis for identification, not a label by which one could be judged or treated in an

inequitable fashion (Smedley, 1998). The purpose of this mechanism was multifaceted. Firstly,

by using phenotypes to classify different groups of people, hierarchies are formed based on

characteristics such as presumed intelligence and strength. Such classification was used to

construct the Black race as the less-intelligent but stronger race of people—possibly justifying

the trading of Blacks into slavery. Secondly, once enslaved, further distinctions were made based

on skin tone among the slaves to ensure that the Blacks maintained a sense of division on the

planation (Keith & Herring, 1991). Such division limited the potential for uprisings and the

forming of alliances among the slaves—which in turn lowered the chances of a slave escaping

the plantation.

Smedley (1998) writes about another mechanism put in place to ensure division amongst

the slaves, a racial hierarchy. Under this system, the lighter the skin tone one had (that is, the

closer one is to the skin tone of a White person), the more social appeal and potential for success.

During this time period, the lighter the skin of the slave, the easier the work and the more

comfortably kept a slave would be. This system is where terms such as *House Negroes* and *Field*

Negroes originated (X, 1963). The slaves with the darker skin tones were required to perform the

harder tasks and endure the poorest living conditions. The slaves with lighter skin were given easier tasks that did not require as much hard, manual labor. These lighter skinned slaves were often allowed to sleep in the master's house or given much better living conditions. This subtle system of classification by skin tone within the context of the slave community often created a divide between the house and field slaves. This divide between the dark and light toned slaves would help ensure that there was never an uprising against the masters as the lighter slaves supported the masters due to the treatment they were receiving. In such a way, the slaves would consistently choose favorable working conditions over rebellion. However, despite the fact that slavery has long been abolished, the system of comparing light to dark is still in play.

Currently, American society is embedded in a culture in which *Whiteness* is something to be desired. This is even apparent in the physical changes that people of color have been making to the very features that are common to their ethnicities, with the purpose of appearing more *White*. People of color—even those already considered to be prominent members of society— have been known to dye their hair blonde, use products or undergo procedures to lighten their skin tone, or even wear blue contact lenses with the purpose of mimicking more *White-like* features. Despite campaigns such as the Civil Rights Movement, Afrocentrism, and "Black is Beautiful," many people of color continue to strive to be as close to White as possible—with the idea that the *Whiter* a person appears, the easier that person of color's life will be. Thus, in many ways, society is still very much enslaved by the ideology that the lighter a person's skin tone, the more elevated their social status. Since the field of education represents a major component of society, it is important to consider the possibility that these same racial structures may exist in the realm of education. This also could explain why a student of color may feel that they are not being treated in an equitable fashion when compared to White students in the same class. Race

and racialization may also be a reason for a failed relationship between a student of color and a

White teacher. I discuss this further in the following section.

Racialization

Robert Miles (1989) defined racism as "a dialectical process by which meaning is

attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may

be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically" (Miles 1989,

p. 76). CRT theorists have brought attention to the fact that Whites racialize people of color for

selfish political and economic gain (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). At one period, for example,

society may have had little use for Blacks, but much need for Mexican or Japanese agricultural

workers. At another time, the Japanese, including citizens of long standing, may have been in

intense disfavor and removed to war relocation camps. In one era, a group of color may be

depicted as happy-go-lucky, simpleminded, and content to serve White folks. A little later, when

conditions change, that very same group may appear in cartoons, movies, and other cultural

scripts as menacing, brutish, and out of control, requiring close monitoring and repression

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Similarly, Whites may take little issue with Blacks advancing

themselves in careers such as entertainers and athletes, while wishing not to see Blacks advance

academically to a point that they become a competitor. The goal of racialization then, becomes to

ensure that people of color remain —in their place (racialized), poor and uneducated, and

therefore not a viable competitor for Whites.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality relates to the notion that no human can truly claim a

single identity with regards to race, gender, religion, or sexuality. For example, a woman of color

could be classified in multiple categories outside of just race. She could be Black, a lesbian, a

practicing Muslim, and a single parent. Each of these identity labels overlap in such a way that this woman could easily experience multitude prejudice for belonging to multiple, marginalized groups. Stefancic and Delgado (2001) describe the phenomena of intersectionality as what happens when individuals exist at an intersection of recognized sites of oppression.

One of the consistent intersects plaguing communities of color is poverty. In the United States, one of every three Black children and one of every four Latino children live in poverty. This is two times higher than the rate for White children (Lin & Harris, 2009). In fact, people of color make up 50% of the poverty represented in American, suburban communities (NCES, 2016). This common occurrence of intersectionality is cyclical as racial disparities in poverty result from cumulative disadvantage over the course of a person of color's life. In such cases, the hardship in one domain spills over into other domains, thus providing more evidence that discrimination and marginalization present layered barriers for ethnic and racial minorities seeking to escape poverty (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004; Lin & Harris, 2009).

Attention, therefore, must be paid to the various categories and subgroups in which people of color are placed. It is for this reason that the site of this study was the suburbs. While it is true that poverty can exist in various types of residential areas, much of the literature related to race relations between teachers and students takes place in an urban setting. Conducting this study in a suburban setting may help to remove some of the compounding effects of concentrated poverty that is often more common in urban settings, and possibly provide a better understanding of the racial elements involved.

Narratives and Counter-storytelling

CRT refers to the process of sharing accounts of the injustices suffered by persons of color as providing narratives, or *counter-storytelling*. Tyson (2014) called this process the *choice*

of color. This tenet identifies that the story of a person of color's experience is quite influential

for social change. However, due to persistent issues such as racialization, it is difficult for the

person of color's voice to be heard over that of Whites. CRT scholars insist that more credence

should be put into the first-hand accounts of injustice from of people of color than the secondary

accounts from Whites. Similar to the power of the art, literature, and music that depict the

historical struggle endured by Blacks for civil rights, CRT suggests that there is significant

power in the direct accounts of the people of color and their experiences with racism. These

accounts exist in a variety of forms: narratives, or direct accounts of racial related injustices, and

"counter-stories." While narratives provide personal accounts of injustice, counter-storytelling

challenges the views perpetuated by White supremacists (Stefancic & Delgado, 2001). Counter-

stories take their cue from larger cultural traditions of oral histories, family histories, and

parables that give the colored person's perspective and provide insight to Whites who have never

experienced racial injustice (Solórzano, 1998). The process of counter-storytelling is also used to

argue race-related legal cases—although there has been debate about the appropriateness of

using this process as an argument strategy in court (Stefancic & Delgado, 2001). Overall, no

matter how they are utilized, both narratives and counter-stories can play a crucial role in

enlightening those who mistakenly believe that racism and discrimination are a thing of the past.

Applications of CRT

CRT has greatly influenced the purpose, research question, and interview protocol of this

study. For example, I took into consideration that racism is an ordinary part of society. Based on

this assertion, it might then be probable that race would be involved when looking at the success,

or lack thereof, of TSRs. It is for this reason that through my research question I sought teachers'

and students' perspectives on the role that race plays in the formation of TSRs. Similarly, my

teacher interview protocol consisted of questions that may have encouraged dialogue about race

and the role that it plays in the formation of TSRs. -Student questionnaires provided similar

information from the student perspective. I drew upon CRT during my analysis of teacher

interviews and student questionnaire responses. This means that I listened for certain words or

phrases that may have evidenced the manifestation of various CRT tenets, such as White

Privilege. Finally, when presenting my findings, I drew upon CRT to organize and make sense of

any themes that emerged from the analysis. I also explored what CRT might inform implications

for practice, policy, and future research.

Chapter Summary

The literature presented in this chapter shed light on supporting evidence related to the

problem of the study. I also examined the CRT lens through which race and TSRs were

addressed, as well as elements that require further study. From the standpoint of CRT, it is

possible to see how racism still exists in many aspects of society, despite the efforts of the civil

rights movement and other equity-based initiatives. It seems to follow then, that the extent to

which racism is a problem within the field of education should be questioned.

In this study, the lived experiences of the relationships that students have with their

teachers was observed with a lens that accepts that racism persists and may be evident in the

educational setting. Given this theoretical framework, both students and teachers were given the

opportunity to share their narrative regarding race and TSRs through a questionnaire and

interviews with the purpose of answering the question of how race mediates the between teachers

and students. By providing both teachers and students an opportunity to contribute narratives

about how issues of racism and discrimination affect their teaching and learning experiences,

some light may be shed on the current state of education (via TSRs) with regards to race. In

Chapter 3, I demonstrate the ways in which CRT will be utilized in the research design of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the role that race plays in the teacher-student relationships (TSRs) between students and teachers of different races. Through this qualitative study, I sought to address the following research question: How does race mediate TSRs within a racially diverse, suburban setting? In this chapter, I discuss the rationale for employing a phenomenological research design. I then provide a rationale for the selection of the site and participants in this study. Following that, I discuss the qualitative methods, followed by information regarding data collection and a discussion on possible limitations to the study. Restate your research questions.

Research Design

The study was conducted using qualitative methods. I chose this approach to study people and their interactions within their natural settings with the purpose of interpreting the role of race in the interactions between teacher and student (TSRs). Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as:

> Research (that) begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical
> frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning
> individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem,
> qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of
> data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and the data
> analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or these. (p. 44)

Using this approach, I was able to observe the phenomena of TSRs and draw on the experiences of teachers and students as I sought to gain understanding about the role of race in the formation

and maintaining of TSRs. To accomplish this, I employed the specific qualitative methodology of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenology as an approach that focuses on the appearance of situations that occur in the natural world by examining entities from many sides. Phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences, rather than explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology allows participants to give free insight to the researcher about their experiences.

  In this study, the phenomenon examined was TSRs in the context of the experiences of teachers and their students. By selecting phenomenology as my method, I was able to position myself in such a way that allowed me to examine the various experiences of TSRs and the extent to which and how TSRs are impacted by race from the perspective of both the teacher and the student. In this chapter, I also demonstrate how I allowed participants to provide their insight about their experiences with race and TSRs through the interview process.

  After exploring several potential qualitative research methodologies to apply to this study, I selected phenomenology because I found it most appropriately addressed my research question. Conducting an ethnography, for example, may not have provided me the opportunity create as detailed a description of the experience because the aim of ethnography is to "describe and interpret a culture-sharing group" (Creswell, 2013, p. 90). Such an approach would not apply because I studied the TSRs experienced by diverse individuals as opposed to a singular, culture-sharing group. Therefore, I chose the phenomenological approach because it allowed me to examine the lived experiences of students and teachers in regards to TSRs and the role that race may play in the success of these relationships.

Site

The district in which this study took place housed six middle schools. To maintain

confidentiality, I chose Edwards Middle School (EMS) as a pseudonym for the campus. While

the school district that houses EMS does not have a policy regarding conducting research on

campus, I obtained appropriate permissions from the principal of EMS to utilize the school as the

site for my study.

I chose EMS for several reasons. Firstly, while much of the research covered in Chapter 2

was conducted in urban settings, EMS is in a suburban, North Texas school district. Secondly, I

chose this site because it is the most diverse middle school in a school district to which I had

access. The student racial makeup of the school is 41% Black, 18% White, 26% Latino, and 10%

Asian. The racial makeup of the teaching staff at EMS is 35% Black, 56% White, 7% Latino,

and 2% Asian (see Table 1).

Table 1

Teacher and Student Racial Makeup of EMS

Race	Student (%)	Teacher (%)
Black	41	35
White	18	56
Latino	26	7
Asian	10	2

The diverse representation of students on campus and the vast disparity between the

percentages of teachers of color and the percentages of students of color (that is frequently

referenced in related studies) allowed me to gain further insight into how race is mediated in

TSRs. I was interested to see how people from various ethnic and racial backgrounds described

their experiences with TSRs. Finally, I chose this site because it is my place of work. Conducting

research at EMS allowed me full access to a diverse group of participants.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

The participants in this phenomenological study were comprised of teachers and students. Both groups of participants were recruited using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a recruitment technique often used in qualitative studies. The criteria for obtaining a purposeful sample of participants is that all participants have experienced the same phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). In this case, I was looking for all teachers and students who have experienced a TSR. Since it is impossible for teachers and students to experience schooling without having some sort of relationship (or interaction) with their teacher/student counterparts, I operated under the assumption that every student and every teacher at EMS has experienced some form of a TSR (whether positive, neutral, or negative). What could not be assumed, however, was the extent to which and how teachers and students perceive that race mediates these TSRs. Hence, this query represented the central concern of the present study. In the sections that follow, I provide a more detailed explanation about how I selected my student and teacher participants.

After securing IRB approval, I sent out invitations seeking participants in the study. In this section, I provide a detailed account of my recruitment process as well as the outcome of recruiting teacher and student participants. I first discuss the recruitment process for teachers, followed by the recruitment process for students.

Teachers

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Texas at Arlington, I sent out a letter (See Appendix A) to all teachers at EMS, explaining the purpose of my study and inviting them to participate. Nine teachers responded to my e-mail invitation. Out of the nine teachers, five were selected to represent the varying races of teachers at EMS.

Two of the teachers were Black, two were White, and one was Latino. All the teachers who

responded to my invitation were female. Upon selection, I scheduled a date and time for each

interview to take place and ensured that each teacher had enough time allotted in their schedule. I

provide background information regarding these teachers and their roles on campus in Chapter 4.

Ideally, I would have liked as racially diverse a participant pool as possible in order to

obtain different perspectives; but this level of diversity depended on the responses to my

invitation. Once the teachers were selected, and as part of the consent process, I explained the

interview process to them. I notified the teachers of their options to opt out of the study if

needed. I also informed them about the level of confidentiality that would be maintained as they

participated in this study.

Students

The criteria for students' participation in my study was that they were enrolled in the

seventh or eighth grade (at EMS, this is typically ages 12-14). Since every student at EMS had a

math class (and after being given the appropriate permissions), I used the online attendance

system (Skyward) to look up the math teacher's schedules. I then provided each teacher with

recruitment letters (See Appendix B). and consent forms (See Appendix C) for each student on

their rosters. The math teachers were very helpful and supportive of my study and ensured that

each student received a recruitment letter and a consent form. The letters included a broad

description of the study's purpose, explanation of participant expectations, and identification of

the confidentiality measures that were in place. The parent consent form also provided an

explanation of the study and an area for parents to provide their signature of consent for student

participation. The parent consent form provided my contact information so that parents could ask

questions and seek further clarification. It also stated that students could opt out of the study at any time, and that no personally identifying information would be maintained.

While recruiting student participants, I kept in mind the notion of going beyond the Black-White binary when discussing race. This sample of participants was intended to represent people of color in general. For this reason, I wanted to secure a group of at least 30 students with male and female participants from each of the major race groups represented at EMS.

Forty students returned signed parent consent letters within one week. I selected all 40 students to participate in my study. Of the 40 student participants, 17 were Black, 9 were White, 7 were Latino, and 7 were Asian. Although the category "other" was provided as an option, none of the students chose this as an identifying factor. Upon selection, I provided all students with a pass that allowed them to complete the questionnaire during their homeroom period.

Data Collection

I collected data from teachers via two interview sessions. I collected data from students using a questionnaire. Per IRB protocol, I kept all information confidential and anonymous. To accomplish this, I assigned pseudonyms to all interview participants. Not even the participants were aware of their pseudonyms. Confidentiality was also ensured for the student participants in the questionnaire, since their names were not recorded. I was the only one who viewed all data related to this study. The following is an explanation of the procedure I used to collect data from each source.

Teacher Interviews

I began data collection with the first round of teacher interviews. Upon establishing a scheduled time and place (either their classroom or mine), I met individually with each of the five participants and interviewed them using round one of my interview protocol (see Appendix

D). Each teacher allowed me to record the interview for subsequent transcription and analysis. I reminded each participant that participation was not obligatory, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Seidman (2013) provided a structure for the phenomenological interview process. He recommended allotting a time of 90 minutes for each interview. I ensured that the teacher participants were informed of the intended length of time that I would be asking of them.

I explained to each teacher that they would be given pseudonyms, but that I would not tell them what their pseudonym was in order to ensure confidentiality. All teachers agreed with the process. I also encouraged them to speak freely and with the knowledge that any identifiable information would be left out or made into a general statement. For example, if a teacher identified her hometown as *Waco*, I would omit that and use the phrase *in my hometown*. It was of utmost importance to me to ensure that the candid statements of my participants remained anonymous.

Seidman (2013) structured phenomenological research interviews in such a way that the first interview with participants is used to collect background information regarding their experience with the topic in question. My first interview during round one was quite different from the rest, as I quickly realized some necessary changes that needed to take place. While I did not alter the interview protocol in any shape or form, I did make a point to read the questions as less as a script and more as a start to an expected conversation. Once I put this into practice in interviews two through five, I found that more lengthy and rich responses were given by the participants. I also found that in their responses, the teachers answered many of my questions without needing to be probed. As it turned out, almost every interview for the first interview protocol went over the 90-minute allotted period. In every session where this occurred, the

teachers were more than happy to continue until I had asked all of my questions. The teacher participants had quite a bit to say and were very honest with their responses.

During my first interviews, I asked participants about the role race has played in their upbringing or in their neighborhoods growing up. Another question asked about their experiences with race in regards to church and/or school. I also asked the participants to describe the type of TSRs they experienced in their upbringing. The purpose of asking questions such as these was to put the participants' experiences in context by having them shed light on their background and orientations with the central themes and topics of the study (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). A final set of questions was more focused, current, and informed by CRT. My intent was to capture each teacher's perception of the role race played in education and in their classrooms.

The second round of interviews were conducted after the student questionnaire had been completed, and after the IRB had approved the second interview protocol. In addition to asking about the teachers' current experiences with race and TSRs in their classrooms, some of the interview protocol (see Appendix D) consisted of questions that had been formulated based on the responses retrieved from the student questionnaire. During the second interview, I also asked participants about the methods that they used to establish TSRs with their students. I then asked whether or not they believe that their race, or that students' race, was a contributing factor to the establishment or failure of TSRs.

Seidman (2013) recommended that three interviews should be conducted in a phenomenological study. However, due to the time constraints that come with teacher's schedules, I believe that it would have been asking too much of my teacher participants to take part in three interviews. Instead, I combined the structure that Sideman recommended for his third interview with the questions in the second interview.

According to Seidman's (2013) guidelines regarding phenomenological research, the third interview is meant to allow participants to reflect on the meaning of the experience in question. This allows participants to make intellectual and emotional connections between their work and their life (Seidman, 2013). It is at this juncture where CRT becomes more instructive in the interview protocol, as well as in the teacher participants' responses. As stated in Chapter 2, I drew upon the tenets of CRT to shape the interview protocol. This means that the interview questions I posed may have compelled participants to examine their perspectives about the types of TSRs they maintained and whether or not race was an influencing factor. Questions such as "Do you feel that you approach students in different ways based upon their race?" may cause teachers to reflect upon how the TSRs they share with same-race students might differ from those with students of a different race. Other questions in the interview protocol, such as "Have your actions ever been mistaken for discrimination by students?" may bring up conversations about the social construct of race, as well as White privilege. By having the teachers discuss their own experiences with discrimination, I sought to gain better insight into the perspective that they had on issues of race, as well as and the role that it plays in the development of TSRs.

Personal Memos

Personal memos were also used as data source in this study. I wrote memos immediately following the interviews (within 24 hours of the interview) to help with data analysis. Personal memos are descriptive reflections on assumptions, beliefs and personal biases that may arise during the interview process (Creswell, & Miller, 2000). Creswell (2013) wrote that detailed and descriptive memos can 'transport the reader to the setting and give an element of shared experiences" (p. 202). In the case of this study, my personal memos consisted of rich, descriptive details about the setting, along with the participants' body language and facial expressions. I also

included my reactions and thoughts about the participants' statements made during the

interviews that I could not express at the time. Aside from providing context for the interview,

writing personal memos that documented my thoughts and reactions also assisted in keeping

account of any personal biases that may have arisen during the interview process.

Student Questionnaire

Once the appropriate permissions were granted, the students participated in an online

questionnaire developed using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2005). Qualtrics is web-based software that

allows for the efficient deployment and analysis of surveys and questionnaires. By using

Qualtrics, participants were able to provide responses using their mobile devices, which was a

benefit to the study because the students at EMS were accustomed to using survey tools and

mobile applications to complete class assignments.

To maintain confidentiality, I alone had access to the race of the student completing the

questionnaire. It is important to note that when I referred to the *race* of a student, I was referring

to the socially constructed view of race that CRT critiques but is frequently used to describe

people of color on a daily basis. This means that student participants were expected to identify

themselves by apparent physical characteristics for the purposes of being consistent with the

CRT perspective on how society views people of color. Students were asked to identify the race

with which they self-identified, but never had to enter their name when they completed the

questionnaire. For those students who identified themselves as being biracial, an *other* box was

included as an option.

The student questionnaire consisted of statements regarding their experiences with TSRs

and race. Students chose from Likert-type scale responses indicating their agreement or

disagreement with the given statements. The statements I provided are influenced by CRT tenets,

such as the ordinariness of racism and the ways in which racialization can be used to form

assumptions about people of color. Using Likert-type scale responses allowed students to safely

express their opinions without pin-pointing specific details about themselves or their teachers.

An example of a statement from the questionnaire (see Appendix E) is "My race impacts my

relationship with my teacher." Students chose between five Likert-type responses (strongly

disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). These responses were explained to the

student beforehand to ensure understanding and accurate responses to the questionnaire.

Upon receiving appropriate permissions from parents, students completed the

questionnaire in a session lasting no more than 15 minutes during the student's advisory time (a

zero period built into the student's schedule). The students were seated in such a way that they

were not able to view each other's responses to the questionnaire or influence another student's

answer. All student participants were aware that they would be completing a questionnaire for

my study. Before beginning the questionnaire, they were asked not to speak or contact other

students, so as not to influence the opinion of another student. Each student was provided an iPad

to use to enter responses to the questionnaire. All 40 students successfully completed the

questionnaire as indicated by a completion alert that appeared at the end of the survey on each

iPad. Using the questionnaire was less intrusive, less harmful than an interview might have been,

and did not require that students provide any personally identifying or incriminating information.

Field Notes

During the teacher interview process, I took field notes to help myself reflect upon

observations I made about the interview environment, the participants' body language, and other

factors that may have influenced my findings that were not spoken but observed. I also took brief

field notes during the student questionnaire process to give the reader an idea of the classroom

environment and the general demeanor of the student participants. I will provide further insight into this process in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of each interview from the first round, I accurately transcribed the data no later than 48 hours after the first interview was completed. I then referred to the data in the student questionnaire to help formulate the interview protocol for the second round of interviews. Once all students recorded their responses, Qualtrics allowed the data received to be filtered in a myriad of ways. For the purposes of this study, I first filtered the data gleaned from the questionnaire based on the answer choice with the highest percentage of responses. For example, I looked at the responses to the statement: "Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers." Given the answer choices of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, I observed which answer had the highest level of responses. I reported on the answer choice with the highest number of responses in the table in the form of a percent. I then filtered the answer choice with the highest number of responses by race and represented that data in the form of a percent in the table. If the situation occurred where the student responses were divided equally, I then provided data gleaned from the responses to both answer choices. I then used the data from the highest level of responses and the breakdown of those responses by race to report on the general student opinion in response to the statement: "Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers" (for example). I performed this process for every statement in the student questionnaire. The responses to these statements drove the creation of the second interview protocol. A table is provided (see Table 2) to represent the breakdown of responses based on race. Further explanation regarding my analysis is discussed in Chapter 4.

After conducting both rounds of interviews, I analyzed the interview responses according to the system provided by Creswell (2013) as described below: After all interviews were transcribed, I cross-referenced the transcriptions with the audio recordings to check for accuracy. I then began the process of coding, which is a primary means of analyzing interview data (Dey, 1993). For the purposes of this study, the coding process consisted of the categorization of interview data into emergent themes, that is, commonalities that exist across the teachers' responses.

While I am aware that there are multiple applications and software that assist in coding data, it was my preference to code my interview data by hand—as I only interviewed five people. Upon confirming five accurate transcripts I completed one round of coding my data using the following method: First, I reviewed across all the transcriptions with the purpose of identifying emerging codes. These emerging codes are what Creswell (2013) called "significant statements," which are characterized as poignant quotes or passages that provide an understanding of the participants' experiences (p. 82). After underlining the significant statements across all of the transcripts, I highlighted them and sorted them into categories based on *clusters of meaning*." Clusters of meaning is a term used to describe the category to which a set of significant statements belong, based on commonality (Creswell, 2013, p. 61). After removing any repetitive data, I assigned each cluster of meaning a different color based on the experience being described and highlighted them accordingly. Colaizzi (1978) suggested that the clusters of meaning be sorted one last time based on any commonalities in the experiences described by the teachers. This final sort provided me with developed themes that have been gleaned from the interviews. These themes culminated into a passage that successfully allows the reader to

comprehend the experiences of the participants when it comes to race and TSRs. I present this

passage in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, I triangulated my data sources. Triangulation is the process of

utilizing multiple data sources to corroborate findings (Patton, 1999). For the purposes of this

study, I triangulated the data received from the teacher interviews with the data received from the

student questionnaires and the memos I wrote after each interview. I accomplished this by

looking at the various viewpoints expressed in the teacher interviews and comparing them to the

statements chosen by the students in the questionnaire to help facilitate a deeper understanding of

the data. I also made use of the memos I wrote after each interview to compare to the data

gleaned from the interviews and the questionnaires. In triangulating the multiple data sources

that I obtained, I was better able to justify the themes that contributed to my findings. If after

triangulation I arrived at any contradictory findings, I followed the suggestions provided by Gall

et al. (2007) and provided explanations for any evident inconsistencies that may arise.

Researcher's Positionality

Finally, to ensure trustworthiness (and to maintain reflexivity), I find it necessary to

position myself in such a way that I can account for my values and any potential biases. As a

person of color myself who is engaging in research related to issues of racism and

discrimination, I must bracket my own experiences regarding these topics. In the following

section I elaborate upon my position as the researcher in this study.

In my first experience teaching in Texas, I realized that a sense of political correctness

did not exist. I was hired to open a brand-new middle school in an up-and-coming Texas

suburban city. Having just moved to the area, I had little knowledge about the demographics of

my surroundings but formed my own assumptions about what the experience would be like. I

assumed that because it was in the suburbs, that the majority population of students would be

White. I pictured a school that was well-equipped with the latest technology and little to no

student behavior issues. On my first day at my brand-new school, I was in for the shock of my

life, and I was not alone. It seemed that most teachers at the school had formed the same

assumptions as me. We expected to see a large population of White students with a sprinkle of

diversity here and there. We were welcomed to a student population of 45% African American

students, 35% Latino students, and about 20% White. Upon this realization—it is sad to say—

two White teachers resigned before the first six weeks of school had passed.

The racism was very subtle to begin with. The first semester was replete with statements

such as *these people* and *those kids*. Even though many of the students were documented as

extremely academically talented and gifted, they were somehow lumped together in this

unmentionable group of second-class citizens. Coming from a very politically correct, east-coast

upbringing, I was bewildered to encounter such blatant separatist behavior. I soon found myself

being asked to handle problems that White teachers were having with Black students. I was often

told things like "you can relate to her more than I can" or "I just don't understand the Black

mentality."

When it came around to statewide testing, students of color did not perform well in the

areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. While some teachers did engage in self-reflection on

their teaching style, most attributed the lack of academic success to our large percentage of

minority students. Some of the teachers referred to these students as *lazy* and labeled them as

having parents who didn't care one way or another about their child's success. I questioned how

these teachers could expect their students to be successful if attempts had not been made to

establish effective TSRs. The more complaining I heard about the *minority achievement gap* on

our campus, the more I wanted to disprove the statements being made about students of color.

Thus, I arrived at the inspiration for the present research centered on TSRs and the influence of

race.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I detailed the design of this phenomenological study. I have provided a

description of the site and the demographics of the staff and students and explained the recruiting

process for both teacher and student participants. I explained the methods in which I gathered

and analyzed data, along with the limitations involved in the study. I positioned myself and my

potential biases as a person of color who is conducting research on race and TSRs and instilled a

plan for trustworthiness given my position as a researcher.

Based on the site, sample, and methods employed in this phenomenological study, I

expected that reliable and valid data would be gleaned from these methods. In Chapter 4, I

present the analysis of the data gleaned from both rounds of teacher interviews, as well as the

data yielded from the student questionnaires.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

To acquire further information on the role that race plays in TSRs, I collected data in three forms. Firstly, I interviewed teachers with a protocol that focused on background information regarding their past experiences with discrimination and diversity. Secondly, I asked student participants to respond to statements from a questionnaire about how they viewed their relationships with their teachers and whether race was a factor in the TSRs that they experienced. Thirdly, I used data from the questionnaire to help generate the second teacher interview protocol which focused on the experience that teachers had in establishing and maintaining TSRs with their students and the role that race played in their TSRs.

I collected data for the study over six weeks. In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of recruitment and data collection outcomes, as well as particulars regarding data analysis. This will be followed by findings that emerged from my analysis. In recounting this information, I follow the sequential order of 1) teacher interview round one, 2) student questionnaires, and 3) teacher interviews round two.

The first-round interviews asked teachers to share their background and childhood experiences with race and issues of discrimination. Many of the responses given by the teachers reflected some of the tenets of CRT that were described in Chapter 2. To provide context for the data gleaned from the teacher interviews, I use the first round of interviews, as well as notes from the corresponding interview memos, to provide some background information on each participant.

Teacher Interview Round One: Introducing the Participants

      Allison. Allison is a White English teacher at EMS. She grew up in North Texas. She was very energetic and said that she generally had good relationships with all of her students. She attributed being an athlete to experiencing what it was like to be "minority," as she was typically the only White girl on her high school basketball or volleyball team. When asked about her encounters with racism, she described a situation where some students of color were being purposely left out of a team sports picture and how she refused to take that picture without the missing students of color in it. She also discussed realizing during her high school years that many of the Latino students would get mad if someone called them Mexican—because they were not from Mexico. She reacted to this saying "It was like a big old thing—everybody had to be identified." While she acknowledged that diversity is important and that the values and norms of other cultures should be taken into consideration when attempting to form TSRs, it appears that Allison may approach her TSRs from a perspective of colorblindness. That is, she did not understand why racial identification had to be such a "big deal." In her words: "You're just 'Cara' (she is referencing an old high school friend at this point) and we are just friends." Looking through the lens of CRT, Allison's last statement also provides an example of White privilege.

      Allison is not directly affected by the misidentification of her Latino classmates and seems incapable of understanding why a student from El Salvador (for example), or a Latina born in the United States would not care to be identified as a "Mexican." Since Allison has the privilege of not being labeled and categorized based on the color of her skin or nor nationality, she cannot relate to the struggles that accompany being categorized by society because of the color of her skin.

Claudia. "Claudia" is a Black English teacher. She grew up in an urban environment in the Midwest. During her upbringing, despite being surrounded by only Black people, Claudia said that her parents made a point to take her and her siblings outside of their city and teach them about diversity. When asked about her encounters with racism and/or discrimination, she struggled to answer at first. Subsequently, she told me about a situation involving herself and her friends at a movie. A White patron a few rows behind Claudia and her friends claimed that Claudia and her friends were being disruptive. Claudia said that despite the fact that this accusation was false, the manager was called anyway. The manager sided with the White patron, and Claudia and her friends were escorted out of the building. Claudia shared her frustration at this occurrence because she felt as though the manager had sided with the patron because he was White.

Claudia gave another recount of her undergraduate experience at a small college in Pennsylvania where she was a part of the 1% Black population on her campus. She described a situation wherein some White students had hung nooses about campus and mocked Black students. She said that despite several protests, nothing was done about this by administration, and any disagreement about the behavior of the White students was treated as "noise."

Despite the frustration associated with the personal accounts of racism that she shared with me, Claudia seemed to maintain a *taking the high road* approach to handling these issues. For a person of color, taking the high road in the midst of racial injustice can be an incredibly difficult task. When faced with racial injustice, people of color oftentimes find that they can respond in one of two ways. One way is to respond with anger. Although this anger may seem justified, expressing this anger tightens the already snug judgmental box in which people of color find themselves. No matter how justified the anger, an angry Black man (for example) might be

treated differently than an angry White man. While a White man expressing his anger may not be treated like a threat, a Black man expressing his anger in the exact same fashion of the White man might be taken as being too 'aggressive' and treated with consequences ranging from bias to death. Another option is to respond like Claudia, who, when asked how racism directly affected her stated: "I expect ignorance in the world. I'll pray for you . . . but I don't really play into racism or entertain it." Claudia also said that she did not want to give power to something (racism) that does not deserve it. Again, here Claudia is choosing not to express her frustrations with the fact that she may be experiencing unfair treatment due to her race. Instead she has chosen to internalize her frustrations and justify the situations that she encounters as racism as simple ignorance.

Belem. "Belem" is a Latina elective teacher. She was born in Mexico and then moved to a small rural town in Texas. Belem described this town as "filled with either Whites or Mexicans, but not a Black person in sight." Her town was extremely segregated. According to Belem, "there was a Mexican side of town and a White side of town." According to Belem, her family was the only Mexican family on the White side of town.

When asked if the topic of race ever came up in her home, Belem said that race would come up quite a bit in her interactions with her father. She described her father as "really racist" and said that she was instructed by her father never to bring a Black man home, due do many negative experiences that her father had encountered with the Blacks with whom he worked outside of town. According to Belem, when the issue of race came up at home, it was often in the form of derogatory remarks made about White people.

When asked if she ever experienced issues concerning race in her neighborhood or community, she said that she experienced discrimination quite often in her neighborhood. She

talked about her neighbor who refused to learn her name, but instead insisted on addressing her as "Little Maria." She described her frustration with this: "And it was like, are you saying this because I'm Mexican? I mean, not every Mexican is a Maria."

When she got to high school, she found that her race severely impacted her relationships with her teachers; she described being treated differently and given lower grades than her peers, despite the high quality of work she turned in. All of the teachers in her high school were White except for one. She was often wrongly accused of inappropriate behavior or academic incompetence by her White teachers. She also had a difficult time forming relationships with the White students at school because most of them did not socialize with Latino students.

When asked how issues or race and discrimination directly affected her, she said: "It is affecting me right now … I am engaged to a White man and when people see us together, it's like they can't handle it. Just about every time we go out to dinner together we are not treated well … it kind of gets to you."

Rebecca. Rebecca is a White history teacher. Her interview was comparatively shorter than the other teachers partly due to the fact she had very little to say about race and diversity. Even though she grew up in the same North Texas town as Allison, she said that there were only Whites in her neighborhood and community, and therefore race was never an issue. When asked about how race was addressed in her household, she said: "I do know that my mom would say to my grandfather who is definitely old school that 'people don't say (the n-word) anymore.' But it's hard to get him to change. Other than that, it was not discussed."

In fact, she never socialized with a person of color until she ended up having a Black roommate in college. Rebecca described the experience as "an eye-opener, that we were a lot alike. I mean there were certain things like how we did our hair were different. And then the way

they, I mean people, connected with family was different." Despite Rebecca's limited contact

with people of color during her upbringing, it seems as though she had still established some pre-

conceived notions regarding people of color. Upon being placed in an environment where her

interactions with people of color became commonplace, it appears that her knowledge about

people of color may have changed.

When I asked her about any encounters with racism that she may have had at college, she

said described a confrontation with some Black girls who were saving a washing machine at the

campus laundromat. She said,

> It got heated, words were spoken, and then when we reported it we all ended up having to
>
> go to a training on how to get along with different ethnicities. I didn't realize that this was
>
> a race issue … But because there was one group of girls who looked like each other
>
> against another group of girls who looked like each other, it looked like a race issue.

When asked whether or not she had first hand experienced/witnessed discrimination, she said:

> No, not really. I mean if you try to overanalyze these situations, you can easily see that
>
> about anything and be like 'Oh they just did that because of the color of their skin'. But
>
> in all fairness, it just might have been that particular situation. So, I don't see it that way. I
>
> don't know if that is, out of sight out of mind thing or anything like that.

Like Allison, Rebecca's response is demonstrative of the White privilege perspective. This is

evident in her dismissal of the possibility of situations involving legitimate racial discrimination.

Since Rebecca did not grow up in a diverse environment, she may struggle with

understanding/accepting the ordinariness of racism. It seems that Rebecca viewed the social

struggles that people of color often experience as the result of a misunderstanding, and having

nothing to do with the color of one's skin. The fact that Rebecca failed to recognize the problem

of racial discrimination may make it difficult for her to relate to students of color and form successful TSRs.

Mary. "Mary" is a Black elective teacher at EMS. She grew up in a North Texas town in which she described the level of diversity as "so, so". She said that there was a distinct Black side of town and a distinct White side of town. Similar to Belem, Mary's family lived on the White side of town, and therefore she attended schools with predominantly White student bodies and teaching staffs. When asked about encountering discrimination in her upbringing, Mary had quite a bit to share, particularly of her elementary school experiences:

> Even though my parents were heavily invested in the education of me and my sister like with educational toys, books, tutoring the schools were always trying to place my sister and I into remedial schools. So, while kids were doing the fun stuff during recess. I kept being forced to be in a sped like (referring to special education) reading group. This reading group literally took place in a closet. I was forced to read with legitimately special ed students in a closet during recess just because of an assumption that was made because of my skin color.

Mary recounted another instance in elementary school in which her White girlfriend was told by her White boyfriend that he would not continue to be her boyfriend if she continued to hang out with Mary, because she was Black. "It brought tears to my eyes," Mary said as she reflected upon this experience. Mary shared a final experience about being physically assaulted by another student due to her race:

> I was waiting for my ride on the top of a slide at the playground and this older White boy called me some sort of racially charged name and then kicked me so that I fell down the slide. When I fell, I actually busted out one of my teeth. I went in bleeding from the

mouth to tell the office what had happened. They did absolutely nothing about it. They

said it was just kids "roughhousing" on the playground and that he probably didn't even

mean it. Despite my bleeding face and mouth, I was given a band aid and sent back

outside. The boy who kicked me never received a consequence.

Mary's account of this experience is a powerful counter-story about the ugly manifestation of

racism and how even young children can play a part in this mindset. Mary stated that she would

never forget this experience. When asked about how she feels issues of race and discrimination

affect her currently, she said:

I've tried to counter my experiences by seeing each person individually not by race,

gender or age, but just going into every interaction with every person with a blank slate

and just see what happens . . . (sometimes) with older White people, if there is not a

pleasant look on their face at that first interaction I do revert to what I know about White

people. . . . I kind of a stereotype them. . . . I shy away from having interaction with them.

While I appreciated her honesty, I found her last statement to be cause for concern. Although

Mary's response to how issues of race affect her currently was more directed towards older

Whites, I noted in my memo for Mary's interview that I questioned whether not her experiences

hinder her ability to from relationships with Whites in general. If she indeed does struggle to

from successful relationships with Whites, this may translate to the TSRs she experiences with

her students.

Post Interview Procedures

Within 24 hours of each interview, I wrote a memo regarding my thoughts and

observations on the interviews. In my memos, I described anything I noticed from the décor of a

teacher's classroom to whether or not they hesitated when responding to certain questions. I also

paid particular attention to body language and facial expressions. After this, I reviewed the audio recording multiple times in order to transcribe the interview by hand. It was crucial for me to complete the memo and transcription process as soon as possible to provide an accurate account of the interview experience in its entirety.

Student Questionnaire

Forty students in grades seven and eight returned parental consent forms to participate in the study. Seventeen students were Black, 9 were White, 7 were Asian, and 7 were Latino. I arranged for the questionnaire administration to take place over two days, during the students' advisory (homeroom) period. Twenty students came during advisory period on the first day and an additional 20 students came on the second day.

When the students arrived, they were very pleasant, asking questions about my study, and were quite attentive. I asked them to sit only at desks that had an iPad on them. The iPads were prepared ahead of time with the questionnaire primed to begin. The iPads were spaced out in such a way that no student could see another student's screen. I explained to the students that there was no pressure to participate in the questionnaire, and that they could quit at any time. I also explained the Likert-type answer choices to ensure that the students had a good understanding of the wording of the answer choices. Afterwards, the students began the questionnaire and then returned to class. This entire process took less than 20 minutes. This short data collection process gave me plenty of time to create field notes about each session.

In my notes, I focused on items such as the students' apparent attitudes or questions they asked during my explanation. Since EMS has a very strong college-going culture, the students seemed very excited to participate in a study dealing with a teacher with whom they were familiar and were aware was pursuing her Ph.D. They listened attentively, and there were no

technical errors or issues with student misconduct while taking the questionnaire. For the

remainder of the school year, I was frequently stopped by these students who would ask about

my progress and findings. Of course, I could not share anything with them at the time, but this

sort of interest further supports my argument for greater engagement with middle-school aged

students as a data source.

Teacher Interview Data Collection Round Two

Since the teacher participants were accustomed to the interview process, round two of

interviews went quite smoothly. I based the interview protocol for the second sessions on data

gleaned from the student questionnaires. The questions in the protocol asked about the teachers'

current practices in forming TSRs with their students and the role that race played in these

relationships. Just as in the first round of interviews, all teachers were very obliging and

provided seemingly honest responses. None of the second set of interviews ran over in time. The

second round of interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by hand, following the same

sequence of operation as the first round of interviews. In the sections that follow, I will explain

the coding process used to analyze the data gleaned from both interviews, as well as how I thread

in the data gleaned from the student questionnaires.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Once the student questionnaire and both parts of the interviews were completed, I began

the process of analyzing the data. In this section, I first describe the method in which I coded the

data collected from the teacher interviews. I then explain the way in which I disaggregated the

data collected from the student questionnaires.

Within 24 hours of each teacher interview, I allotted myself time to review the audio

recordings multiple times to help produce an accurate hand transcription of the interview. Once

an accurate transcription was created, I displayed the transcription on a Word document with triple line spacing. The extra space allowed me to make notes during the coding process.

The process of coding the transcription document lasted several rounds. During the first round, I not only read my transcriptions repeatedly, but also reviewed the audio recordings multiple times. I then used the transcription document to highlight any significant statements that stood out to me regarding the teachers' experiences with race and TSRs. Recall that significant statements are those accounts that give context to the participants' experiences. For example, Mary's explanation about how she currently views White adults would qualify as a significant statement as it speaks to the lasting impact of negative experiences she had involving Whites during her childhood.

After selecting the significant statements, I shared them with my debriefing colleague to help keep my selection of these significant statements as objective and unbiased as possible. Debriefing with my colleague was crucial in checking any biases that I may have encountered given some of the teacher participants' responses.

During the second round of interviews, I re-typed and sorted the statements that I highlighted into separate clusters of meaning. For example, when looking at the responses that teachers gave to the question of whether or not they had experienced negative TSRs, I identified any similarities that I encountered among the five responses and wrote them down in a separate cluster or group. Finally, I after reviewing the clusters, I omitted any information or statements that might have been redundant. What remained after this final sort resulted in a few emerging themes. After running these themes by my debriefing colleague once more, I accepted them as the final themes that would contribute to my findings.

I did not analyze the student questionnaire until all of the first teacher interviews were completed. Upon analysis, I considered it best to examine the ways in which the various races of student participants responded to each question. Using Qualtrics, I was able to filter the data by the percentage of responses to each statement in the questionnaire by race. This means that when looking at the statement "Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers," that I was able to see the percentage of Black, White, Asian and Latino students who chose Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree in response to this statement. To clearly represent the number of responses made by each racial category, I found it best to provide a separate table for each of the statements in the questionnaire (see Appendix F). I then examined all of the statements in the questionnaire and highlighted any responses in which 50% or more of a given race were represented (I refer to these statements as *high yield* statements for the remainder of the study). For example, if 57% of the White students chose "disagree" (or a combination of disagree and strongly disagree totaling more than 50%) to the statement "Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers," I highlighted that statement as one worth representing in my second interview protocol. After gathering these statements, I created interview questions that represented this data to use in the second round of teacher interviews. For example, if a majority of students chose disagree to the statement "Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers," I drafted a question asking teachers how they went about forming relationships with their students for the second interview protocol. Upon finalizing the second interview protocol, I sent it in for review to the IRB. Upon receiving IRB approval, I began the second round of teacher interviews. After analyzing the data from the second interview protocol, I triangulated the data from the high-yield statements from the student questionnaires

with the themes that emerged from the teacher interviews and information from my memos and

field notes and collection process. This resulted in the final development of my findings.

Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explain how race mediates teacher-

student relationships. In order to accomplish this, five teachers were interviewed, and forty

students completed a questionnaire which contributed to the data of this study. The findings that

developed from my data collection help shed light on this phenomenon of the TSRs experienced

at EMS. Many of the results from the student questionnaire provide insight into the TSRs that

students of different races experience, and the role that race plays in these experiences. The

themes that emerged from triangulating the data provided a wealth of rich data pertaining to the

role that race plays in TSRs. In their candid accounts about everything from their upbringings to

current classroom strategies, the five teachers of different races brought up several perspectives

that require further exploration.

In this section, I will first discuss the high-yield statements that were gleaned from the

student questionnaire data. I will then focus on the emergent themes of this study while

incorporating both the words of the teacher participants and the opinions of the students as

represented through their responses to the questionnaire. After exploring the high-yield

statements from the questionnaire, I will discuss the emergent themes in the following order: (1)

strategies for f successful TSRs, (2) the impact of race on teachers' experiences, (3) TRS and the

Latino student, and (4) actions possibly mistaken for discrimination.

High-Yield Statements from Student Questionnaire

The responses to the student questionnaire were quite varied and unpredictable in nature

(see Appendix F). To better organize the results of this data for the study, I provide a breakdown

of the high-yield statements by race. Upon performing this analysis, I found that the Black

students who participated in the study were very positive about the TSRs that they were

experiencing on campus. Most Black student participants chose either somewhat disagree or

strongly disagree to the statements such as "I feel like my race impacts my relationship with my

teacher," and "I feel like my teachers' race impacts the type of relationship they have with me".

Further, they agreed to statements about having a good relationship with their teachers and

feeling like they were liked by their teachers.

While the majority of the White student participants responded in such a way that

indicated that they were generally content with their TSRs, one response did stand out. The

majority of White participants either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed to the statement "I feel

like my teachers' race impacts the type of relationship they have with me" (56%). This means,

that some of the White student participants at EMS perhaps felt as though they were having

difficulty establishing successful TSRs with their some of their teachers of color. This finding

can be interpreted in multiple ways. One interpretation could be that the White students felt that

they were not given as much attention by their teacher in comparison to their peers who are

students of color. This is quite possible since much pre-service and in-service teacher training

refers to the needs of students of color. It could be that in their attempt to focus on making sure

that students of color are treated with equity, teachers (including White teachers) may be

neglecting the White students and causing the White students to feel that their race is the reason

why they are receiving less attention.

Another interpretation could be that the White students are faced with teachers like Mary,

who may pre-judge the White students due to the negative experiences she has had with Whites

in the past. In such a case, the racial dissonance between teacher and student truly is impacting

the formation of a successful TSR. In either case, this situation challenges the frequent

misconception that racial prejudice is something that only occurs when Whites marginalize or

discriminate against Blacks. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the ways in which we need to move past

the Black/White binary with regards to how racism is viewed in society.

The students who identified as Asian also provided responses that demonstrated general

contentment with their TSRs. However, 57% of the students who identified as Asian agreed

with the statement "I sometimes feel like my teachers treat other students unfairly." Since this

statement did not directly refer to race, it is possible that the Asian students might have

considered other groups who may be treated unfairly (for example, female students, or those

students identified as special ed). Because the statement could have been interpreted in multiple

ways, I was not able to make any concrete assertions as to the meaning of this result.

While the number of Latino participants was much lower in comparison to the number of

Black participants, the Latino participants hinted at some displeasure in their classroom

experiences. Although the data show that the Latino participants agreed to the statement

"generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers," the majority of Latino

participants agreed with statements such as "sometimes I feel like my teachers treat other

students unfairly because of their skin color" (57%) and "I feel like my teachers' race impacts the

type of relationship they have with me" (57%). Most Latino participants also agreed with the

statement "I know how it feels to be treated unfairly because of the color of my skin" (71%).

The results of the questionnaire pose several points that require further discussion. It is

clear that several of the student participants have acknowledged that race does in fact play a role

in the formation of the TSRs that they experience. This is evident in the fact that even the White

students (who per CRT reap the benefits of privilege) believed that their teachers' race impacted

the type of relationship they have with them. While the Asian students appeared to be content

with the TSRs that they experienced, it was interesting to see that despite their contentment, they

did acknowledge that some students were being treated unfairly. Another critical point to

acknowledge is the fact that while the Black students (the racial group upon which most of the

TSR research is based) voiced their satisfaction with their TSRs; the Latino students were the

racial group to voice the most displeasure in their TSRs. In Chapter 5, I will delve more into the

TSRs that the Latino student participants experienced as well as the importance of the Latino

student's voice with regards to future research. I the section that follows, I will explore the

themes that came about after the interviews and student responses were triangulated.

Strategies for Successful TSRs

It was evident in each of the teacher interviews that the teachers were quite aware of the

importance of the elements of TSRs that are mentioned in Chapter 2 (communication,

relatability, trust, positivity) and the need to incorporate them into their teaching strategies. For

example, when asked about the ways in which she goes about building relationships with

students, Allison shared,

> At the beginning of the year, I show them a bunch of pictures of me and my kids and my
>
> dogs and all that kind of stuff, so I kind of let them know that I'm like—a person...I tell a
>
> lot of stories. Once they hear my stories, about how like I got crazy nicknames in school
>
> and stuff like that, then they're like "oh, well let me tell you about my time" and we bond
>
> a little bit.

In doing this, Allison can present herself as a person who students can relate to in one form or

another. Her continued relatability may ultimately lead to students' feeling safe to trust her.

Belem also indicated that she goes out of her way to treat her students as if they were her

own children. Both Belem and Allison have found the relationship-building strategies to be very

effective in lessening the negative TSRs that they may encounter now and again in their careers.

Other teachers, such as Claudia and Mary, mentioned relationship-building through games and

activities. When asked how this was done, Mary responded:

> I in general try to make the classroom a fun place . . . the first few weeks are about
>
> just getting to know each other. . . . I don't just go into the curriculum. Its more about
>
> building relationships.

> While Rebecca was well informed on the importance relationship building within her

classes, she admitted to struggling with maintaining successful TSRs:

> Sometimes I think I give the perceptions to certain students that "she doesn't like me." I
>
> think that comes from not talking enough to each other and asking questions . . . also it
>
> just comes down to the fact that I am a very shy person naturally and so it is harder for
>
> me to open up and to do a lot of that with students. So certain students will say "she
>
> doesn't like me" and I'm like "no, I love that student, I don't know why they would think
>
> that," so I think it's just more communication that needs to be had, maybe from my part,
>
> so, maybe I need to open up more. To some kids, it's never a problem.

While this is a problem that occurs with only some of her students, Rebecca understood that

communication was key to increasing more successful TSRs. If students do not feel comfortable

enough to talk to their teachers, elements of TSRs, such as relatability and trust, cannot be

achieved.

The Impact of Race on Teachers' Experiences

The following accounts will explore the ways in which the racial background experiences held by the five teachers may or may not have affected the types of TSRs they form with students of different races. One of the first questions I asked each teacher regarded their upbringing and the level of racial diversity that they had experienced growing up. It is no surprise that experiences shape the ways in which an adult will think and operate, as well as the values they may possess. For every teacher that I interviewed, this was extremely evident. All of the teachers of color whom I interviewed could describe to me some way in which their race, and the existence of racism itself, affected their upbringing.

Mary, a Black elective teacher who shared several instances of racial discrimination in her childhood, seems to struggle to connect with Latino students. Claudia, a Black English teacher who shared that her parents intentionally exposed them to different races and cultures throughout her upbringing, stated that she is very much in favor of Black students being taught by Black teachers. When asked whether or not their needed to be a special approach to teaching students of color, Claudia said "I believe that students of color need to be able to encounter their race in an educational setting. I feel this is important so that they have examples that look like them." Belem, a Latina elective teacher, also had several experiences with racial discrimination in her upbringing. Her comments appeared to mirror some of Claudia's sentiments that race may play a role in establishing TSRs. When asked about her students, she said,

> My Hispanic kids flock to me for anything and everything. I think the fact that we have
> the same race makes them feel more comfortable with me. . . . I guess some of the
> [Black] girls here identify with [here, Claudia named a specific Black teacher at EMS]
> because they can identify with her and can talk to her.

I found it noteworthy that none of teachers of color seemed to promote diversity. Their concerns seemed to lie with the students who mirrored their race. This means that rather than focus on whether or not a Black student, for example, was being treated with equity, Belem may pay more attention to Latino students, since she herself is Latina. It is problematic when some people of color will only look after 'their own', that is, they will prioritize the concerns of people who mirror their race over other people of color who do not share their race.

The perspective was very different when interviewing the White teachers. While Allison (a White English teacher) reported that her background was very diverse, she still could not describe many times when she witnessed or experienced racial discrimination. This could be due to the fact that Allison is blinded by her White privilege. This means, that although several instances of racial discrimination could be happening around her, Allison more than likely would not notice these instances, or, would not view them as injustices. When asked about her TSRs with students of color, she said that she appreciated learning about all of her students' cultures but struggled to understand the perspective of the Middle Eastern students and Latino students with regard to the ways in which they viewed female authority. When asked to expand and whether she thought that her or her students' culture affected her TSRs, she responded,

> I don't think so… I mean I don't understand why in certain cultures the female doesn't
> have authority . . . but at the same time, since I'm from here [US], I don't understand. I
> was told that when I was little I could be president . . . so it's hard for me to see that some
> students are so closed off. But I still accept them and try to work with them, but it's hard.

Milner (2006) discussed his concern about White teachers' "deficit thinking" when it comes to educating students of color. He stated that "teachers' perceptions that students of color do not already possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to succeed and learn can

result in "instruction that falls short of optimal teaching and learning" (p. 80). Since the current study involved teachers of varying races, I found that Milner's concern may not just apply to White teachers but could apply to a teacher of color teaching a student of a race different than theirs. Given the candid responses from all the teacher participants regarding race and TSRs, Milner's concern about teachers' deficit thinking based on assumptions and stereotypes may need to be extended to *all* teachers—regardless of the color of their skin. Based on the teachers' interview responses, it appears that each participant came into the world of education with their individualized forms of racial baggage. If this is the case, changes need to occur to the ways in which teachers are prepared to teach and maintain healthy TSRs with diverse student populations. In Chapter 5, I will delve further into how teachers can be better prepared to form successful TSRs with students of color.

Latino Students

With the exception of Belem (Latina elective teacher), 3 teachers spoke about having to call parents of male Latino students due to insubordination. In regard to this problem Mary (a Black teacher) said,

> With Hispanic males, sometimes they have issues with female authority, and that's a
> cultural thing that didn't necessarily respect my authority. There have been a couple of
> times where I have had Hispanic males not show me the proper respect. I have heard, in
> that culture that females are not as respected as much as males in the Hispanic culture.

This is a clear-cut example of a teacher making a generalized assumption about a student's race or culture and then using this misinformation to set negative expectations for her students. Mary is not alone in these sentiments, as Allison also struggled to understand the culture of her

students of color. Similarly, Rebecca, a White teacher who also struggles with Latino students, said,

> In that group, a lot of parents, mothers specifically, would tell me that their daughters would not be going to high school and this and that. And then learning more about them, it was very well known that they were going to have a family very soon and that was part of everybody's groups in that area. This idea that—they are going to get married very soon; so education was not as important for the girls as it was for the guys. So that was kind of scary. Because when you have conversations with middle school students about the future and being a parent "next year" is what they see, it is very hard to understand.

In this situation, Rebecca is speaking with the assumption that every Latino student she comes across in on-course to being a teen parent. This is also coupled with the assumption that Latinos do not truly value education. Milner (2006) stated that such behavior [teachers making assumptions about a student's race] inhibits teachers from valuing the knowledge that students bring to the classroom. However, Milner's statement was from the perspective of White educators forming negative assumptions about Black students. In Mary's case, a Black teacher forming negative assumptions about Latino students. It is apparent, then, that this problem of judging students based on cultural assumptions goes beyond the racial tensions experienced between Blacks and Whites. I will address the idea of extending interventions on issues of race beyond the Black-White binary in Chapter 5.

Contrary to the previous accounts, Belem, one of only three Latino teachers at EMS said this of her Latino students:

> Once they realize that I'm looking out for them, then they start opening up more. My AP
>
> (advanced placement) kids—you know, it's a Hispanic class- and they can come talk to
>
> me about anything and everything as if they were my kids.

Belem seems to believe that Latino students need a place to be able to collectively voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns. According to Belem, EMS is not as diverse as it may seem on paper. She also added,

> When I tell people I work at EMS, they say, 'oh you work at the Black school'. For
>
> example, I was looking at (the school) picture posted in the website and there is not one
>
> student with blonde hair in that picture. . . . Then, I was looking at one of the High school
>
> pictures and there was only one tall White kid and everyone else was Black. Not
>
> Mexican, no Asian. It's like the schools in our district are sorted by color.

Much of what the teachers shared in the interviews agrees with the data represented in the student questionnaire. That is, that the Latino student participants knew what it felt like to be treated unfairly due to the color of their skin. Based on these responses, it appears that further studies need to be done regarding the experiences of Latino students. In Chapter 5, I will explore ways in which studies can be conducted that highlight the valuable opinions and experiences of the Latino middle school student.

Actions Possibly Mistaken for Discrimination

Given that some of the student participants in the questionnaire believed that their teachers were judging them by the color of their skin, I asked teacher participants about their experiences with being accused of racial discrimination by their students. Belem provided the following example:

> A couple years ago, I was in charge of doing duty in the cafeteria. This group of boys—I
>
> have no idea what was wrong with them—started to harass me. They would come by the
>
> door and yell things at the door. This one time, they came and yelled 'We don't like you
>
> because you're Mexican' and I was like—what does that have anything to do with it? And
>
> they were like, 'well, you don't like us because we're Black.'It got to the point where I
>
> told the AP [assistant principal] that I wasn't going to come to duty if this wasn't taken
>
> care of. I was feeling very insecure because I felt like they thought I was targeting them
>
> because of their race. But then, they turned it around to say that I didn't like them because
>
> I'm Mexican.

In this case, a group of Black students felt that Belem's race impeded the formation of a TSR.

When asked if her actions had ever been mistaken for racism, Rebecca shared the
following account:

> I did have an experience with a kid I sent to the office earlier. I asked him, "Why are you
>
> upset with me"? And he said, "Because I don't like White people" and I was like, well ok.
>
> . . . I can't do anything about that. There's nothing I can change about that so we're going
>
> to have to get over that.

Situations such as these make it somewhat difficult to distinguish between instances when racism
is truly at work verses instances where the student is merely accusing a teacher of discrimination
based on a background and/or mindset that *expects* to be treated in such a fashion.

When probed about any other instances where her actions had been mistaken for racism
Rebecca stated the following:

> I've heard it all the time [that students think I am racist], because they always try to call
>
> me that. . . . Generally, if I am called a racist, it will be the student that is constantly in

trouble. The one for which I am always calling parents. So, you will hear that come up in

parent conferences where they say, 'Well he gets along with his other teachers, but this

one is White'.

Being accused of racism seems to be a persistent matter for Rebecca. This makes it difficult for

me to decipher what truly was taking place here. On the one hand, Rebecca could be dealing

with a number of students of color who happen to have pre-conceived expectations of unfair

treatment from a White teacher. On the other hand, Rebecca, whose upbringing that was quite

limited in diversity, could be unknowingly treating her students of color unfairly due to negative

pre-conceived notions that she may have regarding students of color. Either way it seems that

many of the TSRs that she experiences are negative ones. Rebecca did not share any examples of

positive TSRs that she had experienced. As such, these negative TSRs put her students at risk for

poor achievement in her history class.

Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to explain the recruitment and data collection process, as well

as expound upon the themes that emerged from the data collected. The data yielded from the

teacher interviews and the student questionnaire provided insight into the ways in which both

teachers and students viewed the TSRs that they have experienced. While most of the student

participants provided responses that demonstrated a general sense of satisfaction with the TSRs

that they experienced, the Latino student participants provided responses to the contrary. The

Latino students' responses indicated that they believed that their teachers' race impacted the

TSRs they experienced.

Based on the responses from the teacher interviews, it is evident that all the teacher

participants made an intentional practice of utilizing the positive characteristics of TSRs to

increase the chances of establishing successful TSRs. However, most of teacher participants expressed a sense of difficulty with the TSRs they experienced with their Latino students. Other themes presented in this chapter included the role that a teacher's racial background plays in their approach to TSRs, teachers' actions being mistaken from discrimination, and the views held by teachers on the ways in which students of color should be approached. In the chapter that follows, I discuss the findings and future implications that have arisen from the themes that emerged from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to observe the role that race plays in the relationships between students and teachers of a variety of races, and examine the lived experiences of the TSRs occurring at EMS. To accomplish this, I conducted my study at a suburban middle school in North Texas that consisted of a diverse student body and a somewhat diverse teaching staff (the school had very little Latino or Asian teacher representation). I conducted my research in the form of two rounds of teacher interviews, and a questionnaire completed by 40 students. Upon analysis of the data yielded from both rounds of interviews, the student questionnaire, memos and field notes, I developed a set of findings that require further exploration.

The findings gathered from the data of the study provide us with a wealth of insight how race mediates TSRs, and the experiences of middle school-aged students of color and their teachers. In this chapter, I will present an interpretation of my findings, discuss the limitations of the study, and provide changes in policy and practice. I then will summarize my findings in the conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings that emerged from the study seem to paint a bleak picture of the experiences of some of the students of color at EMS. The data focused around three main points that help frame the TSRs experienced by both the teacher and student participants at EMS. Firstly, both data from the student questionnaire and elements of the interviews exhibited issues between EMS teachers and Latino students. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it is possible that the Latino students at EMS felt as though their race impacted their relationships with their

teachers, and that some of the teachers at EMS may treat student unfairly because of the color of their skin.

Secondly, on the EMS campus there appeared to be assumptions and negative talk that took place regarding the Latino culture that needed to be remedied. The teacher participants seemed oblivious to the pejorative ways in which they addressed their Latino students. Thirdly, a disconnection may exist in how the teachers at EMS believe they related to their students versus how the students actually interpreted these methods of establishing relationships. In addition to the disconnect between the teachers and the Latino students, the data also revealed that the White student participants at EMS encountered some struggles in the TSRs that they experienced with their non-White teachers. In the sections that follow, I will delve further into what can be learned from these findings.

TSRs and Latino students. The data gathered from the student questionnaire suggested that the Latino students at EMS did not feel they were treated with equity by their teachers. The data also suggested that the Latino student participants felt as though the color of their skin inhibited them from forming successful TSRs with their teachers. In the teacher interviews, comments received about students that were not positive mainly involved Latino students. Mary seemed to believe that it was acceptable to assume that a Latino male in her class would not respect her authority. Rebecca struggled to understand the Latino 'culture' as a whole." The stereotypes that are being applied at EMS run the risk of causing severe damage to potential TSRs. In order to remedy this, the persistent disconnect that exists between Latino students and their teachers needs to be addressed. The National Center of Education Statistics projects that the number of Latino students in the United States will be at or above 3 million students (NCES, 2016). CRT suggests that discrimination based on race and ethnicity is still rampant in the United

States. If the United States is set to house over 3 million students of color, then it is critical that

teachers work to foster better TSRs with Latino students to ensure the success of the future

leaders of this state and country. There is no justifiable reason for a Latino student to feel less

important than any other student being educated in the United States. Latino students need to feel

valued and form successful TSRs just as much as any other group of students. Teachers and

administrators must become intentionally aware of this need and take steps to ensure that their

staff is educated about how to approach this need.

  Negative talk regarding race. While the teacher participants appeared quite savvy in

strategies needed to promote successful TSRs with their students, the ways in which some of the

teachers spoke about their *trouble* students (mostly Latino) seemed somewhat negative. During

the interviews, when speaking about their Latino students, both Mary and Rebecca used

seemingly dismissive language to describe them. Words such as 'they', 'they're,' and 'them'

were used to describe students belonging to this group rather than actually using their names.

Such talk needs to be eliminated to achieve the goal of increased success in TSRs with Latino

students.

  Lack of Power. People of color are accustomed to the negative talk associated with their

race/ethnicity and are oftentimes faced with the choice of causing a scene or taking the high road

in response to such incidents. This was true for Claudia, who seems to choose to take the high

road more often than not when confronted with racial injustice. This also is true for myself.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, taking the high road' means to choose not to react when confronted

with racial injustice, but rather to ignore the instance when it occurs. People of color choose to

take the high road in these circumstances because they often are judged for blowing racial

injustice out of proportion when they issue complaints of inequity. Unfortunately, this situation

is true for students of color as well. To avoid judgement, many students of color will tolerate frequent racial injustice without saying anything for fear that they would be stereotyped or judged. This inability for a person of color to confront injustice in a similar fashion to their White peers reinforces the concept of the lack of power that people of color frequently experience when dealing with inequity. In the process of forming TSRs with students of color, I suggest that teachers form healthy TSRs with their students by promoting the notion that the student is valuable and that the student's opinions matter.

Student responsibility in TSRs. While much of the findings of this study focus on improvements that teachers need to make in order to foster more successful TSRs, the student must take some responsibility on his/her part to help make the TSR a success. In Chapter 2 and through the accounts of some of the teachers, I have shown the negative impact that experiences with racial injustice can have in the manner that a person of one race/ethnicity may relate to a person of a differing race/ethnicity. In such cases, negative assumptions and expectations may be formed about a person merely due to their race/ethnicity. This is especially true for young, impressionable students. If a student of color has experienced racial injustice in the classroom from a White teacher (for example) in the past, they are more likely to expect the same types of behaviors from any White teacher. This negative expectation provides a hindrance on the student's side to forming a successful TSR. While a teacher cannot control the thoughts and feelings of a student, they can engage in relationship-building strategies that make themselves appear more relatable, and trustworthy to a student. This in turn will promote the development of a healthy TSR.

As noted in Chapter 2, when students experience negative TSRs, their academic success may be hindered (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Davis, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2001;

Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008). Some of the students at EMS indicated

that they experienced negative TSRs with their teachers due to the color of their skin. While the

questionnaire results showed that the Black students maintained generally good TSRs, the

majority of the Latino students believed that their race was impacting their relationships with

their teachers. This should be cause for concern.

Most of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 refers to Black students experiencing

negative TSRs with teachers, but less of the literature refers to issues that Latinos students may

be experiencing due to their race. A similar situation seems to exist at EMS. While both Blacks

and Latinos fall into the category of 'people of color', it is possible that at EMS, more efforts to

eliminate injustices are made in response to issues concerning Black students than the efforts put

in place to eliminate the injustices experienced by Latino students. This may be due to the fact

that in American society, it is often assumed that racial injustice only occurs between Whites and

Blacks, which diminishes the plight of peoples of color who are not Black. Such assumptions

are quite inaccurate and may be threatening the TSRs and academic success of Latino students,

and any other students who are not Black, but can be labeled 'of color'. In the section that

follows, I discuss how such assumptions can be avoided about race, and how educational

practices can be further developed to be inclusive of all people of color.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study indicate that some significant changes need to be made to the

ways in which the teaching staff and administration approach and support the formation of TSRs.

To accomplish this, more light needs to be shed on the issues occurring at EMS that pose a threat

to the establishment of TSRs.

Going beyond Black and White. From a CRT perspective, if Latino students are feeling as though their race impacts the TSRs they experience with their teachers, then this issue needs to be examined with race in mind. I have explained earlier the ways in which racism is perceived as an "ordinary," everyday occurrence when looking through the lens of CRT. The fact that the Latino students at EMS have voiced this sentiment of marginalization based on their experiences supports the possibility that these students are experiencing racial prejudice within their TSRs. To recap, racial prejudice is what occurs when a person of one race (or ethnicity) judges or treats someone from a different race (or ethnicity) unfairly. In the case of the Latino students at EMS, it is important to note that this is not a Black/White issue. In fact, the teachers who demonstrated the most disconnection with their Latino students were Black (Mary), and White (Rebecca). The fact that students of color still run the risk of experiencing issues of racism and discrimination, even in the educational environment, is not surprising. However, what is daunting is the idea that when it comes to acknowledging victims of racism, Latino students may feel as they are not included in this group. This could be because much attention with regards to racism has been focused on the tension between Black and Whites, while racial tensions that involve Latinos appear to be less prominent in society (when looking from the perspective of the media). This study has made it evident that more light needs to be shed on issues of discrimination involving Latino students.

To accomplish this, it is crucial that the educational preparation program faculty look beyond the Black and White binary when they train teachers on forming successful relationships with various ethnicities. While it is important that all educators understand the damaging effects that racism has on TSRs, it now seems necessary to emphasize that the needs of *all* children–not just those that are Black–should be considered. Some CRT theorists have suggested that

educational preparation program faculty need to fully embrace the tenets of CRT by structuring their programs in such a way that the notion of *whiteness* and the weight that it carries in the social hierarchy is confronted. Sleeter (2017) found that this could be done by using insights from social movements, collaborating with communities to broaden the range of voices at the table, and engaging White faculty members in situating themselves within rather than outside an analysis of race (p. 166). Howard and Milner (2014) support the idea of checking one's personal biases before entering the teaching profession and referring to it as a process of building racial and cultural knowledge. This process requires that teachers attend to their own deep-rooted beliefs, ideologies, and values (p. 206) before entering the classroom. Based on the findings of this study, it has been made apparent that pre-teachers, and current teachers (regardless of their racial background) need to be aware of the biases that they may maintain towards certain races and the potential academic risks posted to these students if those biases remain unchecked.

Implications for Policy

It is commonplace for school campuses, school districts and states to develop mission statements that include policy regarding cultural sensitivity and equity in education. However, taking the results of the student questionnaire into consideration, it is possible that more accountability needs to be put in place to enforce such policies and ensure that the goal of cultural sensitivity and equity in education is actually met. One suggestion is to provide cultural sensitivity training to teachers and administrators as a mandatory training. Such a training may help encourage the development of more inclusive education environments. While I posed the question to my teacher participants about whether or not they thought that EMS could benefit from some form of cultural sensitivity training, it was hard to obtain an honest answer that went beyond an eye roll. This general reaction from the teacher participants demonstrated the lack of

confidence in the effectiveness that they saw in any related trainings they may have experienced.

Based on my personal experiences as an educator who has attended several trainings, I can attest

to the fact that teachers are constantly trained to *look out* for students of color, ESL students, and

students who come from a low socioeconomic status (SES) background. Unfortunately, if Latino

students persist in feeling unsupported, it is possible that such trainings could stand to be re-

constructed and focused in such a way that the experiences of *all* students of color are

considered.

In order to promote equitable educational experiences for students of color, CRT needs to

have a greater presence in the development of state, district and campus policies. One way to

help assist the need for in-depth professional development may be to bring in members of the

CRT community (theorists, writers, professors) who can assist in guiding the development of

educational policies in such a way that teachers, school leaders and school districts are held

accountable in ensuring that students of color are experiencing equitable and successful TSRs.

Tools such as climate surveys that include race and TSRs as a topic for discussion could aid

campuses and school districts to monitor the sentiment of students of color regarding their

learning environments.

Elements of CRT would also be quite useful if implemented into the criteria for teacher

evaluation. In many school districts in North Texas teacher evaluations consists of teacher self-

reflection, teacher goal setting, classroom walkthroughs conducted by administration, and finally

a conference held between the administrator and the teacher. With the purpose of improving

racial equity in education, there are elements of CRT that could be utilized in each aspect of the

teacher evaluation system. For example, questions regarding how the teacher approaches student

of varying races and ethnicities could be added to the self-reflection section. Thought provoking

questions focused on CRT tenets such as the ordinariness of racism and white privilege may help

guide teachers to reflect on their teaching strategies from a CRT perspective. A requirement

could be made that one of the goals a teacher set for themselves be related to improving equity in

the classroom. When conducting classroom walkthroughs, administrators could be equipped a

pre-set, CRT based criteria that requires them to conduct critical observations of the classroom

dynamics and evidence of TSRs. Finally, in the setting of a teacher/administrator conference,

administrators can engage the teacher in dialog regarding strategies for maintaining successful

TSRs and racial equity in the classroom environment.

 CRT offers many elements that can be built into the framework used to evaluate school

leaders and school districts as a whole. District leaders, school administrators and school

counselors can utilize CRT as an item of accountability in leadership and faculty meetings.

Professional learning communities on school campuses could focus on topics such as *White

privilege* and *intersectionality* to help facilitate productive discussions about ways in which

students of color can experience successful TSRs. Done this way, the responsibility for

maintaining equitable learning environments falls on every member of the educational

community- from the school board members to the classroom teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

To answer the research question of on how race mediates teacher-student relationships

within a racially-diverse, suburban setting, 45 participants (five teachers and 40 students) from a

racially diverse, suburban middle school participated in interviews and responded to statements

from a questionnaire. While the data gleaned from the study may provide the insight into the

TRSs experienced by teachers and students of varied races, much can be done to make this study

accessible to a variety of settings and participants. In this section, I will provide suggestions for ways in which the study could be improved upon for future research.

This study could benefit from being conducted on a larger scale. Due to the low number of participants, the number of students representing each racial group was not evenly distributed. The relatively small number of participants could be the reason why the data from the questionnaire yielded limited information on the Asian group of student participants. While the questionnaire did yield significant information regarding the sentiments of the Latino students at EMS, this was only representative of seven students. Done on a bigger scale, it is possible that the findings of this study would have yielded more meaningful results. This also could have occurred had the study been conducted on a district level (utilizing more than one school), rather than on a campus level.

I recommend that further qualitative studies be conducted at institutions with higher populations of Asian and Latino teachers. At EMS, there are currently a limited amount of Asian and Latino teachers, so the odds of having an Asian or a Latino teacher participant for my study were quite slim. I count myself fortunate to have had at least one Latino teacher participant. Naturally, an ideal situation would have involved more representation of Black, White, Latino, and Asian teacher participants. Such a panel of participants could help to provide more depth to the experiences of teachers of various races and the TSRs that they maintain with students of various races.

Limitations

As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, some limitations were encountered through the process of conducting my study. While some of these limitations proved not to be problematic, others did, and a few additional limitations came about after the data were collected. In this

section, I first address the perceived limitations that did not occur and then discuss those that

actually were encountered while conducting to conducting this study.

In Chapter 1, I posed that the fact that I was conducting this research from the position of

a person of color, and that this might be problematic with regards to the responses that I would

receive from the teachers. I also considered the potentiality of my own biases getting in the way

in the analysis of the data gleaned from the teacher interviews. This proved not to be the case. As

it is evident in Chapter 4, my race did not seem to interfere with the very candid responses that I

received from each teacher. While the teachers may have chosen to soften their language in the

way they shared their opinions, many of their biases continued to be evident in their responses

and were therefore not influenced by the fact that they were interviewed by a person of color.

From my perspective as the researcher, I made a commitment to practice reflexivity throughout

the process of conducting the study. The data analysis yielded from this study was based on my

frequent debriefs with my colleague and reviewing my personal memos regarding the teacher

interviews to ensure that I was not inserting any of my own biases into the analysis of the

interview data.

My first limitation was that all of my teacher participants were female. In fact, all of the

teachers who responded to my recruitment letter were female. While the disproportionate

number of women in education when compared to men is common knowledge, it would be

interesting to see whether or not a male teacher participant would provide a different perspective

in terms of TSRs with students from a different racial group of their own.

Another limitation was that I was not able to fully adhere to Seidman's (2013) guidelines

for phenomenological research and conduct three interviews. Due to the time constraints that

accompany a teacher's schedule, I decided that a third interview would be too demanding on my

teacher participants. While the first and second interviews gathered background experiences and current experiences, a third interview, according to Seidman (2013) would focus on drawing out poignant and intellectual connections to the teachers experiences with race and TSRs. Such data might have added another dimension to the themes that were developed from the interviews.

One of the most significant limitations to this study is that I was not able to actually interview the middle school student participants. In Chapter 3, I explained why and how the perspective of the middle-school aged student is crucial to research on TSRs. Some studies have argued the importance of student viewpoints in educational research as students are directly affected by any change in policy or instructional practices (Howard, 2001). After interviewing secondary students, Blackman (2010) suggested that "students are the most powerful resource available to teachers, and that engaging them in dialogue can facilitate the development of effective pedagogies for teaching" (p. 4). Other researchers have found students' first-hand accounts of their learning environments may result in the researcher gathering more accurate data (Nieto, 1994). Giroux (1988) argued that the student perspective is "an important starting point for enabling those who have been silenced or marginalized" (p. 63). In this study, students had the opportunity to express their opinion of the TSRs that they share with their teachers; and the role that race plays in these relationships. The study was designed in such a way that they would accomplish this without risking their current TSRs; and yet, their opinions will be valued and utilized.

After conducting this study, I have been convinced even more that the voices of middle school students are crucial and deserve to be heard. I would suggest that future researchers to develop an interview protocol that can be administered to middle-school aged students without causing harm to their current TSRs. The information acquired from such interviews could be

critical in helping researchers, teachers, administrators, and professors to better understand the TSRs that middle school students of various races experience. I consider my own study to represent an entry point into a research problem, providing the foundation for future studies, looking at student-teacher relationships with respect to a variety of racial ground, moving beyond the Black-White binary. Particularly relevant is the need to explore the unique circumstances of Latino students with respect to their relationships with teachers, opening up a range of fruitful qualitative research possibilities dependent upon a contextual and cultural understanding of this phenomenon.

Finally, based on the findings of this study, it is evident that more attention needs to be paid to the experiences of Latino middle-school aged students. Therefore, a future study involving the interviewing of Latino middle school-aged students could be quite useful in providing information about why and how Latino students feel that their race impacts their TSRs.

Conclusion

The research question in this study asked: how does race mediate teacher-student relationships within a racially diverse, suburban setting? In order to explore this question, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted. Teacher participants were interviewed and students participated in answering a questionnaire regarding TSRs and the role that race plays in maintaining TSRs. Upon analysis of the data, I found that while the teachers perceived their TSRs to be positive and inclusive, some of the students felt as though their race had a negative impact on the TSRs that they experienced at EMS.

The Latino students at EMS were the most affected by this problem. In addition, aside from providing relevant trainings to teacher and pre-service teachers that are CRT focused,

emphasis needs to be placed on the idea that racism goes beyond the Black/White binary and that racism in fact places *all* students of color are at risk of not having well-established TSRs. One of the ways we can begin to fix the problem of Latino students who may feel as though their struggles are being ignored is to give value to the counter-narratives that arise from their experiences. To achieve this objective, I suggest that future studies allow for the interviewing of middle school students of color, so that the voices of Latino students can be heard. The ultimate goal of education is to do what is best for students. Therefore, it is critical that we give value to students' opinions. The narratives of these students could in fact be quite influential to changes in educational policy that are long overdue.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER

My name is Christa Tillman-Young and I am a doctoral candidate at The University of Texas at Arlington. I request your participation in a research study. As a participant, you will be asked to participate in 2 interviews that may last up to 90 minutes each. The interviews conducted will be on the topic of teacher-student relationships and the role that race plays in these relationships.

There are no perceived risks or direct benefits for participating in this study. You may withdraw your participation in this study at any time.

Your anonymity is of the utmost important. Any personally identifying information will be kept confidential. I may publish, present, or share the results of my study, but neither your name nor the name of your employer will be used.

If you are willing to participate, or if you have any questions about the study, please contact me at christa.tillman-young@mavs.uta.edu. For questions or concerns, contact the UTA Research Office at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Christa Tillman-Young

APPENDIX B

STUDENT RECRUITMENT LETTER

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Student,

My name is Ms. Tillman-Young and I am a math teacher here at your school.

I am performing a research study and would like for you to participate. Research studies help us develop and test new ideas. It is your choice whether or not you want to take part in the study.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn more about the learning relationships that students form in the classroom with their teachers.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to join me during advisory time and answer an online questionnaire using your iPad.

Participating in this study will not hurt you in any way. You can stop participating at any time and there will be no penalty for doing so. Your parents must agree for you to be in this study.

You can ask me any questions that you have about the study. You or your parents can reach me at: christa.tillman-young@mavs.uta.edu. For further questions or concerns, you or your parents may contact the UTA Research Office at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

If you would like to participate in this study please return this letter with the information below, completed and signed.

Christa Tillman-Young

_____   _____
       NAME (PRINT)   **DATE**

Signing your name below means that you agree to be in this research study.

_____
          SIGNATURE

APPENDIX C

PARENT CONSNET FORM AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT LETTER

PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT

      My name is Christa Tillman-Young and I am a doctoral candidate at The University of Texas at Arlington. I request your child's participation in a research study.

I am asking your child to take part in this research study because I am trying to learn more factors that lead to academic success.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, they will be asked to complete an electronic questionnaire advisory time. Completion of the questionnaire should not take more than 25 minutes.

There are no perceived risks or direct benefits for your child participating in this study. You or your child may withdraw participation in the study at any time.

Your child's anonymity is of the utmost important. No personally identifying information will be recorded. I may publish, present, or share the results of my study, but neither your child's name nor the name of their school will be used.

If you are willing to allow your child to participate, please complete the information below, have your child complete the attached form, and then ask them to return both documents to me.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at christa.tillman-young@mavs.uta.edu. For further questions or concerns, you may contact the UTA Research Office at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

Thank you for considering your child's participation in this study.

Sincerely,
Christa Tillman-Young

Parent Full Name: _____

Child's Full Name: _____

Your signature below means that you permit your child to participate in this research study.
_____   _____
     (Signature)   **(Date)**

APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Part I

1. My interviews with you will ultimately be about your teaching here at EMS, but before getting to that, I would like to begin to by asking you some questions about your upbringing and education.
    a. How racially diverse was the area in which you grew up?
    b. How racially diverse was your group of friends?
    c. In what ways did the topic of race ever come up at home?
    d. Have you ever experienced issues concerning race in your neighborhood, or, church or other community events?
        i. Probe: What was your reaction to the incident?
        ii. Probe: What was the reaction of the people around you?

2. Now, I would like to as a few questions about your personal experiences as a secondary student.
    a. Can you talk about the level of diversity you were exposed to at your school?
        i. Probe: How diverse were your classes?
        ii. Probe: How diverse was the teaching staff at this school?

    b. Can you describe an experience where you had a good relationship with your teacher?
        i. Probe: What do you think contributed to this positive relationship?
    c. Can you describe an experience where you had a bad relationship with your teacher?
        i. Probe: What do you think contributed to this negative relationship?

3. Now, I would like to talk with you about discrimination. I am defining discrimination as a situation where a person is treated poorly due to the color of their skin.

    a. Can you tell me about a time when you have experienced discrimination?
        i. Probe: What was your reaction to the incident?
        ii. Probe: What was the reaction of the people around you?

    b. Can you describe a time when you have witnessed an incident of discrimination?
        i. Probe: What was your reaction to the incident?
        ii. Probe: What was the reaction of the people around you?

  c. In what ways do issues involving discrimination based on race effect you?

<div align="center">Teacher Interview Protocol</div>

<div align="center">Part 2</div>

1. Thank you for contributing more of your time towards my study. During this session we will discuss the relationships that you form with your students. Can you begin by telling me what is your strategy is for building positive relationships with your students?
   a. How effective are these strategies?
      i. Probe: Can you talk about a time that you have felt pushback from your students when applying these strategies? If so, how do you address it?

2. How well do you and your students communicate with each other?

3. How well do you think that you relate to your students?
   a. Probe: Can you provide some examples of how you and your students relate to each other?

4. How well do you think your students trust you?
   a. Probe: How do you go about earning their trust?
   b. Probe: Can you talk about a time when you felt that your students didn't trust you?

5. How does your students' culture affect your relationships with them?
   a. Probe: (depending on response)

6. We have spoken a bit about culture…. what about race? Do you feel that you approach students in different ways based upon their race?
   a. Do you feel like your race or your students' race may affect the relationships you have with your students?
   b. Probe: How so?

7. Have your actions ever been mistaken for discrimination by students?
   a. Can you describe a time that you have encountered discrimination?

8. Can you share your thoughts on whether or not there needs to be a special approach to dealing with students of color?
   a. If so, why?

9. Can you share your thoughts on whether or not students of color learn differently than White students?
    a. If so, what is the difference?

10. How would you feel if your school district implemented a mandatory professional development class on cultural sensitivity in the classroom?

APPENDIX E

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Students were asked to describe themselves in the following fashion:

    A. Choose the gender with which you best identify (options: female, male)

    B. Describe the race with which you best identify (options: Asian, Black, Latino, Other, White)

Students were then asked to respond to the following questions using the Likert Scale below:

Answer 1	Answer 2	Answer 2	Answer 3	Answer 4
"Strongly Disagree"	"Disagree"	"Neutral"	"Agree"	"Strongly Agree"

    1. Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers.
    2. I feel as though I am treated fairly by my teachers.
    3. I sometimes feel like my teachers treat other students unfairly.
    4. Sometimes I feel like my teachers treat other students unfairly because of their skin color.
    5. I know how it feels to be treated unfairly because of the color of my skin.
    6. Sometimes, I feel like my teachers judge me because of the color of my skin.
    7. Sometimes, I feel like the color of my skin keeps my teachers from liking me.
    8. Sometimes, I wish that my teachers had the same skin color as I do.
    9. I feel like my race impacts my relationship with my teachers.
    10. I feel like my teachers' race impacts the type of relationship he/she has with me.

APPENDIX F

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

Descriptor Question A							
Describe the gender with which you best identify.		Black	White	Asian	Latino	Other	#Total Participants
	Male	5 (45.45%)	2 (18.18%)	4 (36.36%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	11 (27.50%)
	Female	12 (41.38%)	7 (24.14%)	3 (10.34%)	7 (24.14%)	0 (0.00%)	29 (72.50%)
	Total Participants						40 (100.00%)

Descriptor Question B						
Describe the race with which you best identify.	Student Race	# of Students	% of Students	# of Males	# of Females	Total
	Black	17	42.50	5 (29.41%)	12 (70.59%)	17(100.00%)
	White	9	22.50	2 (22.22%)	7 (77.78%)	9 (100.00%)
	Asian	7	17.50	4 (57.14%)	3 (42.86%)	7 (100.00%)
	Latino	7	17.50	0 (0.00%)	7 (100.00%)	7 (100.00%)
	Total Participants	40	100	0.00%	100.00%	40 (100.00%)

Analysis of Student Questionnaire Data (filtered by race for each question) *

Question 1	Response	Student Race					
Generally, I think I have a good relationship with my teachers.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Somewhat disagree	23.53	11.11	0	0	0	12.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	0	22.22	14.29	14.29	0	10
	Somewhat agree	41.18	22.22	71.43	42.86	0	42.5
	Strongly agree	35.29	44.44	14.29	42.86	0	35
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 2	Response	Student Race					
I feel as though I am treated fairly by my teachers.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	11.76	0	0	14.29	0	7.5
	Somewhat disagree	11.76	11.11	14.29	14.29	0	12.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.88	0	14.29	14.29	0	7.5
	Somewhat agree	23.53	55.56	42.86	14.29	0	32.5
	Strongly agree	47.06	33.33	28.57	42.86	0	40
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 3	Response	Student Race					
I sometimes feel like my teachers treat other students unfairly.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	17.65	11.11	0	0	0	10
	Somewhat disagree	17.65	11.11	14.29	28.57	0	17.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.65	0	28.57	14.29	0	15
	Somewhat agree	41.18	66.67	57.14	14.29	0	45
	Strongly agree	5.88	11.11	0	42.86	0	12.5
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 4	Response	Student Race					
Sometimes I feel like my teachers treat other students unfairly because of their skin color.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	52.94	22.22	14.29	14.29	0	32.5
	Somewhat disagree	11.76	11.11	28.57	14.29	0	15
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.65	33.33	14.29	14.29	0	20
	Somewhat agree	0	22.22	28.57	42.86	0	17.5
	Strongly agree	17.65	11.11	14.29	14.29	0	15
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 5	Response	Student Race					
I know how it feels to be treated unfairly because of the color of my skin.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	41.18	44.44	14.29	28.57	0	35
	Somewhat disagree	11.76	0	0	0	0	5
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.76	55.56	57.14	0	0	27.5
	Somewhat agree	5.88	0	14.29	42.86	0	12.5
	Strongly agree	29.41	0	14.29	28.57	0	20
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 6	Response	Student Race					
Sometimes, I feel like my teachers judges me because of the color of my skin.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	52.94	44.44	28.57	42.86	0	45
	Somewhat disagree	11.76	11.11	0	14.29	0	10
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.88	33.33	42.86	0	0	17.5
	Somewhat agree	17.65	11.11	14.29	42.86	0	20
	Strongly agree	11.76	0	14.29	0	0	7.5
	Total ≈	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 7	Response	Student Race					
Sometimes, I feel like the color of my skin keeps my teachers from liking me.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	58.82	44.44	28.57	42.86	0	47.5
	Somewhat disagree	11.76	33.33	14.29	14.29	0	17.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.76	11.11	42.86	0	0	15
	Somewhat agree	17.65	11.11	14.29	42.86	0	20
	Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 8	Response	Student Race					
Sometimes, I wish that my teachers had the same skin color as I do.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	43.75	66.67	14.29	42.86	0	43.59
	Somewhat disagree	12.5	0	14.29	0	0	7.69
	Neither agree nor disagree	25	22.22	42.86	57.14	0	33.33
	Somewhat agree	6.25	11.11	0	0	0	5.13
	Strongly agree	12.5	0	28.57	0	0	10.26
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 9	Response	Student Race					
I feel like my race impacts my relationship with my teacher.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	64.71	33.33	14.29	28.57	0	42.5
	Somewhat disagree	11.76	11.11	42.86	14.29	0	17.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	0	22.22	14.29	28.57	0	12.5
	Somewhat agree	11.76	33.33	28.57	28.57	0	22.5
	Strongly agree	11.76	0	0	0	0	5
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

Question 10	Response	Student Race					
I feel like my teachers' race impacts the type of relationship they have with me.		Black (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	Latino (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
	Strongly disagree	64.71	33.33	28.57	28.57	0	45
	Somewhat disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.88	11.11	42.86	14.29	0	15
	Somewhat agree	17.65	55.56	28.57	42.86	0	32.5
	Strongly agree	11.76	0	0	14.29	0	7.5
	Total	≈100	≈100	≈100	≈100	0	100

*The percentage total of responses by race are approximate to 100, but may be slightly less due to rounding.