A CASE STUDY DESCRIBING PRACTICES AND BELIEFS OF TEACHERS

WHO ARE EFFECTIVE IN THEIR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN

A DIVERSE RURAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN GEORGIA

by

Busani N Siphambili

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this nested case study was to describe the practices and beliefs of teachers who

are effective in their behavior management with minority students (African American) in three

rural schools. This study was shaped by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural behavior theory that

states that learning is a social process and the origination of human intelligence in society or

culture. It also emphasizes that the development of thinking is a shared process, not an

individual one, and that children learn by participating and sharing other people's frame of

reference. Social interactions play an important role in the development of cognition.

Participants included two principals, six teachers, and 30 students from three Big Creek schools

(Pseudonym): the elementary school, middle school and high school. Data was collected

through interviews, classroom observations, documents and focus groups of the sample

population. Reductive qualitative analysis was used and that included use of coding and

extraction of themes. A rich description of the phenomenon of practices and beliefs of teachers

who are effective in their behavior management with minority students was generated by

answering the central question: "What are the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective

in their behavior management with African American students?" Within-case analysis and

cross-case analysis was utilized to analyze the data. After data analysis, themes that emerged

were: respect, teacher's attitude, transmitting positive attitude about students, divergence, warm-

and welcoming learning environment, and optimistic forward progress. Recommendations are

provided for the teachers and administrators that struggle with behavior management in diverse

schools.

Keywords: Sociocultural theory, behavioral disorders, classroom management, positive

behavior support, diversity, effective practices

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my lovely wife, Brittny, and my lovely children. Without their support and encouragement, I would not have made it to this point. It is my pleasure to say thank you for their patience and support. A special thanks to my loving parents who encouraged me not to give up no matter how hard or complicated the task may be. This dissertation is also dedicated to my deceased grandparents, Hlabathi and Sarah Siphambili, for their everlasting love.

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I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Verlyn Evans, for dedicating her time and working with me to achieve my goals. I would also like to thank my research consultant, Dr. Cindi Spaulding, who worked hard to see that I was on the right path, and who provided encouragement when I felt things were not going well. Her door was always open whenever I had a question about my research or writing. She steered me in the right the direction whenever she thought I needed it. And finally, I want to thank all committee members, Dr. Carol Gillespie and Dr. Vijayalakshmi Gangadharan, as well as the faculty members who took their time to help me in this journey.

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List of Abbreviations

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Positive Behavior Intervention (PBI)

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this study is to describe the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Improving student discipline and classroom management skills is considered to be one of the most imperative tasks for educators. The United States (US) educational environment and present societies are now more diverse and complex. Using a conventional approach to discipline students at school has its limitations when it comes to coping with new types of behavioral problems displayed by new generations of diverse student populations. Students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds in the US continue to encounter educational deficits at a high rate due to unequally structured learning opportunities (Losen & Skiba, 2011). In schools, discrimination on the basis of social class, race, and disability continues to be seen through disproportionate school suspensions and negative attention to certain groups of students (Losen & Skiba, 2011).

Although a large body of research shows that there is a trend in fewer discipline referrals in schools and improved academics (Horner, Sugai, Eber, & Lewandowski, 2004; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008), classroom teachers still express that student discipline is the most complicated and challenging task for them (Macciomei & Ruben, 1999). Vincent and Tobin (2011) reported that African American students continue to experience a disproportionate rate of long-term suspensions despite the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions (PBI). Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive approach that can be used by schools to improve student behavior, and to achieve social, emotional, and academic success. Few studies provide in-depth understanding of the context that explains the process of practices

and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students. Therefore, there is a need to understand how effective educators work with minority students from different backgrounds with behavior problems.

Background

Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education (1954), there are still alarming trends in the academic achievement of African American students. According to a report released by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2010), almost 7,000 students become dropouts every day across the United States. About one-half of all African American students who attend school do not graduate with their class or with a high school diploma (Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore, & Friant, 2010). Dropping out of school limits African American students' access to higher education and economic opportunities. African American students are also disproportionately referred for discipline suspensions (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Decades of research have tried to explain and address negative trends that still exist in the US education system. In the field of education, discipline continues to be a major concern facing schools, and behavior issues still remain an unresolved problem in spite of different strategies and techniques being offered over the years to confront it within the classroom and the school environment.

The most important factor today is that despite schools implementing evidence-based behavior management strategies and school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS), many schools experience a higher proportion of African American students' problematic behaviors. In the classroom, the majority of the teachers have allocated a considerable amount of time in an effort to try to handle inappropriate student behaviors; however, they frequently become discouraged and frustrated and even leave the profession, citing undesirable student behaviors as

a significant factor (Gresham, 2004; Levin & Nolan, 2000). Behaviors that demand a lot of teachers' time impact the classroom climate and decrease instructional time which, in turn, reduces learning opportunities for all of the students.

In the field of education, it is vital to note that the ability to value diversity requires extensive, ongoing learning experiences which help teachers effectively manage behaviors that hinder other students from learning. In addition to scrutinizing instruction and other classroom practices such as behavior management, assessment, and parent involvement for inequities, culturally proficient educators examine other policies, procedures, and practices that are often overlooked (Guerra & Nelson, 2011, pp. 59-60). It is important to provide staff development sessions to teachers and principals so that there are ongoing learning experiences to help educators recognize the influence of culture and understand how these practices improve student behavior (Guerra & Nelson, 2011). Teachers with few years of diversity training do not believe that culture influences how students behave; they believe that all students hold the same values and beliefs (Guerra & Nelson, 2011).

To be effective at managing student behavior, teachers should look at themselves first in order to be aware of their biases, acknowledge any negative thoughts they have, and make sure that their feelings do not influence their actions. The literature suggests that students behave better when they perceive their teachers to be supportive, responsive, and caring (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Classroom teachers who teach appropriate classroom behaviors while at the same time correcting problematic behaviors in a culturally responsive manner help students learn the shared values of their classroom; and they engage in successful classroom behavior techniques (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Fallon, O'Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012; Sugai, O'Keeffe, & Fallon, 2012).

To avoid disruptive behaviors and teacher burnout, Obenchain and Taylor (2005) believe that "one indicator of successful teachers in middle and high school is the quality of their behavior management skills" (p. 7). In order for educators to eliminate misbehavior, it is important to prevent the occurrence or escalation from the beginning (Obenchain & Taylor, 2005).

Another issue to consider is that every school operates in a particular society, culture, and context. Culture, society, and beliefs play an important role in behavior management of students. Norms, values, motivational bases of the values, and traditions vary across cultures. Researchers agree that the culture and context of the developing world impact the values, attitudes, and norms of behavior which are markedly different from those used by school teachers and leadership in the developed world (Simskins, Sisum & Memon, 2003; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). In diverse classrooms, these authors suggest, it is the duty of the teacher to devise effective strategies that will work for different students from varied cultural backgrounds.

One of the teacher's most important jobs is to manage the discipline in the classroom (Simskins et al., 2003). Teachers who manage discipline effectively in the classroom are those who are knowledgeable of other individuals' culture and values. A meta-analytic review also provides compelling evidence that cross-ethnic or racial interactions, cultural awareness workshops, and ethnic studies courses during college relate to an increased orientation toward helping others (Bowman, 2011). In addition, studies of adults indicate that more positive attitudes about outgroup members relate to more cooperation in intergroup encounters (Koschate, Oethinger, Kuchenbrandt, & van Dick, 2012; Koschate & van Dick, 2011).

Research reveals that experiences of discrimination are a social reality for adolescents (Brown, 2008; Simons et al., 2002). It is, therefore, crucial to realize that the nature of

discrimination has shifted from overt actions to more covert forms such as bias in discipline practices.

According to the reviewed literature, African American youth are more likely to perceive discrimination as they get older (Brown, 2008; Quintana, 1998). In addition, African American students are more likely as youth than as children to explore their social and ethnic identities, which may make them more attuned to how others treat them (Brown, 2008; Quintana, 1998). As their social world expands, African American students are exposed to and have more contact with the mainstream culture, which in turn, may expose them to more experiences of discrimination (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006). The findings in the literature are straightforward; most disciplinary referrals originate in the classroom, and more times than not, the referrals are for students of color (African American) and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Greene et al., 2006).

The literature suggests that there are some inconsistencies between the rules or the culture of power (Delpit, 1995) and some students' ways of knowing and conducting themselves. This is an indication of a disconnect between the teachers' beliefs and practices used in managing students' behavior in the classroom and students' cultural background, beliefs, values, and norms. Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson. (2002) reported a "differential pattern of treatment, originating at the classroom level, wherein African American students are referred to the office for infractions that are more subjective in interpretation" (p. 317). An example of such behaviors is that African American students often speak to adults more as equals than as authority figures because that is the way many speak with their families. Such behavior can be viewed as disrespectful and a student may be sent to the office for this if a teacher is not aware of that culture.

Another example of how teachers' subjective interpretations end in students' referrals occurs when a Latino student jokes with a teacher after the teacher has attempted to correct a particular behavior. In this situation, the teacher may misinterpret that behavior as being defiant or rude. The student, however, uses this same joke at home with parents to show that *there are no hard feelings* on this student's part. Teachers who are not knowledgeable of that student's culture could find such behavior unacceptable and inexcusable. Then an inaccurate interpretation is applied in the situation, and ultimately the student suffers negative repercussions and this causes the trust in the teacher to be diminished.

Teachers and students do not ascribe the same meanings and intentions to student behavior, and this inconsistency contributes to the alarming referral patterns that exist in schools with diverse populations of students. Skiba et al. (2002) found that students of color, and particularly African American students, overwhelmingly received harsher punishments for misbehavior than their Caucasian counterparts. Skiba et al. asserted,

> Fear may . . . contribute to over-referral. Teachers who are prone to accepting stereotypes of adolescent African American males as threatening or dangerous may overreact to relatively minor threats to authority, especially if their anxiety is paired with a misunderstanding of cultural norms of social interaction. (p. 336)

In 21st century classrooms, there is a disconnect between teachers and students, and this is a major reason for many management conflicts that surface in the classroom. These conflicts are couched in misinterpretations that are shaped by the socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and ethnic inconsistencies that exist between teachers and students. A significant number of teachers in the United States continue to be from European-American and middle or upper-class backgrounds; whereas, the student population has become increasingly diverse (Howard, 2010).

In many classrooms, teachers are predominantly Caucasian and students are increasingly non-Caucasian. Some teachers and students of color possess different racialized and cultural experiences that become a roadblock for academic and social success. Teachers must reflect upon their own worldviews and continuously attempt to understand their students for increased effectiveness in teaching minority students (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

There is a need to provide support for teachers to help them increase universal practices for all students. Further, there is a need for targeted supports for at-risk students because of the increasing population of diverse students in schools from different cultural backgrounds with different beliefs. In one study, most of the teachers indicated that they were not confident that the social behavioral interventions they used had the desired impact on students (Stormont, Reinke, & Herman, 2011). Farmer and colleagues (2006) described a number of strategies teachers could use to manage social dynamics in the classroom. For example, teachers can downplay social status or provide multiple routes to social status. Farmer et al. (2006) suggested that teachers who were highly attuned to classroom social dynamics and who frequently used strategies actively to manage social relationship challenges, usually had students who reported a more positive sense of peer community, a greater enjoyment of school and learning, and were viewed as less aggressive by their classmates.

Research suggests that schools of education across the United States lack programs that prepare teachers to be able to teach and manage behaviors displayed by students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Research also added that teachers need training to help them to work effectively in schools with a large number of students of color (Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Schools can provide preservice training and on-going preparation training from outside organizations to help teachers acquire skills and knowledge they need in order to manage

behavior in diverse classrooms. Teachers can also observe skillful teachers in a diverse classroom and use these teachers as resources to learn about other cultures. Moreover, teachers who are trained specifically to work with culturally diverse students have greater levels of teacher efficacy to work with those students (Siwatu & Starker, 2010).

Challenging behaviors continue to be a growing concern in schools because of students' individual culture, beliefs, values, and home language. This study will use a case study approach to describe the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students. It will also describe how teachers' beliefs influence their practices in teaching students with behavior issues. Research has demonstrated that classroom rules are effective in children's use of desired behaviors and skills while helping to alleviate challenging behaviors (Benedict, Horner, & Squires, 2007). Literature shows that many teachers are reluctant to work in culturally diverse settings (Bleicher, 2011; Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003; Terrill & Mark, 2000). Gay (2010) stated that the reasons for teachers to be reluctant to work in culturally diverse setting may be clarified by understanding teachers' beliefs about students from diverse backgrounds.

Teachers' beliefs influence teacher efficacy, behavior, perceptions, instructional judgements and decisions, and pedagogical practices (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Pajares, 1992). A better understanding of teachers' beliefs may clarify the reluctance of many teachers (Bleicher, 2011) to teach in a culturally diverse setting (Gay, 2010). The cultural and experiential gap between teachers and African American students hinders effective instruction and behavior management in the classrooms. Losen (2011) reported that African American male students who attended middle school were 28% more likely to be suspended at least once, almost three times that of the 10% for White students. These students were suspended for inappropriate

behavior, fighting, disruptive behavior and threatening other students. The federal government stated that African American students were three times more likely than White students to be expelled or suspended and this came from the U.S Department of Justice and Education 2014 "Dear Colleague Letter". It is the aim of this study to help the educational systems improve student discipline strategies, in addition to helping educators step out of their boundaries and learn how to manage student behavior in their classrooms from different perspectives.

Situation to Self

As a Black male from Africa, I have experienced culture shock, encountered unfamiliar weather, worked with people whose values were different from mine and students from different cultural backgrounds. I faced challenges in adjusting to the lifestyle during my first years in the United States. As an African American male researcher, and being a school administrator in a predominantly Black school district, I have seen much when it comes to embracing other cultures and learning to accept students and their culture. I work hard daily at school with the staff trying to educate them about other cultures and how to embrace diversity despite our differences because I know how it feels to be treated as an outcast. Based on this qualitative study, I would like to understand how some teachers are able to manage minority student behavior and what practices they are using that make them effective teachers. Addressing race in schools is a difficult thing to do, and my school has a majority of teachers of other races. In this qualitative study, I strove to remain neutral when reporting findings.

Epistemology is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Crotty, 2003). Social constructivism is the epistemological stance used in this study because of my experiences as a minority, my cultural background, life experiences, and values. The purpose of the study is to understand how constructivist teachers create a context for learning in

which students can become engaged in activities that encourage and facilitate learning. The study is based on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism ideas as it focuses not only how adults and peers influence individual learning, but on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact how instruction and learning take place. It also looks at important contributions that society makes to individual development. Sociocultural theory gives insight about the ways people interact with others and the culture in which they live. In turn, these interactions shape their beliefs and actions. Vygotsky (1978) stressed the important roles that culture and cultural differences can have in a child's development. This will further help me to understand better, how culture plays an important role in shaping human behavior and also know what occurs in the society. This perspective is related to contemporary theories that were developed by Vygotsky, and by Bandura (1986), the father of social cognitive theory.

Problem Statement

In the United States, there is a growing consensus in schools that teaching students of diverse backgrounds and experiences is a challenging task for teachers who are not familiar with the students' backgrounds, culture, beliefs, and values (United States Department of Education, 2010). Teachers' beliefs and practices play an important role in classroom behavior management (United States Department of Education, 2010). The cultural and experiential gap between teachers and students hinders effective instruction. In the United States, the rate of suspension among African-American students (15%) was approximately three times greater than the risk for Caucasian students (4.8%) during the same period (United States Department of Education, 2010). This disproportionate punishment of minority students is a well-documented problem and a concern for communities in the United States.

Previous studies point to socio-economic factors, racial biases, and cultural differences that might contribute to what has been termed the *discipline gap* between minority and Caucasian students (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Many teachers are hesitant to work in culturally diverse settings or schools (Bleicher, 2011; Futrell et al., 2003; Terrill & Mark, 2000). Gay (2010) noted that the reasons for this reluctance may be clarified by understanding teachers' beliefs about students from diverse backgrounds. In diverse classrooms, teachers' beliefs significantly influence teacher efficacy, perception, behavior, decisions, and pedagogical practices. In American schools, race and socioeconomic status (SES) are connected highly (McLoyd, 1998), raising the possibility that racial disparities in school discipline can be associated with SES factors, as well. With a teaching force in most American school districts that is predominantly White and female, the possibility of cultural mismatch or racial stereotyping as a contributing factor in disproportionate office referrals cannot be discounted (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

From a global view point, Chen and Astor (2010) discovered that Western risk factors, including attitudes towards aggression and the quality of student-teacher relationships, were predictive of school violence in Taiwan. Teachers should create an environment that promotes interactions among students and teachers. Lack of interactions or lack of willingness of teachers to accept, accommodate, or respond to students' needs hinders students' emotional, social, and intellectual growth. Research suggests a strong link between school social climate and student behavior (Hopson & Lee, 2011; Lo et al., 2011; White & Warfa, 2011). Schools with positive and sound socio-emotional climates have lower rates of behavior issues and student suspensions. Nationally, many schools are faced with the need to change their approach on how they discipline students based on overwhelming evidence that shows the ineffectiveness of common

disciplinary practices that administrators and students schools use such as suspension and expulsion (Hopson & Lee, 2011; Lo et al., 2011; White & Warfa, 2011). Changing teachers' beliefs about students of color can help improve teachers' willingness to work in diverse schools and improve teacher efficacy. A better understanding of effective teachers' beliefs and corresponding practices may clarify the reluctance of many teachers to teach in a culturally diverse setting (Bleicher, 2011; Gay, 2010).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nested case study was to describe the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students in three schools in rural Georgia. Teacher effectiveness was operationally defined by observing teachers in action and judging their effectiveness in managing African American students' behavior in their classrooms. Effectiveness was judged based on these levels: very poor, average, above average, and excellent. At this stage in the research, beliefs were generally defined as "conceptions" (Thompson, 1992, p. 132), world views, and "mental models" that shape learning and teaching practices (Ernest, 1989, p. 250). Practices were generally defined as serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the –art teaching. The theory guiding this study is Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory as it gives an insight into the ways people interact with others and the culture they live in which shapes their beliefs and actions. Vygotsky believed that parents, relatives, peers, and society all have an important role in forming higher levels of functioning.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the sense that it explores the beliefs and practices of effective teachers who are able to manage student behavior in culturally diverse classrooms. The study was conducted in an economically deprived rural school district, with three schools that serve

students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The majority of the students were African American students; the teachers were Caucasian.

In the literature review on social cultural management programs with students, there is a gap in the beliefs and practices of teachers implementing effective social cultural management programs with African American students. Findings from this study will fill the knowledge gap within the sociocultural theory by describing how effective teachers developed culturally sensitive beliefs and practices to improve African American students' behavior. It is expected that findings from this study will be consistent with the findings from an extensive literature review, suggesting that, given the dramatic differences in teachers' levels of attunement to social dynamics, focused efforts to help teachers attend to relevant cues in the classroom environment could be especially helpful (Hamm, Farmer, Lambert, & Gravelle, 2013). The study will contribute to the field of education and to educators by identifying the importance of developing culturally sensitive teachers who conceive of culture as a dynamic process of interaction, communication, socialization, and education.

Educational programs should develop teachers who acknowledge, validate, and address group and individual differences between and within cultural groups (Hamm, Farmer, Dadisman, Gravelle, & Murray, 2011). These findings are consistent with other research, suggesting that teacher knowledge of classroom peer affiliation patterns are associated with more positive school adjustment (Hamm et al., 2011; Neal, Capella, Wagner, & Atkins., 2011) and that teachers' active efforts to support positive friendship connections can foster social and academic adjustment (Farmer et al., 2006; Gest & Rodkin, 2011). Teaching practices reflect teachers' beliefs that, in turn, reflect their own experiences and backgrounds (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Cuba, 1984; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988).

Teachers can examine their experiences and attitudes about teaching in racially culturally, and linguistically diverse classrooms and reflect upon their beliefs and how these beliefs affect teaching practices. This study will shed light on the ability of educators to link their culture with that of African American students in order to gain insights regarding students' behavior. Gaining insight will help teachers use more effective practices to manage their classrooms. Additionally, the study will identify content such as awareness of cultural values, biases, and social and cultural influences affecting teaching and learning which may be infused into the college programs that prepare effective teachers.

Research Questions

The study was conducted in a low socioeconomic, rural school district, with only three schools. The central question that was explored is: What are the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students? Additional questions will be explored to gain a better understanding of the beliefs and practices of effective teachers in the behavior management of African American students. The following are sub-questions:

1. What are the beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students?

    Effective teachers examine their beliefs about teaching and explore the effectiveness of their practices in accommodating various cultures, lifestyles, and their students' learning styles. Teaching practices reflect teachers' beliefs which, in turn, reflect their own experiences and backgrounds (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Cuba, 1984; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988). Therefore, the purpose of this question is to explore teachers' beliefs and how they apply their beliefs in helping students with behavior issues

academically and socially. The use of open-ended interviews helped the researcher to get a better understanding of teachers' beliefs on how they manage African American students' behavior. Responses from the teachers were categorized into themes for each case and between cases.

2. What are the *practices* of teachers who are effective in their behavior management of African American students?

The ways in which teachers managed their classrooms provided a glimpse into their effective practices. Observations from each teacher, lesson plans, and interview responses clarified teachers' effective practices in managing African American students' behavior. In the classrooms, all teachers had rituals and routines which were arranged to promote smooth transitions from one lesson to the next without loss of instructional time.

3. What are the *social characteristics of the classroom environment* of the teachers who are effective in behavior management?

Creating a learning environment takes planning, and it involves both physical space and cognitive space. Effective teachers are those who create and implement classroom management practices which motivate students to learn. Through observation, it was clear that effective teachers created a classroom environment that was nurturing and supportive while also promoting interactions between students. In the classrooms, teachers encouraged students to use kind words and talk to their friends in order to solve problems. Children's thoughts and feelings were validated by these effective teachers.

4. How does the school environment influence teachers' beliefs and practices in their classroom management?

School environment encompasses the physical environment, the social system, and the relationships between principals, teachers, and students. School climate and culture play an important role in student achievement and behavior. A school that has shared values, shared beliefs, and social norms provides an environment that makes it easier for teachers to manage their diverse classrooms. Schools that have well-established behavioral expectations for students, teachers, and all visitors from different cultures create a safe and supportive school environment. This research question is designed to establish how the school environment influences teachers' beliefs and practices in the classroom, how the school culture and climate impactstudent achievement and behavior, and how the school environment reflects the community's culture.

Definitions

As the study explores the belief and practices of teachers who are effective in their classroom behavior management in a diverse school system in rural Georgia, it is important to state that there were important terms used to mold the study. These terms are defined below in an attempt to foster a better understanding of key concepts in the study.

1. *Sociocultural theory* - According to Palincsar and Scott (2009), "The work of sociocultural theory is to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context; hence, the focus of the sociocultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organized activities play in influencing psychological development" (p. 1). Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This equally applies to voluntary attention,

logical memory, and the formation of concepts. All of the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

2. *Cultural diversity* - This term is used to describe variation between people in terms of a range of factors such as ethnicity, national origin, race, gender, ability, age, physical characteristics, religion, values, beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, or life experiences (RNAO, 2007).

3. *Classroom management* - Stronge (2007) defined classroom management as a term including discipline, as well as room arrangement, routines, teaching plans, and organization of the learning environment.

4. *Self-efficacy* - An individual's belief that instructional effectiveness affects student learning (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Cheong, 1992; Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006).

5. *Teachers' beliefs* - BouJaoude (2000) defined teachers' beliefs as a referent part of existing knowledge that guides actions.

6. *Beliefs* - Personal judgments formulated from experiences (Raymond, 1997, p. 552)

7. *Practices* - The actual applications or use of ideas, beliefs, or methods as opposed to theories about an application or use.

Summary

Classroom disciplinary climate has a great effect on student learning and achievement, and the ability of teachers to manage their classrooms effectively is critically important in increasing students' learning opportunities. Teachers' beliefs and corresponding practices play an important role in creating a positive learning environment that accommodates students from all cultural backgrounds. Therefore, as behavior issues continue to increase in schools (Irvine, 2003), there is need to develop culturally relevant curriculum and instruction for all students in

P-12 classrooms. Research suggests that successful teachers of culturally diverse students adopt parental/surrogate roles with their students (Irvine, 2003).

The remainder of the dissertation is organized into the following chapters: Chapter Two provides a review of selected literature and research, Chapter Three describes research methods and procedures, Chapter Four presents the findings of the investigation, and Chapter Five provides a summary of the study and discusses its conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Many schools in the United States are densely populated with students from diverse cultures, with varying backgrounds, beliefs, norms, and values. This diverse population of students presents challenging behavioral issues that require intervention. Some of these children struggle with behavioral problems because they have emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD). These serious and persistent behaviors interfere with students' learning and teachers often resort to reactive and punitive strategies that have many negative drawbacks. Teachers often resort to punitive strategies because they lack training in managing problem behavior in their classrooms (Irvine, 2003; Raudenbush et al., 1992; Stronge, 2007; Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006).

Disruptive students display behaviors which may include aggression towards their peers and teachers, and a lack of interpersonal skills. Student behavior problems have caused many counties to establish policies designed to strengthen behavior support systems, such as the Positive Behavior Support (PBS). PBS is a framework developed for use by school administrators and teachers. Even though educators in schools employ PBS, there are still several gaps between existing policies and educational practices in many schools. Translating these behavior support systems into practice is a great challenge. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to discuss the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students. This chapter explains the theoretical framework which describes beliefs and effective practices that can be used by teachers to manage classroom behaviors exhibited by students from diverse cultural backgrounds.   The development of these beliefs and practices will be explored, as well.

Theoretical Framework

This study is shaped by sociocultural theory created by Lev Vygotsky (1978) as a response to behaviorism. Watson (1930) defined behaviorism as a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Behaviorism focuses on an individual's behavior. The main idea of sociocultural theory is that individuals are aware of circumstances surrounding them and how their behaviors are shaped by their surroundings, and social and cultural factors. Vygotsky believed that parents, relatives, peers, and society all have an important role in shaping an individual's behavior. Vygotsky's theory makes teachers aware of their vision of students as defined by students' age and IQ as compared to culturally and socially stimulated learners. This vision helps teachers to see themselves as role models as compared to being sources of knowledge. Vygotsky theorized that for humans to reach their fullest cultural development, they must facilitate meaningful relationships with others (Kaptelinin, 1999). Educators should encourage social interactions in an educational setting and also recognize inherent diversity of experiences in their classrooms.

There are other major theories that advance and inform the literature on the topic of study, such as the social cognitive theory proposed by Miller and Dollard in 1941. Later in 1963, Bandura and Walters broadened the social learning theory with the principles of observational learning. There are many definitions of this theory but the best one that fits this study is that people learning through observation and experiences assume control of their own behavior (Ormrod, 2011). Bandura (1977) developed the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief that one can execute the needed steps to achieve a goal. This theory suggests that every individual has a certain level of confidence in their ability to perform a task, and their level of confidence influences what they do. Teacher self-efficacy can be conceptualized as

individual teachers' beliefs in their ability to plan, organize, and carry out activities that are needed to attain given educational goals as per social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory focuses on cognitive and emotional aspects, as well as aspects of behavior for understanding behavior change. This theory helps educators understand how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral patterns, and it also provides intervention strategies (Bandura, 1997).

This social cognitive theory plays an important role in providing a framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating programs that can be used to manage behavior in the classroom. This framework provides the foundation for future research about effective practices that can be used by teachers to manage classroom behaviors exhibited by students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Social cognitive theory involves perceived collective efficacy that represents shared beliefs in the power of group effort in order to produce desired effects by collective action (Bandura, 1997, 2000). Social cognitive theory guides teachers in their classrooms where they work as agents who intentionally influence students' functioning and life circumstances. In the classroom, teachers are viewed as direct personal agent. Social cognitive theory is well-suited to clarify human personal development, adaptation, and change in diverse cultural settings.

Related Literature

According to Sanderson (2010), the sociocultural perspective entails a view of individuals' behavior patterns as behavioral and mental processes developed or produced by their contact with others within their race, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Sociocultural perspective theory is significant because it applies to all the sectors of life such as communicating, coping with one another, and relating to one another. Sociocultural theories describe learning and development as being embedded within social events and occurring as a

learner interacts with other people, objects, and events in the collaborative environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theories state that human cognition develops through engagement in social activities when an individual interacts with other people and events.

According to Johnson (2009), human cognitive development cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and historical contexts from which such development emerges. African American culture plays a vital role in African American students' behavior and their academic achievement. Betancourt and Lopez (1993) defined culture as *subjective culture*, which includes all the ideas, objects, and ways of doing things created by a group of people. Subjective culture includes ethnic identification such as national origin, language, beliefs, social norms, values, communication patterns, and values that concern an individual's spirituality or religion. Sociocultural learning occurs when there is interaction, negotiation, and collaboration among teachers and students. Lack of understanding how culture, learning, and school achievement interrelate is a significant problem when approaching behavioral issues in the school environment. Teachers with limited understanding of such dynamics constrain their ability to support positive schooling outcomes of African American students.

Behavioral Disorders

Students with behavioral and emotional disorders demonstrate inconsistent responses to teachers' requests and display behaviors that are disruptive to the classroom environment (Banks, 2014). According to research, social and emotional skills are very important to early school engagement and classroom adjustment (Denham, 2006; Knitzer, 2003; Ladd, Herald, & Kochel, 2006; Raver, 2002; Thompson & Raikes, 2007). Students who lack social skills have a hard time engaging in socially mediated classroom learning activities and they also have problems in establishing relationships with teachers and peers (Fantuzzo, Bulotsky, McDermont,

Mosca, & Lutz, 2003; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000). Emotional and behavioral problems occur during early grades as young students work on building skills with language and as they develop capacities to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Educators cannot sit back and ignore students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, because a large number of these students are being included into the general education classrooms. Westling (2010) found that most teachers do not use effective classroom management strategies and scrutinize challenging student behavior as having a negative impact on the overall classroom environment, as well as on subsequent interactions between students and teachers. It is essential for teachers to learn effective practices that can be implemented in the classrooms to help minimize inappropriate behaviors.

Although teachers prefer positive interventions over punishment to manage classroom behavior, many classrooms are not actually positive learning environments (Banks, 2014). Students with emotional and behavioral disorders tend to earn lower grades or fail courses, and this puts them in situations where they see themselves being retained or they drop out of school. To compensate for all of this, they tend to resort to misbehaving in the classroom or becoming defiant to adults. Because of their struggle to function in the classroom, they exhibit extremely disruptive behaviors, and they also tend to isolate themselves from the rest of the students. These students display high rates of inappropriate behavior, low rates of positive behavior, and these behaviors influence their academic outcomes.

Students who struggle to function in the classroom socially and academically display patterns of antisocial behaviors. Walker, Ramsey, and Gresham (2004) warned, that as these students get older, they wreak havoc on schools. As soon as these aggressive, disruptive, and defiant students enter the classroom, their aim is to disrupt the learning of all of the students.

Their actions overwhelm teachers while simultaneously ruining their chances for successful

schooling and successful life as productive citizens of their community.

Disruptive classroom behaviors are a great concern in the schools because they pose

significant and personal challenges for teachers. These behaviors threaten teacher authority and

control in the classroom and can diminish teachers' feelings of self-efficacy (Fields, 2004;

Wiley, 2000). Additionally, misbehaving students may experience internalized behaviors that

involve depression or social isolation. Identifying such behaviors is very difficult because they

are not overt or observable. Sometimes these internal behaviors are referred to as intropunitive.

Some behaviors are externalized, and these appear as children interact with their environment.

Failure to interact with the environment causes the child to act in a way that causes conflict with

other people in that surrounding.

Students who display externalized behaviors break rules and display physical behaviors

that can harm other people or objects. In school, externalized behaviors may include a failure to

comply with school norms and societal, and consistent rule breaking. In the classroom, these

students tend to walk around without permission, fail to complete their work, and struggle to get

along with their peers.

Misbehavior

Misbehavior is defined as any student behavior that is perceived by the teacher to

compete with or threaten the academic actions at a particular moment (Burden, 1995, p. 15).

Some authors define misbehavior as a student's all-intended or unintended behavior that prevents

any educational effort, corrupts the teaching-learning process, seriously hinders schools' normal

processes, and disregards and exploits the common rights of students and teachers in schools and

classrooms (Başar, 1998; Kyriacou, 1986; Lawrence & Steed, 1984, cited in Türnüklü, 1999;

Boz, 2003; Çelik, 2003; Küçükahmet, 2001; Celep, 2008). Misbehavior not only affects students' learning and their academic activities negatively, but misbehavior also leads to conflicts among students and between students and teachers. Students with behavior issues frequently are off task during instructional time, and they try to get attention from their teacher and other students by displaying disruptive behaviors. The majority of students who exhibit challenging behaviors have poor school and life outcomes (Kauffman & Landrum, 2012).

Students' misbehavior in the classroom is unavoidable because students can misbehave due to prior experiences in or out of school (Bull & Solity, 1996). Research shows that some students' misbehavior does not originate from students' personal identities, but sometimes from their teachers' behavior (Stephens & Crawley, 1994). Students from different backgrounds with varying characteristics misbehave for many reasons which may include an unstable classroom climate. Teachers who acknowledge other cultures and use effective approaches can modify student behavior by cultivating an appropriate classroom environment and climate. In chaotic classrooms, misbehavior prevents the teaching-learning process and affects the communication between the teacher and the students.

Social Competence

Rubin and Rose-Krasnor (1992) define social competence as "the ability to achieve personal goals in social interaction while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others over time and across situations" (p. 208). Social competence can also be referred to as an individual's ability to get along with other human being, and it is also viewed as the ability to maintain peer relationships while simultaneously exhibiting pro-social behavior in school. As children grow, their social competence is affected by how well they communicate with other people. Social competence involves behaviors like communicating effectively with peers and

adults, listening to other people, taking turns, listening to others, and not being aggressive. A student's social competence can be described as the ability of an individual student to maintain appropriate interpersonal relationships through cooperation, responsiveness, assuming social responsibility, and behaving in friendly, warm, and other positive ways (Barry & Wigfield, 2002; Gjerde & Shimizu, 1995; Green & Rechis, 2006).

Literature suggests that there is a positive association between students' social competence and their academic performance including achievement, school adjustment, and motivation for schoolwork (Patrick, 1997). Students who experience isolation or rejection experience low social competence and such students display regular behavioral problems. Social competence is very important during childhood because it promotes socialization and children's ability to sustain close relationships with other students. Research suggests that children who do not have a basic level of social competence at the age of 6 tend to have trouble with relationships when they become adults (Blandon, Calkins, Grimm, Keane & O'Brien, 2010; Ladd, 2000; Parker & Asher, 1987). Adults such as teachers play an important role in influencing children's social behavior because they spend most of the day in school under the care of their teachers. It is important to note that family members also play a vital role in the development of a child's social behavior. Students from diverse cultural and family backgrounds can exhibit behaviors that are unacceptable or viewed as unacceptable by other cultures. Teachers play an important role when it comes to bridging students' differences. Teachers in their classrooms can bridge these differences by creating communities that are open, honest, and willing to embrace other cultures.

Social competence plays an important role in preventing behavioral problems that exist in schools (Blandon et al. 2010; Ladd, 2000; Parker & Asher, 1987). As children grow up, they

need to develop social skills that will enable them to interact with their peers and teachers, regulate their anger and aggression, and resolve conflicts in a mature manner. Therefore, social competence has a great influence on students' performance in school. Establishing friendships is key to social competence, and this promotes a strong correlation between school achievement and measures of competence. Students who don't get along with their peers and teachers tend to shift their focus to their problems and this causes them to lose concentration in their academics. Kavale and Forness (1995) indicated that about seventy-five percent of the students with learning difficulties lacked social skills. Students who lack social skills are products of environments that are not conducive to learning acceptable social skills. Students who come from environments that lack structure, violent homes, or violent communities have problems in socializing with other students in school. Students need certain skills to be successful in any given society, and if they lack these skills, they cannot establish or maintain relationships.

Social competence embraces empathic and legal dimensions where an individual behaves in a way that satisfies his or her own rights, needs and goals while satisfying those of his or her interaction partners. Students and teachers who have developed an understanding of emotional expressions and how to respond to them are in a better position of understanding other people's feelings and this helps them understand how their own behavior can affect other people's feelings. Social and emotional competence is something that is learned through socialization. In this 21st century era, parents and teachers are responsible for teaching children how to socialize and get along with other children. Garner (2010) stated that emotions are fundamental to a child's academic and cognitive achievement. Children who are able to adjust socially and emotionally to school are successful in their academic endeavors(McWayne, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2004). On the other hand, those students whose emotional, behavioral, or social

needs are not addressed usually struggle in school (Rones & Hoagwood, 2000). Children's social competence is grounded in their early childhood experiences and their social competence behaviors which are shaped by their traits, family, and school interactions.

For learning to take place, there should be interaction between the teacher and the students. Teachers have a direct impact on the development of students' emotional and social abilities (Raver & Knitzer, 2002). They influence how students interact, socialize, and behave by supporting or discouraging the development of social and emotional competence. To promote social and emotional competence, teachers should provide positive relationships with students, create a classroom community, and have students who are academically successful and engaged (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). The relationship that teachers create with their students helps them understand their students better, especially those that are from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds.

Diverse Culture

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008) defined diversity as differences in groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, language, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, exceptionalities, and religion. Twenty-first century classrooms are highly populated by students from diverse backgrounds which has caused a need for better and more effective methods for teachers to use to teach and manage student behavior. It is the responsibility of teachers to create a classroom culture that welcomes all students, regardless of their cultural background, and to provide the best learning opportunities. Effective teachers are always prepared to address the changing demographics of school communities and the academic and cultural needs of the diverse students they teach (Howard, 2010; NCATE, 2008).

In this world with dynamic cultural changes, there is a need for an educational paradigm that caters to students with different cultures, and one paradigm that captures the nature of this interplay is sociocultural theory. A large number of the teachers in the United States continue to be from European-American and middle or upper-class backgrounds, while the student population has become increasingly diverse (Howard, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) reported that almost half of the United States student population in 2008-2009 was non-White. With this increasingly diverse population of students in classrooms, there is need for educational coursework on multiculturalism to help teachers overcome the obstacles they face as educators of children in diverse settings.

It is the duty of educators to ensure that every student gets an equal opportunity for education, regardless to their cultural differences. The literature continues to show that classroom management is a serious concern for teachers in schools with diverse learning environments. Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) stated, "Literature reveals that there has been less focus on classroom management where the population of students is culturally diverse" (p.34). The authors also purported that the matters of classroom management, instruction, learning, and diversity are almost inseparable. As noted in other studies, there is a discipline gap when it comes to classroom management and diversity. Cultural and linguistic differences add complexity to what can be a very daunting task for some teachers (Banks, 2014). Therefore, it is very important for teachers to develop culturally effective disciplinary techniques to help reduce unwanted behaviors among culturally and linguistically diverse learners. To be culturally responsive, teachers should strive to understand cultural and linguistic differences and the associated needs of students from various cultural backgrounds (Ford & Kea, 2009).

Researchers have theorized that cultural conflict causes school failure for African American students, especially those from low-income backgrounds (Byers & Byers, 1972; Nieto, 2000; Gay, 2000). The majority of the students who are referred to the office for discipline issues are students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. These students tend to get in trouble because inconsistencies exist within the rules or the culture of power. Teachers spend most of their time handling disciplinary problems and less time on instruction because of the lack of the knowledge regarding how to respond to diverse students. It is clear that not only instructional time is lost, but students who get suspended or expelled suffer academic consequences.

According to social identity theory individuals are likely to perceive differences between themselves and others, and to classify themselves and others into different social categories (Ashforth, & Mael, 1989). Classroom management and social-emotional learning are related in a number of ways. Social emotional skills form the foundation for children's positive behavior in school (Boyd, Barnett, Bodrova, Leong, & Gomby, 2005; Denham, 2006; Raver, 2002). The way individuals perceive themselves shapes the way they select whom they can interact with and from whom they should isolate themselves. There are key social-emotional skills that students need in order to manage their behavior, such as focusing, listening attentively, following directions, managing emotions, dealing with conflicts, and working cooperatively with peers (Jones & Bouffard, 2013). Students with strong social skills are less disruptive in class. Creating social groups also creates tension among these groups and discipline issues emanate from such situations. These social dynamics could promote social aggression, bullying, and disruptive behavior (Rodkin, 2011), and may also foster a normative peer culture in which academic engagement and effort are not valued, but are perceived to be a social risk (Hamm,

Schmid, Farmer, & Locke, 2011). It is the role of teachers to find ways to become knowledgeable about diverse cultures so that they can support prosocial behavior in diverse classrooms and schools. Educators in schools should create a climate that supports ethnic diversity and pluralism.

Lack of knowledge about other cultures creates conflict between teachers and students because some behaviors could be viewed as unacceptable and inexcusable by teachers because they incorrectly interpret a culture; while to the student, it is how they joke at home with their parents. Research findings have shown that teachers' beliefs about their students will influence student performance (Good & Nichols, 2001). Knowing other cultures and their norms can help teachers understand their students better and be able to serve them according their individual needs. Educators must use their own social-emotional skills to establish high-quality relationships with students (Greenberg & Jennings, 2009; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Teachers should avoid distancing themselves from their students because they do not know their culture, and instead, they should strive to learn about the students' home lives and cultural backgrounds and also learn about their needs. When students realize that teachers distance themselves, they begin to develop mistrust, and then begin to question why they have to listen to the teacher. Some students misbehave so that they can use this as a way of distancing themselves from uncaring and disrespectful teachers. Sstudents behave better when they perceive their teachers to be supportive, responsive, and caring (Wang & Holcombe, 2010).

Academic Achievement Gap

One of the most toxic problems facing American society is the significant gap in educational achievement between African American and Caucasian students. Scholars have identified some of the factors that explain achievement gaps between African American and

Caucasian students such as family composition, poverty, teacher/school quality, and achievement motivation (Davis-Kean, 2005; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; Rankin & Quane, 2002). The achievement gap has continued to exist because of the lack of attention to what Milner (2007) identified as "unseen dangers" (p. 388) in education research. The desegregation of students created some issues that were not obvious at that time. Desegregation required teachers and administrators to learn how to nurture the development of students from different backgrounds, and at the same time, identify ways of confronting cultural differences of their students.

Teachers are required to examine peer culture, cultural values, and quality of schools in order to serve their students better in their learning. The National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that the average African American twelfth grade student's proficiency is roughly the same as the average Caucasian eighth grader (Roach, 2004). The cause for this low performance by African American students is that majority of black parents are poor and they do not spend time reading to their children (Roach, 2004). Research shows that it is critical that children be cognitively and socially stimulated from birth with frequent reading so that they perform better academically (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Research over the past several years demonstrates that children who are read to by their parents on a regular basis tend to become better readers and perform better in school (e.g.,Abdullah-Welsh, Flaherty, & Bosma, 2009; Douglas, Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010; Mortimore & Wall, 2009; Roberts, Jürgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). African American children are three times more likely than Caucasian children to be poor (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2011), and they have a high risk for reading difficulties and dropping out of school. African American children are overrepresented in special programs for students with disabilities (Obiakor, Beachum. & Harris, 2010; Patterson,

2005), and are frequently isolated or blamed for their behavior by their teachers. This contributes to their lack of confidence, poor academic performance, lack of interest in school, and finally drop-out of school.

Education research has placed more emphasis on the gap in achievement across racial and ethnic groups but less-to-no emphasis on disproportionate suspensions and expulsion of African American students. The primary discipline strategy that most schools rely on when dealing with disruptive students is the exclusion of these students from the classroom. The use of exclusion as a discipline practice has a disproportionate impact on African American students and thus contributes to racial gaps in academic achievement. Demographic characteristics that contribute to the racial discipline gap are low-income and high-poverty neighborhoods. There are other factors that also contribute to the racial discipline gap such as negative teacher beliefs and expectations. Teachers who overreact and rely on stereo-types to interpret African American students' physical expression and language create an atmosphere that is polluted by negative teacher-student interactions.

In U.S. schools, the majority of African American students are educated by teachers who are not of their racial or cultural background. According to Lewis (2006) and the U.S. Department of Education (2003), 87% of teachers for both elementary and secondary schools are White and 8% are Black. Effective teachers of African American students believe that these students have a potential to score higher on achievement tests compared with other races. African American students should not be viewed from a deficit perspective by teachers. Teachers' lack of cultural understanding cultivates a negative attitude towards African American students which in turn reduces effective teaching by teachers. In addition to factors such as low income, inferior school resources, and lack of parental involvement, research literature shows

that teachers' failure to address or value African American students' primary culture could also be a significant factor in their academic success (Hale, 2001; Irvine, 1990).

In the classroom, teachers have the greatest effect on students' behavior and academic achievement. It is the teacher's responsibility to encourage students' perceptions that they are being treated fair and that the teacher cares about them while providing quality education. A teacher's ability to address cultural diversity in the classroom in relation to the teacher's social location has an impact on a student's academic success (Delpit, 1992; Marks, 2005). Educators who create positive teacher-student relationships and support students in the learning environment impact students' social and academic outcomes (Delpit, 1992; Marks, 2005). Teachers who bring their beliefs that are conceived from their experiences and teachings tend to have problems in managing African American students' behavior and addressing their educational needs (Delpit, 1992; Marks, 2005). Further, teachers who come into the classroom with a preconceived notion about African American students create an environment that hinders learning. Teachers should recalibrate their attitudes and methods of teaching, and be sensitive to cultural needs of African American students. Additionally, students may benefit from teachers embracing their cultural practices and values in the classroom. In order to improve academic achievement of African American students, teachers should hold African American students to the same academic standard as their White peers and also take time to learn the backgrounds and needs of the students.

Educators should pay attention to the affective needs of their students and build caring relations with their students. According to Gay (2000) characteristics of both caring and uncaring teachers are:

Caring teachers are distinguished by their high performance expectations, advocacy, and

empowerment of students as well as by their use of pedagogical practices that facilitate

success. The reverse is true for those who are non-caring. Their attitudes and behaviors

take the form of low expectations, personal distance and disaffiliation from students, and

instructional behaviors that limit student achievement. Just as caring is a foundational

pillar of effective teaching and learning, the lack of it produces inequities in educational

opportunities and achievement outcomes for ethnically different students. (p. 62)

Schools of the new century that are populated by students from different cultures need a

culturally responsive teaching force in the classrooms. Our increasingly diverse educational

environment is largely dominated by teachers from different backgrounds. Most of these

teachers are not able to connect with their students because of racial differences, ethnicity, social,

and behavioral characteristics. Teachers should demonstrate care for their students, be willing to

listen to them and discuss their personal matters. It is still noticeable that even though

improvements were made in public education, there is still a significant gap in achievement

between African American students and White students.

Classroom Management

The primary emphasis for classroom management in a behavioral model is the use of

techniques that bring students' behavior under stimulus control (Brophy, 1999). In culturally

diverse classrooms, teachers should shift from a traditional classroom management approach that

is teacher-centered to a person-centered approach that features shared leadership, community

building, and a balance between the needs of the teachers and students. Lack of empirical data

has left classroom teachers and other people in the field of education without a clear direction

and understanding of what practices to utilize when creating and managing socially complex learning environments (Martin, 2004).

Twenty-first century classrooms have activities and events that are multifaceted, simultaneous, fast occurring, and unpredictable. Therefore, Sugai and Horner (2002) explained that teachers should be well trained to know to which action to pay the most attention. Teachers should be aware of the factors that affect students' behavior and the best classroom management strategy to select to address each behavior problem. Allowing students to have unnecessary free time in the classroom opens doors for students to misbehave. In order to avoid this, Sugai and Horner (2002) suggested that teachers have flexible environments in the classroom, carry out learning experiences in a planned way, and use time effectively; and physical conditions of the classroom should be conducive for learning and communication must be at the level where all students feel free to share ideas.

Strong classroom organization and behavior management skills are critical for both general education and special education teachers (Oliver & Reschly, 2010). Evidence from studies examining the interactions between teachers and their students with behavior concerns indicates that the rates of both positive and negative teacher engagements with students identified with challenging behaviors is very low. In order to create a positive learning environment, teachers can address problematic classroom behaviors by developing appropriate relationships with students (Banks, 2014). Lane, Pierson, Stang, and Cater (2010) reiterated the importance of teacher-student relations, suggesting that students with challenging behaviors are disadvantaged when it comes to getting their instructional time from their teachers because teachers tend to provide fewer instructions and pay less attention to disruptive students.

Classroom management is not about controlling students, but effective classroom management is all about supporting students to manage themselves through learning and activities (Bailey, Jacob, & Jones, 2014). Teachers' classroom management should focus on ways to establish and maintain workable systems for classroom groups, rather than focusing on spotting and punishing misbehaving students, as Sugai and Horner (2002) explained. They added that focus should be on resolving behavioral disorders through gaining the attention of students. Teachers should manage their classrooms in a calm and supportive way. Reactive management can be angry, punitive, inconsistent or unclear, and tends to escalate the problem behavior (Lesaux, Jones, Russ, & Kane, 2014). During instructional time, teachers should be capable of delivering effective instruction at the same time as managing a variety of instructional tasks and student behaviors that are part of the classroom interaction. Some of the best practices that help teachers manage their classrooms well, Sugai and Horner (2002) suggested, are (a) to use classroom rules and procedures; (b) to teach students how to handle disruptions, how to use classroom time wisely, how to be positive all the time, and how to accept other students the way they are; (c) and to respect their learning styles. Literature shows that the personalities of teachers, their teaching style, and their relationship with their students play an important role in determining the undesirable behavior of students in the classroom (Atıcı, 2009; Sugai & Horner, 2002).

School counselors work collaboratively with classroom teachers to promote educational and personal social development (Auger, DeKruyf, Grothaus, & Trice-Black, 2013). Students who exhibit unwanted behaviors in the classroom are referred to the school counselor for intervention or counseling sessions. Counselors also visit classrooms to deliver lessons that help students learn how to get along with their teachers and peers. In order to achieve these aims, it is

crucial for school counselors to prevent students from misbehaving and help teachers to approach students' misbehavior effectively (Atıcı, 2009). When educators provide intervention for misbehaving students at a young age, positive results are possible for students (Corcoran, Broce, & Shadik, 2011). School counselors work hand-in-hand with teachers when it comes to dealing with students' behavioral problems. It can be said that counselors aid those teachers who lack approaches that are needed to deal with misbehaving students. School counselors help by organizing group guidance activities for students, teachers, and parents; and during these meetings, they give advice on how to deal with behavior problems. It is clear that, in schools, discriminatory beliefs and practices play a role in determining who is seen having behavior problems. It is the duty of school counselors to conduct classroom guidance activities that focus on behavior and work with teachers collaboratively (McMahon, 2007).

A disconnection between teachers and students in the classroom is another major cause of behavior issues experienced by teachers in their classrooms. Effective classroom management requires teachers (a) to establish expectations for their students' behavior, (b) to communicate with students in a culturally consistent way, (c) to create inclusive and caring classrooms, and (d) to work with families to build strong relationships (Grothaus & Johnson, 2012). Students should be allowed to have some degree of autonomy in setting classroom rules so that they might feel empowered. The feeling of empowerment could help in making them feel valuable. School counselors are responsible for facilitating collaborations, training school personnel, and equipping them with ideas and strategies that they need when interacting with disruptive students (Bernes, Bernes, & Bardick, 2011; Grothaus & Johnson, 2012).

Teacher-Students Relationships

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2013) shows that in public schools majority of the teachers are White (82%) and most of these teachers are females (72%). The demographics of the students in these schools are very diverse, and there is a growing indication that poverty is increasing rather than decreasing (NCES, 2013). The total teaching force has grown at a fast pace over the past three decades, and there is an indication that the number of African American teachers has not increased as expected to match the overall teacher population. There is a need for African American teachers who can be role models for all students and especially for African American students. African American teachers also promote learning because they have a better understanding of African American students' cultural background and experiences. On the other hand, the population of African American students continues to outpace the pool of African American teachers (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). As diverse population of students increases in schools, a relationship between teachers and students continues to weaken.

Teachers are having difficulty knowing their students well and catering to their needs. This causes students to react in a negative way which, in turn, makes teachers build parallel walls. Ethnic minority students who live in poverty are more likely to face risk factors such as familial instability and exposure to violence, which impacts their behavior in the classroom (Oshima et al. 2010). These students who live under poverty display academic difficulties, and they underperform when compared to their white peers who come from middle class families (Hoff, 2013). In order for teachers to reach students' needs, they have to develop positive teacher-student relationships. To build positive relationships, teachers should teach essential skills that will help students learn how to share, how to listen to others, and how to disagree.

Since every classroom environment contributes to the school culture, teachers should create a shared vision of the school and be role models. Teachers who develop a positive relationship with their students while creating caring classroom communities are able to help their students develop better social skills and perform at high levels academically. It is also very important for educators to display a warm and responsive demeanor to students in order to develop a trusting relationship with them. This allows students to develop socially and emotionally. In such an environment, teachers are able to manage their classrooms effectively.

Effective learning takes place in an environment that promotes communication between teachers and the students. Teachers' interaction with their students has a great impact on the quality of instruction and student behavior. Teachers must be prepared to do the needful changes and adjust the instruction, activities, and assessments that are appropriate to meet the needs of a diverse population of students in the classroom. Teachers are there to provide guidance and support students' development of social and psychological skills (Baker, 2006). Teachers who create a positive relationship with their students promote the quality of both teaching and learning. Communication between teachers and students promotes the cultural, social, and historical backgrounds of both teachers and students. Effective communication and outreach from teachers to students, as a part of the affective domain of education, can greatly promote students' academic growth and general school experience (Cushman & Cowan, 2010).

According to O'Connor, Collins, and Supplee (2012), children who come from low income families and insecure attachments are more likely to follow atypical conflict trajectories. Studies show that African American students who come from low income families are at risk of atypical conflict trajectories (Spilt, Hughes, Wu & Kwok, 2012). The increasing mismatch between racial backgrounds of teachers and students in U.S. schools has increasingly influenced

students' relationships with teachers over time (Thijs, Westhof, & Koomen, 2012). Another contributing factor to the increasingly poor relationships between students and teachers is a lack of teacher-parent relationships. Teachers need to develop quality relationships with parents of African American students and promote cultural continuity between home and school. There is a need for teachers to improve emotional connectedness with African American students in the classroom level in correspondence with the collectivistic nature of African Americans (Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright, 2012).

Positive teacher-student relationships promote good behavior, academic achievement, and decreases drop out of high school students. Relationships between teachers and students have a great impact on students' learning, attitudes toward school, and motivation. A review of the literature indicates that positive relationships between teachers and students have a positive effect on test scores and student engagement, and these relationships motivate students to stay in school. Students who receive strong teacher support coupled with a safe school environment feel connected to the school, and they tend to display high achievement in their academics. Students who are neglected, who receive negative treatment, or who are ignored by their teachers tend to display negative behaviors which may result in dropping out of school.

Regardless of their cultural background or ethnicity, students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Students who have positive relationships with their teachers are more behaviorally and emotionally engaged and their academic performance improves. Teachers who develop relationships with their students by showing high levels of support, love, and care produce students with high levels of academic performance and low levels of behavioral issues. Teachers who lack experience in a diverse racial and cultural environment believe that harsh methods of punishment such as paddling are needed to control African American student

behavior in their classrooms. These teachers who lack behavior management skills have forced schools to hand over authority to school administrators and law enforcement. African American students who display unwanted behaviors find themselves in the correctional system or they eventually drop out of high school as a result of the disciplinary process. This handover of authority promotes the use of the juvenile justice system to redirect students from school systems that are not able to meet student needs (Fuentes, 2011). Schools are resorting to this method of handling discipline because there is a cultural gap between teachers who work with African American students.

Interactions that some teachers have with African American students outside the school setting gives them an idea about the lifestyles that their students have experienced as compared to their colleagues who live in the suburbs. Some teachers share their students' culture and this gives these teachers an advantage when it comes to minimizing differences between home and school. African American teachers can be seen as teachers who reflect the culture of African American students. Teachers who have a strong positive bond with their students create a classroom environment that allows students to engage in academically and socially productive ways (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). This bond between teachers and students helps students to learn about socially appropriate behaviors and how they can benefit from positive relationships with their teachers and peers. Literature shows that students from low-income backgrounds who have strong teacher-student relationships display higher academic achievement and more positive social-emotional adjustment as compared to their peers who lack positive relationships with their teachers (Murray & Malmgren, 2005).

Teacher-student relationships are a major factor that affects students' school engagement, academic motivation, student development, and their behavior (Hughes & Chen, 2011; Roorda,

Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). There is a need for supportive and positive relationships between teachers and students in order to promote a "sense of school belonging" that encourages students' willingness to participate cooperatively in classroom activities (Hughes & Chen, 2011, p. 278).

Students in the classroom sometimes misbehave because of boredom and their unwillingness to tackle challenging tasks. In order for teachers to be able to manage challenging behaviors, it is important that they know their students in order to plan challenging activities that are appropriate for a variety of different abilities within the learning environment (Churchill et al., 2011). It is crucial for teachers to know that behavior and engagement are directly related, and therefore the challenge for teachers is to create a learning environment that will engage their students in learning (Churchill et al., 2011). Teachers who make their classrooms a good place for students to be make students want to be there, to be on task, and to be well-behaved (Churchill et al., 2011, p. 278). In order for teachers to design activities that cater to the needs of their students, teachers must take time to understand individual needs of their students and develop positive relationships that promote learning and minimize behavior issues.

Allocation of Maximum Time for Instruction

One of the major skills necessary for success in schools, in everyday life, and in the work world is effective time management. Allocated time is the time that the state, district, school, or teacher provides the student for instruction (Johnson, 2009). Teachers who effectively manage time provide their students the best opportunity to learn and develop personal habits that lead to effective and wise use of time. In schools, allocated time is the amount of time assigned for instruction in a content area. In an extensive multiyear study of teaching practices, the following findings on the allocation of time were reported (Fisher et al., 1980):

Within reading and mathematics, classes differed in the amount of time allocated to

different skill areas. For example, in one second-grade class, the average student

received 9 minutes of instruction over the whole school year in the arithmetic associated

with the use of money. This figure can be contrasted with classes where the average

second grader was allocated 315 minutes per school year in the curriculum content area

of money. As another example, in the fifth grade some classes received less than 1,000

minutes of instruction in reading comprehension for the second year (about 10 minutes

per day). This figure can be contrasted with classes where the average student was

allocated almost 5,000 minutes of instruction related to comprehension during the school

year (about 50 minutes per day). (p. 16)

Effective teachers engage their students and make sure that they are on task all the time

and actively participating in learning activities. When students are engaged during the lesson,

they ask and respond to questions, and by doing so, they stay on task and are less likely to

misbehave.

Proactive Approach

According to Choi and Chepyator (2012), in the United States there are extreme cultural

differences between teachers and the students they teach. Trends in U. S. public schools show

that predominantly Caucasian teachers work with students from mostly underrepresented

populations that include African American and Hispanic American. Teachers who are able to

manage behavior in their classrooms use a proactive approach. A proactive approach uses a

broader plan for addressing discipline rather than just developing consequences for behavior.

This type of approach focuses on educating students about acceptable and unacceptable behavior

rather than handing out copies of school rules to students (Dunlap, Goodman, McEvoy, & Paris,

2010, p. 3). A proactive school approach towards discipline has "to become woven into the fabric of existing school systems" if it is to be effective (Dunlap, Goodman, McEvoy, & Paris, 2010, p. 41).

Interventions

According to a 2003 report from the United States Supreme Court, a multicultural environment requires social skills that can be developed in ethnically diverse schools through exposure to very diverse people, cultures, and points of view (Asmus, Forsyth, Pei, Stokes, & Teddie, 2013). There is a need for comprehensive, evidence-based interventions to help early childhood educators manage challenging student behaviors in diverse classrooms. There are interventions that are helpful and easy to implement in order to create a climate of productive behavior in the classroom. The most serious types of misbehavior require individual interventions, and sometimes, additional community resources. Improving the overall behavioral climate of the school reduces the incidences and severity of more serious violations. Estimates indicate that one out of five children experiences distressing emotional problems, and less than one-third of these children receive the help they need (Mental Health America, 2009). School is a place where children spend most of their time learning and developing their social skills that enhance their problem solving skills.

Interventions and effective practices have been developed to help students who display inappropriate behavior, academic learning problems, and ineffectual interpersonal relationships. Researchers suggest that successful interventions for these students must be built on a behavioral foundation (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995; Walker et al., 1998). Students with behavior problems experience difficulty in their interpersonal relationships with their peers and adults. It best to use social skills intervention which is a standard component of all programming for these

students with behavior issues. Despite having several research based approaches available for intervening with the behavioral and social problems displayed by students, many of these practices are not being used effectively by teachers. Teachers prefer interventions that are easy to implement, not time-intensive, positive, perceived to be effective by the teacher, and compatible with the context in which the intervention will be employed. In order for an intervention to be effective, it is best to choose an intervention that is supported empirically and to then implement it with integrity and early in the cycle of behavioral problems.

Understanding cultural differences is very important in order to serve and understand students better. Lack of understanding of other cultures and their values forces teachers to interpret and respond to students' behavior from the perspective of mainstream sociocultural norms. Using mainstream sociocultural norms actually discriminates against students from other cultures and ethnic minority backgrounds. Some of these behaviors that are exhibited by students from other cultures are influenced culturally. With the growing culture gap between the students and the teachers, a need for culturally responsive teaching exists. Culturally responsive teaching helps teachers develop the skills and knowledge to teach children from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social class backgrounds. Diverse cultural activities such as a festival occasion can be shared in the classroom for other students to learn about their peers' culture. This will allow the other students the opportunity to better understand and accept the students of a different culture. In order to reach all the students, teachers can use culturally responsive classroom management pedagogy. First, teachers need to examine values of other cultures and bring cultural biases to a conscious level; then acknowledge the cultural, racial, ethnic, and individual differences that exist among people. Understanding cultural content knowledge, and learning about students' family backgrounds, their culture's norms, and the way their culture

manages time and space are great tools when managing behavior problems in the classroom. Culturally responsive classroom management requires educators to have a better understanding of how differences in race, social class, gender, and language background are linked to power.

Successful intervention programs must include a home-school component. Without the help of the community or home, most interventions fail to produce the expected results. School officials should rely on parents because they are the primary source of behavior training.When parents are involved in parent management training, wherein they are taught techniques such as praise, rewards, time out, response cost, and contingency contracting, they learn skills that they need to guide their children in the right direction. During their training, parents have opportunities to discuss, practice, and review these techniques.

Positive Behavior Support

A branch of Responsive to Intervention (RTI), dealing directly with students in need of developing more socially acceptable behaviors, is called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which works via a multi-tiered model with a heavy emphasis on prevention and teaching strategies (Fallon et al., 2012). Positive behavior support (PBS) and (RTI) models focus on identifying and providing timely interventions for a continuum of student needs (Young, Caldarella, Richardson, & Young, 2012). These two models, the PBIS and RTI, require screening in order to identify students who need interventions. The screening processes are research-based, and they are very effective in identifying behavioral and emotional concerns for early adolescents. Despite the fact that PBI dates back to the early 1990s, discipline rates for students from diverse backgrounds continue to remain high (Cramer & Bennett, 2015).

Disruptive behavior and discipline problems have dominated in schools. Disruptive students who are violent and disrespect their teachers cause teachers to leave the teaching field

and look for other careers (Cramer & Bennett, 2015). Vincent and Tobin (2011) reported that Black students continue to experience a disproportionate rate of long-term suspensions of more than 10 days, despite the implementation of PBIS. In order to provide an effective learning environment and control these behaviors, school officials have tried different research-based approaches, and the most common one used by most schools across the country is PBIS. The appropriate use of praise is integral to the successful implementation of PBIS (Caldarella, Christensen, Young, & Denley, 2011). Even though praise has been criticized by some educators, it has proven to work, has been recommended as a way to encourage students, and contributes to closer teacher-student relationships (Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009). In a study conducted by Reinke, Herman, and Stormont (2013), it was reported that when praise rates increased, reprimand rates decreased, though teachers often needed reminders to praise students.

The PBIS approach consists of three tiers. The first tier deals with social skills. Students in this tier are taught social skills in all settings in the school. Those students who have problems following directions or participating appropriately in the class receive Tier I and Tier II of the intervention approaches. Tier II deals with small groups of children who lack social skills, who need cognitive-behavioral counseling, and who need conflict management skills. The focus of Tier III is one-on-one intervention, and parents are involved in responding to students' needs. Some behaviors are taught across the three tiers.

According to the reviewed literature, these practices and interventions are not used by every school, and those school administrators who implement these practices do not have consistency in their implementation process (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008). Administrative procedures in schools are shifting from using punitive traditional ways of punishing students and moving towards using the PBIS interventions. PBIS is a proactive school-

wide approach that is used to address behavior problems in all settings, and it has been implemented in most of the schools across the United States.

A five-year longitudinal study of PBIS conducted in 37 elementary schools found that implementation of a PBIS model resulted in fewer student suspensions and office discipline referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2008). PBIS intervention is a success because of its components that include promotion of social and academic competence in students. PBIS procedures engage students, teachers, and parents; and provide an ongoing training of staff to develop and sustain practices with fidelity. PBIS is similar to RTI in the sense that it has three tiers like RTI and includes well-stated behavioral expectations. Its systems monitor student behavior and students receive help at different levels according to their needs.

It is evident that in schools, the climate of the learning community is changing because of the diverse population of students. It is school administrators' responsibility to find programs that cater to the needs of individual students. Schools that use PBIS show improved attendance, reduced office referrals, improved academic achievement, improved school atmosphere, and reduced delinquency in later years. "School environment should be inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all" (NMSA, 2010). In schools where PBIS is implemented, there is a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm. U.S. student population has become more diverse and behavior management practices and outcomes are frequently discrepant among cultural groups, particularly racial groups.

Teacher Efficacy

Teachers who demonstrate "culturally responsive pedagogy" are caring individuals who have high expectations for all students and also provide constructive feedback to students (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Moreover, teachers who are trained specifically to work with

culturally diverse students have greater levels of teacher efficacy to work with those students (Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Teachers should also attend professional development workshops to improve their performance in diverse classrooms. Effective teachers create culturally responsive classrooms that recognize the teachers' own ethnocentrism. In an ethnographic study of 31 culturally diverse students who were identified by the school as potential dropouts, Schlosser (1992) discovered that teachers must avoid distancing themselves from their students. They should develop knowledge about the students' home lives, cultural backgrounds, and also develop knowledge about adolescents' developmental needs. Effective teachers do not give up on their students, regardless of their misbehavior. Schlosser (1992) and Noguera (2003) indicated that effective teachers strive to establish and bridge disconnections that are important to academic and social success. Weinstein et al. (2004) stressed that developing and implementing culturally responsive classroom management is a frame of mind and more than a set of predetermined skills, actions, ideas, or strategies. Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as:

> The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)

Teaching is a trade that requires individuals to bring to their classroom a world view about teaching and learning shaped through years of personal experiences as learners within families, communities, and cultures. These teaching beliefs and practices shape the dynamics of student learning (Bryan & Atwater, 2002) because teachers' beliefs translate into classroom instructional practice (Kuykendall, 2004), and these instructional practices influence student

learning and, in turn, teacher efficacy (Bryan & Atwater, 2002). Bandura (1997) proposed that self-efficacy is a function of three interrelated factors: environmental, behavior, and internal personal factors. Teachers with high efficacy are capable of withstanding external influences that could interfere with their classroom management, and they are able to persevere when faced with challenging tasks. Effective teachers make sound judgements with diverse students and this involves teacher sensitivity to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

When teaching African American students, it is important to foster teacher efficacy because it plays an important role in influencing teacher behavior, student learning, and behavior. The influence can be either positive or negative. The majority of teachers enter the teaching profession without experience with diverse groups (Howard, 2010), and questions have been asked whether this lack of experience affects teacher efficacy and student outcomes. Siwatu (2011) noted that preservice teachers felt better prepared to teach in suburban schools than urban schools. However, teachers must first examine their own beliefs and biases, as well as their students' perceptions of them as teachers, before they can work successfully with students of color (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Howard, 2010; Sleeter, 2001).

Summary

A better understanding of teachers' beliefs and corresponding practices may provide teachers who are reluctant to teach in diverse setting tools needed (Bleicher, 2011) to teach in a culturally diverse setting (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Gay, 2010). This chapter focused on the literature concerning effective classroom management and effective teacher practices that lead to better student behavior. Positive management strategies that are essential to effective teaching and learning were addressed in the chapter. As the population of students in schools continues to

change, it is important for teachers to embrace and value other races, their norms, and religious

backgrounds in order to know them better and to serve them better. It is evident that there is

need for effective, practical intervention approaches that are not biased for treatment of

disruptive student behavior in the classroom, and teachers need training on how to react to

certain behavior displayed by culturally different students.

Teachers should use proactive methods to manage student behavior (Howard, 2010;

Noguera, 2003; Siwatu; 2011). Culturally responsive classroom teachers should not aim to

achieve compliance or control, but to provide equitable opportunities to all students from all

walks of life and help them learn and become productive citizens of their society (Caldarella et

al., 2011; Rychly & Graves, 2012). The literature review revealed that many teachers lack an

understanding of African American culture and practices, and of classroom management skills

needed in a diverse classroom. The gap is comprised of teachers' limited understanding of

African American students' culture, indifference of African American students, and a lack of

professional development training and teacher education programs across the country that will

adequately prepare teacher education students as future teachers of African American students.

Researchers (Boykin, 1992; Darder, 1991; Scheurich, 1993) agreed that many teachers work

from within a hegemonic, Western, epistemological framework, which often influences them to

have lower expectations of African American students and lack of understanding students'

families and primary culture. This contributes to the achievement gap between African

American students and Caucasian students. Teachers' limited understanding of African

American students' culture is not the only factor that has contributed to the gap, but it is one of

the many factors contributing to the gap, and it is the factor on which this study will focus.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The method used for this study was qualitative, which Creswell (2013) described as a process of understanding that is based on methodological approaches of inquiry. In the United States, there is a growing consensus in schools that teaching students of diverse backgrounds and experiences is a challenging task for teachers who are not familiar with the students' backgrounds, culture, beliefs, and values (United States Department of Education, 2010). The cultural and experiential gap between teachers and students hinders effective instruction. The purpose of this nested case study is to describe the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students. This nested- case study will explore beliefs and best practices used by effective teachers when they are working with diverse students. Creswell suggested that the qualitative approach is the best approach to use when a researcher wants to obtain a detailed view of the topic of study. This chapter discusses the design, guiding questions, participants, setting, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Design

Qualitative research (Creswell, 2013) was used in this study to describe beliefs and practices of effective teachers who teach in diverse classrooms. Qualitative research was selected because people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions are being explored. The goal was to understand basic social processes such as how effective teachers manage classroom behaviors exhibited by African American students. Qualitative methods provided an in-depth analysis of the experiences of the participants. Qualitative inquiry permitted the participants to share their experiences in teaching students from different cultural

backgrounds and how to manage behaviors that interrupt learning. Qualitative research offered me an opportunity to understand complex situations and provided me an opportunity to expand my understanding of the social and the in which world we live. This study utilized data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the analysis of the qualitative research method (Creswell, 2013).

Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2011). According to Stake (2005), case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied such as a case within a bounded system, bounded by time and place. Robert K. Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Johnson and Christensen (2008) provided a definition of case study research as "research that provides a detailed account and analysis of one or more cases" (p. 406). In this study, the three schools are the cases and the teachers are nested cases. As a researcher of this study, I selected this because it allows me to utilize detailed, in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, and document reviews such as audiovisual materials, documents, and reports.

My rationale for selecting a case study methodology was that a case study embraces the complexity of multiple variables, and it uses a wide range of methods and sources of evidence in order to shed light on the phenomenon being investigated as compared to the traditional positivist approaches that deliberately divorces phenomena from context. The cases in this study are the three schools (elementary, middle school, and high school). The participants are the principal, teachers and African American students. This descriptive study provided information

about teachers' beliefs and practices that make them effective when managing behavior in their classrooms and their attitudes towards African American students. This descriptive study also provided information that shows relationships between effective teachers and African American students. A nested case study approach was applied in this study. A nested case study was the best design for this study because of the three schools which are the cases and the teachers who are the nested cases.

This study also aimed to describe beliefs and practices of effective teachers who are able to use effective strategies to manage classroom behavior exhibited by African American students. Effective teaching is presenting material well, cultivating thinking skills, stimulating interest in the subject and motivating students to learn (Layne, 2012). Effective in this study describes teachers who are most successful in helping African American students learn and such teachers also use strategies that help students act positively towards one another. This study will help the educational systems to improve student discipline strategies and also help teachers to step out of their boundaries and learn how to manage student behavior in their classrooms from different perspectives. My focus was on how these beliefs and practices are developed and demonstrated in the classroom.

Research Questions

Central Question 1: What are the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students?

Research Sub-question 1: What are the beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students?

Research Sub-question 2: What are the *practices* of teachers who are effective in their behavior management of African American students?

Research Sub-question 3: What are the social characteristics of the classroom environment of the teachers who are effective in behavior management?

Research Sub-question 4*:* How does the school environment influence the teacher's beliefs and practices in their classroom management?

<div align="center">

Setting

</div>

This study was conducted in three schools (elementary school, middle school, and high school) located in a rural area of South Georgia. Big Creek County (pseudonym) has approximately 6,000 people, and it was created on December 23, 1830. African Americans (58.8%) are the largest racial/ethnic group in Big Creek County followed by Caucasians (27.6%) and Hispanics (13.3%). The median household income of Big Creek County residents is $23,451.

School District

Big Creek County School District (pseudonym) is classified as a high need school system because 100% of the students qualify for free lunches. The school district has only three schools: an elementary school, middle school, and high school. The three schools are under the leadership of one principal, two assistant principals, and 32 teachers. The three schools are located in a low socioeconomic, rural area in South Georgia. The schools have a diverse population of students, with 98% African American students and 2% White students. The schools were selected because of their diverse population of students and for convenience.

Elementary School

The elementary school serves a high concentration of disadvantaged students with 100% of the students qualifying for the free and reduced-priced school food services. The school has roughly equal percentage of males and females with 48% males and 52% females forming the

student body.

Middle School

The middle school serves a high concentration of disadvantaged students with 100% of the students qualifying for the free and reduced-priced school food services. The school has roughly equal percentage of males and females with 51% males and 49% females forming the student body. 98% of the students are African American.

High School

The high school serves a high concentration of disadvantaged students with 100% of the students qualifying for the Free and reduced-priced school food services. The school has roughly equal percentage of males and females with 48% males and 52% females forming the student body.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

Participants for this study were from all three schools: elementary, middle, and high school. School administrators were contacted to request permission to conduct the study in their schools (see Appendix A). The participants selected were students, teachers, and principals from all three schools from County School District. I discussed the purpose of the study with the principals and teachers before the study took place at their schools, and teachers were assured that the findings would be confidential, that there would be pseudonyms, and that the information they provided as well as their identity would be kept confidential. Teachers were selected by the principals and the selection only included effective teachers. Effective teachers are defined as those with below average of student referrals as evidenced by the discipline data management system of the school. Effective teachers are also those who are nominated as

teacher of the year by the administration and students as evidenced by their practices that are

culturally responsive. Teachers selected had at least one or more years of teaching experience.

The sample consisted of six teachers, two from each school, two principals, and five

students per teacher participant from each school. The total number of students combined from

three schools was 30. The age range of teachers and administrators was from mid-20s to late-

50s. Students' grade levels ranged from Grade 1 to Grade 12. All students who participated in

this study were African American. Teachers selected included Caucasian and African American

teachers who spoke about what they perceived as important characteristics, beliefs, and

behaviors. These African American teachers also gave input about their peers that they

identified as having culturally responsive approaches in the classroom. Those teachers identified

as effective were contacted by their principals and they contacted me if they were interested and

I informed them of the study and their role in the study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

Educators	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Years of Experience
Elementary School Teachers					
Josie	56+	F	Caucasian	Specialist	22
Bernadette	46-55	F	Caucasian	Specialist	25
Shelby	46-55	F	Caucasian	Other	33
Middle School Teachers					
Deborah	56+	F	African American	Specialist	35
Hailey	56+	F	Caucasian	Specialist	38
High School Teacher					
Lana	<25	F	African American	Bachelor's	3
Administrators					
Asst. Principal	46-55	M	African American	Specialist	2
Principal	26-35	M	African American	Specialist	11

Procedures

To conduct this study, this researcher completed the proposal that would be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the superintendent of the schools. After getting approval from administrators (see Appendix A), informed consents (see Appendix K) from teachers, and assent from students (see Appendix C), data collection began and included completing a series of activities that would help gather information needed to answer stated research questions. Interviews were conducted and data analysis was completed as soon as the researcher got the data. The interviews were transcribed and coded for themes and thick rich descriptions about the teacher, and findings/characteristics were used as part of data analysis. Open coding was utilized to identify distinct concepts and categories in the data. Codes were assigned to the themes to come up with identifiable categories. Coded data was organized and categorized into groups which was later analyzed. During data collection, the researcher kept all data in a secure place under key and lock for security purposes. The identity of all participants was protected by using pseudonyms. Survey Monkey was used to generate questionnaires and focus groups of 10 students from each teacher participant were selected randomly. To validate data collected, member checks were utilized.

The Researcher's Role

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is considered an instrument of data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In qualitative research, data are mediated through the human instrument as compared to the use of inventories or machines. My role was to facilitate interviews and focus groups. I interviewed the participants, observed them in their classrooms during instruction time, and reviewed documents. In qualitative research, researchers must describe relevant aspect of themselves, including any biases, assumptions, expectations, and

experiences to qualify their ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003). As a researcher, my role was to select students who would participate in the study, and conduct observations of the participants in the classroom. My goal was to be unbiased when viewing the data or conducting my analyses.

There are some assumptions that I put forth to the study which were: (a) minority schools located in low-socioeconomic areas lack the support they need to help African American students graduate from high school and enter college, (b) African American students are taught mostly by teachers with different cultural backgrounds, and (c) African American students have low motivation to go to college when they finish high school. My personal experiences as a foreigner and an African male, and also from what I see and read about African American males made me come up with these assumptions. As I conducted my research, I took measures such as member checks to decrease the impact of these assumptions in my data collection and analysis so that the participants' voices would be heard.

Data Collection

Data collection began after receiving an approval to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Creswell, 2013), and approval from the district and school's principals. Data collection included individual interviews with principals and teachers, using open-ended questions, questionnaires, focus groups interviews for students, collection of documents and classroom observations. Triangulation of findings from these data sources was used to answer the research questions. Confidentiality of the school district, the schools, and the participants was ensured throughout this study.

Teachers in all three schools were identified with the assistance of the principals. The principals contacted teachers with few or below average student referrals and those who had

been nominated as teacher of the year by administration and students and asked them if they were interested in participating in the study. I then scheduled a visit with the teachers so that I could explain to them the purpose of the study. A purposeful sample of African American students was then selected from each class that was taught by the participating teachers to increase the generalizability of the results. Data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers, and these interviews were audio-recorded and I also took notes. Three classroom observations for each class were conducted, and a review of a collection of documents and focus groups for students was conducted. Names were removed from documents to protect the individuals and to make sure that no one could trace information back to the schools or any individual. All documents and data collected were kept under lock and key all the time, and at the end of the study all material used was destroyed. Confidentiality was maintained during and after the study.

Questionnaires

Background information on the principals and teachers were gathered using open questionnaires. Principals and teachers were asked to consent to participate in the study before they completed the questionnaires (see Appendix G). Questionnaires were generated from Survey Monkey, and the questionnaires included race, age, current job, educational level, contact information, years of teaching, subject taught, certification and endorsements.

Interviews

Interviewing is the process of gathering data from participants (principals and teachers) by asking questions and allowing participants to react to the questions verbally. I conducted face-to-face interviews with the principals and teachers. The questions on the interview were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are used widely in qualitative research (Gall, Gall,

& Borg, 2003). The focus of the research was on teachers' beliefs and practices used in managing classroom behavior in a diverse classroom. These interviews were conducted at the schools where the participating teachers worked. For transcription purposes, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed as soon as possible after the interviews were conducted.

The interview questions were open-ended, and they were structured in terms of the wording. These open-ended questions provided opportunities for both the interviewer and the interviewee to discuss the topic in detail (Gall et al., 2003). Gall, Gall, & Borg (2003) added that open-ended questions allow participants to provide detailed information and also allow the researcher to ask probing questions as means of follow-up. Open-ended questions allow participants to express their views and experiences, and this rich data makes it cumbersome to sift through the responses. According to Gall et al., rich data reduce researcher biases within the study, particularly when the interviewing process involves many participants. Standardized open-ended interview questions included the following (see Appendix F):

1. Why did you become a teacher?

2. What do you enjoy most about being a teacher?

3. What is your greatest challenge or frustration as a teacher?

4. How would you describe your classroom management style?

5. Please tell me about your view of school discipline.

6. What are the factors that play an important role in school discipline practices?

7. Please describe how teachers' beliefs affect classroom management and behavior management.

8. Why is your classroom setting like this?

9. Please describe how you build rapport with your students.

10. Please describe your discipline philosophy and how you manage minority students' behavior in the classroom.

11. Can you describe the school's environment and how it influences your beliefs and practices in classroom management?

12. Please describe the support you get from other staff members and parents when dealing with behavior issues exhibited by minority students.

13. Please describe how you give your students recognition and positive reinforcement.

14. Please describe your relationship with your students' parents and how they help in managing their child's behavior.

Interview questions 1 and 2 were geared towards finding out more about the teachers and why they chose to be in the field of education and what they enjoy most about being a teacher. Questions 3 and 4 were designed to get an in-depth exploration of the teacher's experiences and contributions in improving student behavior. These two questions also highlight challenges that teachers come across when teaching African American students and how they overcome these challenges. These questions gave the researcher a better understanding of the teachers that were participants in the study.

The purpose of question 5 was to explore the teachers' experience in school discipline, classroom management, and student relationships within the school. Discipline is the key area of responsibility in any teaching position, specifically managing student discipline within the classroom. This question gave the researcher a better understanding of how effective teachers handle behavior problems displayed by African American students in their classroom. This question also highlighted the teacher's ability to manage classroom behavior in a timely manner.

Question 6 was designed to gain insight on teachers' beliefs and how their beliefs influenced them in managing classroom discipline that is exhibited by African American students. This question also shed light on different teachers' beliefs and their worldview and how they view their students. Physical characteristics of a classroom play a major role in shaping students' behavior. Questions 7, 8 and 9 provided information about practices that the teachers use to manage student behavior in their classrooms. Effective and best practices, such as seating arrangements, allow teachers to manage students' behavior better and establish better communication with their students. Seating arrangements allow teachers to monitor and reinforce control of the classroom. Question 8 gave the researcher ideas on how teachers establish rapport with their students, and how they show interest in their students, encouraging them to display good behavior, and how they find out about their students' interests and hobbies. These questions gave teachers an opportunity to explain and give examples of how they recognize their students' efforts and accomplishments.

Since teachers' philosophy plays an important role in classroom management questions 9, 10, and 11 provided a clear explanation on how the school environment influences students' behavior and how teachers manage unwanted behavior exhibited by African American students. Teachers also described their discipline philosophy and their teaching styles. Questions 12, 13, and 14 were developed to generate data to enable me to understand how teachers reinforce good behavior, how they work with students' families when dealing with behavior issues, and also to explain the barriers that they experience when addressing discipline issues. As a researcher, I gained insight on how effective teachers work with parents to provide support to students and also manage classroom behavior by talking to the teachers and the principal.

Different research tools were used to obtain comprehensive information about the beliefs and practices of effective classroom teachers. The tools included interviews with teachers and principals, open questionnaires for teachers and principals, and classroom observations. Questionnaires and interviews were used to examine teachers' beliefs and knowledge. Interviews consisted of 14 questions. Open-ended questionnaires for exploring teachers' beliefs and practices consisted of 10 questions that focused on their teaching, their role as a teacher, the role of the students, and effective practices. A Likert-scale was used by the researcher to summarize answers to the probe questions.

Standardized open-ended interview questions for principal included the following (see Appendix I):

1. Describe the environment at your school and the factors that contribute to the environment.

2. What are the programs that are focused specifically on discipline at your school?

3. Are the programs in place working and effective?

4. What are the discipline issues you face every day?

5. How are the practices and policies in the school implemented and administered?

6. What are the parents' attitudes and involvement in their children's education and discipline?

7. Do you think that parents and teachers play an important role in helping control disruptive behavior in school?

8. What are the barriers that hinder you from handling disciplinary issues more effectively?

9. What are the most common discipline issues in the school?

10. What are the common offenses in the school?

11. What are the consequences for these common offenses?

12. Do you think different teachers have different practices that they use to manage behavior?

13. Do you think some practices are more effective than others?

14. As an administrator how do you provide a safe school environment?

15. What are some things that you think need to be done to provide a safe learning environment?

Document Analysis

Documents were collected from the teachers that reflected their beliefs and practices such as letters sent home to parents, documentation reflecting their classroom management philosophy, awards, certificates, notes from teachers to students and teachers. Copies of their classroom rules, copies of their classroom rituals and routines, and lesson plans that demonstrate cultural appreciation were also used and analyzed. Any documents collected for data analysis were be photocopied and names or identification information were erased.

Observations

Observations were conducted to gain additional information on the practices that are used by effective teachers in their classrooms and how they manage student behavior. Observations provided a rich picture of the setting, and I was able to see for myself what was happening instead of depending on my respondents only. Observations allowed me to have direct contact with participants because the main focus of qualitative research is naturalism. I conducted three observations for each class. Each observation lasted for about an hour and a half. The first one was announced and the last two were unannounced. During and after observations (see Appendix J), I took notes because I was a non-participant observer. Observations took more

than an hour per class, and the observations lasted beyond scheduled class periods in order to observe transitions. Stake (2010) suggested that observations allow the researcher to see what is happening in the natural setting.

After conducting observations, teachers were interviewed. Thick, rich descriptions of information collected from the focus groups and all interview transcripts were created. This information was analyzed thematically, then it was grouped using codes and themes, and finally interpreted. Collected documents that included attendance documents were analyzed and coded categorically by themes.

Focus Groups

Focus groups originally were called focused interviews or *group depth interviews* (Marczak & Sewell, 2005). Each focus group of students that was selected out of the classrooms of effective teachers consisted of five African American participants. Each group was composed of students who were selected using purposive sampling. Focus group questions consisted of opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and ending questions. As a researcher, I asked students probing questions to gather additional information from them. Standardized open-ended interview questions included the following (see Appendix H):

1. What are your personal experiences with teachers' behavior management practices when dealing with African American students?

2. What is your attitude towards teachers who enforce school rules?

3. Can you describe a teacher who treats African American students fairly and accommodates their needs?

4. Describe how your teacher communicates expectations about what you are expected to know and be able to do.

5. How does your teacher promote respect for students?

6. Does your teacher teach you to be a critical thinker and how does he/she do it?

7. How often does your teacher give you feedback regarding your responses and participation in the classroom?

8. Describe how your teacher treats African American students and other students from different cultural backgrounds.

9. What are some suggestions you would give teachers to improve in their classroom management and how to deal with African American students?

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a non-numerical data analysis. It is an explanation and interpretation strategy of collected qualitative data from the people and situations that were investigated. Qualitative data analysis is a process that seeks to make sense of massive information that is collected from different sources and this descriptive information can be used to offer an explanation or interpretation. It also allows a researcher to reach a conclusion for an existing situation or problem. Techniques that are more precise are still needed for analyzing qualitative data (Yin, 1994). The proposed research study utilized the interpretative approach, in which social action and human activity are transcribed into readable text in preparation for analysis (Berg, 2007).

The case study method employs the option of developing data by various sorting or coding operations to reveal the essence of the account (Berg, 2007). Material that is collected to

identify patterns themes and meaning (content analysis) will be used to analyze data of the

research proposal's results and a detailed, systematic examination and interpretation. It is very

important to organize, manage, and communicate the information, and count the frequency of

observations within the labels. Qualitative analysis includes a continual interaction between

theory and analysis (Neuman, 2006). In qualitative research, researchers establish consistency of

reoccurring themes. Criteria of selection must be established and must be exhaustive to account

for each variation of message content before content analysis is conducted (Berg, 2007).

Content analysis was used in reporting researched results. Content analysis demands a

systematic examination of the content of a body of knowledge collected during data collection

process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). When performing the task of content analysis, I bracketed

preconceived notions and experiences toward the data's content and this was done by writing

memos through data collection and analysis. Gearing (2004) explains bracketing as a "scientific

process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases,

assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon" (p. 1430).

Audio-taped interviews and focus groups were transcribed by a contracted transcribing

entity. The contracted transcribing entity signed a written affidavit of confidentiality (see

Appendix L). According to Berg (2007), data reduction recognizes the voluminous nature of

qualitative raw data; therefore, there should be transformation to make the data more

understandable. Data reduction may occur through summarizing, identifying analytical themes

and theoretical explanations (Berg, 2007).

Nested Case Analysis

The steps process proposed by Creswell (2013, pp. 182-187), were used in the data

analysis process. Step 1) includes organizing and preparing the data, step 2) includes reading

through the data to get a general sense of the information and to reflect on its initial meaning, step 3) includes the coding process, describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes, step 4) includes interpreting data, and step 5) includes representing and making interpretation or meaning of the data gathered. This process applied to each type of data collected through interviews, observations, focus groups and documents.

Results of the interviews were transcribed and categorized by words, phrases, sentences, and whole paragraphs to determine the themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. After the information from the interviews were transcribed and typed, I sorted and organized the data to obtain a general sense of the information generated to elicit meanings. In this study, observations were translated into field notes to be used as supplement to the interview transcripts, journals, and field notes. Responses were organized to identify patterns of consistency. Data obtained from each question were aggregated and segregated accordingly. A similar approach was taken integrating data from the student journals into the themes.

Coding was used to interpret and analyze data collected. Coding refers to the process of organizing the information into portions or sectors of typescript before striving to make sense of the information. Creswell (2009) explained, "It includes taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences or paragraphs or images into categories and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participants" (p. 186). Creswell encourages qualitative researchers to analyze the data for information that can be coded to address four specific concerns as outlined below:

1. Codes on topics that readers would expect to find, based on the past literature and common sense;

2. Codes that are surprising and that were not anticipated at the beginning of the study;

3. Codes that are unusual, and that are, in and of themselves, of conceptual interest to readers;

4. Codes that address a larger theoretical perspective in the research. (pp. 186-187)

I used these coding processes to get a better sense of the data collected after the data had been collated, sorted and bracketed. Common themes and trends were assigned codes that would place them in identifiable categories. Coded data was organized into meaningful groups of information that could be better analyzed. This study used multiple methods of collecting data to ensure that data collected was reliable and valid. Forms used for collecting data were interviews, observations focus groups and documents. These also helped achieve triangulation.

Case Analysis

The case reports portrayed practices and beliefs of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management. Data from nested cases were used in case analysis. In case analysis, I was looking for main themes, subthemes, and basic themes associated with participant views within a case (school). The results from the nested cases were categorized into main themes, subthemes, and basic themes. Patterns and relationships between categories were identified and examined to determine significant correlations. The coding process was used to generate generalizations about the phenomenon being studied.

Cross Case Analysis

The beliefs and practices of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management was the focus of this qualitative case study. Cross case analysis was used to analyze the results of the themes from the individual cases. This qualitative data analysis process "facilitates the comparison of commonalities and difference in the events, activities, and processes that are the units of analyses in case studies" (Creswell, 2012; Ezzy, 2013). Cross-case

analysis extends the researcher's expertise beyond the single case and triggers, or stirs the researcher's imagination. It also raises new questions, reveals new dimensions, produces alternatives, generates models, and constructs ideals (Merriam, 2014; Stake, 2013). Researchers use cross-case analysis to delineate a combination of factors that might contribute to the outcomes of the case; seek or construct an explanation as to why one case is different or the same as others; make sense of puzzling or unique findings; or further articulate the concepts, hypotheses, or theories discovered or constructed from the original case (Creswell, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Cross-case analysis process empowers researchers with the capacity to better understand how relationships might exist among discrete cases, accumulate knowledge from the original case, refine and develop concepts, and build or test theory (Creswell, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Merriam, 2014; Stake, 2013). Cross-case analysis gives researchers an opportunity to compare cases from one or more settings, communities, or groups. This comparison provides opportunities to learn from different cases and gather critical evidence to strengthen or further support data generated from other sources.

Six separate nested case reports from effective teachers were prepared, each offering rich descriptions of the real classroom relative to discipline and classroom management of African American students. The steps in the cross-case analysis process consisted of (a) preparing the interview data for analysis, (b) conducting different analyses by case, (c) navigating deeper into understanding the interview data, (d) representing the data, and (e) making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013).

The interviews were transcribed and categorized by words, phrases, sentences, and whole paragraphs to determine the themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. The case

reports portrayed practices and beliefs of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management. Distinctive features derived from the cross-case analyses were included in the case report, including the practices and beliefs of the effective teachers, relative to their classroom behavior management following the development of individual case reports.

A cross-case matrix, as Stake (2013) described, was designed and developed to present the issue addressed in each research question, such as accommodating various cultures, lifestyles, and their students' learning styles; addressing the physical characteristics of the classroom environment; understanding how to help students with behavior issues academically and socially; understanding personal biases and expectations of culturally diverse students; and understanding how the school environment influences teachers' beliefs and practices in their classroom management. The use of cross-case analysis made it possible to compare data from the six nested cases and to discern patterns or themes. Careful reexamination, rechecking, and triangulating from a review of case reports led to verification, revision, and discarding of unrelated information generated from cases. The initial cross-case matrices were revised to cluster data within matrices by related themes for the purpose of better understanding the practices and beliefs of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management of African American students.

The intent of the study was to describe the reality of the practices and beliefs of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management of African American students. Cross-case analysis enabled me to generate information to produce aggregate impressions. The findings were organized around the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a qualitative study is the demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound, and the argument made based on the results will be strong. According to Creswell (2013), making sure that the research and representation of the results is trustworthy gives rise to the validation of the study.

There are different strategies that can be used to ensure credibility, dependability, and the essence of transferability in qualitative research design (Creswell, 2003). To demonstrate trustworthiness of interpretations and findings of the study, validation of the information was completed through triangulation strategies that involved thick description and member-checks.

Credibility

Credibility is the ability of a research process to generate findings that elicit belief and trust. Yin (2014) believes that credibility is foundational for validity. Triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, audit trail and dependability audit are available research strategies in establishing reasonable creditability in qualitative research design (Driessen, Muijtjens, Overeem, Tartwijk, & Vleuten, 2006). Triangulation was possible as data was collected via interviews, observations, documents, and focus groups.

This proposed study used member checking and an audit trail to establish reasonable credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checking as the most valuable way of supporting research credibility. Member checking, also known as informant feedback or respondent validation, technique improves the accuracy of data collected and therefore improves applicability of the study (Creswell, 2003). In member check participants were asked to authenticate interpreted data obtained from collected data of the research project in order to check the authenticity of the work. The participants reviewed data collected and commented on

the accuracy of the research material and their comments served as a check on the validity of the interpretation. Member-checking occurred during the interviews and at the conclusion of the study. Participants were given the transcripts to check them for accuracy. I summarized all the information and asked participants to determine if the information was accurate and they provided feedback or comments. At this stage, all participants affirmed the accuracy and completeness or denied reflections of their views, feelings, and experiences. Upon affirmation of the researched findings, Creswell (2003) indicated that the study has credibility.

In a qualitative research study, researchers use audit trail to establish rigor (Wolf, 2003). Audit trails, also known as confirmability, attest to the interpretation of the researcher (Wolf, 2003). Creating an audit trail enables dependability in a qualitative research study (Wolf, 2003). An audit trail involves detailed documentation of all steps utilized in assessing the researched data (Wolf, 2003). Audit trail provides evidence of recorded raw data transcended through a series of analysis, reduction and synthesis (Wolf, 2003). Audit trail will be utilized for this study.

Delicate and sensitive data can unintentionally influence the results of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Potential biases can be found in different stages of the study such as during the selection process, interviewing process, and in the analysis process of a qualitative research study. If any biases occur during the study, the integrity is lost. Gender, ethnicity, age, and religion are some of the things that can influence participants' response to the researcher and research questions. In this research study, I put forth all the efforts to avoid and eliminate bias by using a proven strategy.

This research study was intended to help close the gap in the literature in relationship to managing student behavior and use of effective practices in diverse classrooms where African

American students seem to be misunderstood when it comes to their culture and the way they behave in the classroom and within the school environment. It is important to note that there are other ethnic groups in these diverse classrooms that are misunderstood in relationship to their societal worth and their cultural beliefs.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the process of results being accurately examined (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), and refers to internal validity and making inferences from events, which are not directly observed (Yin, 2014). Dependability also involves a way of accounting for all the changing conditions in what is being studied. In this study, dependability will be enhanced by using overlapping methods which utilize planned methodological triangulation, or multiple data gathering procedure such as interviews, observations, and focus groups. According to Benz and Newman (1998),

> One should be able to generalize underlies science. However, we are unwilling to accept fully that generalizability is consistent with the qualitative paradigm in principle; generalizability is the purpose of quantitative, not qualitative research. In fact, we have assumed that, if the purpose of the research is to generalize, one should employ quantitative methodology. (p. 54)

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Strategies for enhancing confirmability are having the researcher to document the procedures for checking and recheck the data throughout the study. Another researcher can take a *devil's advocate* role with respect to the results, and this process can be documented. Prolonged engagement with the participants

through use of focus groups and then individual interviews also help to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After the study, an external audit was conducted which examined the data collection and analysis procedures, and the auditor made judgements about the potential for bias or distortion.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the thick description of a setting allows other researchers to compare settings for similarities. External validity is defined as the extent to which the findings of a study may be generalized to another setting or another group of people. In this study, the inclusion of teachers from three different levels of schools increased transferability. The use of thick rich description of findings increased transferability.

Ethical Considerations

Any research should be conducted in an ethical manner in order to avoid unwanted research dilemmas. Careful planning and adhering to ethical standards is very important. In this study, to protect the participants and the sites, I used pseudonyms (Creswell, 2013). All materials and data collected were saved on the computer with a password and locked in the cabinet in my office. All data collected and transcribed material will be kept in a locked room for at least 5 years. After 5 years, all the data collected will be destroyed. As a researcher, I exercised fairness and there was not any bias against participants. As a researcher, I made sure that the informed consent process was appropriate and in accordance with the federal guidelines. Participants received informed consent forms that were written in their primary language, and the consent was written in simple language. The consent forms notified participants as Creswell

(2013) recommended that they are able to opt out at any time, and to confirm that right to opt out. Student assent and parental consent was sent home to the parents. I had no influence over participants in any manner. The focus of this study was not to criticize ineffective teachers who failed to manage their classrooms in a diverse environment, but the study was aimed at shedding light on how teachers can transform their beliefs and practices and use them effectively and productive when they are working with African American students. In order to collect accurate data and make accurate interpretations, the researcher has to be proficient, open-minded, and honest (Creswell, 2013).

Summary

In Chapter Three, included are discussions of the nested-case study research; design choice; the guiding questions; the participants; the setting; the data collection; and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. This nested-case study research was designed to explore the beliefs and practices of effective teachers in managing African American students' behavior in the schools. Three sites were used to collect data about beliefs and practices of effective teachers who were identified by the principal as being effective in managing African American students' behavior. The schools used were the elementary, middle, and high schools. Six teachers, one principal and assistant principal were selected from the three sites. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, students focus groups, documents and observations. Themes related to beliefs and practices were identified through analyzing data that was collected. Pseudonyms were used to identify participants and the sites. Themes that emerged are discussed in Chapter Four and all data collected was stored in a safe locked place for confidentiality reasons.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

There is a growing consensus in United States schools that effective instruction is hindered by cultural and experiential gaps between teachers and students (United States Department of Education, 2010). When a teacher is unfamiliar with the students' myriad backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, and value systems, teaching becomes a demanding task (United States Department of Education, 2010).

This study explored the beliefs and practices of teachers who were identified as particularly effective with culturally diverse students. Effectiveness was defined in two ways. One definition was teachers whose numbers of student referrals were below the school's average. The other definition was teachers who were nominated as a Teacher of the Year.

The overall purpose of this nested-case study was to determine what made demonstrably effective teachers so successful at managing their African American students. Specific aims were to describe the teachers' beliefs and practices when managing student behavior. Further goals were to understand the basic social processes that teachers used to develop relationships with their students and in turn manage their behavior when it hindered learning. The evidence presented stems from a four-pronged qualitative data collection approach. The first approach was based on face-to-face interviews with six teachers and two administrators (hereafter collectively referred to as educators and individually referred to by their pseudonyms). The second approach was based on six focus group interviews with students. The third approach was based on observing teachers and students in their classrooms during normal instruction time. The fourth approach was based on document review.

Research Questions

The study's central question was:

What are the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their   behavior

management with African American students?

This was addressed by four specific sub-research questions developed from the central

question.

Research Sub-question 1

What are the *beliefs* of teachers who are effective in their behavior management

with minority students?

Research Sub-question 2

What are the *practices* of teachers who are effective in their behavior

management of African American students?

Research Sub-question 3

What are the *social characteristics of the classroom environment* of the teachers

who are effective in behavior management?

Research Sub-question 4

How does the *school environment* influence the teacher's beliefs and practices in

their classroom management?

Description of Sites and Participants

This section will present a brief description of the cases and the findings from each case.

I will present a description of each site followed by a depiction of each research participant from

the site. A depiction of each research participant, their beliefs, and practices on managing

African American students' behavior will be covered in this section, as well. Eight educators

were interviewed (see Table 2). Two were administrators; both were African American males.

Six were teachers; all six were females. Out of the six teachers four were Caucasian teachers and

two were African American. Corresponding to the six interviewed teachers, there were six focus

groups. The focus groups comprised of three groups of five students per group from the

elementary school, two groups of five students per group from the middle school children and

one high school group with five students.

Except for Lana, who was new to teaching (with 3 years of teaching experience, see

Table 2), the teachers were highly experienced with between 2 and 3.5 *decades* of teaching

experience. The Principal had over a decade of experience. The Assistant Principal had 2 years

of experience in his current position.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

Educators	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Years of Experience
			Elementary School Teachers		
Josie	56+	F	Caucasian	Specialist	22
Bernadette	46-55	F	Caucasian	Specialist	25
Shelby	46-55	F	Caucasian	Other	33
			Middle School Teachers		
Deborah	56+	F	African American	Specialist	35
Hailey	56+	F	Caucasian	Specialist	38
			High School Teacher		
Lana	<25	F	African American	Bachelor's	3
			Administrators		
Asst. Principal	46-55	M	African American	Specialist	2
Principal	26-35	M	African American	Specialist	11

Table 2
Student's Demographic Information
Josie's Class

Student	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level
1st Child	6 years	Male	African American	1st
2nd Child	7 years	Female	African American	1st
3rd Child	7 years	Male	African American	1st
4th Child	6 years	Female	African American	1st
5th Child	6 years	Male	African American	1st

Table 3

Student's Demographic Information

Bernadette's Class

Student	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level
1st Child	7.9 years	Male	African American	2nd
2nd Child	7 years	Male	African American	2nd
3rd Child	7 years	Male	African American	2nd
4th Child	8 years	Female	African American	2nd
5th Child	7.5 years	Female	African American	2nd

Table 4

Student's Demographic Information

Shelby's Class

Student	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level
1st Child	10 years	Female	African American	5th
2nd Child	11 years	Female	African American	5th
3rd Child	11 years	Male	African American	5th
4th Child	10 years	Male	African American	5th
5th Child	11.8 years	Male	African American	5th

Table 5

Student's Demographic Information

Deborah's Class

Student	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level
1st Child	12 years	Female	African American	7th
2nd Child	13 years	Male	African American	8th
3rd Child	11 years	Male	African American	6th
4th Child	13 years	Female	African American	8th
5th Child	12 years	Female	African American	7th

Table 6

Student's Demographic Information

Hailey's Class

Student	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level
1st Child	13 years	Female	African American	6th
2nd Child	13 years	Female	African American	7th
3rd Child	13.6 years	Male	African American	8th
4th Child	12 years	Male	African American	7th
5th Child	12 years	Male	African American	7th

Table 7

Student's Demographic Information

Lana's Class

Student	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level
1st Child	14 years	Female	African American	9th
2nd Child	15 years	Female	African American	10th
3rd Child	16 years	Male	African American	11th
4th Child	16 years	Male	African American	12th
5th Child	17 years	Male	African American	12th

Corresponding to the six interviewed teachers, there were a total of six focus groups. Three groups from the elementary school children, two focus groups from the middle school children, and one high school group. Each focus group had five students. The age of the students ranged from six years to 17 years. Lana's high school students handled the focus group interview with the most polish. Deborah's middle school students were the most candid, and had a story within a story: Deborah Student 3 emerged over the course of the focus group, and was the most thoughtful and articulate participant despite beginning the most aggressive. Shelby's elementary school students were the most articulate and reasoned as a group. Hailey's middle school students, Bernadette's elementary school students, and Josie's first graders were not able to engage in focus group discussion.

The student focus group comments differed with respect to two characteristics of discussion, which are mentioned here because they influenced the evidence presented. One difference was in the direction and completeness of expression. The other difference was distracting background chatter.

Specifically, students in three of the six student focus groups stayed focused on answering the interviewer's questions with minimal chatter among themselves. They provided - in some cases startlingly articulate - commentary, and eschewed extensive chatter among themselves during the focus group. These groups were not all older age groups. They were Lana's high school math students; Deborah's middle school students; but also Shelby's elementary school students. In contrast, students in the other three focus groups often strayed from the interviewer's questions (i.e., by addressing other ideas), often failed to complete their comments, and frequently interrupted discourse with chatter among themselves. They were

Bernadette's elementary school students; Hailey's middle school students; and Josie's first graders.

The first section presents a description of each participant and evidence from Case A which is the elementary school. The second section presents a description of each participant and findings from Case B (middle school); the third section presents a description of each participant and the findings from Case C (high school); and the fourth section presents descriptions of the administrators and the findings. The final section is a summary.

Case A (Elementary School)

The elementary school is a small rural public school located South of the state of Georgia. It serves a high concentration of disadvantaged students with 100% of the students qualifying for the free and reduced-priced school food services. The school has roughly an equal percentage of males and females with 48% males and 52% females forming the student body. The elementary school has an outstanding reputation for employing dedicated teachers who can serve students from diverse backgrounds. Currently the elementary school serves 145 children in grades kindergarten through five with ages ranging from four years to 10 years. The school promotes a positive school and learning environment through Positive Behavior Intervention Support Program (PBIS). The school has its expectations displayed throughout the school. All the classrooms are in the same hallway and the walls in the hallway are populated with charts that promote positive behavior (see Figures 8 & 10). Case A was selected because it had a high population of Caucasian teachers who teach African American students. Three Caucasian teachers were interviewed from this site. Their ages ranged from 46-56+ years and their teaching experiences ranged from 22-33 years.

According to the teacher interviews, focus group discussions, documents, and classroom observations, it was evident that the over-arching theme was respect. Respect was also the basic social process that effective teachers employed to develop relationships with African American students and in turn manage their behavior. Teachers at this site reported that they are a family and they help each other in managing unruly behaviors. This is evident from the interview with one of the teachers, Josie, who teaches first grade, had a student who "really definitely has an issue." She disciplines this student him by handing him off to the teacher next door: "The teacher next door helps me. I can remove him from my room if I need to and put him in [the class next door] just for a few minutes." At other times, "I have a staff member who just comes in and talks to him." When one of Lana's students misbehaves, they are also sometimes sent to another next class or simply allowed to leave the class for time in an undisclosed location to "gather themselves before they can come back into their regular classroom setting. Our staff members are very supportive in that."

They also stated that they enforce sense of respect within their students. This was evident during my observations because I saw how these teachers interacted with their students in the hallways and in the classrooms. They encouraged students to treat each other with respect and use kind words.

Case A participants. The three participants at Case A are all female and their ages range from 46-56+ years. All three participants have taught at the school for more than 5 years. They all expressed their love for teaching and for seeing their students succeed academically and socially. Two of the teachers have specialist degrees, and the other teacher did not disclose her credentials. To identify these teachers, I named them Josie, Bernadette and Shelby.

Nested case 1: Josie.Josie is a Caucasian teacher and teaches first grade. She is certified in early childhood and has a specialist degree. Josie has been teaching for 22 years. Josie was driven into the field of education because her dad could not read but her mother graduated from Tulane University. She also wanted to work with kids and make a difference in their lives. During the interview, Josie stated that effective management (and ultimately, effective pedagogy) starts with communication to students of any age that you care about them personally, eschewing that antiquated unidirectional hierarchy. She also stated that students respect and work for those that they believe care about them. This was reinforced by several features of observations. For example, during classroom observation, it was evident that Josie focused on helping students improve academically and behave in an acceptable manner in school and in society. Josie's classroom had clearly posted classroom expectations and rules (see Figures 4, 9, & 10). Josie was also observed verbally communicating her classroom expectations and rules. Another outstanding feature I saw taking place in Josie's classroom was the sense of creating a welcoming classroom that promotes love and caring for each other. During the observations, it was evident that the teacher had rituals and routines that she expected her students to follow. Positive reinforcements were used by Josie when she saw a student exhibiting good behavior.

Nested case 2: Bernadette. Bernadette is a Caucasian female teacher. She teaches second grade and has 25 years of teaching experience. She has been teaching at this school for 24 years. Bernadette stated that working at a day care center when she was in high school made her fall in love with children and that led her go to college and become a teacher. It was Bernadette's belief that students reflect their teacher's expectations, but she was quick to point out that teachers must communicate their expectations clearly. "They've got to know *what you expect from them*. If the children know the teacher expects them to behave and what those

expectations are, then that's going to lead them to behave." Bernadette shared that she treats her students as one of her own. Bernadette sees individual people instead of the ethnic group to which they belong.

It was Bernadette's belief that her number one priority is to see all her students succeed. Bernadette described her classroom management style as "very ritual and routine-based". She went on to explain that her dad was a member of the military police. It was Bernadette's philosophy that total school should be cohesive throughout and that the rules laid by the school should be consistent throughout the whole school so that the students know what the expectations are as soon as they enter the school grounds.

Nested case 3: Shelby. Shelby is a Caucasian female teacher and she teaches fifth grade. She is 46+ years and has 33 years of teaching experience. She was once a principal and she decided to go back to class after retiring from being a principal. Shelby was strongly influenced by family members who worked in education. She stated that they always came home and talked about their classrooms. She was always intrigued by that and this led her to not consider any job besides teaching. When asked about the most enjoyable aspects of work in education, Shelby stated that she enjoys watching the rewards of learning and interacting with her students. When asked about her college education, Shelby stated that she was not willing to share that but she was well educated. Shelby stated that her philosophy is that everyone is responsible for their behavior and when she sees or hears about her students doing something good, she always calls their attention to it. Her main aim is not to focus only on bad behavior but on both bad and good. I also observed that she speaks to her students one on one when addressing an issue. It was observed that Shelby makes liberal use of praise and sometimes food incentives.

Case B (Middle School)

The middle school serves a high concentration of disadvantaged students with 100% of the students qualifying for the free and reduced-priced school food services. The school has roughly equal percentage of males and females with 51% males and 49% females forming the student body. 98% of the students are African American. Because of the size of the school, there are only four academic teachers at the middle school. This is the only middle school in this district. This middle school provides educational services to all residents that live within the county boundary limits.

Case B participants. There were two middle school teachers, one was Caucasian and one was African American. The Caucasian teacher has 38 years of teaching experience, and the African American teacher has 35 years of teaching experience. Both teachers have specialist degrees. Because of confidentiality, these teachers' pseudonyms are Deborah and Hailey. Both teachers stressed the importance of respect and showing love to the students. They also stated that their years of experiences help them in handling complicated issues and dealing with students who display unwanted behaviors.

Nested case 4: Deborah. Deborah is a female African American middle school reading teacher. She teaches seventh and eighth grades. Deborah was drawn to teaching because, among her other traits, she has the essential element – which is patience. Deborah is 56+ years old and holds a specialist degree with 35 years teaching experience. During the interview, Deborah stated that she enjoys giving students the content they need and watching them monitor their own progress over time. She expressed that most of the younger students do not see the importance of learning and monitoring their progress. Because of her teaching experience, Deborah was very candid about African American student behavior problems than the rest of the teachers.

During my classroom observations, I could witness how Deborah dealt with misbehaving students. She believes that using indoor voices is the key to controlling student's behavior. She stated that screaming at the students causes them to become worse and sometimes talk back to an adult that is screaming at them.

Nested case 5: Hailey. Hailey is 56+ years old. She is a female Caucasian teacher and teaches middle school. She is certified in early childhood and special education. She holds a specialist degree. Hailey has been teaching for 38 years. Her desire to help students who had problems with speech drove her to become a teacher. She has held different positions in education. Hailey stressed respect and stated that she tries to understand the situation from the child's perspective. She believes in treating students with respect and always urges them to do their best. It was observed that Hailey treats her students with kids' gloves, and they are given autonomy to make certain decisions in their classroom.

Case C (High School)

The high school is a public high school. It was established in July 2009 as the newest, and one of the smallest high schools in the state of Georgia. It has 10,000 square feet (930 m^2) of space. Each classroom is equipped with Smart Board technology. The new facility includes a media center, band room, and weight room. The gymnasium seats over 500 people. It now serves students in grades nine through twelve. The high school serves a high concentration of disadvantaged students with 100% of the students qualifying for the free and reduced-priced school food services. The school has roughly equal percentage of males and females with 48% males and 52% females forming the student body. It has a population of 84 students in grades nine to twelve. The number of academic teachers at the high school is seven, and there is one special education teacher, one computer technology teacher, and one physical education teacher

who serves both high school and middle school. The school promotes a positive school and learning environment through Positive Behavior Intervention Support Program (PBIS).

Lana, one of the high school teachers, stated that she loves the school because the atmosphere of the school makes her feel at home.

Case C participants. One teacher was interviewed at Case C, and the teacher participant will be called Lana for confidentiality reasons. Lana is a math teacher for the high school and aged >25 years. She is also new to her work, with just three years of experience.

Nested case 6: Lana. Lana is an African American female teacher aged between 23 and 25 years. She has a bachelor's degree and she is currently working on her masters. She teaches math and has 3 years teaching experience. She has only worked at this school and she stated that she has no intentions of moving because she was born in the surrounding area. She stated that she became a teacher because when she was in school she saw a lot of kids struggle in mathematics. She has always wanted to be a teacher since she was little because she wanted to use what she knows to help other children do better in mathematics.

When asked about her beliefs on managing African American students' behavior, she stated that it starts with adults showing respect to the students. She believes that when students are respected and treated fairly they in turn respect the adults or teacher and do as they are asked to do. In Lana's relatively unburnished experience, she stressed the need to show her students that she respects them. In this, her beliefs depart from centuries of scholars - from Sun Tzu and Plato through Renaissance university professors through the post-World War II American teachers - who expected their students to respect them in unidirectional hierarchical ranking system.

Lana does not believe in any of the former unidirectional hierarchical thinking. Lana claims, "My kids know what I believe. They respect me and I respect them. They know that if their teacher believes it's possible, then we have that buy-in from our kids." For Lana, respect grows from understanding and empathy:

> I believe that if you understand where the African American children in our district come from – their rural area – if you have some sympathy for those kids and show them that you love them, they respect you 100%. You just must show *some sympathy* to those kids, because they are less fortunate.

> Even if Lana was not highly experienced, I observed that she has good control of her students and she treats them with respect. Lana stated that before she took the job at the school the math department had a revolving door because every year for the past six years the school hired a new teacher for math. During the interview, she stated that she was confronted with the near-impossible task of bringing high school students up to grade level.

Administrators

Principal. The principal is an African American male aged between 26-35 years. He holds a specialist degree and has 11 years in the field of education. Out of the 11 years in the field of education, the last 7 of those years he has worked as the principal. He is responsible for all three schools (elementary, middle, and high school) since it is a small school system. He stated that he believes that students deserve a rewarding educational experience. During the interview he stated that rigor, relevance, and relationships is the theme for this school year. He believes that all teachers should strive to provide a rigorous learning environment that will lead students to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school. His focus was to continue to improve the quality of the school community and provide the best for the children.

The principal also talked about the need to monitor and track discipline. His school had a concerted data tracking program in place and he also used the Educator's Handbook which allowed him and the teachers to closely monitor and track their discipline.

Assistant Principal. The school system has only one assistant principal for all three schools. He is an African American male with a specialist degree. He is new at the school and has only 2 years of experience in his current position. His age ranges between 46-55 years. During the interview the assistant principal stated that the schools are currently implementing a new awards program called PBIS. (PBIS is an acronym for Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, and is used interchangeably with SWPBS, an acronym for School-wide Positive Behavior Supports.) The Assistant Principal informed me that this was the first year of PBIS implementation at his school. The Assistant Principal noted:

> We're certainly moving in the right direction. There are some challenges with buy-in across the board. I think a lot of teachers are still of the mindset that, 'Don't let kids see you smile before Christmas.' Because of that, we don't try to find positive things students are doing [or] try to compliment them.

> It was evident during discussion that the assistant principal gets a lot of support from the principal, teachers and parents on how to manage behavior since he was new in that capacity as an administrator.

Results

The overall purpose of this nested case study was to determine what made demonstrably effective teachers so successful at managing their African American students' behavior. In this following section, I will report the results of the cross-case data analysis. This analysis examined themes, similarities, and differences across cases. Three cases were examined to

generate common themes and any differences that exist between them (Stake, 2006). The use of open-ended questions provided thick descriptive data, and quotes from the participants provided a clear understanding of their lived stories in the field of education. After analysis of data, the main themes that emerged from the study were: (1) respect, (2) attitude, (3) divergence, (4) consistent, (5) warm and welcoming classrooms, (6) optimistic forward progress. Subthemes also emerged from these main themes as a result of triangulation of data from interviews, observations, focus groups and documents.

Research Question 1: What are the beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students?

Respect. Respect was the over-arching theme that emerged from the interviews that were conducted with all participants. Respect was also the basic social process that effective teachers employed to develop relationships with African American students and in turn manage their behavior. There were other answers to this first research question such as teacher's attitude and transmitting positive attitude. Without question, teachers think that their beliefs have a substantial impact on their classroom management and student behavior management. This corresponded to the two important beliefs. One belief was that a teacher's attitude is transmitted to students and influences them accordingly. The other belief was that transmitting positive attitudes about students allows a teacher to build rapport with them, and rapport is necessary to reduce student misbehavior. Both beliefs are underscored by respect. This was evident through observations that were conducted in all classrooms.

In Lana's relatively unburnished experience, she stressed during the interview the need to show students that teachers respect them. In this, her beliefs depart from centuries of authorities and scholars - from Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu in 496 BC and Greek philosopher Plato

in 348 BC through Renaissance university professors to the post-World War II American teachers - who expected their students to respect them because the ranking system was hierarchical and unidirectional. Lana does not believe in any of the former unidirectional hierarchical thinking. Lana claims, "My kids know what I believe. They respect me and I respect them. She went further to state that respect grows from understanding and empathy. She further states that when a teacher respects the students, the students work together to promote the teacher's agenda. During focus groups discussions students stated that they have respect for those teachers who show them respect. Deborah Student 3 brings up a further point, to which we shall return: "I have respect for the teachers as long as they have respect for me. If they don't have respect for me, what respect can I give them back?" Like Lana, Josie believes that respect, appropriate understanding of and empathy with a student's personal plight goes a long way toward managing their misbehavior, because a teacher's beliefs affect their classroom and behavior management.

All the classrooms that I visited I observed that each teacher had a chart that showed ways of respecting one another (Figures 1, 3, 4 & 5). I also noticed that a lot of teachers talk about respect and encourage students to use kind words especially the elementary teachers.

The Assistant Principal echoed Lana's and Josie's beliefs by stressing that student misbehavior is often traced to circumstances at home rather than at school. Like the teachers, he emphasized the importance of trying to understand situations from the child's perspective and showing them love and respect. Hailey, a middle school teacher also believes that a teacher's beliefs affect classroom and behavior management. More broadly, she too stressed respect by trying to understand the situation from the child's perspective: "I treat [students] with respect. I try to understand why they're behaving the way they're behaving."

Bernadette echoed the above sentiments that students reflect their teacher's expectations, but pointed out that teachers must communicate their expectations clearly: "They've got to know *what you expect from them*. Reinforcing the above opinions that teachers' beliefs impact students, Shelby also felt that teacher beliefs have a strong influence on their ability to manage African American student behavior. She pointed out that it is all about respect. At the elementary and middle school, students recited the student pledge every morning before they began their lessons. This pledge reminded them of how they need to act and show respect to their peers and teachers (see Figure 8).

Attitude. During the interviews, the participants mentioned that transmitting positive attitudes about students allows them to build rapport with them, and rapport is necessary to reduce student misbehavior. This was supported by a high scholars' response that: "the attitude or the personality of the teacher" and "how they go about teaching" matters a lot to them. From the observations that I made it was very clear that the teachers' attitudes play an important role in managing African American students' behavior in the classroom. I observed several times that when teachers corrected students that misbehaved they did it in a way that minimized embarrassment to the students. Teachers displayed patience during instructional time and this was because they believe that every student can learn. They exhibited positive attitude during instructional time. They encouraged their students to work hard, praised them for good behavior and gave their students positive feedback.

Research Question 2: What are the *practices* of teachers who are effective in their behavior management of African American students?

This research question was answered by data collected from participants from the three cases. The following themes emerged to answer the above research question: mutual respect

between teacher and student, divergence, use of positive reinforcements and use of rituals and routines. Below is the description of the themes from all three cases.

Mutual respect between teacher and student. The participants described mutual respect between teachers and students as the cornerstone to building relationships that promote trust and good behavior. Mutual respect between teachers and students was a theme that was strongly emphasized in all cases. Participants in all cases mentioned that if students feel that they are respected and valued they will do whatever they are told to do without hesitation, but if there is no mutual respect discipline becomes an issue. During the interviews teachers across the board stated that the best effective practice that they use to manage behavior is one of creating an environment of mutual respect. Lana claimed that mutual respect was the most important practice in her classroom management style. She stated that there was little need for formal management once mutual respect had been established. "Basically, I really don't have problems managing my classroom. I establish my policies and procedures on the first day. The kids respect me; of course I respect them. We have a good time."

Deborah echoed the sentiments of her colleagues that mutual respect played an important role in managing student behavior. She stated that her discipline philosophy is one of mutual respect, which means taking responsibility. "My philosophy is we respect one another and understand that everybody has boundaries. My desk is off limits to them." During observations it was evident that teachers practice mutual respect and it was also noticeable in their documents that were on the walls (Figures 3 & 4). Deborah's student spoke about her teachers, "I have respect for the teachers as long as they have respect for me. If they don't have respect for me, what respect can I give them back?" Students stated that every person needs to feel they are respected regardless of their color or age. Shelby Student 4 said, "I want her to treat me the

same way I treat her, as she would want me to treat her as she treats me." This desire is very positive for Shelby Student 1, who said "my relationship with my teacher is great because *when I respect her, she respects me.*"

Rituals and routines. Several teachers provided data that gave a clear indication that rituals and routines played an important role in managing behavior. Bernadette described her classroom management style as "very ritual and routine-based." She went on to explain that her dad was a member of the military police. Thus, along with her Black mom, "I was raised with rituals and routines. I guess that's what led me to be such a routine-oriented person." During the observations, it was evident that these teachers had rituals and routines that they expected their students to follow. Copies of their classroom rules and copies of their classroom rituals and routines were posted where they were visible to all students (see Figure 6). Less time was lost during transitions from one subject to another or during bathroom breaks because students followed taught rituals and routines. This in turn reduced behavior issues for teachers. When asked how they knew what do without the teacher directing them where to go during reading stations transitions, students explained that they knew their rituals and routines and when to change when a teacher rings a bell.

All classrooms that I observed had clearly posted classroom expectations and rules (Figures 3, 5 & 7). In addition, teachers verbally communicated these expectations and rules to the students throughout the lesson and even in the hall ways. Students who misbehaved were redirected and sometimes teachers pulled them to the side and talked to them privately. I observed that teachers gave students a lot of chances to correct their behavior and typically spoke to their students in a soft tone. Students were also given an opportunity to calm down if they were showing signs of anger.

Positive reinforcements. All teachers practice individual recognition and other forms of positive feedback by drawing on a treasure trove of methods. They informed me that positive feedback and use of treats tailored to the student age group in question helps them manage their classrooms effectively. Shelby, Deborah, and Hailey make liberal use of praise as well as food incentives and this was observed in their classrooms. When asked why they use treats such as food incentives they stated that elementary children like treats and they enjoy to see their teachers reward them when they behave. I noticed that the correct use of positive reinforcements was a powerful way to shape behavior; and also noted that the PBIS award system was used from elementary to high school (see Table 8).

Some teachers explained that reinforcers ranged from an investment of personal time to "credit cards" that buy coveted goodies. Bernadette disclosed that credit cards, or rather the choice moments that the credit cards buy, are extremely effective reinforcers. High school and middle school teachers stated that they reward their students with PBIS points and with those points they can purchase anything from the PBIS store. Sometimes they are given ice cream on Fridays to celebrate their discipline free week. Shelby likes to talk to her students one-on-one and praise them or call their attention when she sees them doing something good. Every classroom had PBIS chart with students' names and points they have earned that week. The Principal also mentioned how PBIS and MOPE works at his school. He pointed out that his PBIS program "is focused on really supporting positive behaviors" and that within PBIS, they have their expectations. The principal went on to say, "We live by our acronym MOPE, which means Maximizing Our Potential Every day." During focus groups discussion students expressed that they like treats especially the elementary ones but the bigger students enjoyed getting free time or using their technology gadgets during their earned free time.

High school and middle school teachers had their students' work posted on the wall with positive comments. When asked about the comments, teachers stated that the comments build confidence in students and create a positive learning environment. In most of the classrooms that I visited, I observed that students are always engaged in learning material; that reduces idle time, which in turn creates opportunities for students to misbehave.

Divergence. The theme of divergence emerged, indirectly suggesting that effective teachers keep students on track in the classroom as a function of context and student age. During interviews, all teachers stated that to manage student behavior in their classrooms they keep their students on track and this varied according the ages of students or grades taught. All teachers agreed that it is important to create an environment of mutual respect. During observations, I noticed that Shelby's students are involved in making rules and the consequences. When asked about this Shelby stated that it was her way of putting her beliefs of respect into practice.

Research Question 3: What are the social characteristics of the classroom environment of the teachers who are effective in behavior management? All participants in this study had an input in this question. The themes that emerged to answer this question were warm and welcoming, giving students autonomy to make certain decisions. These themes are discussed below.

Warm and welcoming. Participants from all three cases stated that they focus most on creating a 'warm and welcoming' classroom environment not only for their students but for other teachers, parents, stake holders and visitors. Several other features that emerged during interviews were observed in action during classroom observations. For example, an outstanding feature that I saw taking place in all classrooms was the sense of creating a welcoming classroom that promotes love and caring for each other. Students were encouraged to choose words that are kind and caring when communicating. Teachers also encouraged their students not to say

anything if they have no kind words to say to their peers or the teacher. Those who were observed using kind words were rewarded (see Figure 5). Looking through the documents it was evident that these teachers care about their students and they make them feel loved and cared for (see Figure 2).

Lana described her classroom as "a lot of group work." She seats different groups of students together depending on the task at hand. "If I have a lot of scaffolding tasks, I'll let all the low students work together, the high students [work together] and the middle students [work together]." By doing this it promotes social skills because group work involves communicating with peers. She added that her standards are posted along with a word wall to make it easy for students to refer to the standard in case they need to. This creates a "very welcoming" classroom culture, evidenced by the observation that Lana's students always come in engaged. The same warm and welcoming feeling emerged from Bernadette's classroom although she pilots a "pretty strict" physical and cultural classroom environment, probably because she too takes advantage of group work in the arrangement of the students' desks and this was witnessed during classroom observations.

During the interview, Deborah stated that she allows her students to talk among themselves as means of socialization. Deborah had this comment when asked about letting her students speak during class time, "I work with English/Language Arts (ELA). The kids have to talk in this room". "As a whole, the classroom management style is for me really let the kids socialize to a certain point." Other teachers like Shelby indicated that they keep their classrooms clean because they believe that a clean environment is welcoming.

Giving students autonomy to make certain decisions. Teachers and students discussed the importance of sharing responsibilities in the classroom. During the interviews, teachers

expressed that there was a disconnection between teachers and students in the classroom and this was another major cause of behavior issues experienced by teachers in their classrooms. Students should be allowed to have some degree of autonomy in setting classroom rules so that they might feel empowered. I observed that teachers at the high school and middle school involve their students in solving problems that affect the class and their learning. Students are empowered to make decisions and solve issues as a class. One of the teachers Josie stated that she often gives her first graders free reign: "I like to be the facilitator and let them think they're in charge and watch them move around." Shelby, also an elementary school teacher, used a similar technique, although she hesitated to label her management style as "democratic, balanced leadership, or authoritative." In any case, Shelby's elementary school students "have power. They have consequences. Shelby stated that she wants them to help in making the rules and the consequences." This gives them autonomy to make decisions and when they make these decisions they feel accepted by their teacher.

Middle school and high school students expressed satisfaction when given power to make rules. Lana described how here students like to make the rules and this gives them a buy in and they make sure that they follow their own rules. Lana, "they like to be in charge." It was also observed that in the classrooms some of the students like to remind those that don't follow rules that they will be in trouble.

Research Question 4: How does the school environment influence teachers' beliefs and practices in their classroom management?

The influence of the school environment on the discipline of African American students is broad indeed. It includes the physical environment itself, the social environment, and the psychological environment (e.g., if and how staff members support teachers; and each teacher's

relationships with the parents of her students). The following themes are focused on answering research question 4: optimistic forward progress, emphasizes respect, supports a family atmosphere, help each other to manage unruly behavior, monitors student behavior, and reward positive behavior.

Optimistic forward progress. Both administrators discussed their professional efforts to engender a unified atmosphere at their schools. The theme of respect, which has emerged in many comments to this point, again threaded through discussion of school environments. The Principal called his school environment "positive," based on his efforts to "create a culture of higher expectations." During the interviews, the theme that emerged from the teachers' comments about the influence of the school environment on teacher's classroom management was optimistic forward progress. Participants stated that they were optimistic about the efforts being made to improve the school environment by raising standards and creating more disciplinary consistency, and tended toward cheerful descriptions of relationships among staff members and of teacher-parent relations. Both administrators discussed their professional efforts to engender a unified atmosphere at their schools, and the Principal called his school environment "positive," based on his efforts to "create a culture of higher expectations." The principal expressed that their culture was evolving and they have a very positive culture and environment, but it is one where change is happening.

Help each other to manage unruly behavior. All participants responded by saying that the school environment promotes positive behaviors, and this was evident from posted rules throughout the building so that everyone is on the same page when it comes to school wide rules. Lana, one of the teachers, stated that they have same rules in every classroom, the hallways, and the cafeteria. Everyone knows what the expectations are. One of the teachers, Shelby, was most

forthright: "I think our school has high expectation for academics. But I don't think that expectation is high enough for behavior." Shelby thinks academic expectations and behavioral expectations go hand in hand. "Behavior is a little bit more important than academics. If you don't have the behavior under control, academics are not going to happen." Josie admitted that her school is:

> finally doing things, now. They're moving towards to ideal of enforcing the same rules all around. "I always believed that children should walk down the hall correctly, sit in their seats correctly, and use very good table manners. The school *kind of* supports that.

Bernadette's school's environment is "striving for success." Hailey thought that the atmosphere of her school was "accepting." Teacher comments suggested that school staff work together well. This was evident from Shelby and Hailey's comments: Shelby said she got "great support" compared to her previous experience at anotherschool. Hailey also reported good support among staff members. The students echoed the sentiments that teachers work together and that some students are sent to the office or to another teachers' classroom to stay there and calm down. Students expressed dislike of being sent to other rooms because of their behavior. They stated that they want to stay in their classrooms. During observations, I witnessed at least three incidences where students were removed from their classrooms and sent to the next room to calm down. The other teacher brought them back after a couple of minutes after talking to them. Bernadette used the word cohesive in describing her blend of discipline philosophy and policy: "Total school should be *cohesive* throughout. If we have rules, they should be cohesive throughout the whole school so the kids know what their expectations are each time they move us."

Lana claimed that her "very small" high school does not "have a lot of discipline issues" because "most of our kids are real respected." She insisted that they work as a team to solve minor behavior issues when they arise. She stated that they may have a fight here or there, but for the most part the discipline is well-managed. "Our principal handles them the way according to our handbook." When it comes to working as a team the assistant principal had this to say:

> I think all hands need to be on deck. If you see something that needs [addressing], don't necessarily let an administrator always be the one to make a correction. If other kids see you making corrections or see something not right, then they're more apt to come to you and believe you have their best interests at heart, as opposed to 'I want to sit back. I didn't see it. I'm going to call an administrator and let them deal with it.'

Josie, who teaches first grade, had a student who "really definitely has an issue." She disciplines this student by handing him off to the teacher next door: "The teacher next door helps me. I can remove him from my room if I need to and put him in [the class next door] just for a few minutes." At other times, "I have a staff member who just comes in and talks to him." When one of Lana's students misbehaves, they are also sometimes sent to another next class or simply allowed to leave the class for time in an undisclosed location to "gather themselves before they can come back into their regular classroom setting. Our staff members are very supportive in that." On the other hand, this may not be so strange.

Finally, the Principal works hard to create coordination and cooperation among the teachers by providing the same discipline policy training to everyone.

> We used to do faculty meetings and share things with teachers [but] the implementation was just not at the level we had anticipated. We now do small

groups with PL teachers on things that we want to roll out. For example, the

Educator's Handbook – the discipline referral system that's online – we train

everybody on that. Then we had teachers a month later still not sure on how to

submit a discipline referral, so we went back and sat down with small groups of

teachers and really differentiated the PL for teachers to ensure that everyone,

regardless of where they were with the program, got the support they needed to be

able to effectively use it.

Monitors student behavior and reward positive behavior. Participants were
optimistic about the efforts being made to improve the school environment by raising standards
and creating more disciplinary consistency, and tended toward cheerful descriptions of
relationships among staff members and of teacher-parent relations. There was also evidence of
consistent discipline practices at virtually every layer of the school environment. During the
interview, the assistant principal described the current implementation of a new awards program
called PBIS.

The Principal also talked about the need to monitor and track discipline. His school has a
concerted data tracking program in place, which silently suggests that there had been a pressing
need to reign in disobedience despite the administrators' mild comments:

We use an online program, the Educator's Handbook, which is our referral

system. The Educator's Handbook really allows us to very closely monitor and

track our discipline. At any given time, I can know what locations in the building

we're having the most discipline issues, girls or boys, middle or high school,

during transitions or during the cafeterias. It really breaks that down.

Teachers also help to monitor student behavior by giving students points for good behavior and then at the end of the week on Fridays they get their reward. Lana had this to say about their reward system: "PBIS plays an important role in our school discipline. The kids love being rewarded for doing well. They know they can receive PBIS points. That helps out with our discipline a lot. Students also help to monitor their peers' behavior by talking to them about their behavior." During observations, I witnessed some students monitoring their points on the charts. The teacher picks one student per week to be in charge of entering the points on the chart and the teacher keeps track of the points on the computer. Students enjoy doing that and they feel empowered and respected.

Supports a family atmosphere. Another finding that emerged from the interviews was that the principal, assistant principal and teachers have a lot of support from parents when it comes to education and discipline. The Assistant Principal stated that he holds parents accountable too when it comes to disciplining their children. The rest of the teachers reported rosy relationships with students' parents. For Bernadette, parental (but also administrative) support is the most important element of discipline. But, having grown up in the area, she has the benefit of a long, personal history with the residents and thus an additional upper hand that translates into "a very good rapport with parents." Bernadette:

> *I've known these parents forever, and they've known me forever*. I think that gives
> me a pretty good rapport. I can call a parent, and they're up here in five minutes if
> they're not at work. I think I have a pretty close relationship. You heard
> [unnamed student] call me [deleted true name]. I'm friends with his parents. A
> lot of these I'm friends with because we've known each other forever, being in
> [the same] county.

Deborah calls her relationships with the African American parents of her students "pretty good." She sometimes calls them, emails, or runs into them in the halls at school; all these provide a moment to talk about how the child is doing. "I think the communication is open and good. Majority of the parents are supportive." Lana stated that if misbehavior required contacting the student's parents, she called them and most of the time they speak with their child. For the most part, the action is corrected. Students expressed their opinions that they usually don't like teachers calling their parents because they get punishment when they get home.

Emphasizes respect. The theme of respect, which has emerged in many comments to this point, again threaded through discussion of school environments. The Principal called his school environment "positive," based on his efforts to "create a culture of higher expectations." Lana reported that discipline depended on the type of incident that occurs. If the infraction is minor, "most of the time, we just talk to the kids" to get them back on track. But more serious infractions, such as fighting or repetitive actions, require "corporal punishment, at-home suspension, or even in school suspension (ISS). It just depends on the incident that happened."

Along the same lines as Lana, the Principal uses talking as a practice for dealing with discipline issues. This is another way to put respect into practice. Hailey had this to say about showing students respect:

> I don't think children should be demoralized or that you say something that is really going to affect their ego or self-esteem. I think a lot of the teachers go after them because the kids are not acting the way they should act in class. They tear down their self-esteem. 'I knew you couldn't do that anyway' or something of that sort.

Classroom walls had star behavior charts that teachers referred to when redirecting students who displayed unwanted behaviors (see Figure 7). These charts were used as bibles in the classrooms.

As a whole, the themes and subthemes that emerged can be meshed into six major attributes that make demonstrably effective teachers successful at managing their African American students' behaviors. These attributes include (a) respect, (b) positive attitude, (c) divergent thinking patterns, (d) consistency and fairness in student-teacher interactions, (e) warm and welcoming classrooms, and (f) an optimistic outlook on student progress.

These emergent themes support the findings from the literature, which suggest that managing student behavior effectively requires teachers to look at themselves first, become aware of their biases, acknowledge any negative thoughts they might harbor, and make sure that their feelings do not influence their actions in the classroom. The literature suggested that students behave better when they perceive their teachers to be supportive, responsive, and caring (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Fallon et al., 2012; Sugai et al., 2012; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). The discussion, conclusions, and recommendations are in Chapter Five.

Summary

This qualitative case study explored the beliefs and practices of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management. The intent of the study was to describe the reality of the practices and beliefs of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management of African American students. Multiple strategies of collecting data supported triangulation, which ensured that data collected were reliable and valid. Strategies included interviews, observations, focus groups, and document reviews. Six separate nested case reports from effective teachers

were prepared, each offering rich descriptions of the real classroom relative to discipline and classroom management of African American students.

This study is shaped by sociocultural theory created by Lev Vygotsky (1978) as a response to behaviorism, a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Vygotsky's theory makes teachers aware of their vision of students as they are defined by their age and IQ as compared to culturally and socially stimulated learners. This vision helps teachers to see themselves as role models as compared to being sources of knowledge. Themes and subthemes emerged from a triangulation of findings from the interviews, observations, focus groups, and document reviews. Themes related to practices and beliefs of effective teachers relative to their classroom behavior management.

Figure 1.

Dear Students,
1. I believe in you.
2. I trust in you.
3. You are listened to.
4. You are cared for.
5. You are important.
6. You will succeed.

Love,
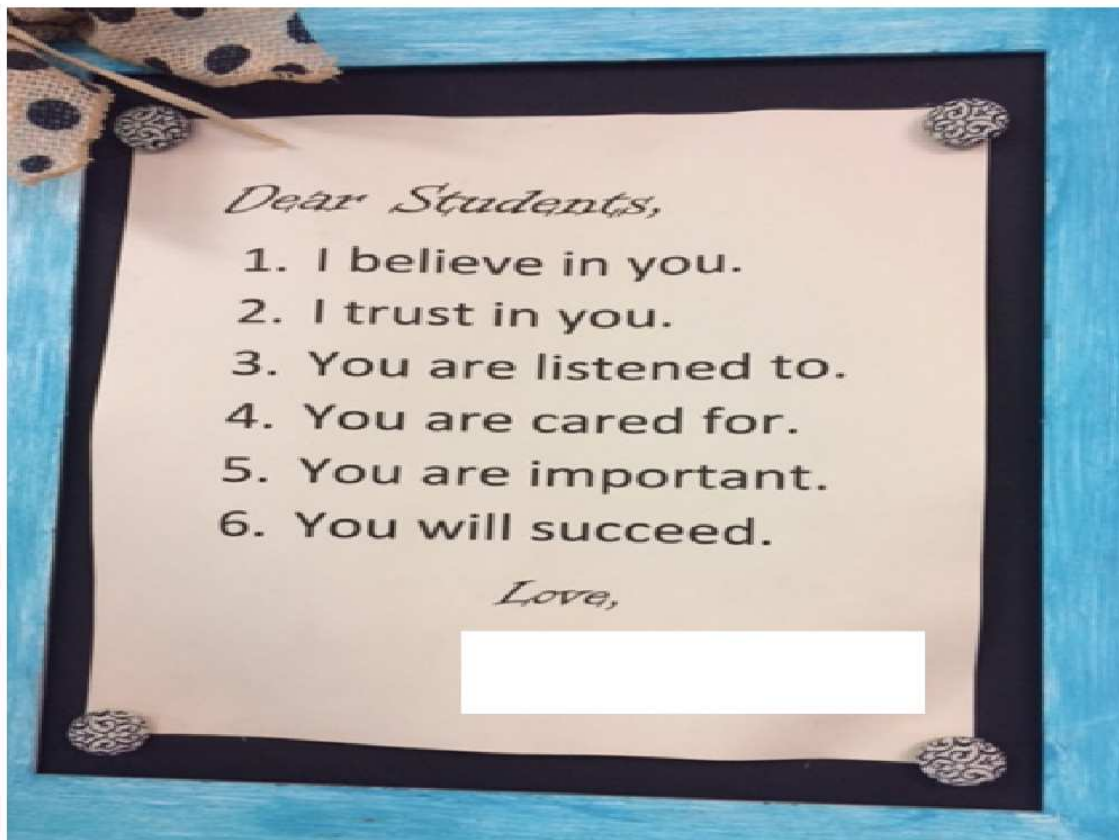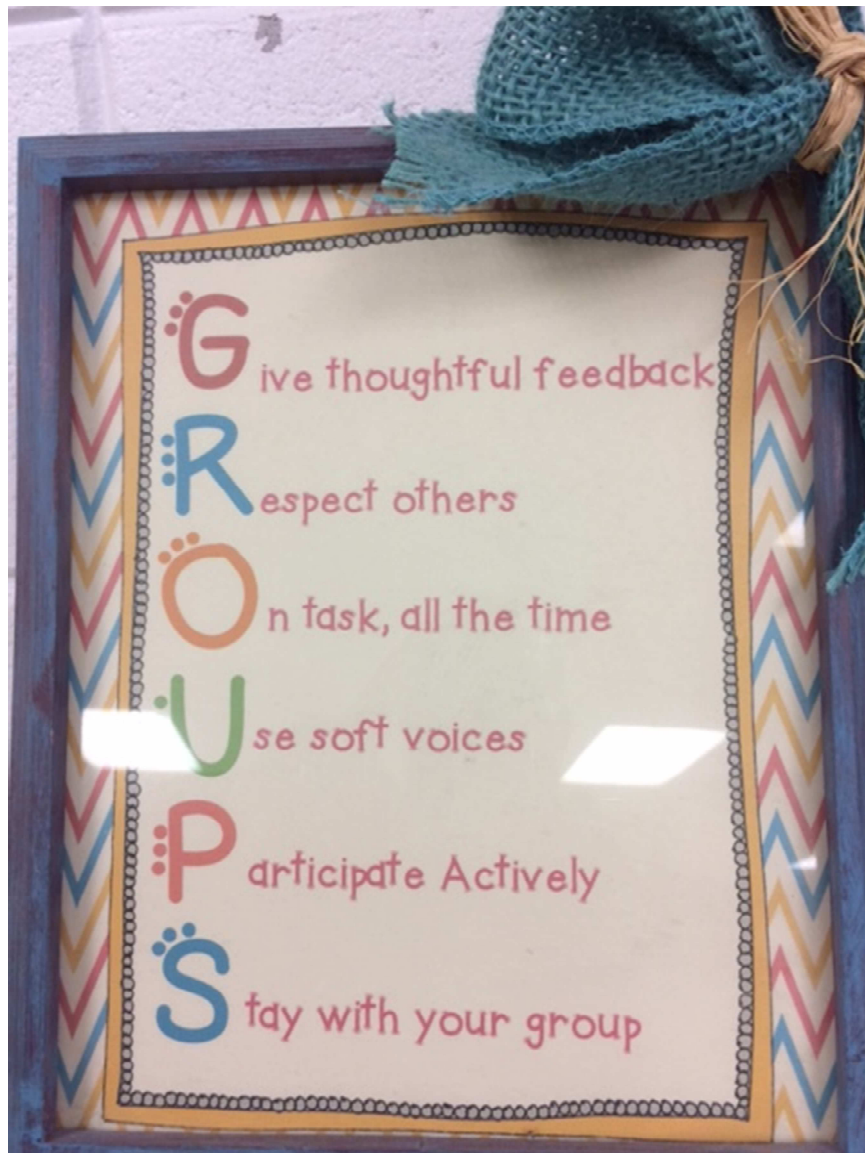
Figure 2.

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

SUPER

rituals – Rituals tell you how we do things in this class the same way everyday.

routines – Routines explain what we always do in this class the same way everyday.

transition – A transition is a change from one form, condition, or place to another.

habit – A habit is something that you do regularly, often without thinking about it.

signal – A signal is anything agreed upon to send a message or warning.

sequel – A sequel is a book or movie that continues the story of on earlier work.

artifacts – Artifacts in this class are the tools and resources essential to learning.

Figure 6.

Figure 7.

Student Pledge

As a student at ▮▮▮▮▮ County Elementary School, I pledge to be respectful, responsible, and show restraint. I pledge to treat both adults and students with respect and to accept people who are different from me.

I pledge these things because I am a ▮▮▮▮ kid; and I want my school, my parents, and my community to be proud of me. I know that by following this pledge I will also be proud of myself.

Figure 8.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
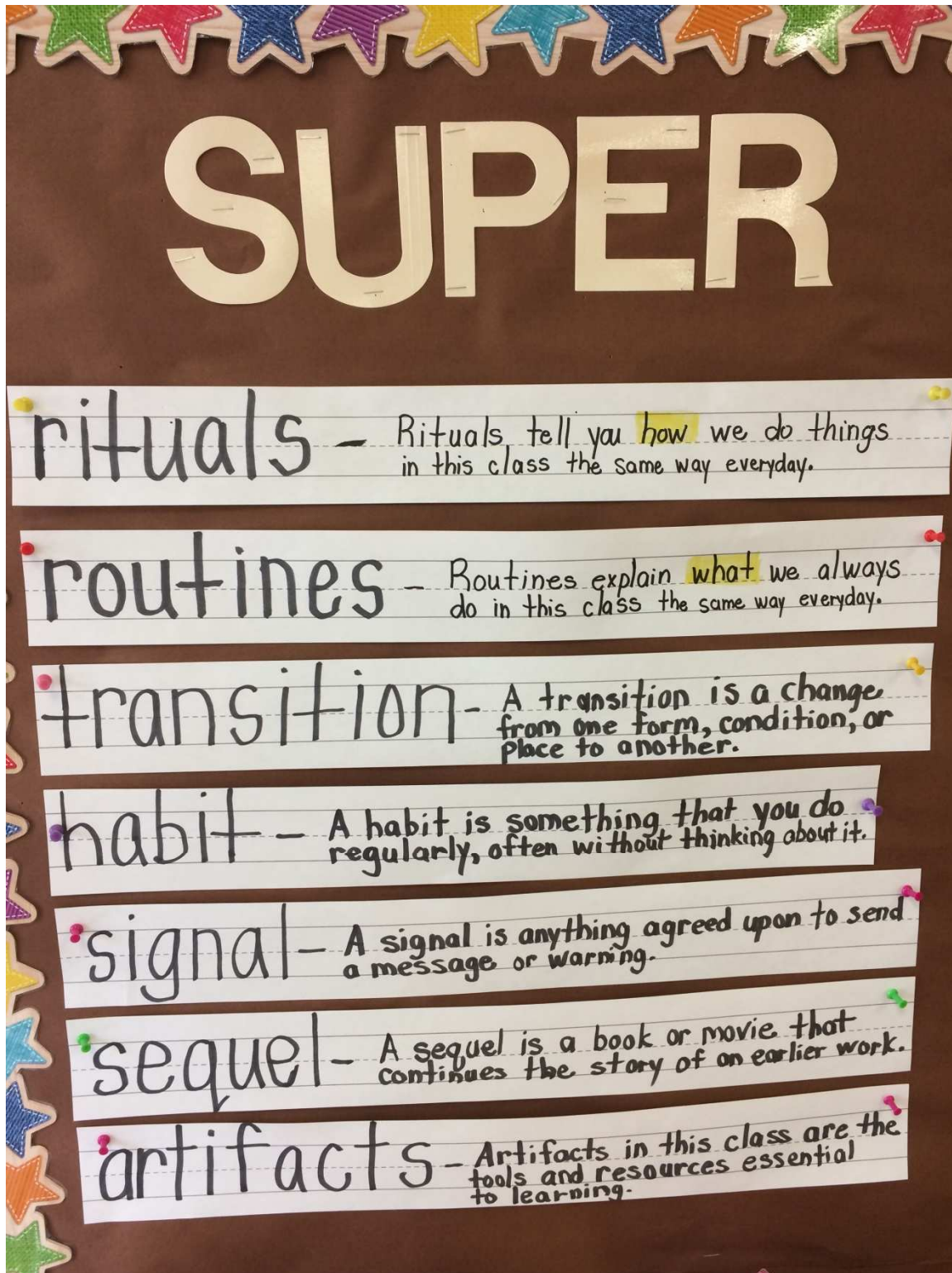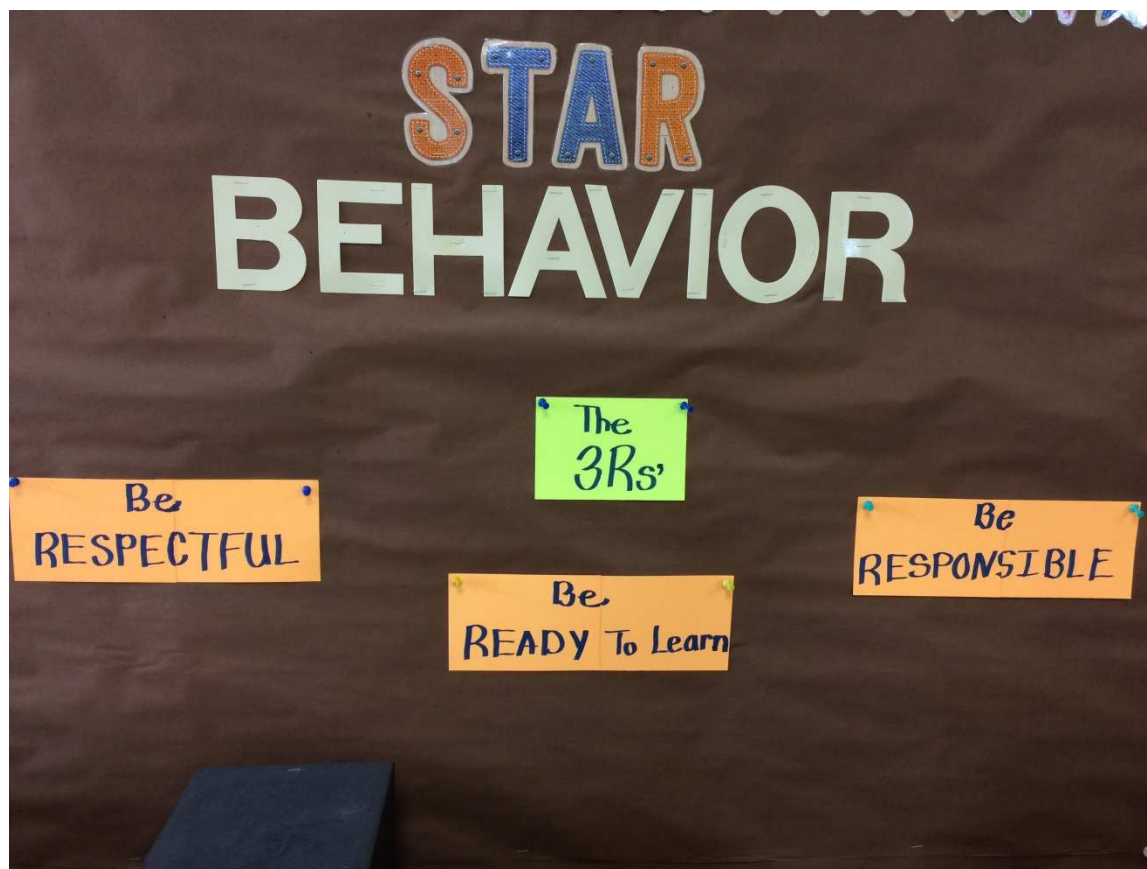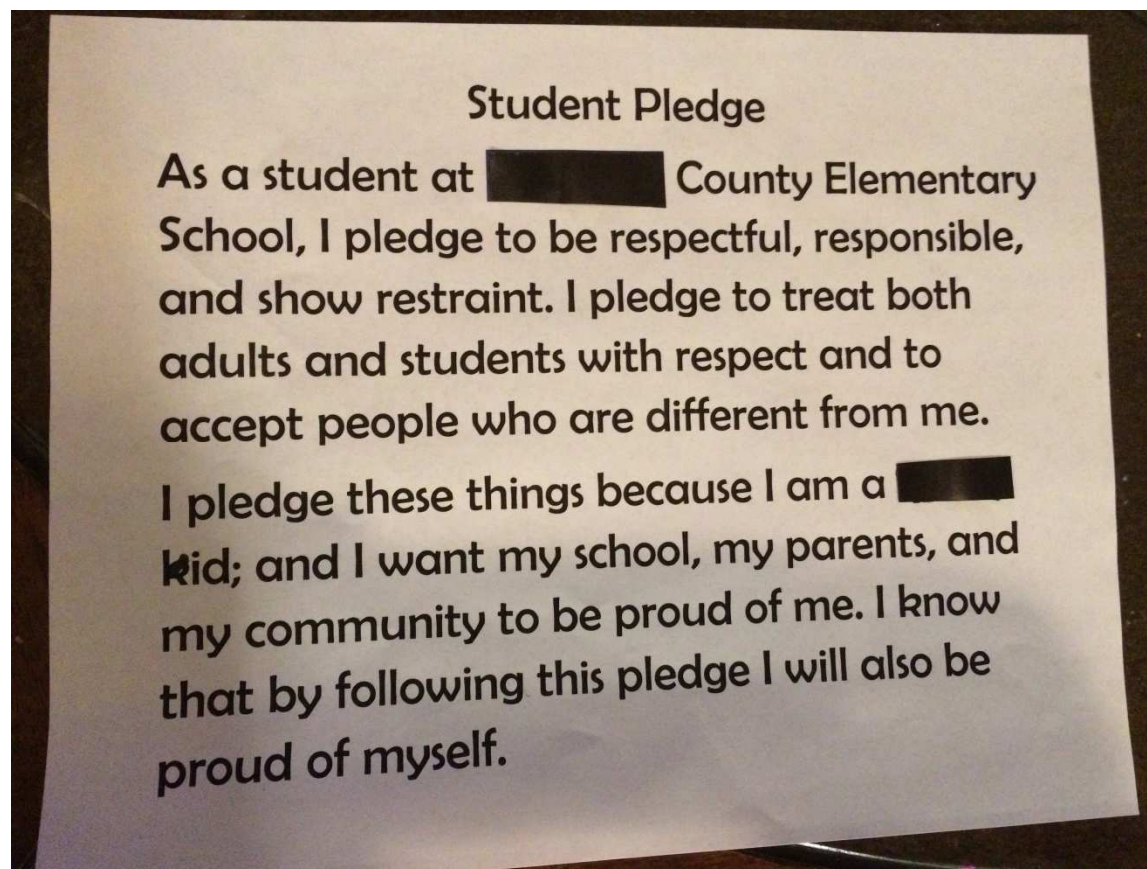
Overview

The purpose of this multiple case study was to describe the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students (African American). The study's findings are discussed in this chapter and how they relate to the research questions. The theoretical framework of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) shaped this research study. After researching the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students (African American), it is my desire to provide a summary of my findings, implications, a discussion of the findings, limitations and delimitations of the study, recommendations of the future research, and assumptions of the study. It is the belief of the researcher that the information gathered from this research will be helpful for future studies.

Summary of Findings

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to describe the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). A case study approach was used to describe the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students. The study's main focus was to determine what made demonstrably effective teachers so successful at managing their African American students. Specific aims were to describe the teachers' beliefs and practices when managing student behavior. The study used the following data sources: interviews, focus groups, documents and observations to provide triangulation. Further aims were to understand the basic social processes that teachers used to develop relationships with their students and in turn manage their behavior when it hindered learning.

The study's central question was generated with four specific research sub- questions that were aimed at addressing the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students.

Four research questions that focused on teachers' beliefs and practices were used to guide this study. The summary of the findings was based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students (African American students)?

Data from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents indicated that all six teachers that participated in the study from the three sites (Cases) believed that respect is the cornerstone in building good relationship with students. Similar to Lana's class and other teachers' classrooms, the culture of Bernadette's classroom is mutual respect: "If I show my students respect, they're going to respect me back. If I show their parents respect, they're going to respect me back. If I talk to them like I would talk to another teacher, not like I'm talking down to them, they're going to respect me."

Teachers think that their beliefs have a substantial impact on their classroom management and student behavior management. This corresponded to the two important beliefs. One belief was that a teacher's attitude is transmitted to students and influences them accordingly. The other belief was that transmitting positive attitudes about students allows a teacher to build rapport with them, and rapport is necessary to reduce student misbehavior. Teachers described the importance of knowing where these students come from and their backgrounds and knowing these things helps teachers understand the situation from the child's perspective.

Research Sub-question 2

What are the *practices* of teachers who are effective in their behavior management of African American students?

This research question was answered by data obtained from all participants in the study. Practices were conceptualized two ways: classroom management style and handling discipline. Practicing individual recognition and other forms of positive feedback by teachers helps a lot to when it comes to managing student behavior. The teachers made liberal use of treats, tailored to the student age group in question. The correct use of positive reinforcements is a powerful way to shape behavior; note also that the PBIS award system was used from elementary to high school (see Table 8). Reinforcers ranged from an investment of personal time to "credit cards" that buy coveted goodies. The individual styles of the effective elementary school teachers in the current study ranged from flexible and student-governed to structured and predictable. The individual styles of effective middle school teachers flexed in conjunction with student behavior and misbehavior. The individual style of the effective high school teacher was to create an environment of mutual respect.

From lengthy discussions about the discipline of African American students, teachers stated that the ideal discipline *philosophy* is one of mutual respect between teacher and student and the ideal discipline *policy* is the need to be consistent. By observing teachers in action in their classrooms and reviewing documents and teacher interviews from all teachers, I discovered that all teachers emphasized respect and there was consistency in their discipline policy from elementary all the way to high school. There was also collaboration when it came to disciplining students. Teachers helped each other when need arises to deal with discipline issues.

Research Sub-question 3

What are the *social characteristics of the classroom environment* of the teachers who are effective in behavior management?

Data collected from all cases indicated that their classrooms are warm and welcoming. Teachers take the time to align lessons in ways that attract the students' attention and engender their engagement. Teachers stated that standards and expectations are posted along with a word wall. This creates a "very welcoming" classroom culture, evidenced by the observation that Lana's students "always come in engaged. One of the teachers Deborah stated that she creates a warm and welcoming classroom by allowing her students to do what they do well-talking among themselves. She uses this as means of giving students time to socialize. She stated that for socialization to take place students should be afforded opportunities to verbalize and collaborate.

By reviewing documents and teacher interviews from all cases, I discovered that these teachers care about their students and they make them feel loved and cared for regardless of their backgrounds or the language they speak. One of the lower grades teachers had a student who did not speak English but the teacher went out of her way to learn how to speak that student's language so that she could have better communication with the student.

Research Sub-question 4

How does the *school environment* influence the teacher's beliefs and practices in their classroom management?

Data collected from all participants was used to answer this question. Participants expressed that the school environment plays an important role in influencing their beliefs and practices in managing student behavior. The influence of the school environment on the discipline of African American students is broad indeed. It includes the physical environment

itself, the social environment, and the psychological environment (e.g., if and how staff members support teachers; and each teacher's relationships with the parents of her students). Participants were optimistic about the efforts being made to improve the school environment by raising standards and creating more disciplinary consistency, and tended toward cheerful descriptions of the relationships among staff members and of teacher-parent relations.

The Principal called his school environment "positive," based on his efforts to "create a culture of higher expectations." The Principal:

> I can't talk about the environment without talking about the culture. I certainly think our culture is evolving. We have a very positive culture and environment, but it's one where change is happening. Sometimes change is uncomfortable, and as a result of that the culture has an impact – but we're working on that.

The school has posted rules throughout the building so that everyone is on the same page. There are same rules in every classroom, the hallways, and the cafeteria. One of the participants had a different view when it came to expectations. The teacher stated that she thinks the school has high expectations for academics but she does not think that expectations are high enough for behavior. But she was quick enough to say that the school *kind* of supports behavior expectations. Teacher comments suggested that school staff work together well and they get support from other staff members. The principal works hard to create coordination and cooperation among the teachers by providing the same discipline policy training to everyone and he communicates expectations to the students' parents. The Assistant Principal has a lot of support from parents when it comes to education and discipline and he holds parents accountable, too. The rest of the teachers reported rosy relationships with students' parents.

Table 8

Ways to Provide Students with Recognition and Positive Reinforcement

Teacher	Methods of Recognition and Positive Reinforcement
Bernadette	I do their weekly behavior charts. They get the check for the positive behaviors. If they have an issue, I'll write in the little square what their issue was. We do the PBIS. They try to build points. I have a chart over here that we record our points on. Every nine weeks I'll tally up their points. They can go to the PBIS store, and we're going to start doing field trips for the ones who can go ahead – have points. Then I do the credit card system.
Deborah	Most of the time I just give them recognition. If they're doing really good, I tell them 'This is a good job. Keep it up.' The ones that are not doing as well as I think they can, I will give them pointers as to *how* they can do better. I tell them they can do better. That's not talking so much, focusing on what the assignment is, and not doing a sloppy job. Do their very best. Sometimes I do give them incentives – not very often, but candy or looking at a particular movie.
Hailey	I [usually praise them verbally] and with primary reinforcers, and I support them. If they come in having a bad or something has happened to them in the classroom, we talk about it. Usually Goldfish, animal crackers, or gummy bears – food.
Josie	We have the PBIS thing, where they can go and buy things from the store. I also have Fun Friday on Fridays. They love stickers. I have stickers, treats...
Lana	We reward our students with PBIS points. That gets them excited and motivated. We have a PBIS store [where] they can purchase, candy, school supplies, or save those points to actually get into a basketball game for free. They can have ice cream on Friday celebrations. There are multiple things kids can do with their points.
Shelby	I try to speak to them one-on-one. When I see or hear about them doing something good, I always call their attention to it. I try not to just focus on the bad.

Note. PBIS = Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

Discussion

Fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education (1954), there are still alarming trends in the academic achievement of African American students. According to a report released by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2010), almost 7,000 students become dropouts every day across the United States. Almost one-half of all African American students who attend school do not graduate with their class or with a high school diploma (Bridgeland et al., 2010). African

American students are also disproportionately referred for discipline suspensions (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Skiba et al., 2002). Decades of research have tried to explain and address existing negative trends that still exist in the US education system. In the field of education, discipline continues to be a major concern facing schools and behavior issues still remain an unresolved problem in spite of different strategies and techniques being offered over the years to confront it within the classroom and the school environment.

This study utilized the interpretative approach, in which social action and human activity are transcribed into readable text in preparation for analysis (Berg, 2007). Through the use of different research methods that included interviews, focus groups, observations and documents, I was able to obtain comprehensive information about beliefs and practices of effective classroom teachers. This study provides a rich description of how teachers manage African American students' behavior and how their beliefs influence their practices in the classroom. Discussions in this study will begin by reviewing the findings through the lens of the theoretical framework. The rest of the discussion is devoted to comparing the results of this study to previous research that is discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Theoretical Framework

This study is shaped by sociocultural theory created by Lev Vygotsky (1978) as a response to behaviorism. Sociocultural theory states that individuals are aware of circumstances surrounding them and that individual behaviors are shaped by the surroundings, social and cultural factors. Vygotsky believed that parents, relatives, peers, and society, all have an important role in shaping an individual's behavior. Based on this theory, cultural beliefs, attitudes, and respect are relevant to management of African American students' behavior. In this sociocultural theory, the school is viewed by students as their society because they spend

most of the time with their peers and teachers. Participants from all three cases (schools) confirmed that respect and attitudes are relevant to managing student behavior. The findings from this study also support the idea that cultural beliefs and surroundings shape an individual's behavior. In the classrooms, teachers who used positive reinforcers and praise stated that they have fewer behavior issues. Respect and transmitting positive attitudes about students allows teachers to have better communication with their students which is necessary to reduce student misbehavior.

Another theory that is significant to this study is the social cognitive theory proposed by Miller and Dollard in 1941. This theory provides a framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating programs that can be used by teachers in the classrooms to manage behavior that is exhibited by students from diverse cultural backgrounds. In reference to this theory, the three cases (schools) are using PBIS program to monitor and reward good behaviors. The study showed that having a program that monitors behavior in place and using it with fidelity decreases the number of students who get in trouble. The use of reinforcers by teachers promoted positive behaviors with the school. The social cognitive theory also stresses the fact that shared beliefs produce desired effects. Students who feel connected to their teachers tend to show respect and display desired behaviors in the classroom. Some of the students stated that they respected their teachers because they felt that they shared the same values and beliefs. On the other hand, some teachers stated that they were born and raised local and this made it easy to manage student behavior because they knew their parents.

Later in 1963, Bandura and Walters broadened the social learning theory with the principles of observational learning. There are many definitions of this theory but the best one that fits this study is that people learning through observation and experiences assume control of

their own behavior (Ormrod, 2011). Through interviews teachers, the assistant principal and principal stated that it takes a village to raise a child and this was evident when they were addressing research question 4 which focused on the school environment. It was evident from the results of this study that having expectations that are uniform throughout the school and communicating them to students effectively improved student behavior in all areas of the school. All participants stated that they help each other in managing students' behaviors and sometimes the next door teacher intervenes and helps to calm the student down. This data confirmed research by Vygotsky (1978) which stated that parents, relatives, peers, and society, all have an important role in shaping an individual's behavior.

Findings from participants from all three cases confirmed research by Watson's (1930) behaviorism a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. This theory refers to how behaviors are learned. The findings from the study show that those teachers who use rituals and routines in their classrooms have less behavior issues because students are conditioned to following the routines when they hear the bell ring and hand clap. This was evident in all elementary classrooms that I observed.

Although teachers prefer positive interventions over punishment to manage classroom behavior, many classrooms are not actually positive learning environments (Banks, 2014). Based on what I found and saw in the classrooms during observations, I can say that the classrooms were conducive for learning and teachers did their best to create an inviting learning environment. Since the school is using PBIS, the main focus of the programs is to focus on positive behavior and rewards. The findings of this study showed that teachers, administrators, students and parents have the same common goal which is to create a positive learning

environment, create a sense of loving community and produce high achieving respectful students.

School Environment

The school environment is made up of two parts: the social, which involves interactions between parents, students, teachers, staff and administrators and the physical, which involves dealing with classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, cafeteria and gymnasium (Johnson, 2009). School environment encompasses the physical environment, the social system and relationships between principals, teachers, parents and students. When collected, data was cross analyzed it revealed that a positive school environment promotes positive behavior. Success in effectively disciplining students is based on a unified approach. This was also evident from interview data and observation that I conducted in the classrooms.

Participants from all cases (schools) felt that the school was creating an environment that has disciplinary consistency and that promotes positive relationships among staff members, students and parents. It was also the belief of all the participants that respect was fundamental to creating a school environment that collectively engendered optimistic forward progress. This was also supported by the Principal's remarks where he called his school environment "positive," based on his efforts to "create a culture of higher expectations." Administrators put a lot of effort to bring about a unified atmosphere within the school in order to create a positive school environment and creating a culture of higher expectations. Human behavior is something that is learned and it can be modified through environmental adjustments (Sugai et al., 2012). Data collected from this study supports the fact that teachers and administrators are working together as a team to change unruly learned behaviors to create a conducive learning environment.

One of the outstanding features that I saw taking place in all classrooms was the sense of creating a welcoming classroom that promotes love and caring for each other. Students in the classroom were encouraged to respect each other and adults, engage in positive conversations, and follow school and classroom rules. In most of the classes, teachers kept their students engaged in learning material and this reduces idle time, which in turn creates opportunities for students to misbehave.

Practices of Effective Teachers

Teaching practices reflect teachers' beliefs that, in turn, reflect their own experiences and backgrounds (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Cuba, 1984; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988). Regardless of their race, color, beliefs or background, all participants in this study stated that they were aware of the challenges they are faced with and what makes them overcome these challenges are their years of teaching experience and patience. When managing behavior teachers approach the challenges with an array of collegiate teaching experience ranging from 3 years to 38 years. Establishment of a positive classroom environment is a vital element of culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Data collected through interviews from all participants in the study and documents indicated that they created and maintained positive learning environment for better classroom management.

Once rules and communication guidelines are well established, the instructor can then turn attention to activities that continue to build relationships, promote cooperation, and encourage self-reflection (Ellerbrock, 2014). Participants in all three cases (schools) provided their students with classroom rules and school rules. Rules are posted in the hallways, bathrooms and in the classroom. They also have rituals and routines that were followed by the

students. Students are always encouraged to recite the school pledge every morning. By doing this, it reminds them of the rules and how to manage their behavior.

Data collected revealed that establishing relationships and communicating expectations clearly were key to getting students to respond positively. Lack of good relationships with students leads to display of unwanted behaviors by students. Effective teachers maintain fairness among their students.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support

Vincent and Tobin (2011) reported that African American students continue to experience a disproportionate rate of long-term suspensions despite the implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). The findings from these three cases (schools) did not reveal such issues and they were not observed during data collection. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive approach that was used by the schools to improve student behavior, achieve social, emotional and academic success. Through discussions it was evident that PBIS was implemented with fidelity and all participants stated that they saw great improvement in student behavior.

This whole-school preventive intervention strategy is currently implemented in over 5,000 schools nationwide (Sugai & Horner, 2006) and aims to prevent disruptive behavior and enhance the school's organizational climate by creating and sustaining a comprehensive system of behavioral support. According to previous research, implementation of school-wide PBIS is associated with a reduction in office discipline referrals (Taylor-Greene et al., 1997), suspensions (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005), and improvements in academic performance (Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002). The literature supports the findings from this study where the teachers expressed their support of the program. Some of the benefits of

implementing this intervention support that I observed from the three cases (schools) were that teachers and students had a buy in it. Teachers were excited to have it and students loved it because they are rewarded for good behavior through this system. Another benefit of using this system is that teachers use reinforcers that range from an investment of personal time to "credit cards" that buy coveted goodies.

Implications

Implications for Teachers

Effective teachers are those that are committed to helping students that struggle academically and those that have behavior issues. This study was significant because it helped to explore and address the beliefs and practices of effective teachers who are able to manage student behavior in culturally diverse classrooms. Teachers are held accountable for their classroom management and student achievement. Teachers who possess comprehensive and well-articulated classroom rules and procedures are able to manage their classrooms effectively. This study has evidence that shows that effective and successful teachers have well established effective classroom routines and procedures that aide in preventing interruptions and promote smooth transitions.

Supporting African American students with behavior issues should not be left to the teachers or administration only but it should involve parents and other outside agencies. Schools and parents should work together to provide the support these students need for them to improve their behavior. School counselors should be involved in providing sessions such as anger management and provide ideas on how to control their behavior. Teachers should take their time to teach rituals and routines and classroom rules. Learning rituals and routines cannot be done in

a day it takes practice. Students should be given ample time to practice and by doing so it helps students understand the expectations and follow them with fidelity.

The six teachers who were identified as being effective in managing African American students' behavior credited their success to the love of their job, positive attitudes about students, building rapport with students, establishing mutual respect between teachers and students, and creating warm and welcoming classrooms and creating disciplinary consistency.

Implications for Administrators

Findings from this study highlighted the role that administrators play in implementing programs that monitor and promote positive behavior. By implementing up to date programs for monitoring student behavior such as PBIS shows that administrators cannot continue to rely on old traditional discipline practices that involve punishment. The current "zero tolerance" approach to discipline has proven ineffective in reducing problem behavior (Skiba, et al., 2002). It is very essential for those that work with children to abandon old ways of managing discipline and start using programs that provide data. This data will guide administrators in making sound decisions that will help students rather than expelling them from school. It was evident from this study that the use of PBIS improved student behavior and provided support to the teachers that they have always wanted. Research has shown that approximately 80% of the student body can be successful, as defined as one or fewer office discipline referrals, with universal supports in place (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). This was evident from this study because teachers expressed satisfaction with the PBIS program that is being implemented in all three schools. However for this program to be effective it should be implemented with fidelity and administrators should search for research-based practices and help educators to create learning environments that will prevent problem behaviors.

The implications of this study were significant because they addressed beliefs and practices of teachers who are successful in managing African American students' behavior; the study also provided information for understanding how effective classroom management correlates with higher student achievement. It provided insight into the attitudes and practices of effective teachers, and the data collected will contribute to the field of education and to educators by identifying the importance of developing culturally sensitive teachers who conceive of culture as a dynamic process of interaction, communication, socialization, and education.

Limitations and Delimitations

The attributes of a research study that are within the control of the researcher are called delimitations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). There are some delimitations that are deeply-rooted in this study that helped in increasing the study's credibility. Site selection is one of the delimitations because the school system is located in a low socioeconomic county, with a high population 98% of African American students who attend the three schools, and 97% of the teachers are Caucasian. Secondly, a purposefully selected group of teachers, principals, and students was included in the study and collection of specific data to discuss the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students was done. Another delimitation is that the study only focused on effective teachers, meaning that there is no comparison with non-effective teachers to see what the other teachers are doing wrong or to see the practices they use to deal with classroom management. Effective teachers are defined as those with below average of student referrals as evidenced by the discipline data management system of the school. Effective teachers are also those who are nominated as teacher of the year by the administration and students as evidenced by their

practices that are culturally responsive. Teachers selected had at least one or more years of teaching experience.

The study has limitations such as geographic location of the schools that I studied. They are located in a small county populated by farm workers. Using schools as the units of analysis restricts the ability to investigate the contribution of prior infractions, a variable that can have a significant effect on administrative decisions regarding disciplinary consequences. As an employed educator, I had to use the closest schools to reduce travelling and taking time off from my job, and in order for me to be able to collect data I had to take days off from my job. Another limitation was that the population of the student participants, which was a small group of thirty students that included lower grades students, struggled to stay on task during interviews. It can be concluded that regardless of these limitations, this study is a good attempt to better understand how to manage African American students' behavior from the perspective of effective teachers. The research is valuable because it will address the substantial gaps in the research literature, exploring racial and ethnic disparities in school discipline and also further discussion and development of culturally responsive programs that will enhance teachers' practices that are effective in managing student behavior.

Future Research

The purpose of this nested case study is to describe the beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with African American students in three schools, in rural Georgia. This study researched teachers' beliefs and practices that make them effective in managing African American students' behavior in their classrooms. Future research should include students from other cultural backgrounds since there is a growing population of students

in American schools that come from different cultural backgrounds. Future research should

include teachers from other cultural backgrounds as participants so as to gain an insight on how

African American students act when taught by teachers from other cultures. This will shed light

on whether these African American students lack respect for teachers or any teacher who they

view as an outsider. Further research should be conducted to determine ways teachers and

administrators can foster cultural awareness in school and in diverse classrooms. It is important

to have teachers who have knowledge of other cultures and willing to embrace these differences

and provide relevant teaching and material.

In this research, purposeful selection of teachers was done by the principals since they

knew who was effective in managing students' behavior. Future research should use random

selection of teachers. This will allow for a better sample that is not biased. 21st century schools

are getting more populated by students from different cultures and this has caused students to

join gangs which in turn have made discipline issues skyrocket in schools. With this in mind, it

is important to have educational programs that are geared towards developing teachers who

acknowledge, validate, and address group and individual differences between and within cultural

groups.

Another suggestion for future research is that student participants should include students

with different cultural backgrounds. This will give the researcher a better data from diverse

students not only certain group of students (African American students).

Recommendations

The purpose of this nested case study is to describe the beliefs and practices of teachers

who are effective in their behavior management with African American students in three rural

Georgia schools. This study examined teachers' beliefs and practices that make them effective in managing African American students' behavior in a diverse classroom. Misbehaving students hinder other students from learning and interrupt the learning and teaching process. Data collected from the participants offered valuable information about beliefs and practices of effective teachers, and in this section I will provide recommendations that will help other educators who struggle to manage behavior of African American students in their classrooms. Based on the results of this study these are the recommendations:

Support from the Administration

In the United States, teachers are struggling to manage disruptive or off-task behavior in their classrooms. Most teachers are failing to manage disruptive behavior because they still rely on traditional discipline practices such as punishment or paddling. In order to help teachers on how to manage disruptive behaviors administrators should step out of the box and find new ways of managing behavior such as the implementation of School-wide systems of Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS). Implementation of the School-wide PBS helps to prevent chronic behavioral challenges and also provides support to adults within the school environment. In order for SW-PBS to be successful school administrators should be active participants and support their teachers by providing needed resources for successful implementation of the program. Administrators should take leadership, ensure that the program is implemented with fidelity, and become the spokesperson to the community stakeholders about how the programs will improve the climate of the school and create a positive school environment that is conducive for learning.

Student Teacher Relationships

A safe, trusting and culturally responsive environment is necessary for creating positive teacher-student relationships. Teachers should empower their students and involve them in making decision that affects their daily school activities. Students should be allowed to have input in creating classroom rules and consequences for breaking these rules. Open conversations should be an everyday thing between teachers and students. Conversations create a bond of trust between teachers and students and also allow teachers to know their students better and how to serve them according to their needs. Teachers should have open conversations about race, culture, and beliefs. These conversations help to build trust and love. Students who feel loved and cared for are always willing to comply with their teacher's wishes. Through open conversations teachers become aware of any difficulties their students are having and this helps teachers in making decisions that will create a positive atmosphere for a classroom environment.

Respect

Respect plays an important role in creating a positive learning environment free of destructions. Teachers need to value their students and respect them in order to win them and have active learners in their classrooms. This does not mean that teachers do not deserve to be respected; they should also be respected by their students. Teachers should ensure that their students respect each other and they embrace other cultures and beliefs. Teachers should avoid authoritarian control in their classrooms because this may lead to students becoming afraid to talk about their problems. If they are respected and allowed to talk about their problems they will feel valued and respected. The most important thing that teachers need to know is that their students deserve respect, special attention, appreciation, someone who admires their strengths, and cares for them. Lack of adult respect is very corrosive to students.

Positive Beliefs

Effective teachers believe that their beliefs play an important role in shaping their practice. Effective teachers believe that sharing the power with students makes students become active and self-regulated learners. Teachers should create student-centered classrooms that embrace students' attitudes and respect for their opinions and decisions. These teachers' beliefs are that there should be clearly defined student roles and behavior expectations. Teachers should also teach social skills that will help developing good citizens. It is very important to note that teachers' beliefs and behaviors are considered as one of the most important conditions for classroom order.

Effective teachers believe that all students can learn, they should be treated equally, learning should be fun, diversity in the classroom is strength and not a problem, and that students should be given praise for good deeds. Teachers' beliefs have a huge impact on their classroom practices and teaching.

Summary

According to this research, it can be concluded that there is a lot that needs to be done to prepare teachers for 21st century classrooms that are increasingly getting populated by students with diverse backgrounds with varied cultures. The study also showed that respect is the key to managing behavior. Another important aspect of this study is that teachers' attitude influences how students behave. The other belief was that transmitting positive attitudes about students allows a teacher to build rapport with them, and rapport is necessary to reduce student misbehavior.

This study concludes by pointing out that administrators play a vital role in helping teachers manage student behavior within the school and in their classrooms. Administrators

devote a lot of effort to bring about a unified atmosphere within the school in order to create a

positive school environment and creating a culture of higher expectations. As educators, it is

important to note that our students need love, respect and to be treated with kid gloves. On the

other hand it is also important to know that other cultures exist for a reason and they also need

love, respect, and recognition at all levels.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM ADMINISTRATORS

Date:

To: Researcher

From: School Authorized Administrator

Address:

I [school authorized agent] an authorized administrator with Big Creek Schools /County

(pseudonym) grant Busani N Siphambili permission to carry out research at Big Creek Schools

/County (pseudonym). Busani N Siphambili is granted permission to contact administrative staff

at Big Creek Schools /County (pseudonym) to aid in the identification of students and teachers

that are going to participate in the study and to further aid the researcher in establishing contact

with the identified students and their parents to request that they participate in face-to-face

interviews, focus groups and classroom observations. Permission is also granted to seek

assistance from administrative staff in reviewing and using student records.

Signed _____

School Administrator

APPENDIX B

INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Students,

My name is Busani N Siphambili. As a doctoral candidate at Liberty University I would like to invite you to participate in a study that is focused on describing beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their classroom behavior management in a diverse rural school system in Georgia. You are invited to participate in a focus group interview with some of your classmates.

You will be asked questions about your teacher's behavior management practices, social characteristics of your classroom, your school environment and how it influences your teacher's beliefs and practices in managing student behavior in the classroom. For accuracy purposes the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed. After transcribing the interviews the tapes will be destroyed. There are no monitory rewards for your participation but your input will help future educators in managing classroom behavior by using effective practices.

Information gathered from the study will be stored in a safe and secure place. Your identity will not be revealed but the results may be published. Your group members will hear what you say and you will hear what they say too. No personal questions will be asked.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at ███████████ If you are interested in participating in this study please sign and return the attached consent form to your principal. I will make a follow up in a week through a phone call.

Respectfully,

Busani N Siphambili

APPENDIX C

ASSENT OF CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?

My name is Busani N Siphambili, a graduate student at Liberty University and I am doing a study on how and why some teachers do well in their behavior management with minority students (African American).

Why am I doing this study?

I am interested in studying how teachers help African American students behave better in their classrooms.

Why am I asking you to be in this study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because I specifically want to look at African American students who are taught by effective teachers at the elementary school, middle school, and high school.

If you agree, what will happen?

If you are in this study I'm going to ask you to fill out a survey about yourself. This survey will take about 10 minutes. You will also be asked to answer questions with a group of other students from your classroom. I am going to ask you questions about how your teachers handle misbehaving African American students and how they help these students to behave right. This will take about an hour and half. Interviews will be audio taped.

Do you have to be in this study?

No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don't want to, it's OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

Do you have any questions?

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

Signature of Child _____ Date _____

Researcher: Busani N Siphambili ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ bnsiphambili@liberty.edu

Advisor: Dr. Verlyn Evans at vevans@liberty.edu.

Liberty University Institutional Review Board,

1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515

or email at irb@liberty.edu.

APPENDIX D

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

1) What is your name?_____

2) How old are you? _____

3) What is your gender?   Male   Female

4) What is your grade level?_____

5) What is your mailing address?_____

APPENDIX E

TEACHER INVITATION LETTER

Dear :

My name is Busani N Siphambili. As a doctoral candidate at Liberty University I would like to invite you to participate in a study that is focused on describing beliefs and practices of teachers who are effective in their classroom behavior management in a diverse rural school system in Georgia. Your participation in this study is very important because it will give me an opportunity to observe you teaching and how you manage disruptive behaviors. Your participation will be treated with respect and confidentiality.

You were selected for this study because of your outstanding and effective classroom management practices. Conducting this study at your school will allow me to will be asked questions about your teacher's behavior management practices, social characteristics of your classroom, your school environment and how it influences your teacher's beliefs and practices in managing student behavior in the classroom. For accuracy purposes the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed. After transcribing the interviews the tapes will be destroyed. There are no monitory rewards for your participation but your input will help future educators in managing classroom behavior by using effective practices.

Information gathered from the study will be stored in a safe and secure place. Your identity will not be revealed but the results may be published. Your group members will hear what you say and you will hear what they say too. No personal questions will be asked.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at ██████████. If you are interested in participating in this study please sign and return the attached consent form to your principal. I will make a follow up in a week through a phone call.

Respectfully,

Busani N Siphambili

APPENDIX F

STANDARDIZED OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you become a teacher?

2. What do you enjoy most about being a teacher?

3. What is your greatest challenge or frustration as a teacher?

4. How would you describe your classroom management style?

5. Please tell me about your view of school discipline.

6. What are the factors that play an important role in school discipline practices?

7. Please describe how teachers' beliefs affect classroom management and behavior management.

8. What are your beliefs and how do they help you when it comes to managing disruptive behavior exhibited by African American students in the classroom?

9. Do you have any story or a situation that made you change your views about African American students and understand them better?

10. What role do you think your beliefs and practices have played in managing African American students' behavior?

11. What are your beliefs about the ability of African American students to do better in their academics and behavior?

12. Please describe the physical characteristics of your class and your classroom management style.

13. Describe the culture of your classroom.

14. Please describe how you build rapport with your students.

15. What kind of relationship do you have with parents of African American students and how do you communicate with them?

16. Please describe your discipline philosophy and how you manage minority students' behavior in the classroom.

17. Can you describe the school's environment and how it influences your beliefs and practices in classroom management?

18. Please describe the support you get from other staff members and parents when dealing with behavior issues exhibited by minority students.

19. Please describe how you give your students recognition and positive reinforcement.

20. Please describe the barriers to effective discipline practices.

21. As an educator do you think African American students will be viewed the same like other races in the future?

APPENDIX G

TEACHER'S DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please choose the correct response.

1. What is your age range?

   a. Under 25 years old

   b. 26- 35 years old

   c. 36-45 years old

   d. 46-55 years old

   e. 56+ years old

2. Gender

   a. Male

   b. Female

3. Ethnicity

   a. Caucasian

   b. Asian

   c. African American

   d. Other

   e. Hispanic

4. Highest education completed

   a. High school

   b. Bachelors

   c. Specialist

   d. Doctorate

  e. Other

5. Number of years teaching _____.

6. Number of years at the same school_____.

7. Grades taught in the past_____.

8. Grade teaching at present_____.

APPENDIX H

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

OPENING SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Busani N Siphambili from Liberty University. I have you here today because I want to learn from you about your personal experiences with teachers' behavior management practices when dealing with African American students and how they help students improve their behavior that is disruptive in the classroom. The questions I am going to ask have no right or wrong answers. As you share your opinions please be respectful of what others have to say.

During discussion feel free to share your ideas. Things that you say will not be shared with anyone. Please respect what others say and don't talk about what you or others say outside of this room. I ask everyone to promise to keep what we say here today in the room to themselves and not to say it to anyone outside this room. In order to protect your identity, you will all have name cards in front of you with a number on it. You will refer to yourself by your number each time you talk, and refer to others by their numbers. The name of the district, school or other students will be protected. Everyone' confidentiality will be respected.

This will be audio-recorded in order to capture everything said in this discussion. The recording will never be shared with anyone and if you don't feel comfortable being recorded please let me know. I am going to ask you questions about how your teachers handle misbehaving African American students and how they help these students to behave in an acceptable manner. I need you to make sure that you don't discuss about what we say in here outside of this room. Those who do not want to participate any more for any reason; they are welcome to leave at any time. I have a form for every one of you to complete and it is for

collecting your demographics. After you complete your demographics sheet we are going to start out discussion.

Questions

1. What are your personal experiences with teachers' behavior management practices when dealing with African American students?

2. What is your attitude towards teachers?

3. Can you describe a teacher who treats African American students fairly and accommodates   their needs?

4. . Do you think African American students have problems with behavior at this school Please explain?

5. Does student misbehavior take up a lot of instructional time?

6. What do the teachers in the classroom do when an African American student gets in trouble?

7. What do teachers in the classroom do in order to help African American students learn? Is there anything they could do different and better?

8. Do you think if you had an African American teacher you would behave differently in the classroom?

9. What are the relationships like between teachers and African American students?

10. What is the difference in the way African American teachers handle disruptive students as compared to teachers from other cultural backgrounds?

11. Do you think your teacher treats all students fairly regardless of their race or color?

12. What are some suggestions you would give teachers to improve in their classroom management and how to deal with African American students?

13. Is there anything else that you would like to share before we conclude our session?

14. Thank you for participating in this study and for your input. This concludes our focus

group.

APPENDIX I

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the environment at your school and the factors that contribute to the environment.

2. What are the programs that are focused specifically on discipline at your school?

3. Are the programs in place working and effective?

4. What are the discipline issues you face every day?

5. How are the practices and policies in the school implemented and administered?

6. What are the parents' attitudes and involvement in their children's education and discipline?

7. Do you think that parents and teachers play an important role in helping control disruptive behavior in school>

8. What are the barriers that hinder you from handling disciplinary issues more effectively?

9. What are the most common discipline issues in the school?

10. What are the common offenses in the school?

11. What are the consequences for these common offenses?

12. Do you think different teachers have different practices that they use to manage behavior?

13. Do you think some practices are more effective than others?

14. As an administrator how do you provide a safe school environment?

15. What are some things that you think need to be done to provide a safe learning environment?

APPENDIX J

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Observer/Interviewer:_____ School Name:_____

Observation date: _____ Time Start: _____ End: _____

Teacher Ethnicity: _____ Teacher Gender: Male___Female__

Grade Levels of students: _____ Course Title:_____

Students: Number of Males _____ Number of Females _____

Classroom Race/Ethnicity: % Minorities (approximate) _____

Select one from scale: 0 = not observed, 1 – minimal, 2 – to some extent; 3=very descriptive of the observation.

1. Students exhibited positive classroom behavior.

0	1	2	3

2. The classroom exhibits a respectful environment.

0	1	2	3

3. There is a climate of respect and encouragement for students' ideas, questions, and contributions; mistakes are viewed as an opportunity to learn

0	1	2	3

4. Students and teacher appear to have positive relationships and to enjoy spending time with each other (laughing, easy relationship.

0	1	2	3

5. Students actively seek and provide assistance or guidance.

0	1	2	3

6. Teachers and students provide positive reinforcement and feedback to each other.

0	1	2	3

7.

Detailed Observations	Reflective Notes

APPENDIX K

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

NAME:

SCHOOL:

GRADE TAUGHT:

DATE:

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of [*insert general statement about study*].

- You were selected as a possible participant because [*explain how subject was identified*].

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is [*explain research question and purpose in lay language*].

- Ultimately, this research may be [*published as part of a book on…, presented as a paper, etc.*].

Confidentiality

This study is anonymous. We will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity. The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Busani N Siphambili at

bnsiphambili@liberty.edu or by telephone at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. If you like, a summary of the

results of the study will be sent to you.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Subject's Name (Print): _____Date_____

Subject's Signature:_____Date_____

Investigator's Signature:_____Date_____

APPENDIX L

AFFIDAVIT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

NAME: TITLE:

DATE:

1. The Material has been tendered to the undersigned solely for purposes of the undersigned's review and transcribing thereof, and for no other purpose.

2. The undersigned acknowledges and agrees that the Material is extremely confidential and proprietary and that the unauthorized disclosure or use of the material by the undersigned or third parties would cause serious and irreparable harm or damage to the participants.

3. The undersigned does not have, has never had and does not claim and will not claim to have any ownership or proprietary interest in the Material, legally, equitably or otherwise.

4. The undersigned will maintain the Material and its contents in the strictest of confidence and secrecy and will hold the Material in trust as the fiduciary of participants, and under no circumstances will the undersigned (a) disclose the Material or any part thereof, whether in writing, orally or by any other means, to any person or entity or (b) reproduce in any manner all or any portion of the Material, without the researcher's (Busani N Siphambili) written authorization.

Signature: _____   Print Name/Title_____Date_____

APPENDIX M

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

A CASE STUDY DESCRIBING PRACTICES AND BELIEFS OF TEACHERS WHO

ARE EFFECTIVE IN THEIR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN A DIVERSE

RURAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN GEORGIA

Liberty University

IRB Approval 2588.092216

As the transcriber for this case study I agree that I will:

1. Keep all the audio recordings and transcripts from the research study confidential.
2. Keep all the audio recordings and transcripts in a secure place while it is still in my possession.
3. Not share or discuss any information from the research with anyone other than the researcher.
4. Return all the transcripts and other information to the researcher after completing the research tasks.
5. Erase and destroy all research information in any format that is not returnable to the researcher after completing the research tasks.

Transcriptionist signature -- Date----------------

Transcriptionist printed name --

Researcher signature --Date ---------------

Researcher printed name --

APPENDIX N

FOCUS GROUPS INTRODUCTORY SCRIPTS

Hello, my name is Busani N Siphambili from Liberty University. I have you here today because I want to learn from you about your personal experiences with teachers' behavior management practices when dealing with African American students and how they help students improve their behavior that is disruptive in the classroom. The questions I am going to ask have no right or wrong answers. As you share your opinions, please be respectful of what others have to say.

During discussion, feel free to share your ideas. Things that you say will not be shared with anyone. Please respect what others say and don't talk about what you or others say outside of this room. I ask everyone to promise to keep what we say here today in the room to themselves and not to say it to anyone outside this room.

In order to protect your identity, you will each all have a name cards in front of you with a number on it. Please use your number to refer to yourself by each time you talk. Please refer to others by their numbers. The name of the district, school, or other students will be protected. Everyone's confidentiality will be respected.

This will be audio-recorded in order to capture everything said in this discussion. The recording will never be shared with anyone, and if you don't feel comfortable being recorded, please let me know. I am going to ask you questions about how your teachers handle misbehaving African American students and how they help these students to behave in an acceptable manner. I need you to make sure that you don't discuss about what we say in here outside of this room. Those who do not want to participate any more for any reason; they are

welcome to leave at any time. I have a form for every one of you to complete, and it is for

collecting your demographics. After you complete your demographics sheet we are going to start

our discussion.

APPENDIX O

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

9/22/2016

Busani N. Siphambili
IRB Approval 2588.092216: A Case Study Describing Practices and Beliefs of Teachers Who
Are Effective in Their Classroom Behavior Management in a Diverse Rural School System in
Georgia

Dear Busani N. Siphambili,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This
approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol
number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as
it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms
for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the
requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included
as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX P

PERMISSION REQUEST

Date: August 31, 2016

Title: The Superintendent

School District: ███████████████████

Dear: V. Harris

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education: Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is A Case Study Describing Practices and Beliefs of Teachers who are Effective in their Classroom Behavior Management in a Diverse Rural School System in Georgia, and the purpose of my research is to describe the practices and beliefs of teachers who are effective in their behavior management with minority students (African American) in three rural schools.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in your school district at the elementary school, middle school and high school where teachers are effective in their behavior management with minority students (African American).

Prior to the data collection, participants (teachers and students) will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire form that will consist of data with reference to the teachers and students' gender, level of education, and years of teaching experience. Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, observation, and focus group. Data collected will be used to develop an understanding of this phenomenon by investigating the beliefs and practices used by teachers to manage classroom behavior.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Busani N Siphambili

Doctor of Education Candidate