A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF BLACK MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS'

EXPERIENCES OF THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

IN LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Zebedee Talley Jr.

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Lisa G. Driscoll, Co-Chair

Serge F. Hein, Co-Chair

Penny L. Burge

Benjamin Dixon

Richard G. Salmon

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Blacksburg, Virginia

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ABSTRACT

This study involved a qualitative investigation of Black middle school students' experiences of teacher characteristics that they saw as influential in their learning and achievement. The sample consisted of 8 students selected from a public middle school in central Virginia. Data collection involved both in-depth individual interviews and classroom observations. Interviews focused on the participants' early educational experiences, middle school experiences with teachers, and experiences of the role that teachers play in learning and achievement. Classroom observations provided additional insight into the classroom setting, participants' actions, and participants' interactions with teachers and other students and were conducted to minimize their influence on classroom activities.

A whole-text analysis of the interview transcripts and field notes generated 5 major categories: elementary school experiences, instructional environment, student motivation, student trust, and racism. For each category, subcategories were also developed. Participants were motivated by teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations. They emphasized the need for equity in the classroom as a prerequisite to academic achievement. They were also motivated to learn by teachers who shared instructional and personal time, spoke positively to them about their future, shared their own educational experiences, and demonstrated a caring attitude toward them. Participants described how they were not motivated to learn by teachers who were viewed as racist, yelled at them, refused to spend time assisting them, or displayed an attitude of apathy. They also expressed how they were sometimes denied bathroom privileges, were separated from White students during class, were treated as if they were "invisible," or were treated like second-class citizens. They also experienced racism as prevalent in teachers' grading practices. Significant findings include the following: (a) the Black middle school student participants' educational experiences influenced their learning and the classroom environment, (b) duration of

instructional time influenced students' learning, (c) high teacher expectations of students and teacher encouragement of discussions beyond course subject matter increased students' motivation to learn, (d) development of a trusting teacher–student relationship promoted their learning, and (e) various forms of racism decreased students' willingness to learn. Implications of the findings for educational practice and further research are discussed.

DEDICATION

This dissertation would not have been possible without divine help from God. It is dedicated to my loving wife, Pat, who has journeyed with me each year as I traveled to class. Her love has been inspiring and endless. To my children Zeb, Chris, and Ashley, who sacrificed family time so that I might accomplish this task, I say I love you very much. To my new daughter, Joy, and grandchildren CJ and Destinee, you have been wonderful family additions. To my parents, the late Bishop Zebedee Talley Sr. and Mattie R. Talley, who gave me educational opportunities that were never afforded them, I know that I can never repay you for your love and gift of a great work ethic. To Sandra, Fraun, and Barry, my siblings, you have always been supportive of me, and I love you. To my nephews and niece Corey, Stephen, and Stacey, please continue to strive for excellence.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Statement of the Problem

Although public education in the United States has accumulated many triumphs, the academic achievements of Black children, as indicated by their average standardized test scores, have lagged behind those of their White counterparts (Miranda, Webb, Brigman, & Pelusco, 2007). The academic underachievement of Black children is a pervasive, well-documented problem (Coleman et al., 1966; Craig & Washington, 2001; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). This underachievement or gap begins in the early years of Black children's educational experience (Burkam & Lee, 2002; Fryer & Levitt, 2002, 2004). Viadero (2008) found that this gap widens more quickly for the highest achieving Black students.

In a meta-analysis of several studies, Ferguson (2003) examined whether schools had an effect on the Black–White student test score gap. He found that a teacher's behavior, expectations, and experiences could interact with students' beliefs, behaviors, and work habits in a way that widens the Black–White student test score gap. Although a student's socioeconomic background and family structure may influence student academic success, teacher interaction with students may play an important role in determining student success. Ferguson (2003) stated that teachers should expect the same quality of work from Black and White students.

Many schools systematically evaluate student learning with tests that many educators claim measure achievement. Black students consistently score lower than White students on math and reading tests (Crouse, Phillips, & Ralph, 1998; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Some research has indicated that low test scores by some racial–ethnic groups may have been the result of student experiences of teacher feelings (Patrick & Turner, 2004). Those researchers explained that student achievement and work ethic are greatly influenced by classroom environmental factors, including whether a student is expected to be successful.

Students' Trust of Teachers

Students' thoughts of whether they can trust teachers are vital to the academic success of students (Birch & Ladd, 1998). Gill and Reynolds (1999) discovered that there was a strong relationship between student academic achievement and student perception of how their teachers felt about their academic success. E. L. Brown (2004) stated that this sensitivity of students is

especially important when teachers deal with a diversified student population. When students trust that teachers want them to do well academically, it appears that they try harder in their academics (Gallagher, Pressley, & Raphael, 2004). In other words, students who believe they can trust teachers experience greater academic achievement.

Teacher Encouragement

Pianta and Stuhlman (2002) examined factors such as compliance, achievement, a secure base, positive effect, neutralization of negative emotion, and negative effect. They found that there appears to be a significant relationship between academic achievement and teacher encouragement when interacting with students. Freeman (1999) stated that every school should have a written policy that calls for the encouragement of high levels of performance from students and from teachers.

In essence, student academic success is partially a product of a child's perceived relationship with the teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta, Rollins, & Steinberg, 1995). Research indicated that relationships between adults and children create categories of expectations, beliefs, and feelings which might impact academic achievement (Bretherton, 1990; Brown, 2004; Main, 1996). Student experiences of how teachers rate their academic success have been proven to be significantly related to achievement (Bocian, Gresham, & MacMillan, 1997; Mazzocco, Myers, & Tesei, 2001). Teacher encouragement and trust, as perceived by the student, are vital components of student success.

Additional studies indicated that students perform poorly academically when they are the object of little encouragement and low expectations from their teachers; often, these low expectations translate into disidentification with schools (Aronson & Steele, 1995; Babad, 1993; Botkin, Marshall, Sharp, & Weinstein, 1987). Researchers have emphasized that students who have teachers with high expectations usually reach those expectations when they are given adequate encouragement (Combs, Mason, Schroeter, & Washington, 1992; Gardner, 2007). Ladson-Billings (2001) pointed out that White race is normative and that diversity is associated with deficiency, depravity, and being disadvantaged. This perception by the student could certainly influence achievement. Christophel (1990) explained that there is a direct link between teacher verbal and nonverbal behavior and student learning. Researchers have suggested that Black children attain greater levels of achievement when parents and teachers give encouragement and have high expectations (Hughes, 2003).

Student experiences of adult expectations may influence students' ability to succeed academically. Au and Harackiewicz (1986) showed that a student's perception of adult expectations tends to become more accurate and solidified as the child grows older. When teachers educate students within an educational climate of high expectations, they can foster better academic achievement. Students of all racial–ethnic groups tend to experience academic success when teacher behavior communicates high expectations (Ferguson, 2003).

R. T. Baron and Cooper (1985) indicated that Black students may be victims of lowered teacher expectations, thus hindering their desire to excel in academic endeavors. The researchers explained that Black children experience low teacher expectations, while White students generally experience high teacher expectations. In Baron and Cooper's study, even when Black students achieved the same academic success as their White counterparts, they were viewed by educators in a more negative light than White students. This factor might explain the differences in the way that various racial–ethnic groups are perceived by teachers.

Gallagher et al. (2004) found that Black students perform as well academically as White students when teachers demand excellence. When students perceive that teachers want them to do well academically, they try harder in their academics. In fact, this study implied that Black students could score well on standardized collegiate entrance tests when they were given the same expectations that were afforded White students.

A study by DeMeis and Turner (1978) indicated that race is a significant factor when teachers assess students and that Black students may have been viewed with lower expectations than White students. Goldsmith (2004) found that Black students have higher educational goals than White students, while at the same time, they are not privileged with the same educational standards. In Goldsmith's study, Black students felt a sense of inferiority, which may have caused them to achieve less academically. Race and low teacher expectations lower the possibility for Black students to experience high academic achievement. Martin, Martin, Gibson, and Wilkins (2007) found that Black students are frequently the victims of low teacher expectations.

There may be a link between teacher expectations and teacher stereotyping of Black students as low achievers (Larocque, 2007). Teachers may translate those stereotyping experiences into low expectations. This may manifest itself in the classroom in the form of

teachers giving high expectations to White students, while giving Black students low, or little, expectations. Eccles, Jussim, and Madon (1996) found that the estimated impact of teachers' experiences for grades and scores was almost 3 times as great for Black students as for White students. In addition, the negative effects of stereotype bias were larger for children from low-income families and for girls from all economic status groups than for White male students with average incomes. Black children from low-income families experienced the greatest negative impact of stereotype bias and trailed White students by half a standard deviation.

The theory of teacher expectations was further examined by Ferguson (2003). He stated that teachers appear to be less flexible in their expectations for Blacks, girls, and students from low-income homes (Cook & Ludwig, 1998). Ferguson (2003) hypothesized that the behaviors of both students and teachers may be affected by a combination of the student's race and ethnicity and the teacher's perception of performance. He indicated that teacher perception has a greater influence on Black students than on White students. Ferguson (2003) suggested that this trend might be a result of the teacher's self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations. According to Ferguson, this may mean that Black students respond differently than White students to similar treatment from teachers, that teachers treat White and Black students differently, or that both may be true.

No Child Left Behind

Some schools may contain some type of achievement gap that marginalizes minority students who perform as low achievers. Federal stipulations are being used to counter the Black–White student gap growth trend and the low achievement of students from all racial–ethnic groups. The No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) attempted to address this trend and has increasingly called for gains in adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the test scores of Black and other minority children. This legislation was the first federal law to divide student standardized test scores into subgroups, and expressly calls for at least a 70% passing rate nationally among minority students. Public schools face economic sanctions if those benchmarks are not met.

Policies within the No Child Left Behind Act assign very specific consequences to districts and schools that consistently maintain a wide race achievement gap. The consequences range from allowing parents to withdraw students from so-called failing schools to the loss of significant federal funding for schools. This legislation may have a significant impact on

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American educational policies.

Importance of Understanding Student Experiences

Student experiences are a result of situations, emotions, and thoughts that can greatly impact academic achievement (Ames, 1992; Midgley, 2002). Celeste et al. (2003) noted that student experiences of success are greatly influenced by the perception of what teachers communicate in the classroom. The perception of how a student is viewed by a teacher appears to be an important factor in determining student academic success (Celeste et al., 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Patrick & Turner, 2004). The voices of Black middle school students and their experiences with teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations have seldom been documented in current literature.

Middle School Years

Patrick and Ryan (2001) explained that the classroom environment is important for academic success for students of all grade levels, but the early adolescent period may be the most critical. The middle school years are vital for academic growth for students because these years mark a period of identity searching and self-reflection (Goodenow, 1993). During this time, students often decrease their interest in school, question the value of education, and decrease their willingness to achieve academically (Anderson & Maehr, 1994; Eccles & Midgley, 1989).

During the middle school years, students care greatly about their peers, and engagement in learning is greatly impacted (Mac Iver & Reuman, 1994; Mansfield, 2001). Eccles and Midgley (1989) stated that there is a relationship between adolescent development and students' educational motivation to learn. Some researchers have found that adolescent students tend to become less engaged in education as they grow older (Brewster & Fager, 2000). Describing the experiences of middle school students during this time of physical, social, and academic change may be vital to understanding their educational abilities (Mansfield, 2001).

Researchers have shown that high-quality teachers engage all students in learning and that achievement is usually the result of both teacher and student behavior (Patrick & Turner, 2004). This may indicate that student experiences of how much teachers care about the development of their work habits may be a factor in student achievement. Anderman et al. (1996) pointed out that teachers need to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and in which children can thrive academically.

Student academic success is partially a product of a child's perceived relationship with the teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta et al., 1995). Researchers have indicated that relationships among adults and children create categories of expectations, beliefs, and feelings that may later impact academic achievement (Bretherton, 1990; E. L. Brown, 2004; Main, 1996). Student experiences of how teachers rate their academic success are significantly related to achievement (Bocian et al., 1997; Mazzocco et al., 2001).

Haskins (2000) found that a student's perception of the teacher's character and feelings can greatly impact classroom interactions between student and teacher. The student–teacher relationship, which is partly the result of student perception, can greatly determine the level of academic success of the student and the effectiveness of the teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Haskins, 2000; Pianta et al., 1995).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe Black middle school students' experiences of those teacher characteristics that they see as influential in their learning and achievement, including trust, encouragement, and expectations, using a qualitative research design. There was overlap and interaction among these factors as perceived by Black students, with teacher expectations occupying the largest arena in research literature. This study's results were founded in narratives about individual students and a discussion of themes and categories common among the students.

Black students may be positively affected by their experiences of teacher academic demands and trust in their cognitive abilities (Neuliep, 1995). Ames (1992) stated, in his *goal theory*, that student motivation and performance are related to the individual personal beliefs of students and their classroom environments. This may indicate that student experiences of teacher trust and teacher encouragement play a role in determining how hard students are willing to work academically. Descriptions of middle school students' experiences and voices are needed in current literature.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What are Black students' experiences during their middle school years?
2. What are these students' experiences with their teachers?

3. What are these students' experiences of the roles that trust, encouragement, expectations, and other teacher characteristics play in their learning and achievement?

4. What common themes can be identified from these students' experiences?

Overview of Methodology

A qualitative research approach to the study of Black middle school students' experiences of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations and the influence these experiences may have on student motivation to learn was utilized. In this study, I attempted to understand experiences that were real to the participant and that had been "lived," as recommended by Creswell (1994) and Nieswiadomy (1993).

The intent of this study was to gain in-depth insight into selected Black middle school students' experiences of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations. Data were collected from interviews, the researcher's field notes, and classroom observations. Data were then conceptually examined to identify student lived experiences. The content data were examined to identify concepts and the frequency of those concepts as they related to student lived experiences and the influence of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations as they related to student learning. Data were analyzed continuously throughout collection and were compared to identify emerging categories (see Appendix A). Data analysis included the triangulation of data collected from participant interviews, classroom observations, and the researcher's field notes. Further analysis included whole-text analysis and constant comparison analysis.

Data analysis consisted of reading and reflecting on data from the student interviews, observations, and researcher's log using the mainstream qualitative research method to develop categories, as suggested by Patton (2002). Standards of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, transparency, and dependability were employed to ensure quality in data collection. Study credibility was obtained by utilizing member checks, prolonged engagement in the field, peer debriefing, and triangulation. *Triangulation* is defined as determining the accuracy of findings by examining data from sources, interviews, observations, and researcher's logs to ascertain if data are credible and support categories and themes (Merriam, 1998).

Significance of the Study

Few qualitative researchers have investigated students' perceptions of teacher expectations, and even fewer have focused on Black and low-income children (Croizet et al.,

2004; Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Ogbu, 2003). The middle school years are vital for academic growth for students because during these years, students are at a critical developmental stage characterized by identity searching and self-reflection (Goodenow, 1993). Although the academic gap appears to be shrinking, Black students still trail White students in standardized test scores (Fryer & Levitt, 2004). School leaders may be able to increase teacher awareness that Black student experiences of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations may be related to enhanced academic achievement. Describing the experiences of middle school students during this time of physical, social, and academic change may be vital to understanding Black students' academic achievement. The results of this study could increase dialogue about the relationship between students' achievement and their experiences of teachers regarding racial–ethnic stereotypes and bias.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the topic of student experiences and presented the purpose and research questions for the study. A review of the literature surrounding student experiences of teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations is presented in chapter 2. A description of the qualitative research approach used in this study and the procedures for collecting and analyzing data is presented in chapter 3. The results of the study are presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 gives a discussion, limitations, implications for further research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Black students and children of other ethnic–racial groups lag academically behind White students (Coleman et al., 1966; Craig & Washington, 2001; Ferguson, 2003; Gardner, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Wenglinsky, 2004). Student experiences of teacher actions may be related to this educational phenomenon. This chapter presents literature related to Black middle school students' lived experiences of teacher behaviors, including trust, encouragement, and expectations, and the influence these behaviors may have on the students' motivation to learn.

The cornerstone of this chapter revolves around the issue of teacher behaviors as experienced by middle school students. Student experiences of teacher behaviors may be accurate or inaccurate, but nevertheless, they are real to the students (Mirkamal, 2001). Rothman (2001) suggested that academic differences between these racial–ethnic groups might be attributed to the differences in teacher expectations among racial–ethnic groups. Studies have shown that Black students are influenced academically by their peers and by their experiences of people around them (Bratton & Peterson-Lewis, 2004; Croizet et al., 2004; Mocombe, 2006; Ogbu, 2003). This varied racial–ethnic perception may be a key to solving the puzzle of lagging academic success among Black middle school students, but there is a lack of qualitative studies on student experiences with teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations.

The literature review is divided into four major sections. First, the achievement gap is defined. This is followed by a review of the literature that initially recognized the achievement gap, including the Coleman et al. (1966) study, which set the context for further discussions of the achievement gap. The third section of the literature review examines student experiences of teacher behaviors and attitudes. The chapter then concludes with a summary of reviewed literature research findings.

The Achievement Gap

This section traces the evolution of the term *achievement gap* with regard to Black–White race–ethnicity, with special attention paid to how the phrase has evolved into its present usage. The achievement gap is widely recognized as the average score difference between Black and White students on standardized tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The earliest discussions of the achievement gap can be traced to the 1960s.

Researchers Hedges and Nowell (1998) explained that there has, in all probability, always been an achievement gap between Black and White students, but originally, the perceived gap may have been based on anecdotal inference, rather than on reliable data. In other words, prior to the 1960s, research on Black–White test score differences was often based on samples of convenience, instead of representative samples. Convenience samples were likely biased, with conclusions derived from statistical procedures that were not generalizable to a national population. As a result, studies using such biased samples may have either overstated or understated the magnitude of the gap.

Rose (2000) stated that the term *achievement gap* refers to the fact that poor minority students, as a group, tend to score lower on student achievement tests than middle-class, nonminority students. Rose's data were based on nationwide standardized test results from school census regions. Pollock (2001) defined the achievement gap as the difference in achievement between racial groups in schools. He maintained that this raises two important questions: How and why do different race groups achieve differently, and how is achievement linked to race? These questions could be considered America's most neglected race questions, and the answers to these questions could prove to be controversial.

Similarly, Deutsch (2003) defined the achievement gap as the disparity in academic performance among groups of students. He explained that it is presently used to describe the immense academic performance gaps that exist between White students, who are at the higher end of the academic scale, and Black students, who are at the lower end of the academic scale. In addition to standardized test scores, the gap may manifest itself in students' classroom grades, course selections, dropout rates, and college completion rates (Deutsch, 2003). A landmark study, titled *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman et al., 1966), popularly known as the *Coleman study* (Coleman, 1972), defined the term *achievement gap* as a gap in achievement that could be remedied by desegregation of schools.

The meaning of the term *achievement gap* has changed since its first use in the 1960s. The definition of the term was initially vague due to the utilization of poor, nonrandom sampling, but later, it became more precise, as standardized tests came under national use and offered large, stratified, and representative samples. Regardless of its precise definition, the achievement gap still puzzles educational leaders across the United States.

Initial Recognition of the Achievement Gap and the Coleman Study

The *Equality of Educational Opportunity* study (Coleman et al., 1966) was commissioned by Congress as part of the Civil Rights Act (section 402) of 1964.[1] Congress commissioned a group of researchers, under the leadership of James Coleman, a sociologist at the Johns Hopkins University, to study whether equal educational opportunities for individuals in public educational institutions existed based on race, color, religion, or national origin (Coleman et al., 1966). The Coleman study, as it has been popularly renamed, set the stage for the disciplined examination of the Black–White achievement gap. The study marked "the first time there [was] made available a comprehensive collection of data gathered on consistent specifications throughout the whole nation" (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 1).

The Coleman study (Coleman et al., 1966) involved over 500,000 public school students (identified by race and ethnicity), 60,000 teachers, and 4,000 elementary schools and secondary schools divided by geographic region.[2] In an analysis of achievement and other data by region, the researchers hypothesized that the southern region would show the greatest deficit of equal educational opportunity among Blacks.

The committee used self-reported experiences gleaned from questionnaires. Students in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 were given standardized tests measuring verbal and nonverbal ability, mathematic achievement, and reading comprehension. First graders were only tested on their verbal and nonverbal ability.

The report organized its findings into several categories: school environment (including facilities, services, curriculum, and expenditures), pupil achievement and motivation (including

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[1] The Civil Rights Act of 1964, section 402**,** states, "The Commissioner shall conduct a survey and make a found to the President and the Congress, within two years of the enactment of this title, concerning the lack of availability of equal educational opportunities for individuals by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin in the public educational institutions at all levels in the United States, its territories and possessions, and the District of Columbia."

[2] The regions were first divided into metropolitan and nonmetropolitan subdivisions. The geographic regions for metropolitan regions were as follows: the Northeast, including Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia; the Midwest, including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota; the South, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia; the Southwest, including Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas; and the West, including Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. For the nonmetropolitan regions, there were only three regions identified due to a lack of sufficient cases to warrant a more disaggregated breakdown. The regions are as follows: the South, as above; the Southwest, as above; and the North and West, which include all states not in the South and Southwest.

the effects of racial segregation on achievement), the academic achievement gap among race and ethnicity, teacher qualifications, contextual effects (peer influences), social and psychological attributes of students, and socioeconomic status. The data analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics.

The findings revealed that there was segregation across the United States, not just in the South, and that many American children had not been given an equal opportunity to attend school with children of all races. The researchers found that 87% of Black students attended schools in which Blacks were in the majority, while 97% of White students in the first grade attended schools with children of their own race.

The researchers determined that the achievement gap between White and Black students was larger than originally expected and that White students, on average, scored higher than Black students by 1 standard deviation on standardized tests. Implications suggested that schools could make a difference in the way students were grouped and in the degree of opportunity that was afforded to Black students. Present-day research supports the claim that schools can make a difference in closing the achievement gap; these ideas will be further expounded throughout this literature review.

The Coleman study is also noted for its apparent erroneous interpretation of its findings. Many have claimed that the study's results demonstrate that schools or educational resources, such as money, facilities, or teachers, do not have an impact on student achievement based on larger attributions of achievement variance among students to socioeconomic status and peer influences. In a later study by Coleman (1972) of the same data, 12th-grade verbal achievement (the dependent variable) was divided among the factors believed to directly affect it. Family demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status, were found to explain 13.3% of the variability in verbal achievement, whereas school-related factors and teacher quality factors explained only 1.4% and 0.9%, respectively. Many popular interpretations of these effects emphasized that since 13.3% was more than 15 times greater than the 0.9% that teacher quality and school-related factors (by a multiplier of 10-fold) explained, the evidence was less indicative of achievement variability than socioeconomic status. Thus a naïve interpretation of the data suggested that school resources, such as additional financial support or more qualified teachers, did not make a difference in student achievement. Interestingly, detractors of the study's results

overlooked that 84.4%[3], or most, of the variance was left unexplained by any factor included in the study. The study was limited to only select factors, but its interpretation has grown to include all factors.

One of the most politically relevant findings was that of a contextual effect. In other words, the Coleman study led researchers to wonder if school setting (including the characteristics, attitudes, and values of the other pupils with which the student comes into contact) had an effect on achievement. The study responded with a shocking and volatile finding: "Attributes of other students account for far more variation in the achievement of minority group children than do any attributes of school facilities and slightly more than do attributes of staff" (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 302). One possible interpretation of this statement is that a student's classmates could explain more of the variability in achievement than any school-related factor. There were many levels on which the findings of the Coleman study were interpreted and understood. The document stands as a seminal study in the research of the Black–White achievement gap and the factors that influence it.

Some researchers have suggested that if specific strategies are not implemented to mitigate its early onset, the gap between White and Black students will likely widen as students continue through the public educational system (S. Baron & Kortez, 1996). According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Child data, Black students consistently score lower than White students on reading, mathematics, and vocabulary achievement tests (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Not all the factors accounting for the existence of the gap can be attributed to differential initial abilities between Black and White students when they first enter school.

When Black and White children with comparable vocabulary and reading scores are observed over time, a disturbing trend emerges: Black children trail their White counterparts in their average academic achievement from the 4th through the 12th grades (Crouse et al., 1998). Through the years, Black children may progress academically at a slower rate. Currently Black students continue to trail White students in reading, math, and science, and this gap is still growing (Lee, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Studies have indicated that Black students who are not socioeconomically disadvantaged still trail White students academically (Ortman & Thandiwe, 2002). Lee (2004) noted that the achievement gap has actually widened in the last decade.

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[3] The proportion of the achievement variance unexplained by the data is calculated by 100.00% − 15.6% = 84.4%.

There are serious disagreements regarding which factors most strongly contribute to this gap. Traditionally, the debate has centered on whether the factors are culturally based or educationally based. Cultural factors include family background (Bradford & Harris, 2003; Crouse et al., 1998; Jacobson, Olsen, Rice, & Sweetland, 2001), socioeconomic effects (Brooks-Gunn, Crane, Duncan, Klebanov, & Phillips, 1998; Orr, 2003; Wilson, 1998), and parental level of education (Lee, 2002).

Educational factors have included teachers' expectations (Ferguson, 1998, 2003; Rothman, 2001), access to quality preschools (Quinn & Thompson, 2001; Weiss, 2003), peer influences (Bratton & Peterson-Lewis, 2004; Croizet et al., 2004; Ogbu, 2003), and curricular and instructional quality (Barton, 2003; Freyer & Levitt, 2004; Krueger & Whitmore, 2001; Munk, 2001). Thus a central question has emerged: To what extent is the Black–White achievement gap attributable to educational factors, and to what extent is it related to cultural factors outside of education?

Research that simply identifies which factors are significant in explaining the gap tells only part of the story; identifying the factors (and strategies) that may contribute to closing the gap is a more prominent theme in the literature. Ferguson (2003), through surveying secondary students in high-performing secondary schools, found that supportive teacher–student relationships are one of the most important factors for reducing the gap. In his 1993 study, Ferguson noted the plight of Black students performing at lower achievement levels on standardized tests and the stigma that they encounter each day in school. He explained that teachers' lowered expectations appeared to have more impact on Black students' performance than on the performance of White students. In addition, he concluded that teachers traditionally have lower expectations of Black students, which could ultimately lead to reduced achievement.

Student Experiences of Teacher Behaviors and Attitudes

There is overlap and interaction among student experiences of behaviors focused around teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations. Teacher trust and teacher encouragement are part of the overall nature of teacher expectations. Teacher expectations are found predominately in the literature with minimal attention given to teacher trust and teacher encouragement. The following sections presented literature organized by student experiences in each arena.

Teacher Trust

Trust has been defined as confidence in the good character and ability of another person (Benjamin, 1999). Verderber and Verderber (1995) stated that teacher trust could be defined as the point at which teachers and students place confidence in each other. Teacher trust is essential because it fosters immediacy, which is an important element in increasing teacher effectiveness with students (McCrosky & Richmond, 1992). Teachers can earn trust from students by displaying trust to students (Haskins & Staudacher, 1987).

Mee (2000) stated that students want to be a part of a trusting environment. Coleman et al. (1996) pointed out that teachers should provide an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and will cause students to thrive. Teachers must educate students through developing a trusting relationship with sensitivity to create competent adults (Noddings, 1995). Students achieve at a higher academic level when they feel that they can trust the educators who teach them (Vars, 2001).

Black students may be even more positively affected than White students by their experiences of teacher academic demands and trust in their cognitive abilities (Neuliep, 1995). Ames (1992) stated in his goal theory that student motivation and performance are related to the individual personal beliefs of students and to their classroom environments. This may indicate that student experiences of teacher trust and encouragement may determine how hard students are willing to work academically.

Teacher trust is an important aspect of instruction; researchers found that students' interests are a major part of student achievement (Banks, 2001; Freeman, 1999). Students' experiences of whether teachers care about student interests and feelings may have a direct relationship to students' academic outcomes. Teachers need to show students that they are able to provide a prejudice-free educational climate in the classroom so that the needs of diverse students can be met (Banks, 2001).

Data from research have shown that Black students are greatly influenced by their relationships to those around them (Ogbu, 2003). Bratton and Peterson-Lewis (2004) found that Black students are motivated to learn in classes with teachers who promote self-identity and portray learning as a cultural and historical duty. These teachers give students a new positive meaning to "acting Black," which some students associate with being unmotivated academically (Bratton & Peterson-Lewis, 2004; Ogbu, 2003).

Student experiences of teacher trust are vital to the academic success of students (Birch & Ladd, 1998). Gill and Reynolds (1999) discovered that there is a strong relationship between student academic achievement and student views of how their teachers feel about their academic success. E. L. Brown (2004) stated that this sensitivity for students is especially important when teachers deal with a diversified student population. When students trust that teachers want them to do well academically, they try harder in their academics (Gallagher et al., 2004). Vars (2001) explained that students will seldom ask for help or take risks that might help them learn unless they feel that they can trust teachers.

Wentzel (1997) examined student experiences of teacher support and caring. This study was designed to determine if students perceived if they could trust teachers to demand their best academic effort. The researcher found that student experiences of teachers who cared are directly related to positive student academic performance. The researcher found that students perform better academically when taught by teachers whom they perceive they can trust (Wentzel, 1997).

Raider-Roth (2005) examined the role of trust in the lives of middle school children. Their study centered around nine sixth-grade students, who attended an independent school in the Northeast. The methodology used was listening guide narrative analysis. *Listening guide analysis* is a form of research that allows students the opportunity to express lived experiences unique to their history. This methodology enabled the students to express and reflect on their individual learning experiences. Common categories were examined through interviews, and students were encouraged to speak about their relationships that involved trust.

Data from this study revealed that middle school students suppress knowledge in the classroom based on trust. Students pointed out that trusting relationships with their teacher lead to better instructional interaction and give them a sense of confidence. In addition, students explained that there was a great relationship between trusting those around them and trusting what they knew or learned. Teacher interaction with students was very important to them and greatly influenced the classroom atmosphere (Raider-Roth, 2005). Gregory and Mosely (2004) suggested that racial attitudes of teachers contribute to unproductive relations between teachers and Black students, especially when teachers refuse to acknowledge issues of racism in the classroom.

Teacher Encouragement

Research has indicated that teachers need to create educational environments that encourage all students to succeed academically (Anderman & Midgley, 1997). Parsons (2001) defined *teacher encouragement* as behavior that teachers use to express supportiveness. A teacher with a supportive learning environment can increase learning among students (Frye, Homan, King, & Short, 1999). Teacher encouragement is a necessary ingredient for student academic success (Parsons, 2001). In addition, all students need teacher encouragement as a path to attain higher levels of achievement and learning (Frye et al., 1999; Parsons, 2001).

Patrick and Turner (2004) examined the lived experiences of two sixth-grade students to describe student experiences of teacher classroom behavior. The students were tracked for 2 years and participated in the same math class. Several constructs, such as student perceptions of whether the teacher cared for or encouraged students, were examined. At the end of the seventh-grade school year, skills mastery tests were given to each student. The test results were compared to transcribed notes, observations, and interviews.

Patrick and Turner (2004) pointed out that student views of teacher instructional practices can encourage students to work in the classroom. A student's perception of teacher support and encouragement can positively change a student's work ethic. Classroom engagement over the 2-year period revealed that student perceptions of teacher behavior influence students' motivation to learn.

Gregory and Mosely (2004) found that teacher actions, such as failing to spend time helping students with assignments, often frustrate Black students. Students in the study mentioned that some teachers refuse to give individual attention to students. This failure often results in student frustration and discipline problems because teachers failed to "get on the same wave length with students" (p. 25). The researchers suggested that this failed relationship between teachers and students is associated with students not being encouraged to achieve or simply giving up on the educational process.

Mansfield (2001) described the impact that student views of teacher encouragement have on student achievement as it relates to caring and support. The results of this study indicated that student views of teacher care and support greatly encourage students to have greater academic engagement. Students found that experiences of teacher support and encouragement gave them a greater sense of belonging and led to increased academic effort. The experiences that students

hold concerning teacher support and care appear to foster better academic skills for students (Mansfield, 2001).

Pianta and Stuhlman (2002) interviewed 50 teachers and coded seven constructs that represented their relationships to specific students. The researchers examined factors such as compliance, achievement, a secure base, positive effect, neutralization of negative emotion, and negative effect. They found that there appeared to be a significant relationship between academic achievement and teacher sensitivity when interacting with students. Children's experiences of how a teacher feels about their success and the respect they receive from teachers could affect academic skills.

Student academic success is partially a product of a child's perceived relationship with the teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta et al., 1995). Freeman (1999) stated that every school should have a written policy that calls for the encouragement of high levels of performance from students as well as from teachers. Student experiences of how teachers rate their academic success are significantly related to achievement (Bocian et al., 1997; Mazzocco et al., 2001). This view by the student could certainly influence student achievement. Christophel (1990) explained that there is a direct link between teacher verbal and nonverbal behavior and student learning. Teachers who encourage students use verbal and nonverbal ways of communicating, such as smiling and giving direct eye contact to students, fostering student–teacher rapport (Cotton, 1995). Black students have enjoyed academic success when they were placed in an encouraging environment with a curriculum that engaged and interested them (Love, 2004).

Additional studies have indicated that students perform poorly academically when they are the object of little encouragement and low expectations from their teachers; often, such low expectations translate into disidentification with schools (Aronson & Steele, 1995; Babad, 1993; Botkin et al., 1987). Studies have emphasized that students who have teachers with high expectations usually reach those expectations when they are given adequate encouragement (Combs et al., 1992). Researchers have suggested that Black children attain greater levels of achievement when parents and teachers have high encouragement and expectations (Hughes, 2003). Teachers can promote academic success by creating classrooms without bias and by encouraging equal educational standards for all students (Banks, 2001; Pai, 1990). Effective teachers encourage the academic efforts of all students by stressing the positive aspects of student behavior (Cotton, 1995).

Frye et al. (1999) stated that teacher support greatly increases a student's literacy aptitude. The researchers examined two students in a case study. The study involved the Accelerated Literacy Learning program for at-risk learners in the southern region of the United States. Research was conducted for 2 years and involved students who initially had similar academic profiles but who eventually were placed in different instructional environments. One teacher was nonsupportive and seldom praised the participant for academic efforts. Another teacher was supportive and used praise and encouragement often. The students' experiences of teacher support and encouragement may not have accounted for all of the differences in academic achievement among students, but it has been explained as being a factor in student academic achievement (Frye et al., 1999). Student perception of teacher encouragement appears to play a major role in student academic success.

Patrick and Ryan (2001) explored the relationship between student experiences of teacher encouragement and academic effort. The researchers found that students viewing their teachers as supportive is essential to student self-confidence. The findings reveal that positive student perception of teacher support and encouragement tends to give students a greater desire to excel academically. Students indicated that viewing their teacher as being encouraging and supportive was vital to their self-confidence. The data revealed that students saw perceived teacher support and encouragement as a pertinent student motivational practice. Black students were not motivated to learn in teaching environments that made them feel "invisible" or nonexistent (Love, 2004).

Teacher Expectations

Student experiences with adult expectations may influence students' ability to succeed academically. Au and Harackiewicz (1986) implied that a student's view of adult expectations tends to become more accurate and solidified as the child grows older. Teachers must educate students within an educational climate of high expectations to foster better academic achievement among racial–ethnic groups (Cotton, 2001). Students of all racial–ethnic groups tend to experience academic success when teachers display high expectations (Ferguson, 2003). Researchers indicated that relationships between adults and children create categories of expectations, beliefs, and feelings that may later impact academic achievement (Bretherton, 1990; E. L. Brown, 2004; Main, 1996).

R. T. Baron and Cooper (1985) indicated that Black students may be victims of lowered teacher expectations, thus hindering their desire to excel in academic endeavors. The researchers examined teacher expectations in 16 experimental studies. Teachers had higher expectations for White students in nine of the studies, while only one study had teachers who expected more of their Black students. The researchers explained that Black children experienced low teacher expectations, while White students generally experienced high teacher expectations. Even when Black students achieved the same academic success as their White counterparts, they were viewed by educators in a more negative light than White students and were not expected to excel academically.

Gallagher et al. (2004) constructed a model school that would ensure academic success for Black students, illustrating the importance of teacher expectations. This school had an exceptionally high completion rate and a high collegiate acceptance rate for Black students. These accomplishments suggest that Black students can score exceptionally well on standardized tests, a requirement for most institutions of higher learning, when they have to live up to high teacher expectations.

Gallagher et al. (2004) concluded that one of the most important factors for the program's success was high teacher expectations for all students. They found that Black students performed as well academically as White students when teachers demanded excellence. Teacher expectations were measured by the success that the predominately Black students had in enrollment or acceptance into institutions of higher learning. When students believed that teachers wanted them to do well academically, they tried harder in academic subjects. In fact, this study implied that Black students could score well on standardized collegiate entrance tests when they were given the same expectations that were afforded White students.

DeMeis and Turner (1978) explored the relationship between teacher expectations and race–ethnicity. Their study was designed to ascertain if teachers viewed Black students with fewer expectations than White students. The researchers indicated that race was a significant factor when teachers assessed students and that Black students may be viewed with lower expectations than White students, and may not be privileged with the same educational standards. This may demonstrate that Black students feel a sense of inferiority that may cause them to achieve less academically. Race and low teacher expectations seem to lower the possibility for Black students to experience high academic achievement.

Wenglinsky (2004) discovered that teacher expectations and the instructional practices of teachers can help decrease the achievement gap. Black students greatly benefit when they are educated with their White peers. This study suggested that Black and White students should be educated in the same classroom and should not be separated. Regardless of student socioeconomic levels, Black students' academic performance improves when they are given advanced and challenging content. Larocque (2007) suggested that teachers should use positive attitudes and expectations for individual students. Data from this study indicated that high expectations are necessary for motivating students to learn.

There may be a link between teacher expectations and teacher stereotyping of Black students as low achievers. Teachers may translate these stereotyping experiences into low expectations. This may manifest itself in the classroom in the form of teachers giving high expectations to White students, while giving Black students low, or little, expectations. Eccles et al. (1996) researched how teacher racial experiences of students' impact test scores. The researchers found that the estimated impact of teachers' experiences on grades and scores was almost 3 times as great for Black students than for White students. In addition, the negative effects of stereotype bias were larger for children from low-income families and for girls than for White male students. Black children from low-income families experienced the greatest negative impact of stereotype bias and trailed White students by half a standard deviation.

Gregory and Mosely (2004) suggested that many teachers ignore racial issues in the classroom. The researchers contended that teachers seldom raise issues of race or differential treatment for Black students in class. These observations were especially critical in the area of student discipline. Teachers were urged to eliminate stereotypes and to avoid racial profiling. This kind of teacher bias was cited as interfering with student learning, especially among Black boys. Love (2004) concurred that racial issues in the classroom are often ignored by teachers. The researcher explained that Black students are disciplined more frequently and placed in classes with teachers who hold low expectations. Finally, Love (2004) stated that many teachers claim that they never see color in their classrooms and act surprised when Black students bring up this issue.

Gardner (2007) stated that Black students have very little positive history that proves that education leads to success; therefore teachers must raise student expectations. The researcher pointed out that many teachers place the burden of educating Black students on the students

themselves, instead of taking responsibility for their education. Teachers must understand that expectations can determine the way that they teach.

Teacher racial experiences of students seem to have a greater effect on academic outcomes for Black students than for White students. Stereotype bias may translate to low teacher expectations for Black students in the classroom. Thus teacher expectations make a significant difference in the test scores of Black students.

Cook and Ludwig (1998) assessed eighth-grade students on the basis of how they viewed their academic success and whether they valued their education. The results showed that Black students tend to overestimate their grades by one-fourth of a letter grade, while White students tend to overestimate their grades by one-fifth of a letter grade. These researchers found that Black students valued being present at school as much as White students. However, the study also revealed that the hardest working Black students trailed the hardest working White students in the amount of time spent on homework and assignments, indicating that schools tend to have lesser expectations for their hardest working Black students than for their hardest working White students. This school culture of fewer expectations may suggest that student experiences vary across race and ethnic lines and affect academic achievement.

Cook and Ludwig (1998) found that Black students still trailed White students on standardized tests, even when the researchers statistically controlled for socioeconomic factors. In conclusion, the researchers suggested that Black students may be under the influence of lower expectations in their schools; thus they are not usual recipients of higher grades than White students. The low expectations may translate into lower test scores for Black students. Results from this study suggest that teacher expectations have an impact on Black student test scores.

Ferguson (2003) stated that teachers appear to be less flexible in their expectations for Blacks, girls, and students from low-income homes. The researcher hypothesized that the behaviors of both students and teachers may be affected by a combination of students' race–ethnicity and teachers' perceptions of performance. The results indicated that teacher perception has a greater influence on Black students than on White students.

Ferguson (2003) suggested that this trend might be a result of the teacher's self- fulfilling prophecy of low expectations. He pointed out that this may mean that Black students responded differently than White students to similar treatment from teachers, that teachers treat White and

Black students differently, or that both may be true. Effective teachers refuse to accept the notion that some students must fail and expect all students to be academically successful (Cotton, 1995).

Goldsmith (2004) found that Black students have higher educational goals than White students when socioeconomic factors are removed. The researcher stated that Black students' positive beliefs and expectations may improve student achievement. Data from this study suggested that Black students have more pro-school attitudes and that high expectations among teachers may lead to better achievement among Black students.

Alvarez and Bali (2004) explored the idea that teacher expectations and the racial makeup of students make a significant difference in student achievement. Their study was conducted in a California school district with a student population that was 80% Hispanic or Black, a fact that researchers should keep in mind when they generalize the findings to other groups. The researchers revealed that standardized test gaps still exist in student populations in which White students are not in the majority.

Results of this study should be viewed with caution because the population had a large concentration of Black and Hispanic students and a minority of White students. A multivariate analysis was used to predict the math and reading scores of a student cohort that began in the first grade and continued to the fourth grade. Student perceptions of teacher expectations appeared to vary across racial–ethnic lines.

Fryer and Levitt (2004) examined the 2003 Stanford 9 test data and confirmed that the Black–White achievement gap first appears in the early grades and widens significantly by the end of high school. With a large number of covariates, the gap appears to lessen and disappear between White and Black students (Fryer & Levitt, 2004); however, when controls are placed on school quality and initial student test scores, along with other covariates, the Black–White achievement gap is greater than the Hispanic–White achievement gap.

Black students still have large test score gaps when they attend schools with heavy concentrations of other minorities. This conclusion suggests that the quality of schools may not be the reason for the test score gaps that afflict Black students; rather, other factors, such as student environment and teacher expectations, may be the cause of low standardized test scores for Black students. Student views of teacher expectations may play a stronger role in determining academic success among Black students than among other racial groups. Black

students may experience a greater decline in standardized test scores than White students because of teacher expectations.

Teacher expectations for Black and lower socioeconomic students are usually less than expectations for White and upper socioeconomic students (Dusek & Joseph, 1985). While exploring 16 studies in a meta-analysis, the researchers noted that teachers' low expectations for Black students may reflect bias. Students may perceive this factor and fail to reach higher academic standards.

Steele (1992) advanced the hypothesis that Black students would excel in academics if they were given proper support and mentoring from their teachers. He blamed a significant amount of failure among Black students on the low expectations of teachers, who often make Black students feel inferior to other students, giving them a sense of hopelessness. When statistical controls are used for ability and previous performance, Black student test scores show an increase when teachers display high expectations (Aronson & Steele, 1995; Steele, 1992). Regardless of past performance, standardized test scores for Black students increase when teachers remove the possibility of stereotype threat. These findings suggest that teacher expectations are essential for increasing standardized scores among Black students.

Cotton (1995) explained that teachers with high expectations for students do not accept the idea that some students will fail. Students must understand that they are expected to achieve academically and that they are accountable for participating in class, completing homework, and demonstrating competency by being active in classroom discussions (Cotton, 1995). Teachers must understand that high standards can become mandated minimum standards but must give students a chance to reach their academic potential (Vars, 2001).

In contrast, some researchers concluded that teacher expectations may not have a dramatic impact on Black student academic achievement. Fryer and Levitt (2004) challenged the idea that White teachers have lower expectations for Black students by suggesting that having a Black teacher appears to have no greater positive effect on Black students than on White students. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Fryer and Levitt tested the assumption that Black students with White teachers would have lower achievement than Black students with Black teachers. The sample was divided into four subgroups: (a) students with no Black teacher in kindergarten, (b) students with no Black teacher in first grade, (c) students with at least one Black teacher in kindergarten, and (d) students with at least

one Black teacher in first grade, all with school-fixed effects. Thus only students attending the same schools were examined.

Fryer and Levitt (2004) hypothesized that if Black students were the victims of low teacher expectations, which caused their test scores to decrease, then Black students with all White teachers should have lower test scores than Black students with at least one Black teacher. These researchers found that Black students with at least one Black teacher achieved academically lower than Black students who had no Black teachers. By the end of the first grade, the study revealed that Black students who had at least one Black teacher had a larger Black–White test score gap than Black students with all White teachers across all academic disciplines.

Fryer and Levitt (2004) insisted that this showed no discrimination against Black students and cast questions on the relationship between low teacher expectations and Black student academic achievement. They contended that if White teachers had lower expectations for Black students than they do for White students, then Black students would have achieved poorly in the classroom. The concept that teacher expectations make little difference may not be valid. Their study was the only study to suggest that teacher expectations make no difference in students' scholastic achievement.

Summary

In conclusion, this review of the literature suggests that student views of teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations are related to the academic achievement of students, especially Black students. One important theme supported by the literature was that Black students are 3 times more affected by low teacher expectations than White students (Eccles et al., 1996). Student perceptions of teacher expectations have been linked to higher student achievement (Ferguson, 2003; Gill & Reynolds, 1999).

Some educators have suggested the existence of a dual educational standard in U.S. classrooms (Peterson & Young, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Although some schools are frantically striving to raise the standardized test scores of Black students without success, other schools are seeing successful results because their teachers display high expectations while teaching Black students (Gallagher et al., 2004).

Ferguson (2003) purported that teachers who have the same aspirations for Black students and White students encourage an equal opportunity for academic success in all students.

He stated that when Black students are expected to achieve less, they simply score lower than White students on standardized tests. Students' sensitivity to teacher expectations could play a major role in student achievement along racial and ethnic lines. Gallagher et al. (2004) suggested that Black students perform at a higher academic rate when teachers demand excellence of all students. The demands of teachers could impact how students perform on tests.

Researchers indicated that Black students may not be privileged with the same educational expectations as White students, thus leading to Black academic underachievement (DeMeis & Turner, 1978; Ferguson, 2003; Gardner, 2007; Larocque, 2007; Rothman, 2001; Wenglinsky, 2004). This lack of high expectations may suggest that Black students are subject to an entirely different set of standards than White students. If students perceive this difference in demands and expectations, this may be a significant factor in their academic achievement.

Findings in the literature suggest that Black students might view teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations in a different light than other students. In addition, the literature pointed out that student achievement and academic effort are influenced by students' perceptions of teacher support and encouragement (DeMeis & Turner, 1978; Gallagher et al., 2004; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Mazzocco et al., 2001; Patrick & Ryan, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2002). Although few studies of student views of teacher trust have been published, studies have shown that students work harder when they perceive that the teacher really cares about them (Birch & Ladd, 1998). There was a lack of qualitative studies on student perceptions of teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations that addressed the lived experiences of Black middle school students. This study fills that gap.

Many studies examined student experiences of teacher expectations; however, only a few studies in the research literature explored Black students' experiences of teacher trust and teacher encouragement. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe Black middle school students' experiences of those teacher characteristics they saw as influential in their learning and achievement, including trust, encouragement, and expectations. The results were found in narratives about individual students and a discussion of themes and categories common among the students. It is hoped that a deep understanding of the lived experiences of students will help educators improve the learning environment.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe Black middle school students' experiences of teacher characteristics they saw as influential in their learning and achievement, including trust, encouragement, and expectations. The study lent itself to a qualitative approach because my aim was to (a) understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, (b) understand the actuality of their experiences, (c) understand the meaning they assigned to those experiences, (d) remain sensitive to the context within which those experiences occurred, and (e) maintain a holistic perspective in coming to understand those experiences.

In this chapter, the research design for this study is described. The researcher's role, site selection, participant selection, description of the participants, data collection, data analysis, data quality procedures, and a pilot study are discussed. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. What are Black students' experiences during their middle school years?
2. What are these students' experiences with their teachers?
3. What are these students' experiences of the roles that trust, encouragement, expectations, and other teacher characteristics play in their learning and achievement?
4. What common themes can be identified from these students' experiences?

Role of the Researcher

Taking account of how I am positioned within this study is important because this is the perspective from which the study was conducted and the findings generated. I adopted many roles in this study: interviewer, observer, transcriber, and analyst. I myself am a product of the achievement gap. Student experiences of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations may lead to better performance among all racial and ethnic groups. I agree with the findings of various studies that this convergence is especially evident among Black boys (Ferguson, 2002; Hughes, 2003; Patrick & Turner, 2004). The belief that students' experiences are an important topic of research and vital to improving education nationwide is an important part of my educational experience.

I am a 52-year-old African American man who has been an educator for 31 years. I spent 15 of those years as a classroom teacher, 8 years as a high school assistant principal, 6 years as an assistant middle school principal, and 2 years as a middle school principal. As the child of parents who never finished high school, yet worked hard to provide my three siblings and me with great spiritual guidance and a college education, education is of enormous value to me. I have had wonderful educational experiences and many outstanding teachers. I received immense support through elementary school from Black teachers prior to school integration.

When Black institutions were combined with White institutions, I continued to experience mostly supportive instruction, with caring teachers. Although I saw many Black students, especially boys, who were not always treated fairly by White teachers, I was given huge support mainly because I attempted to work hard because my parents held high expectations. My high school experience was excellent, even though it was at this time that I noticed that Black students were not given as much opportunity to succeed in education as White students. Many factors, such the types of classes to which students were assigned, clubs that were formed in school, and the respect given to many White students but few Black students, illustrated that Black students lacked equal opportunity. However, this feeling was not simply a part of the educational system; it was a part of society itself. I became one of the few Black boys to gain entrance to the National Honor Society but wanted to graduate from school, find employment, and buy a car. A White guidance counselor convinced me to try college, and with the encouragement of my family, I did so.

Although all of my mentors have been Black, I have found many White professionals at institutions of higher learning who have been very supportive. In addition, at every level of education I pursued, I found fewer Black students who were classmates. I feel that for the most part, I have been treated fairly at each institution that I attended and have even been given superior support at many institutions of higher learning. Nevertheless, I cannot help but notice that racism still exists even at institutions of higher learning.

As a first-year social science teacher in 1978, I began my career with a belief that all children could be academically successful. It was often distressing to observe Black students consistently lagging behind White students in academics. I had the opportunity to work with students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. Many Black students told me that they could not achieve academic success because they were Black and not White. They explained that

teachers expected less academically from them. When I began my career as an assistant principal in 1993, I encountered Black students who did not perform as well as their White counterparts in the core subjects of English, history, mathematics, and science. It has been my experience that Black children can excel in academics when they are given an equal opportunity to learn and when teachers expect them to achieve excellence.

I believe that Black students are facing the same issues in middle school that White students face: physical changes, emotional changes, and social pressure. Many Black students also must suffer the consequences of living in single-parent homes. When given the opportunity to learn from strong instructors, to experience high expectations from teachers, and to develop caring relationships with teachers, Black students have the potential to excel academically and socially. I have witnessed Black students who lived in poverty succeed academically because a teacher, coach, or mentor instilled in them a belief in their self-worth and value. I have also witnessed Black students who never received equal opportunity to succeed being labeled as failures by teachers. Many Black students have mentioned to me that they have not succeeded academically because they were not White students.

Teachers have a great influence on Black students and can shape students' views of society and education by giving them equal opportunity to learn in class without showing inequality in their expectations and actions. In addition, Black students need to see Black teachers working in leadership positions and displaying the actions of productive citizens. White teachers can also be of great influence to Black students by using high expectations in classrooms and by granting Black students equal opportunity. I feel that all children have an inherent sense of knowing when teachers expect them to succeed academically. As mentioned earlier, a White guidance counselor inspired me to attend college; therefore I feel that teacher race is not as significant as teacher preparation and caring. Middle school students are in a state of transition to adulthood, while dealing with tremendous peer pressure. I have seen competent teachers make a positive impression on them to value education, regardless of student race.

Black students need caring teachers who will not let poverty, a single-parent home environment, or socioeconomic circumstances become excuses for not excelling in school. I believe that teachers must insist that Black students learn, despite differences in teacher expectations (Rothman, 2001), culture and family differences (Bradford & Harris, 2003), peer influences (Ogbu, 2003), and curricular and instructional quality (Barton, 2003). In addition, I

have observed that Black students are willing to work in a classroom when there is no racial discrimination. Students simply want to be treated fairly and rebel when they think that teachers are unfair. They dislike being separated from White students in the classroom, being treated disrespectfully by having fewer privileges, being yelled at in front of their peers, and having only second-class citizenship in classrooms. Teachers who have high expectations, teachers whom students can trust, teachers who care, and teachers who refuse to engage in racist actions will find that Black students achieve at high levels when given the same opportunities as White students.

Finally, students learn well when teachers display the positive characteristics of high expectations, trust, caring, and equity. The U.S. Congress has passed, and the president has signed, the No Child Left Behind Act, which stipulates that no students attend public schools without having the opportunity to meet minimal achievement standards. Speakers at recent educational conferences that I have attended continue to stress that the U.S. educational system is falling behind that of other nations because we refuse to educate all our students in public schools. Since middle school is such a critical decision-making time for all students, I feel that it would greatly improve our national educational system if teachers used strategies to give all students self-worth and dignity. Racism has always existed in public schools, and ignoring these issues will not make our melting-pot nation better for all races. Our educational system is a reflection of society, and racism still exists in our society in many overt and covert ways. I believe that we live in the greatest nation in the world, with many technological advances. I certainly hope that we can avoid tragedy in our communities by educating students of all races. National educational leaders should address why many Black students are failing in our schools and the special critical plight of Black male students.

Student experiences of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations and other teacher characteristics may be linked to better academic achievement for all racial groups. When educators have high expectations for all students, academic success may be more likely for all racial and ethnic groups (Birch & Ladd, 1998; E. L. Brown, 2004; Mazzocco et al., 2001). All students should view their teachers as embodying high academic expectations for them. As a qualitative researcher, my aim has been to come to understand, as fully as possible, the perspectives of the students who have participated in this study.

Site Selection

In this section, Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements are discussed, in addition to the process of school selection. The IRB guidelines required that I secure parental permission and assent from those under the age of 18 years. Securing permission, consent, or assent is critical for conducting ethical qualitative studies (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Creswell (2002) indicated that informed consent or assent forms should include information about (a) the study's purpose; (b) the amount of time that data collection will entail; (c) the time required of participants; (d) how the data will be used; (e) risks and the nature of the procedure, and the participant's right to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice; (f) benefits of the study; and (g) how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. Forms for this study met all of the preceding criteria (see Appendixes B and C).

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that site selection should center on matters of constraints and practicality, which in turn limit the content of the research. Most qualitative studies involve a single location, where participants have experienced the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 1998). This study involved a school site located in the central region of the commonwealth of Virginia. The rural area has a population of approximately 20,000 people. The area is mainly a farming region, with fairly large cities within 140 miles. The school district contains about 3,000 students, with an 18:1 student–teacher ratio. There were 10 schools in the district, with an overall district dropout rate of less than 4%. The geographical location of the school district was selected primarily due to its convenience.

I met with the superintendent of schools to discuss the possibility of conducting this study within one of the school district's middle schools. During that meeting, I shared the purpose of the study, the number of students to be involved, the school and student selection processes, an estimated time frame for conducting the study, the amount of time I would be at the school site interviewing and observing students, and how best to access the principal and students of the selected school; I also asked permission to conduct the study at a middle school. A letter detailing the aforementioned information was given to the superintendent (see Appendix D). A time frame for finalizing the permission process for the school district's involvement in this study was established, and the name of a school district contact person was provided.

Once the school district's participation was secured, I met with the school district's contact person to review the specific procedures for the selection of the school, the distribution

of flyers, accessing the principal and students, and maintaining confidentiality. One of the criteria for selecting a site was that the proportion of Black students in the total student population of the school be sufficiently large enough for pool selection. The school selected for this study was the only middle school in the school district. Approximately 600 students were enrolled at the middle school, which was located in a southeastern rural town in the commonwealth of Virginia between two larger cities, with a scenic and historic countryside. The building and grounds were clean and well maintained. The administration and staff appeared to work together. The school district leadership believed in educational excellence, and the school site had achieved state-recognized accreditation. Of the students represented, two-thirds were White and one-third were Black, Hispanic, Asian, or unspecified. Additional school selection criteria included (a) full accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, (b) a sixth-grade through eighth- grade configuration, and (c) students and teachers who did not know me, so as to reduce the impact that my position as a school administrator would have on the study.

After the school was selected, I met with the principal to explain the purpose of the study; to discuss participant confidentiality; to gain permission to post the participant recruitment fliers (see Appendix E); to explain the student selection process, parent consent forms, the interview process, the best time for conducting the student interviews, and the anticipated time I would spend at the school site; and to allow time for the principal to ask questions (see Appendix F).

Gatekeepers played an important role in this study (see Appendix G). Atkinson and Hammersley (1995) defined a *gatekeeper* as an official or unofficial person at a study site who provides entrance to that site and provides the researcher with participants and places to perform the research. Developing adequate rapport with gatekeepers was vital to collecting credible data, as suggested by Creswell (2002). I met with gatekeepers to inform them about the project and to ease any anxiety about the study. The gatekeepers were the superintendent, the middle school principal, and the lead guidance counselor. Information about the study design, participant confidentiality, and data collection procedures was shared with them. Names of contacts or gatekeepers were kept in a file, along with a record of meetings and conversations (see Appendix G).

Participant Selection

Qualitative researchers select participants in a manner that will result in rich, in-depth information for analysis (Patton, 2002). *Convenience sampling*, using samples that are easy to access, was used to select participants. Participants from the previously mentioned middle school who met the selection criteria were included in this study. These criteria included (a) being a middle school student and (b) self-identifying as Black.

English teachers distributed assent letters to students who met the selection criteria and sent permission letters home for their parents. Teachers explained the study (see appendices B and C). Gatekeepers and parents were asked to return the forms to a guidance counselor at the school. The parental permission letter indicated a 2-week time frame for return of permission forms and for requesting information about the interview procedures and confidentiality. I gave packets containing a parental permission letter and a student assent letter to students in English classes, until a sufficient number of participants had volunteered. Returned parental permission letters meeting IRB requirements were categorized according to sex (male or female). I offered an opportunity for students who returned the letters to enter a drawing in which the prize was a $50 savings bond.

Confidentiality of participants was maintained by encouraging all students to return the packets, even if their parents declined permission. All students who returned permission forms, regardless of whether they agreed to participate, were entered into the drawing. Eighth-grade students were targeted first because they had the longest tenure in the school and thus the greatest number of years of experience. There were 13 eighth-grade volunteers. Parents of the selected students were asked to sign permission forms for the preliminary interviews because the students were under the age of 18 years (see Appendix B). Permission and assent forms were written using language that middle school children and their parents could read and understand and at a fifth-grade reading level, as suggested by Rossman and Rallis (2003). The parental form is included in appendix B, and the student assent form is included in appendix C. Parental or legal guardian permission was mandatory for any participant under the age of 18 years. Students signed assent forms (see Appendix C) after parental permission was secured. A reserve list of possible participants from the original list was kept on file and was used to replace any participants who withdrew from the study.

Description of the Participants

The participants were 8 Black, middle school, eighth-grade students: Star, Kirk, Daniel, Ruth, Lydia, Samuel, Naomi, and Job (for their protection, the participants' names were changed for the purposes of this study). This section provides a description of each participant (see Table 1). All the participants were between 13 and 14 years of age, and an equal number of boys and girls were included. Six of the participants were from families with

Table 1

Participant Profile

Participant	Member of pilot study	Age (years)	Sex	Family status	Eligible for free and reduced-price lunch
Daniel	No	13	Male	One-parent home	Yes
Job	No	15	Male	Two-parent home	Yes
Kirk[a]	Yes	14	Male	Two-parent home	Yes
Lydia	No	14	Female	Two-parent home	No
Naomi	No	13	Female	Two-parent home	Yes
Ruth	No	14	Female	Two-parent home	Yes
Samuel	No	14	Male	Two-parent home	Yes
Star	Yes	13	Female	Two-parent home	Yes

a. Foster home.

two parents, one participant was from a home with one adult, and one participant was from a foster parent home with two adults. Brookfield, Brown, and Reavey (2008) defined a *foster family* as parents with an adopted child. Seven of the families qualified for free and reduced-price lunch programs. The teachers in the participants' classrooms were White. There were three female teachers and one male teacher. They were certified in math, science, and history and had an average of 10 years of experience.

Star

Star is a 13-year-old, Black, female, eighth-grade student who has dreams of becoming a professional basketball player. She comes from a home with two adults and describes herself as idolizing her mother. Her family is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program, and she lives in a rural farming community. She enjoys learning activities that use sports as a method to foster learning. She believes that most of the teachers in her early years were caring and understanding. She wants to attend college and aspires to having a professional career after her

basketball years. Star stated that her best teachers were "like a typical person you would meet every day" (transcript, p. 2, line 45, April 2, 2007). She found that teachers in her early years often talked with her about personal things.

Kirk

Kirk is a 14-year-old, Black, male, eighth-grade student who enjoys working for classroom rewards such as candy, prizes, and tangible things. He lives in a home with two foster parents and is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. He lives in a rural setting. He enjoys hands-on activities and teachers who are friendly. Kirk stated, "If I don't like the teacher and we don't have good vibes, then I ain't gonna pay attention in class" (transcript, p. 5, lines 101–102, April 2, 2007). He experienced that he often thinks about his fourth-grade teacher, who demonstrated a lot of encouragement with students.

Daniel

Daniel is a 13-year-old, Black, male, eighth-grade student who says he learns best with teachers who have a sense of humor. He lives in a home with one adult in a rural setting. Daniel is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. He found that he gets a "great deal of wisdom" from his mom since he is being "reared" by her. Daniel has gained knowledge in school by "listening to the teacher and ignoring trouble" (transcript, pp. 5–6, lines 114–116, April 17, 2007). He feels that a teacher can teach effectively while "making class fun, utilizing games." His most influential teacher was a close family friend, and this teacher reminded him much of his mother.

Ruth

Ruth is a 14-year-old, Black, female, eighth-grade student who experienced that she expects professionalism and teachers to stay on task. She lives in a home with two adults in a rural setting. Her family is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. She stated that teachers are supportive when they

> make sure that you know what you are doing and when they are teaching you, they make
> sure you get to class early and on time, they make sure you get good grades so you can go
> to college and have an education. (transcript, p. 1, lines 11–13, April 17, 2007)

Repeatedly, Ruth found that her main focus in school is to get a "first-class education." She revealed that she was promoted through the early grades without utilizing much effort. She stated that students need to "stay focused on learning." She has visions of being a television star one day. Ruth comes from a single-parent home. Her mother and grandfather have been strong, positive influences in her life.

Lydia

Lydia is a 14-year-old, Black, female, eighth-grade student. She lives in a home with two adults, and her family is not eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Lydia lives in a rural setting. She experienced that she wants to be treated as if she is valued by her teachers. Lydia explained, "I want to be treated like I am their own child" (transcript, p. 3, line 60, April 17, 2007). She constantly makes faces of anger as she talks about teacher racism during the interview process. Lydia gave many examples of how she perceived Black students being treated poorly in classes. She found that she has high goals. Lydia stated, "If I was, to like, get in trouble, I knew that I didn't want to work at McDonald's everyday" (transcript, p.14, lines 315–316, April 17, 2007).

Samuel

Samuel is a 14-year-old, Black, male, eighth-grade student who feels that he can tell if a teacher likes him by the "vibes" that the teacher produces. He lives in a home with two adults, and he is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Samuel has been raised in a rural setting. Samuel experienced that most teachers have treated him with kindness. Samuel found that these teachers "don't act like mean, they don't always write you up like the first time you do it they give you some chances" (transcript, p. 1, lines 18–19, April 17, 2007). He stated that his grandfather taught him how to be a "man." He has been strongly influenced by his grandfather. Samuel's mom encourages reading and often sends him to various summer camps to help him stay focused on learning. He is the self-proclaimed class clown.

Naomi

Naomi is a 13-year-old, Black, female, eighth-grade student who stated that she works hard in school because she wants to get a good education. She lives in a rural setting, in a home with two adults, and is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Naomi expressed

that she wanted an "excellent" career and felt that education is the key to obtaining success. She wanted to be treated like other students and not given any special privileges. Naomi stated, "Some teachers treat other kids differently from other people and it's not fair to some kids" (transcript, p. 2, lines 23–24, April 26, 2007).

Job

Job is a 15-year old, Black, male, eighth-grade student. He loved to be disciplined by teachers and felt like they cared when he was corrected in class. Job experienced that teachers that motivated him "stayed on me about doing my work you know about paying attention in class; tell me sometimes I talk a lot in class" (transcript, p. 2, lines 33–34, April 26, 2007). He lives in a rural setting in a home with two adults. Job is eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Job explained that tough teachers make him work harder. He explained that he needs to work hard because he wants to succeed in life.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of information were used for data collection because gaining a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives from one data source is very difficult (Patton, 2002). Although multiple collection methods for data were used, in most studies, one or two methods would usually dominate, with other methods playing a supporting role (Merriam, 1998). Within this study, three main methods of data collection were used: interviewing, participant observation, and research journal entries.

During all of data collection, I followed procedures to protect participant confidentiality. These procedures included assigning a pseudonym (i.e., a false name) to the school and participant, and alteration of any information that could potentially identify the participants, teachers, or other school staff. These pseudonyms were used in all interview transcripts, research journal entries, and the development of the final dissertation itself. All transcripts, audio recordings, field notes, and personal reflections were kept in separate locked boxes in separate locations. Apart from my dissertation co-chairs, who reviewed only the anonymous transcripts, no one else had access to any of these data.

The number of persons who knew the identity of participants in this study was restricted. Borg, Gall, and Gall (2003) pointed out that this limitation of participant information reduces the risk of exposing participants' identities. Teachers were asked for permission to observe in their

classrooms as part of the data collection process for this study but were not told the names of any students in the study (see Appendix H).

Interviews

Interviewing has been called the hallmark of qualitative research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Creswell (2002) defined *interviewing* as a process whereby participants are asked questions by a researcher. Interviewing serves as a vehicle that allows participants an opportunity to express their experiences in their own terms (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006) and that affords the researcher the opportunity to get intensive information from a few participants (Merriam, 1998). Dexter (1970) stated that an interview is a conversation with a purpose. Interviews are unique in that they take you inside a participant's world and lived experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Merriam (1998) defined a *semistructured interview* as an interview process that utilizes questions that are worded in a flexible manner. This type of interview contains a mix of structured and unstructured questions that allows the participant to reflect on past, present, and emerging experiences (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 2006). This style reduces interviewer bias when used with multiple participants (Patton, 2002). The semistructured format increases the ability of the researcher to compare responses because all participants can be asked the same questions (Patton, 2002).

I used a one-on-one semistructured interview format, as suggested by McAdams (2001). The one-on-one, face-to-face interview has been called the most expensive and time consuming of all interview types (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995). This qualitative approach relies on participants who are actually a part of the events (Singleton, Straight, Straight, & McAllister, 1988). Participants were asked questions, and responses were recorded one at a time (Creswell, 2002). It was hoped that rich descriptions would be provided that allowed for a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives of the studied experiences.

I used an interview guide (appendix I) to structure the interviews. Merriam (1998) defined an *interview guide* as a schedule or list of predetermined questions that the researcher plans to ask. The interview guide directs discussions on desired topics and includes questions (see Appendix I). Specific topics were outlined so that the interviewer could discuss each targeted area. This method created an orderly flow for the interview (Patton, 2002). Using the

guide made data collection more systematic and allowed for interviews to resemble a conversation (Patton, 2002).

The use of the interview guide presented certain limitations; however, topics that were vital to the research might not have been listed in the guide and questions may have been interpreted differently by participants and may have yielded different responses, making comparison of response data difficult (Patton, 2002). An interview guide was used for each of three interviews (discussed later). Seidman (2006) suggested staging these interviews from 3 to 7 days apart. This period of time gave the interviewer and participant adequate time to reflect on responses.

Participants were selected from returned permission forms. Four boys and 4 girls were selected. They were released from elective classes to an isolated room, where I greeted them. Parental permission forms and student assent forms were reviewed prior to the initial interview. Prior to the interviews, two tape recorders were placed on the table and were tested to ensure that each recorder captured each participant's voice. The participants were reassured that their responses would be confidential. Participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Interviews with participants were based on the three-interview series technique, as suggested by Seidman (2006). Students were asked about their lived experiences and experiences of how their motivation to learn was influenced by teacher trust, encouragement, expectations, and other teacher characteristics. In the first interview, each participant was asked to describe his or her elementary school experiences, which provided context for exploring the research questions. The second interview was focused on the participants' lived experiences as related to their middle school years. Finally, the third interview gave the participants an opportunity to reflect on the responses that were previously recorded, while adding any information that may have been omitted. Students were also read parts of the transcripts between interviews to assist with data clarity. Students were interviewed at a mutually convenient time, according to their schedules and those of their parents. In addition, one participant (Job) was unable to complete the third interview in person; thus his last interview was conducted by telephone. Tracking forms were used to link interview documents to respective settings and participants (see Appendix J).

I read questions from the interview guide. In addition, I periodically made notations of reactions as participants responded and of any notable events that occurred during the process.

Participant expressions of happiness, sadness, anger, or other emotions were also recorded. Participants often spoke to me in Black vernacular English, rather than standard English. This may have indicated a state of relaxation because I am a Black man and I mirrored their communication style. When individual interviews were complete, participants were given an opportunity to ask me questions or to include additional descriptions or other information. Following each interview, the interview with the next participant was initiated. Each of the three interviews with each participant lasted approximately 1 hour, with 20–30 min elapsing between interviews. I made entries in my research journal after each interview.

Observations

Observational research explores the world in many ways (Patton, 2002). Observations give the researcher an opportunity to view what is happening in the setting as well as what is not happening (Patton, 2002). Moreover, observations provide the basis for field notes (Creswell, 2002). *Field notes* (see Appendix K) are descriptions of basic research information such as the physical setting, who was present, and what took place (Patton, 2002). Field notes are a means of documenting all types of experiences and serve as evidence for a study (Schwandt, 2001). Observations gave me the opportunity to examine the physical setting, participant activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and my own behavior (Merriam, 1998). Participants were observed so that I could understand their experiences within the classroom. These observations gave me an opportunity to better understand the context for the responses given during interviews and provided a means of collecting information not captured during the interviews (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Classroom observations were recorded on an observation sheet, which allowed me to note behaviors such as participant posture, attentiveness, relationships with teachers, body language, and encouragement (see Appendix L). Participant expressions and actions during the interviews and participant interactions with teachers and peers were recorded. Observational data provided information about the participant's involvement in the physical setting, engagement in the learning environment, and interaction with the teachers and with teachers and classmates. The observations helped me to obtain a richer understanding of students' experiences. Each participant was observed once for 45 min in the classroom setting. A checklist was used to assist in observational notation (see Appendix L). Observations were conducted in a manner that minimized interference with the learning environment, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln

(2003). These observations were then developed into field notes. Field notes (see Appendix K) are descriptions of basic research information such as the physical setting, who was present, and what took place (Patton, 2002). Field notes are a means of documenting various experiences and serve as evidence for a study (Schwandt, 2001). It is important to note that observations were made only in classes that were taught by White teachers and that these teachers were aware that I would be observing in their classrooms.

Research Journal

I maintained a research journal throughout the research process to further enhance understanding. I described my thoughts, feelings, and reactions to various aspects of the interviews and site visits. Journal entries were made after interviews, prior to leaving the school site, and during the times that I reflected on the field experience. The journal also gave me an opportunity to document events that did not occur, but that I had read about during my literature review. Data from the research journal also contributed to data triangulation, which included interviews, observations, and field notes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is defined as the process of making sense of data (Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) emphasized that data analysis presents many challenges, such as identifying patterns, reducing large volumes of data, and creating a vehicle to communicate what the researcher has learned. Analysis of the data that were collected in this study was achieved using a form of whole-text analysis (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Patton (2002) described *whole-text analysis* as qualitative data reduction and sense-making efforts when continuous, free-flowing text (as opposed to individual words or phrases) is being analyzed.

I transcribed the interview recordings as soon as possible after each interview was completed. The participants sometimes used Black vernacular English, which was not altered in any way during the transcription process. Periods, commas, and other punctuation was also used to accurately capture the nature of each participant's communication.

Qualitative inquiry does not have a universally agreed on set of analytic practices or techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), and a wide range of analytic procedures therefore exist. In terms of the form of whole-text analysis that was used in this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;

Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I began by immersing myself in the transcripts and reading each of them several times. After becoming thoroughly familiar with a transcript, I read it again, line by line, and identified specific segments of text that were revealing of an aspect of the research questions that I was exploring. I then assigned one or more words to each text segment to capture their meaning. This process is commonly referred to as *open coding* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After all of the interview transcripts had been coded in this way (see Appendix A), the codes were organized (i.e., clustered) to create categories (see Appendixes A and M; Figure 1). More specifically, individual categories emerge as a result of grouping codes that are similar in meaning. Categories therefore preserve the meaning of their associated codes, but at a higher level of abstraction. Put another way, categories can be described as similar codes that form major ideas (Creswell, 2002). Subcategories were also developed for many of the categories and allowed for more fine-grained distinctions to be made between specific groups of codes that composed individual categories (see Appendix M). Subcategories are an important
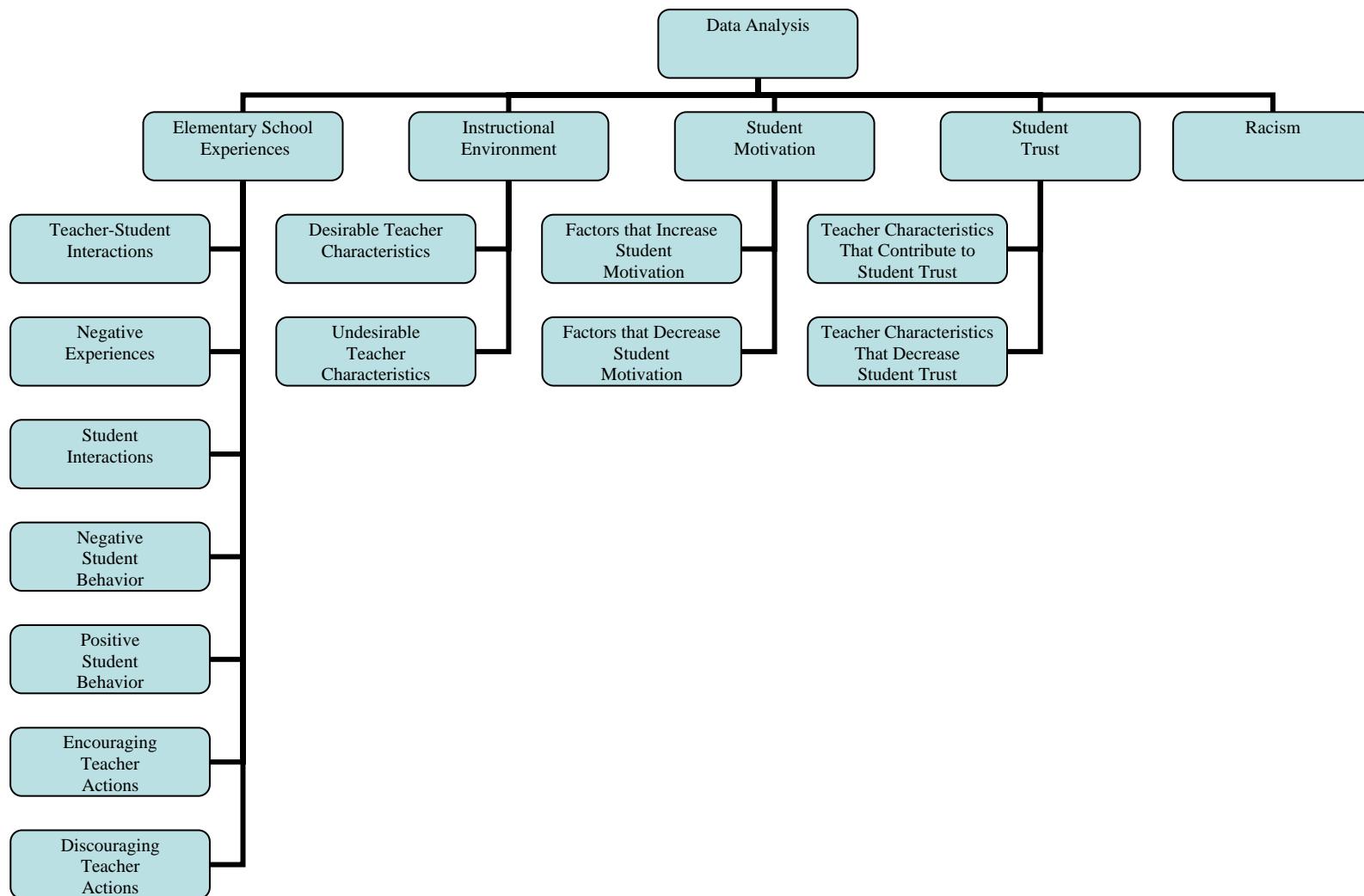
Figure 1. Category scheme.

stage of the analysis process because they allow for a more detailed analysis and discussion of findings.

Negative case analysis is used when data do not support the categories and trends described by the researcher (Patton, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) stated that the researcher should look for negative cases that conflict with categories. Negative cases were identified in some instances. For example, the category of racism revealed the greatest number of negative cases because racism was described by the participants but was not observed by me in the classroom or in the broader school environment. I noted any significant aspects of these negative cases and any conclusions that could be drawn from them (see chapter 5).

Data Quality Procedures

This section contains information about data quality procedures, and it focuses specifically on the trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability, transparency, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers need to be able to respond to other researchers who challenge the study's findings (Merriam, 1998). In this section, each of the trustworthiness criteria is discussed, including the ways in which I addressed the criterion.

Credibility

Patton (2002) explained that research findings need to be credible to be useful. A number of strategies can be used to increase the credibility of qualitative studies: member checks, prolonged engagement in the field, peer debriefing, and triangulation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). For researchers who adopt a more traditional, postpositivistic approach to inquiry, the use of these strategies is important for producing credible research findings because they prevent distortion of the data in ways that serve the researcher's own interests (Patton, 2002). *Triangulation* involves examining data from different sources (Creswell, 2002; Denzin, 1970; Johnson, 1997; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The study of a phenomenon using multiple methods to aid in the verification of findings is critical to some forms of qualitative research (Huberman & Miles, 1984). I was frequently in the field, gathering data when the participants attended school and studied. I spent 2 days each week for 4 weeks collecting data at the school site. I used multiple interviews, observations, and journal writings for data triangulation. The co-chairs of the dissertation committee also served as external auditors for this study. Creswell (2002) defined an *external audit* as obtaining the expertise of a person outside of the study to review the

research. The external auditors reviewed all aspects of the study and evaluated the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined *transferability* as the ability of a researcher to present the findings in enough detail that other researchers are able to determine if those findings are applicable to their own studies or settings. Others should be able to determine if the study's findings are relevant to other contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thick, rich descriptions of findings can lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomenon by other researchers (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I used a systematic approach in developing rich descriptions of the participants' experiences so that the reader could compare his or her own context to my own.

Transparency

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined *transparency* as findings that are grounded in the data and not the researcher's own constructions. Transparency refers to the amount of information provided about how the data were collected, how the analysis was conducted, and how the findings were produced (Johnson, 1997). In meeting this criterion, data were collected in a systematic way, and the data collection and data analysis procedures have been discussed in detail for the reader. Consulting with external auditors, as discussed earlier, also contributed to transparency.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the ability of the research to demonstrate process reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher must ensure that the research process is documented and shows a logical development. Auditability, or an audit trail, is the main technique for establishing dependability. Dependability can also be established by the transparency of research. An audit trial provides the reader with information about how the study was completed, including the reasons for specific changes to the research design (Johnson, 1997). I have provided an audit trail for the reader by maintaining accurate field notes of my observations and detailed research journal entries, providing a detailed discussion of the steps involved in data

collection and the data analysis, documenting various stages of the data analysis, and discussing my own reflexive process.

Pilot Study

Pilot studies are important for interview practice and for evaluating the effectiveness of interview questions (Merriam, 1998). A pilot study was used as part of this study to begin to explore the research questions and to test the proposed research design. As mentioned earlier, the focus of the study was on students' experiences of teachers, including the teacher characteristics of trust, expectations, and encouragement, and the role that these teacher characteristics play in students' learning and achievement. Emphasis was placed on critiquing the interview procedures, examining the suitability of interview questions and observation procedures, and evaluating the overall research process. Questions concerning the length of interviews, availability of participants, and adjustment of the study methodology were addressed during the pilot study. The method used in the final study was adjusted, based on the pilot study findings. The study site was also the site for the pilot study. Within this middle school, a Black boy and a Black girl from the list of students who volunteered to participate in the main study were selected as participants. The parents of these two students, Star and Kirk, were contacted to secure permission for their children to participate. After the parents' written consent and the participants' verbal assent were secured, the participants were interviewed. They were asked to describe their lived experiences of the studied phenomenon.

As suggested by Merriam (1998), the pilot study provided information that helped to shape the questions that were used in the main study. Interviews were originally planned to occur after school hours. However, when it was time to conduct the interviews, the parents lacked transportation to the site. Participation would have been severely limited had I not decided to conduct the interviews during school hours. Star and Kirk were interviewed during elective classes. This decision was approved by parents, administrators, and advisors. Each of the participants was interviewed three times, with each interview lasting 45 min. A particular form of member checking was completed with the participants to check the accuracy of the interviews (Creswell, 2002). They read interview statements to determine if the documents were accurate and provided appropriate context for the next interview. It should be noted that the pilot study participants were included in the final study.

Data collection also included classroom observations, which were developed into field notes. Kirk and Star were observed in classes taught by White, female teachers. Their teachers had an average of 15 years of teaching experience. The average class size was 18 students. The classes contained 58% Black students. I observed each participant one time. Data were then analyzed using the procedure discussed in the "Data Analysis" section of this chapter. Throughout this study, whole-text analysis of the data was used to identify categories (see Appendix A). I also triangulated the interview data, participant observation data, and the information in my research journal entries (see Table 2). Classroom observation data was also collected (see Table 3).

Table 2

Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

Major findings	Sources of data			
	T	I	O	F
Teacher trust				
1. Participants placed a high premium on teacher trust.	X	X	X	X
2. Black students felt that teacher trust extended into the teacher's willingness to keep students out of trouble.	X	X	X	X
3. Teachers who kept secrets were highly valued.	X	X	X	X
4. Black students placed a high value on teachers' friendliness.	X	X	X	X
Teacher encouragement				
1. Participants felt that teacher encouragement was essential to students wanting to learn because it enhanced student self-esteem.	X	X	X	X
2. Black students pointed out that being placed in leadership roles encouraged them to work harder in class.	X	X	X	X
3. Participants felt that teachers who motivated them could better discipline them.	X	X	X	X
4. Black students felt that encouraging teachers made work fun.	X	X	X	X
Teacher expectations				
1. Participants believed that teachers expected excellent work from them.	X	X	X	X
2. Black students felt that positive teacher expectations made them try harder in class.	X	X	X	X

(see next page)

Table 2

(*continued*)

		Sources of data			
Major findings	T	I	O	F
3. Participants connected positive teacher expectations with whether the teacher liked them.		X		X
4. Black students felt welcome in class when teachers held positive expectations.	X	X	X	X
5. Participants described teachers with high expectations as teachers who wanted them to work to their potential.		X		X
6. Teacher expectations appeared to have greater influence when the teacher connected expectations to specific disciplines.		X	X	
7. Teachers expected participants to work as hard as any student regardless of race–ethnicity.	X	X	X	X

Note. T = triangulation; I = interviews; O = observations; F = field notes.

Table 3

Classroom Observation Data

Participant	Teacher gender	Teaching experience (years)	Subject	Class size	Percentage of Black students
Daniel	Female	28	Math	23	39
Job	Female	2	Science	14	71
Kirk	Female	2	Science	14	71
Lydia	Female	2	Science	27	44
Naomi	Male	25	History	25	40
Ruth	Male	25	History	25	40
Samuel	Female	28	Math	22	45
Star	Female	28	Math	22	45

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings that emerged from the interview transcripts and the field notes are discussed separately. For most of the categories, subcategories were developed, which provided a more fine-grained analysis and discussion of findings. The whole-text analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in the emergence of five major categories, which are discussed subsequently. These categories include elementary school experiences, instructional environment, student motivation, student trust, and racism (see Figure 1). The four major categories that resulted from the analysis of the field notes are then discussed. These categories include instructional environment, student motivation, student trust, and racism.

Categories Resulting From Interview Data

Elementary School Experiences

The participants saw their early educational experiences as encouraging them to learn, while other experiences were seen as discouraging them from learning in the classroom. They viewed their early educational experiences as mainly pleasant ones. They enjoyed class and were encouraged at all levels by teachers. Teachers used classroom experiments, hands-on activities, field trips, and manipulatives that made learning enjoyable. As Job stated, "We did hands-on things, you know. Like experiments, all kinds of stuff, you know, working in groups" (transcript, p. 3, lines 55–56, April 26, 2007). Seven subcategories were developed from the category of elementary school experiences: teacher–student interactions, adverse experiences, student interactions, negative student behavior, positive student behavior, encouraging teacher actions, and discouraging teacher actions.

Teacher–student interactions. Star enjoyed field trips, and outside activities were fun and gave her an opportunity to speak with her teachers. She saw teachers as encouraging and using positive comments to motivate students. In addition, she experienced that teachers talked to students about personal problems, while trying to establish a relationship with all students. Ruth found that teachers allowed students to talk about anything and never withheld their inner feelings.

Naomi viewed her teachers as having a good sense of humor and as creating an environment in the classroom through which learning became "fun." Students were allowed to

talk to friends and often used computers in class. Naomi played games that enabled her to learn subject matter quickly.

Most of the participants experienced that they were motivated when teachers shared past educational experiences from their personal history. They enjoyed hearing about their teachers' past events and the lives of teachers' friends. This sharing fostered trust and motivated students to learn. Kirk's enjoyment of hearing about his teachers' past experiences is apparent in his description of such an event. He recalled a teacher who often reminded students of her past educational history to make them think about the consequences of not trying to learn: "She was real friendly and she could relate to what we talk about other than the stuff she teaches" (transcript, p. 23, lines 511–513, April 4, 2007). He also described her warning about students who refused to work hard in their classes: "Yes, she will tell us like that she did the same thing growing up and that she had a friend who got in trouble" (transcript, p. 23, lines 516–517, April 4, 2007).

Students saw encouraging teachers as motivating students and verbally reminded them that friends from their past classes dropped out of school and never succeeded in life educationally. They were motivated to work harder academically because they saw the teacher's personal experience comments as a challenge. Students experienced this show of concern as creating a bond of trust between the teacher and themselves. This bond was understood as translating into teacher help with class work and made a teacher's advice more credible.

For several of the students, teachers who connected students to the teachers' pasts were teachers whom they could trust. They found that these teachers motivated and encouraged them to learn. Participants felt that they responded to teachers who revealed personal experiences. Students felt that they worked harder when teachers conveyed that teachers' school days were difficult, but that they had tried their best. They expressed that these conversations might influence other Black students and that these common experiences taught students to keep putting forth greater effort in class.

Negative experiences. The participants also described some adverse early educational experiences. Some teachers yelled frequently and created a classroom environment that was not conducive to student learning. As Naomi stated, "Well they used to like yell at us all the time. It was like it wasn't all of us but he just yelled at everybody and I didn't like it" (transcript, p. 6,

lines 122–125, April 26, 2007). Participants viewed some teachers as being rude, yelling all the time and saying unkind things, often to Black students.

They saw some teachers' comments as sarcastic when they offered to revise student class work, which was viewed as nonencouraging by participants. They found that teachers often responded that they did not care if students tried to complete incomplete or unsatisfactory class work. Only one teacher was described by the participants as being boring and not focused on instructional issues. Lydia experienced that students sat in class wanting to learn but teachers made them take "boring" notes and did not seem to care if they completed their work.

The overall early educational experiences of the students were essentially positive and helpful. Samuel fondly recalled how he was given a leadership opportunity in elementary school. He found that being given an opportunity to serve as a student council association president enabled him to avoid having discipline problems in class. This leadership experience forced him to model good behavior and increased his motivation to work harder in class.

Participants noted that most early educational memories were positive in nature. They enjoyed playing games, receiving rewards, and teachers who made learning fun. Students found that they enjoyed teachers who talked to them about personal experiences and teachers who shared their educational history. Negative experiences mainly centered on teachers who yelled at participants and who did not care whether they completed assignments.

Student interactions. Participants recalled student interaction during their elementary years. They described student interactions with teachers, students who motivated them to learn, and student interactions that discouraged them from learning in class. Information in the following section describes student interaction.

Students enjoyed the fact that they could ask their peers for help. They saw a desire to be good and serious about their class work. Participants ignored trouble and tried to stay focused on their academics, even when teachers displayed a bad attitude. For example, Lydia stated, "I just ignored her. Yeah like, I do my work but I don't say nothing to her. She ask me a question and like she got an attitude with it. I just don't say nothing" (transcript, p. 8, lines 173–176, April 17, 2007).

Participants declared that they worked hard to get good grades each year. They listened to teachers who were good and respected teachers giving them their best effort. Kirk saw that he attempted to make good grades to show teachers that he could learn and that he was not "stupid."

Most of the participants experienced that they were serious about learning, even when they were separated in class from White students. They indicated that they were quiet while White students were noisy. Participants viewed attending school as exciting, and they kept a positive attitude. Lydia found that most of her teachers wanted her to learn. Teachers used board games and manipulatives to motivate students to learn. Lydia also enjoyed developing acronyms to remember facts and information that was difficult to remember.

Students viewed their past experiences as a period of time when they consistently worked in class, while ignoring possible conflicts with teachers or other students. Daniel understood that he chose to ignore all troublemakers in his classroom. He found that he attempted to listen to teachers and to ignore troublemakers in class.

All the participants conversed with friends about teachers who often commented on whether they motivated them to learn. They experienced that they avoided giving teachers a reason to fail them. Students saw that they refused to become apathetic like friends or nonchalant in their academic endeavors. Each student understood that he or she worked hard in his or her earlier years and tried to achieve excellent grades.

Negative student behaviors. The participants discussed negative student behaviors during their early school years. They found that students often became disruptive in class when they felt that the teacher held a racist attitude. Samuel readily admitted that he expected to be disciplined when he demonstrated misconduct in the classroom. As Samuel explained,

> I didn't feel like any negative thing between my teachers. I knew they had to write me up cause I did something bad. And I didn't get mad because of that. I knew that it was just one of those things that they had to do. (transcript, p. 6, lines 114–119, April 17, 2007)

Daniel declared that he observed other students who were treated unfairly by teachers due to racism. He experienced that some that Black students disrupted classes just to get out of classes. Daniel found that Black students intentionally get mad so that teachers will respond by removing them from class. Racism is discussed at length later in this chapter.

Participants experienced that some classrooms were taught by teachers who were boring. Lydia found that there was only one elementary classroom that she hated to attend. She saw that classes were boring and that she sat in class refusing to work. Lydia described those classes as having boring teachers who discouraged her from working in class.

Positive student behaviors. Most students shared positive student behavior during their early years. Participants understood that they aspired to exhibit good behavior in class and that they enjoyed learning in classes in which teachers made learning enjoyable. They cited ignoring classmates who created trouble in class, while working hard even for teachers with apathetic attitudes. Some students confessed that they were disruptive in class during their early years. Lydia explained that she refused to work in classes in which work was boring. However, most participants described their early years as a time when they exhibited positive student behavior.

Encouraging teacher actions. Students discussed teacher actions that encouraged them to learn and teacher actions that discouraged them from learning. Information in the following section describes teacher actions in the participants' elementary years. Participants saw the majority of their teachers encouraging them in a manner that motivated them to do their best work. Teachers often told them that they wanted the best student effort and gave extra work to ensure that students understood concepts.

Teachers during the early years often talked with them about problems that they encountered in school and even talked about issues that were not related to academics. Students enjoyed this encouragement, and they made greater efforts due to teachers' encouraging words. Ruth's enjoyment of these teacher actions is apparent in her description. As Ruth explained, "They let us do anything, talk about anything. We can said it out loud and don't have to hold back in our chest or anything. They done great with us" (transcript, p. 6, lines 126–127, April 17, 2007).

Participants experienced that teachers used instructional techniques that students felt engaged them in the learning process. They described playing games and doing things that were fun. These games, such as playing trash ball—the privilege of playing basketball with a trash can—interactive teaching strategies, and other rewards, motivated students to work harder, while having fun. Lydia found that these games and activities encouraged students to learn.

Another positive teacher action that motivated participants involved the use of instructional time. According to participants, teachers were willing to let students make up incomplete work and spent extra time reviewing work. Participants experienced a need to spend time with teachers and to enjoy instructional support. Teachers who reached Black students would take time and review instructional material with them. Naomi found that teachers who encouraged her to work harder academically spent extra time with her to meet her educational

needs. She reflected on after-school programs that required students to spend extra hours after school, giving students additional time to work on academic studies. Participants saw that teachers pushed them to work harder and helped them complete work and assignments, while giving them additional time to accomplish their tasks. Those actions helped them to pay attention and were mentioned as being helpful to their success.

A fourth positive teacher action during participants' early years was teacher use of verbal praise, friendly voice tones, and positive comments. They found that teacher hugs, a good sense of humor, and jokes motivated them to work harder. Kirk described the telling of jokes by his teacher in class as being motivating because this relayed the teacher's great sense of humor.

In addition, students mentioned that teachers gave them individual attention, treated students equally, related class work to everyday experiences, and gave second chances to complete assignments. They stated that they were given help with tests, review questions, and extra time. Ruth understood that good teachers will spend time talking to students, even if it means excusing them from other classes to talk about student concerns. There are various ways that Ruth wanted teachers to give students more individualized attention. She described these teacher actions:

> and be more helpful with us, take time and ask us what's going on what you need help with. Make sure you break it down to us, make sure you teaching us what we need to know and make sure you ask us, "Do you get it?" (transcript, p. 32, lines 716–720, April 24, 2007)

Last, many participants viewed teachers speaking about students' futures as motivating to student learning. Participants responded by working diligently when the teacher indicated that they would excel in their academic endeavors. Star had encouragement from the fact that teachers made positive comments to her. She found that teachers continued to push her academically with kind words. Teachers reassured her that she could be successful on any test and would require her to perform at her best academic level. As Samuel was promoted to the middle school, he continued to hear positive encouragement from staff members. He saw that teachers often reminded him that he had a lot of potential and that he was destined to be successful.

Discouraging teacher actions. Participants discussed negative teacher actions that decreased their motivation to learn. They resented teachers assigning written work all of the

time. Participants saw that they were not motivated in classrooms in which they felt as if they were in jail and could not even use the restroom. They wanted teachers to enforce the same rules for White students and Blacks students. Teachers, who were believed to hold racist attitudes, treating Black students with less dignity, were not seen as motivating to them. Samuel contended that he never functioned well academically in classes in which he felt that the teacher was racist and treated participants unfairly or harshly.

Second, students were not motivated in classrooms in which teachers disciplined them without giving them prior warning. They felt that teachers should not write office referrals for students or discipline students without utilizing patience and other intervention methods. Participants wanted classrooms in which teachers had good classroom discipline skills. They were not motivated to learn in classes in which teachers would not help them complete assignments or yelled in class because they were in a bad mood. As Kirk stated,

> Well, I need extra help like she won't do. She'll be like, I did it one time you should have
> paid attention. I will try to explain to her that I was paying attention. I still didn't get it.
> (transcript, p. 16, lines 354–356, April 4, 2007)

Naomi found that she did not like the lack of respect from the teachers when they yelled at her. She experienced that some teachers yell at students all of the time, and this did not motivate her to learn.

Finally, students discussed how teachers refusing to assist students did not motivate students. They stated that teachers should let students submit makeup work. In addition, participants were not motivated by teachers who instructed them while maintaining a negative attitude. Ruth had advice for teachers who might come to school in a bad mood and create an atmosphere in the class that was not conducive to learning: She suggested that teachers who have negative attitudes should just stay at home.

The participants experienced that most teacher actions in their early years were motivating and encouraging. They were motivated by teachers who gave them extra assignments, talked to them about personal issues, treated Black and White students equally, and spoke to them with encouragement. Teachers who motivated students utilized engaging instructional techniques such as hands-on activities. Motivating teachers gave them extra time to complete assignments and spent extra time with them after class. Participants especially worked diligently for teachers who spoke about their future and potential. They were not motivated to learn by

teachers who utilized strict rules in class and who disciplined them without respect. Teachers who were seen as treating White and Black students differently, with racist intent, were viewed as not being able to motivate Black students. Overall, participants echoed that their early educational experiences motivated them to work harder in school.

Instructional Environment

Two subcategories emerged for the category of instructional environment: desirable teacher characteristics and undesirable teacher characteristics. Each of these subcategories is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Desirable teacher characteristics. Students experienced many desirable characteristics of teachers who motivated them to learn. Four characteristics included teachers who displayed caring and loving attitudes, teachers who were glad to see them, teachers who understood them, and teachers who spoke to them about their future. They placed great emphasis on teachers who had a caring attitude. Kirk saw that teachers who really cared would spend extra time with Black students. He found that a teacher cares when he or she spends time reteaching lessons that students did not initially understand. As Kirk stated,

> Then I assume that they really do care about that student and that they want us to do the best that we can. And if you don't get it and she's teaching the whole class then she will take the time to explain to you individually. (transcript, pp. 19–20, lines 433–436, April 4, 2007)

Second, participants were motivated to learn when teachers had a loving attitude toward them. They desired teachers who were supportive of students and who did not display negative attitudes by using harsh words. Participants' teachers who did not "fuss at them for dumb things" and who did not yell at them or put them down in front of others, teachers who encouraged them and who treated them equally and fairly, were perceived as being more effective. Naomi advised teachers to keep the classroom atmosphere in a manner conducive to learning. She found that motivating teachers would not "fuss" at students all the time. Naomi saw that teachers can motivate students by treating them with respect and kindness.

Third, participants understood that they wanted teachers who were glad to see them enter their classrooms. They remarked that the expectations of the teacher and the perception that the teacher cared for them and welcomed them as students in class impacted the amount of work they were willing to complete. Lydia recalled being in class with teachers who did not seem to

want them in class. Lydia experienced that these teachers acted in a manner that made students feel a sense of apathy among teachers. She found that this made her feel inadequate and as if she were "dumb." Furthermore, Lydia saw that some teachers called students "dumb" and that she did not want to return to the classrooms of these teachers.

Teachers who tried to understand students and to whom they could talk openly and freely embodied another desirable characteristic. Students also wanted to be treated kindly and wanted teachers who were willing to motivate them to work harder. Students desired teachers who wanted to help them with work and who pushed them to excel in the classroom.

Finally, participants wanted teachers who spoke to them about their future. Star revealed that positive comments make her think about how her future is related to her present work ethic. She saw that she enjoyed teachers that associated grades in class with student success after school years. Ruth viewed teachers' positive comments as encouraging her to work harder in class. She described an encouraging teacher in this manner:

> She is supportive all the time and cares what you want to do. It's great 'cause you know that you gon do something, you gonna be strong whatever you do. Go girl, do something in life, be something in life. I want to see you on TV. I want to see you being something. (transcript, p. 26, lines 596–597, April 19, 2007)

Undesirable teacher characteristics. Participants experienced undesirable characteristics of teachers. Students were not motivated to learn by teachers who treated them in a mean manner, utilizing harsh actions. Students resented teachers who displayed a negative attitude. Lydia purported that she learned better when a teacher was willing to listen to her problems. As she stated,

> I mean you don't have to be my friend but you can be nice to me, like I don't want you to like, if I can talk to you about everything, it's just I don't want you to be, like having an attitude with me. (transcript, p. 8, lines 164–166, April 17, 2007)

She found that if a teacher is "stuck up," then she did not want to speak with that teacher.

Students did not like teachers who assigned seats and segregated students in the classroom. They viewed being in classrooms in which White students were separated from Black students as less motivating. Participants found this to be divisive and to foster hard feelings among students. Lydia experienced seeing Blacks and Whites treated differently and many times forced to sit apart in class. She saw that students were often separated by race when they were

called to attend various functions in school. Lydia had advice for teachers who want Black students to work harder: She suggested that teachers should not give Black students assigned seats separating each group in class.

Lydia and Naomi experienced that Black students are intentionally separated from White students on buses and in classrooms. Naomi understood that she felt that all students should be allowed to ride or sit wherever they want, regardless of race. Participants saw that Black students and White students often questioned each other about these sitting arrangements.

Many preferred teacher characteristics were experienced by participants. They preferred teachers who were playful and who utilized fun educational activities. Participants were motivated to learn by teachers who had a caring attitude and who treated students with respect. Teachers who spent extra time teaching students were also preferred by students. Overall, the most preferred characteristic of teachers was being a caring teacher. The least preferred characteristic of teachers was displaying an attitude and having a harsh disposition. In addition, participants experienced that they were not motivated to learn in classes in which teachers separated students based on race–ethnicity.

Student Motivation

Two subcategories emerged for the category of student motivation: factors that increase student motivation and factors that decrease student motivation. Each of these subcategories is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Factors that increase student motivation. Participants discussed several factors that motivated them to learn. Students stated that they were motivated by hearing encouraging words from teachers. They found that teacher encouragement fostered greater personal effort in class. Samuel saw that a teacher who cares would encourage a student to excel in the classroom, even if the student had disruptive behavior. Samuel's appreciation of a caring teacher is evident in his description:

> Well, like you doing bad things and teachers would just help, you help you do a lot of stuff, help you do a lot of your work. And then push you to do better and better and work to your potential. (transcript, p. 16, lines 350–352, April 19, 2007)

Participants saw that they were also motivated by rewards. They were motivated to work harder for teachers who gave them food, candy, recess, or socialization time. Teachers' rewards of free time and privileges motivated them to learn. However, some students indicated

that they were not motivated by extrinsic rewards. Naomi understood that she is not motivated by extrinsic rewards. She saw that students fail when they refuse to work; thus she worked harder to gain promotion. Naomi found that trying to be the best person that she could be motivated her more than any tangible thing; however, she still connected her success with actions by the teacher. In addition, teachers often assisted her by encouraging her to strive to reach her potential.

Teachers who showed that they cared were also considered motivating. Job was encouraged to work hard, even when teachers disciplined him, and he understood that his teachers cared when they imposed strict rules. He saw that he worked harder when teachers disciplined him firmly in classes. Job experienced that he did not resent this tough love. He found that he wanted his teachers to be strict and to ensure that he completed all of his work in class. Job reasoned that teachers who disciplined him proved that they cared.

Kirk was motivated by teachers who could joke with him. These teachers were friendly and had a sense of humor. He saw that he needed a good cordial relationship with students to sit attentively in class. According to Kirk, teachers need to ensure students are motivated to learn and that students achieve academically. Kirk saw that students will not try to work for a teacher who fails to build a relationship with them.

Finally, Kirk saw that teachers must keep students in a classroom environment in which students are allowed to move on when they make a mistake. He understood that when students return from being disciplined in the office, teachers should have a forgiving disposition. Kirk concluded that teachers should not display bad attitudes, but rather, afford the student an opportunity to learn from consequences.

Participants were motivated to learn by teachers who wanted them to do their best and who expected them to achieve. They understood that they were motivated to learn when teachers expressed positive expectations. Star found that all of her teachers expected superior work from her. She experienced that her teachers frequently said that they wanted her best efforts in the classroom. She saw that teachers expected her to attend college and work a professional job. As Star elaborated,

Like they will ask us like everybody in the classroom, what do you want to be when you grow up? I always say a "lawyer," they say for you to be a lawyer you have to get good

grades and you have to go off to college and we all know that you can do it. (transcript, p. 14, lines 301–304, April 4, 2007)

She concluded that teachers who motivated her wanted her to make good grades and to perform academically with her greatest effort.

Several participants understood that teachers expecting them to do well motivated them to learn. Teachers instilled in them the notion that they had to work hard in life to achieve good things. Lydia experienced that her teachers constantly expected great effort from students. Teachers informed her of their expectations when she did not work on a level that was expected. She found that her teachers would not allow her to fall asleep in class because they knew that she was capable of successfully doing all of her class work. Lydia understood that she was expected to work hard each day. Samuel noted that teachers often told him that he would be someone special. He found that expectations influence a student's motivation and that teachers need to tell students that they will be successful.

In addition, Samuel understood that he was motivated when teachers told him that he would be successful in life. He saw that students would usually work harder when teachers communicated by using encouraging statements. Samuel experienced that these encouraging statements made him work harder in class and feel better about himself. He understood that he felt good about attending class when teachers continued to use positive statements.

All participants realized that teachers expected much from them and often talked about their future. They experienced that teachers told them that they could exhibit good behavior because one day they would be successful in life. Daniel saw that his teachers expect much from him because they give him a great deal of work. He experienced that they often talk about his future and say that they hope that he finishes high school and graduates from college. Daniel did not mind teachers having strict rules or being firm with him. He understood that one of his favorite teachers expected him to do well—he could tell so by her firm discipline in the classroom.

Job agreed with Daniel that teachers expect excellent work from him by staying firm. He saw that when teachers expect him to work diligently, it has a positive effect on him. Job found that working hard was part of his everyday actions. He described teachers who have high expectations for him as teachers who constantly push him toward his personal abilities. He found that he appreciates firm discipline from teachers. Lydia accepted her teachers' expectations as a

personal challenge to work harder academically. Lydia understood that she did not want to settle for a job at a fast-food restaurant.

Kirk experienced that teachers expect as much work from him as they do from other students in his class. He saw that these teachers often stop him in class when he is not on task. Kirk understood that his teachers utilize tough love to keep him trying his best. He saw that teachers who correct him often remind him that they care about him and that they want him to be successful. Samuel laughed and explained that teachers expect a lot from him, even though he is the self-proclaimed class clown. Samuel understood that he enjoys being the center of attention in his classes and that he is still expected to give great effort in class.

Participants described positive relationships with people that motivated them to learn. They placed emphasis on classmates who were friends and encouraged them to work when they felt discouraged. Participants experienced that they relied on friends to assist them with assignments when teachers were unwilling or reluctant to help. They stated that they enjoyed working with friends. Kirk found that he has several friends who are honor roll students. He understood that although they often become disruptive in school, they still succeed academically in classes.

Family members who motivated them to work hard in school were mentioned by participants. Parents, mothers, grandparents, and siblings were credited with motivating students to work harder in school. Daniel and Star saw their mothers as being an important influence. Samuel praised both his mother and grandfather. He described people who influenced him as being

> mainly my mom because, you know, if I don't bring good grades home or I do something I get punished. My grandfather in on me a lot because he has shown me how to be a man and how I gotta work and everything. He really helped me. (transcript, p. 8, lines 158– 162, April 17, 2007)

Naomi praised her sister for being smart and assisting her in her school work. She saw that her sister was very intelligent and that she frequently assisted her with assignments. Job saw that his teachers motivated him as if they were family members. He saw that he needed the discipline that these teachers gave him. Job understood that he appreciated the fact that teachers would not let him play and talk in class and encouraged him to pay attention.

Factors that decrease student motivation. The participants identified only a few factors that decreased their motivation to learn. They were not motivated by teachers who yelled in class. Participants preferred teachers who would talk to them in a calm voice. Job experienced that most Black students in his class refused to obey teachers who yell and scream. He understood that although a few Black students cooperate, when teachers yell, most of them simply continue to disrupt the classroom.

In addition, some participants cited lack of respect for students as a second factor that decreased student motivation. Samuel found that sometimes students and teachers have a misunderstanding, but the situation has nothing to do with race. Respect is an important item to him. He made a powerful statement:

> Well, I always say you got to give it to get it. So if a teacher yell at me and tell me, tell me what to do and stuff when I didn't even do nothing. Then I'm not going to sit here and listen to her and respect her cause she is not respecting me. (transcript,
> p. 36, lines 803–806, April 24, 2007)

Participants were not motivated to learn when teachers put them down. Daniel enjoys teachers who encourage him, but not teachers who berate him. Samuel understood that having good vibes with a teacher is important. He found that it is futile for teachers to teach students if teachers do not believe their students will become successful citizens.

Participants found relationships with friends to be a factor that decreased their motivation to learn. Some participants expressed the fact that they worked less rigorously when they were in the same class as certain friends. Ruth described these relationships:

> If most of my friends are in the class, we will work better if our friends are not in that class and we know we gonna talk to them. You can do no work because we giggling and laughing. (transcript, p. 18, lines 392–397, April 19, 2007)

Star found that friends sometimes start rumors in class that make her mad, thus making her less motivated to work in class. Ruth saw that her friends sometimes influenced her attitude in the morning prior to the start of school. She explained that in the mornings, she gathered with her friends in first period and discussed thoughts about their teachers. Ruth understood that she especially talked to her peers about teachers who were not willing to teach them, even remarking that they are happy when those teachers are absent from school.

In summary, analysis of data revealed that caring teachers, rewards, discipline, positive comments, and high expectations increased students' motivation to learn. Participants were motivated by teachers who talked about their future aspirations and who utilized words of encouragement. They worked harder for teachers who offered extrinsic rewards but also spoke of the intrinsic value of working hard in class. Participants were motivated by teachers who showed them respect. Negative factors, such as yelling at students and humiliating students, did not motivate students to learn. Teachers who disrespected students were viewed by students as an obstacle to their academic success. Students discussed and described more positive influences than negative influences.

Student Trust

Two subcategories were developed for the category of student trust: teacher characteristics that contribute to student trust and teacher characteristics that decrease student trust. Each of these subcategories is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Teacher characteristics that contribute to student trust. Participants worked harder for caring teachers whom they could trust. They felt that they learned best from teachers with whom they could talk in class about things other than the subject matter. A teacher's willingness to listen to personal problems made students trust the teacher. Kirk saw that this trusting relationship is not restricted to the race–ethnicity of the teacher, but rather, that all teachers could form a bond with students. He saw that it was not just Black teachers who could be trusted, but any friendly teacher.

Students experienced that they enjoyed teachers who were caring and that these teachers increased their desire to work harder academically because a trusting relationship developed. Lydia found that her favorite teacher did not teach the subject area that she liked the most. She understood that she enjoyed this class because she had a great relationship with the teacher. Lydia felt that students would try to do their best for a teacher who had good vibes (feelings) with them.

Participants viewed teachers who were friendly as contributing to student trust. They understood that they learned best with teachers who had a friendly personality. Kirk found that he refused to allow teachers to ignore him. He always had a plan to make teachers give him attention. Kirk employed a unique strategy to get teachers to like him if he felt that they disliked

him. He admitted that sometimes he was disciplined because he picked on teachers. Kirk described what happened when a teacher would not talk to him:

> I'll speak, I'll say hi. Like I'll pick on you if you don't talk to me. I'll keep talking to you. Until they get mad, then they will say something. (transcript, p. 17, lines 370–373, April 4, 2007)

Kirk continued,

> If they don't like me, I keep actually picking on them tell like I like your hair today but I'm just making them talk to me. (transcript, p. 29, lines 659–660, April 5, 2007)

Students viewed teachers with strict but firm rules as increasing student trust. They found that these teachers helped students stay out of trouble. Daniel stated that teachers could be trusted if they showed a willingness to keep students out of trouble. He experienced that teachers showed that they cared when they were tough on students in class. Job also saw that he could trust teachers when they told him to stop talking and to pay attention in class. He insisted that when a teacher picks on him, it shows him that the teacher cares.

Lydia understood that teacher trust could easily be seen in the ways in which teachers treated her. She expressed the following thoughts:

> They treat you like their own child if something was to happen they'll be like I didn't know. Like if something was to happen, I got wrote up or something and then she'd come to the office and give her opinion. She like she never did that in my class. I don't believe she did that or whatever and then when I am having a bad day she'd just come in and talk to me. (transcript, p. 3, lines 60–65, April 17, 2007)

Some participants also wanted an outlet to discuss their inner feelings. They had a desire for teachers to listen to their concerns with an open mind. Participants tended to view this ability to share with teachers as indicating a teacher whom they could trust. Kirk understood that he liked teachers with a personality. He found that he could talk to these teachers about things other than class assignments. These trusting teachers helped him even when he was removed from other classes for disruptive behavior. Kirk feels fortunate that he has teachers who will let him vent about his problems. He experienced that teachers that allow him to express his feelings encourage a sense of student–teacher trust.

> Teacher confidentiality was found to be a characteristic that increased student trust by participants. Participants were motivated in classes in which the teacher maintained

confidentiality. They explained that trusting teachers allowed students to talk to them about personal problems, while maintaining student confidentiality. Ruth understood that she expected trusting teachers to keep conversations with her secret. She felt that if teachers kept conversations confidential, then students could trust them enough to tell them anything. Naomi found that students need teachers with whom they can share their inner thoughts. She experienced that teachers who maintain confidentiality motivated students to behave better in class, forming a bond that motivated them to learn.

Teacher characteristics that decrease student trust. Participants viewed teachers who emphasized racial differences between Black and White students as decreasing student trust. Such differences included correcting Black students for misbehavior, but allowing White students to have free reign in the classroom; calling on White students to participate in class but ignoring the raised hands of Black students; and not allowing Black students to run errands. Daniel experienced that teachers usually reprimand Black students, although they allow White students to speak freely in class.

In addition, Lydia found that Black students often get chastised by teachers more often than White students. She also noticed that her friends were corrected in class for being disruptive, while many White kids were not reprimanded. As Lydia stated, "Yeah, he's Black and the person sitting besides him is White. He's just talking real loud. I can hear him and the teacher just singles my friend out" (transcript, p. 17, lines 368–370, April 17, 2007). The category of racism will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another characteristic that decreased student trust of teachers that was experienced by participants was displayed by teachers who intentionally spent more time helping White students, rather than Black students. Participants saw that teachers tend to spend most of their time with White students, while ignoring Black students' pleas for assistance in class. Lydia experienced that when teachers displayed this characteristic, it made her feel as if she was not "good enough." She understood that even when some students beg for help, the teacher will not spend time helping them. Lydia saw that Black students simply try to finish the work on their own. She explained that some Black kids get angry and refuse to work because of bad feelings. As Lydia recalled,

Sometimes they get mad, be like man, why don't you want to come and help me? She be like I was coming, well, I was coming and then she never comes. Go sit down at her desk then have to stop and do something else. (transcript, p. 35, lines 790–793, April 24, 2007)

Participants also experienced teacher refusal to give Black students adequate time to complete their work. Kirk understood that when the teacher refused to give students extra time, it made them feel as if they were "dumb," instead of highlighting the fact that the students did not understand the class work. Participants saw they were not motivated by teachers who proclaimed that they did not care if students completed assignments. Teachers who displayed a noncaring, apathetic attitude were not trusted by students.

Teachers who chastised Black students for the majority of their time in class were seen as having characteristics that decreased student trust. These participants indicated that students who misbehaved should be forgiven quickly and given a new opportunity to correct their behavior. They stated that they could not trust teachers who were sarcastic and rude. The act of yelling made participants less trusting of teachers and disrupted students' motivation to work. Naomi experienced that she did not like the lack of respect she felt when teachers yelled. Ruth concluded that "all they do is yell and ain't nobody listening to what they saying" (transcript, p. 18, line 400, April 19, 2007).

Participants understand that trusting their teacher is essential to motivating them to learn. They described several teacher characteristics that increased student trust, including teachers caring about students, having good feelings toward students, letting students vent about problems, and communicating with students. Behaviors that detracted from trust building included teachers displaying racial differences, having a noncaring attitude, displaying a lack of respect for students, and demonstrating racism. Although racism has been discussed in this section, it will be discussed in a separate category in the next section.

Racism

A final category that emerged from the analysis was racism. In this section, the various aspects of this category are discussed.

Participants experienced racism in the classroom and saw its presence ushering in a sense of second-class citizenship. Racism was seen by students as teachers providing White students with better treatment than Black students and extending more privileges to White students than to Black students. They saw that feelings of racism kept students from responding to teacher

encouragement and experiencing high expectations by teachers. Daniel witnessed many of his friends getting in trouble with "racist teachers." He found that racist teachers treated Black students in a rude manner; therefore his friends often became angry and walked out of class. Daniel thought White students were given more freedom to talk in class. He stated, "Black kids are usually the quiet ones in class, but the White kids make all the noise and stuff and people can't concentrate. I feel like that's not right. I still do my work" (transcript, p. 15, lines 322–341, April 19, 2007).

In addition, Daniel and Star found that White students were not corrected as frequently as Black students. Daniel saw that White students practically had free reign in class when talking to their friends during instruction. Star experienced that Black students in her classes often received the most discipline, whereas White students were shown more compassion concerning classroom disruption. In addition, she suggested that teachers needed to be more compassionate to Black students. Star saw that teachers should have this disposition toward Black students because they struggle academically in class. Star remarked that instead of being racist, teachers should treat students in a respectful and honest fashion.

Teachers' ridiculing of Black students was a major problem, according to Samuel. He saw racist teachers who often singled out Black students. He experienced racist teacher actions that allowed White students to talk freely in class, while Black students were forced to remain silent. He developed an interesting strategy to deal with racist teachers. Samuel found that he worked diligently in class so that he did not have to worry about whether teacher racism determined his grades in class. He monitored his grades so that racism would not become an issue.

Participants were not motivated in classes in which teachers allowed White students to enjoy a favored status because of race. They saw that relationships with a person should be based on things other than race. Several participants remarked that a student or teacher should be judged by his or her personality, rather than his or her skin color. Ruth saw that most White students enjoy favorite status. She found that teachers do not laugh when Black students say something funny, but laugh when White students make comments in class. Ruth had a lot of frustration in her voice as she described racism in classrooms:

> A White kid is going to always be treated good, they are always going to be better in like
> they gotta be better than the Black person. I don't think that no White people should be

better than the Black 'cause we should be equal. (transcript, p. 33, lines 743–746, April 24, 2007)

Ruth understood that this unequal treatment affects the way that White students relate to Black students. She talked about the high failure rate among Black students. She felt that teachers thought that White students had "bigger" brains than Black students. Participants saw teacher inequitable grading practices with students as being racist. Lydia experienced the fact that White students appear to get better grades than Black students, even though they do not do as much work in class.

Participants spoke about racism in teachers' granting of student privileges. Lydia found that White students were chosen more frequently to carry notes to the office or deliver items to other classrooms. Furthermore, she saw that Blacks were often asked to get in line last after White students have participated in events. She viewed with anger and frustration that she often had to wait in line or be chosen last.

Racism was also associated with bathroom privileges by participants. They expressed great resentment about the way teachers afforded students the courtesy of using the restroom. Samuel saw that "in some classes the teachers don't let you go to the bathroom. . . . they'll let White kids go to the bathroom but they won't let Black kids go. I be kinda mad about that" (transcript, p. 20, lines 452, 455–458, April 19, 2007). Participants saw that Black students were often disrespected by not being allowed to use the restroom. Ruth experienced that teachers freely gave White students access to the restroom, while limiting access to Black students. Ruth viewed this as a sign of teachers not respecting Black students.

Star understood that teachers often discriminate against Black students who want to use the bathroom. She viewed that teachers deny Black students bathroom privileges, even if they ask for permission in the same tone. Furthermore, Star experienced that teachers attempt to use the amount of work that each student has done as a standard for letting Black students use the bathroom. She found that both students usually complete the same amount of class work.

Participants felt that they faced racism in the manner in which their grades were derived. They deemed that the numerical grades they received in class were not a fair representation of their academic achievement. Samuel found that in one class, he earned a 93 average, only later to be given a 73 on his report card. He admitted that he did not want to return to school. Naomi saw

that teachers often reminded Black students that they did not care whether they made passing grades or not.

In contrast to the other participants, Kirk and Job saw little difference in the way that teachers treated Black students and White students. Job saw that Black teachers as well as White teachers treated him the same. He viewed that his teachers were fair, but with regard to some Black students, he declared, "They were lazy and don't want to work" (transcript, p. 7, line 141, April 26, 2007).

Kirk understood that his teachers were fair and were the best educators. In fact, he found that teachers were very impartial. As Kirk said, "because like my teachers, they perfect" (transcript, p. 18, line 400, April 4, 2007). Kirk experienced that his teachers seemed to feel the same way about White students as Black students. He found that he had no problem getting extra assistance in class. He concluded that Black kids often said that teachers were racist because they received a failing grade in class. Job saw that teachers treated Black and White students with the same amount of respect.

These data suggest that Black students often feel as if they are victims of racism. Participants felt that they were forced to sit together, held to stricter grading standards, disciplined in a harsher manner, and denied simple privileges by some teachers because of teacher racism. Job and Kirk were the only dissenters who felt that they were usually treated fairly by all teachers.

Categories Resulting From Field Notes

Four categories resulted from analysis of the field notes: instructional environment, student motivation, student trust, and racism.

Instructional Environment

Expectations were set high for students. Participants talked readily about becoming professional athletes, television stars, and college students. Teachers never allowed students to sit in class without showing effort. Participants spoke of having an opportunity to explore their leadership abilities in elementary school. All participants remarked that teachers expected the same amount of work from them as was requested from White students.

An analysis of the field notes revealed that all participants, except Daniel and Ruth, had conversations with their teachers, asking questions and receiving responses. Kirk, Ruth, Lydia,

Samuel, Job, and Naomi freely spoke with their teachers and appeared to me to work well in class. Star seemed to work well despite the fact that her teacher failed to recognize her hand on one occasion. This behavior did not deter Star, who raised her hand again and continued to work diligently to complete the assignment.

Star, Lydia, Job, and Naomi stayed on task during the majority of classroom time. They received complimentary remarks such as "thank you," "that's correct," and smiles from their teachers and asked questions without tension in their voices. These participants sat up straight and attentively in class, working to complete their tasks. The participants appeared to work steadily on tasks.

Student Motivation

Participants were encouraged in each classroom. They frequently discussed the encouraging actions of teachers such as instructional games that motivated them, teachers who spoke in a positive manner about the students' future, and caring teachers. There appeared to me to be a caring relationship between Black students and teachers, even when students were disciplined or suspended. They never accused teachers of not caring. Teachers smiled frequently at students, and the school atmosphere seemed to hold a feeling of respect and caring for students. This was evident in the office area, even though this may have been influenced greatly by my presence as an observer.

Daniel and Ruth never had conversations with their teachers. However, the teacher exchanged pleasant glances with them on one occasion. These glances were demonstrated in the form of smiles and nods. Although no verbal praise was given, the students worked very diligently on their assignments. Even though Ruth sat in a room with students who were very talkative, she stayed on task, speaking only to one Black girl.

Kirk and Samuel were steadily on task in class, but they were the only two students who displayed disruptive behavior. Kirk asked questions frequently and spoke with the teacher about topics not related to class work such as after-school events. On one occasion, Kirk walked around the room, talking to other students, while the teacher was giving instruction to the entire class. The teacher corrected him, and Kirk resumed talking and working without demonstrating anger. Kirk returned to his seat. After Kirk was corrected, a White boy walked across the room and was also corrected by the teacher. Kirk answered many teacher questions and actively participated in class activities.

Samuel consistently disrupted class by actively talking out loud during class, but he simultaneously participated in class activities. He spoke out, answering questions without being recognized, while actively carrying out unauthorized conversations with two Black boys. The teacher never corrected him verbally but often gave him a smile when she wanted him to lower his voice. Samuel participated in class extensively, often correctly answering questions that were posed to other students. Samuel even told jokes during class discussions but continued to correctly answer questions. The teacher never corrected him verbally.

Star, Kirk, Samuel, Lydia, Job, and Naomi received verbal encouragement and praise from their teachers. Teachers readily acknowledged their questions and responses with smiles and replied in a soft-voiced tone with "thank you" and "yes." All students stayed on task.

Star continued to work, even when, after raising her hand, her first question was initially ignored by the teacher. When the teacher responded to her second question with a smile, Star continued to work harder. She was not daunted by the failure of gaining recognition initially from her teacher.

Kirk worked consistently in class, even though he was disruptive. He walked around the room once, talking to other students as they tried to complete their task. However, he continued to work after he returned to his seat. On one occasion, he was asked to sit down. The teacher asked Kirk to be seated with a smile and in a mild tone of voice.

Although Job was silent and quiet in his demeanor during interviews, he appeared to me to want encouraging remarks. Job answered questions from other students and greeted his teacher's smiles with a smile. The teacher complimented Job each time with a smile, and Job seemed to become more involved verbally in the lesson as he received encouragement from his teacher. Teacher responses consisted of "thank you" and "that's correct."

Daniel or Ruth never verbally addressed their teachers but received smiles and nods of apparent approval from them. These participants worked on task and greeted these gestures with their own head movements, while looking at the teacher. They were not distracted by other students who were talking around them, but consistently stayed on task.

Naomi was often encouraged by her teacher. The teacher gave her warm acknowledgments and smiles for answering questions. Remarks included "yes," "that's correct," and "thank you." In addition, Naomi assisted other students who asked her questions. The teacher glanced at her whenever this occurred and smiled.

The teacher often encouraged Samuel as he gave correct responses to questions in class. Samuel constantly disrupted class by speaking out of turn and carrying on conversations during class time with two Black boys. He even attempted to tell a joke during instruction. Although his behavior was disruptive, the teacher seldom corrected him, but encouraged him with smiles and praise as he made responses. Occasionally, the teacher would glance at him when he spoke with a loud voice. Samuel lowered his voice on those occasions but seemed to thrive in the atmosphere of being the center of attention. This was evident as he continued to answer questions during the lesson.

Teachers in observation classrooms insisted that students work even though two participants, Kirk and Samuel, were disruptive in class. Kirk was disciplined in a respectful manner, being asked to sit down in a quiet tone by his teacher. He was politely asked to be seated and complied, while continuing his assignment. Kirk was not given an opportunity to refrain from working in class. The teacher expected him to work until the assignment was completed, and Kirk worked steadily on this task.

The teacher seemed to expect Samuel to complete the assignments that she placed on the overhead projector, even though he spoke constantly with two Black boys and interrupted questions that she posed to other students. She never gave him negative facial expressions or warned him to stop talking. Despite Samuel's disruptive behavior, the teacher never allowed him to stop working on his assigned work; rather, she smiled in acknowledgment each time Samuel attempted to answer a question. Samuel successfully answered all of the questions that the teacher posed to the class.

Star, Lydia, Daniel, Ruth, and Naomi worked steadily on their classroom assignments. Naomi completed her assignment and began assisting other students. The teacher smiled and nodded at her. This support from the teacher may be an indication that he expected her to be the type of student who could finish her assignment and help other students.

Student Trust

Participants spoke kindly about teachers whom they could trust. They enjoyed being able to speak with teachers about anything and frequently commented on how they enjoyed kind teachers. This was evident in the classroom as they stayed on task. One teacher appeared to be the favorite of participants and was mentioned several times in the student interviews. Black

students seemed to me to enjoy the same freedoms as White students in her room. They were able speak and walk to the tables of others, yet they were expected to work.

Samuel appeared to have a trusting relationship with his teacher that allowed him to be the center of attention in class, as long as he worked and completed his assignments. Samuel worked steadily, even though his behavior was disruptive to other members of the class. The teacher seemed to me to give him a free reign in the area of class conduct and appeared to trust that he would learn the instructional material. Instruction in the class continued without the teacher correcting Samuel. Samuel answered every question that was given to him with a correct response.

Racism

Although the participants spent a great deal of time during the interviews on racism, racist actions, such as teachers ignoring Black students, teachers answering Black students in a rude way, and teachers treating White students more kindly than Black students, were not observed during classroom observations. I also did not observe teachers ignoring Black students.

Chapter Summary

The analysis of the interview data revealed five categories: elementary school experiences, instructional environment, motivation, trust, and racism. Participants discussed their early educational experiences, which they described as predominantly positive. They found that they often looked to their experiences with teachers, their own family influences, and personal goals to bring stability to their academic environment. They shared teacher characteristics that they viewed as desirable, including a caring and loving attitude, being glad to see students attend class, understanding students' perspectives, and speaking to students about the students' future. Teacher characteristics that were considered undesirable included rude student treatment, rude classroom tactics, and negative teacher attitudes.

The participants viewed a number of factors as increasing their motivation to learn, including encouraging words from teachers, caring teachers, classroom rewards, self-motivation, and high teacher expectations. Factors that were seen as decreasing student motivation included being yelled at in class by teachers, teachers who displayed a lack of respect for students, and friends who did not work steadily in class.

Participants described characteristics that contributed to student trust and characteristics that decreased student trust. Teacher characteristics that were seen as increasing the participants' trust included friendliness, a sense of humor, the ability to discipline students, the ability to listen attentively to student problems, and the ability to maintain confidentiality. In terms of teacher characteristics that decreased trust, the participants emphasized showing partiality to students when disciplining them, spending more time during class helping White students than Black students, refusing to allow extra time to complete assignments, and displaying apathy.

Finally, the participants experienced racism in the classroom, which resulted in a sense of second-class citizenship. Racism manifested in the way in which White students were treated more kindly, disciplined less often, and given more privileges than Black students. Participants saw themselves as often deliberately separated on buses as well as in many classrooms and expressed a desire for all students to be seated together.

Field note analysis revealed four categories: instructional environment, student motivation, student trust, and racism. Expectations appeared to be set high for participants. Teachers never allowed students to sit in class without make great effort to work. Most participants actively participated in classrooms, answering questions, taking notes, and being attentive. Teachers appeared to motivate students with smiles and positive facial gestures. Teacher trust seemed to encourage students to talk freely to teachers and appeared to create a classroom atmosphere that fostered great student effort. Participants who were disruptive were corrected in a kind manner by teachers. I did not observe any instances of racism.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND
PRACTICE, AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine eight Black middle school students'
experiences of various teacher characteristics that were influential in the students' learning and
achievement. Significant findings that emerged from this study include the following: (a) the
participants' educational experiences influenced their motivation to learn, (b) the quantity of
instructional time and the classroom environment influenced how they learned, (c) specific
teacher characteristics motivated the participants to learn, (d) teachers who demonstrated trust
promoted participants' learning, and (e) racism in student–teacher relations decreased
participants' willingness to learn.

Educational and Personal Experiences

Black students are motivated to learn when they receive support and mentoring from
teachers (Cotton, 1995; Ferguson, 2003; Steele, 1992). The participants in the present study were
motivated to learn by their past educational experiences and by the sharing of teachers' personal
experiences. These findings are consistent with those of recent studies indicating that Black
students are influenced academically by peers and their experiences of people around them
(Bratton & Peterson-Lewis, 2004; Croizet et al., 2004; Mocombe, 2006; Ogbu, 2003).
Participants stated that some friends encouraged them to work hard in class, while other friends
were distracting. Family members were also viewed as being encouraging and motivating
influences in their lives.

The participants were motivated to learn when teachers spoke positively about these
students' potential for the future. Participants spoke about teachers who discussed their
professional careers, suggesting that the students could become television personalities or
professionals, or attend institutions of higher learning. Findings revealed that students enjoyed
this encouragement, regardless of its plausibility. They were motivated to learn when teachers
associated grades with success beyond school careers. This is consistent with research that found
that Black students must be educated in an environment with high teacher expectations (E. L.
Brown, 2004; Cotton, 2001; Ferguson, 2003). Participants suggested that teachers use teaching

strategies such as fun activities, manipulatives, avoidance of lectures, and rewards for incentives to promote higher expectations.

Instructional Environment

Another major finding is that the participants desired time capital. In fact, they valued time as if it were money. The participants wanted and begged for teachers to spend additional time with them. This time could be spent reviewing class assignments, talking about personal issues, or speaking to them about their future potential. Students associated time spent with them as an indication of their need or value as a person in class. The lack of teacher time resulted in issues of inequity of student treatment, student behavior concerns, and issues of student–teacher trust. Time can be distinguished from attention in that students seemed not to expect one-on-one instruction from teachers; rather, almost any activity in association with a teacher sufficed.

Teachers did not have time equity in their expectations of Black students when compared to White students. Black students were jealous of the time that teachers spent with White students. Teachers spending more instructional time with White students than Black students corroborated findings from a study by Gardner (2007), who found that many teachers hold Black students responsible for their own education and give them little assistance.

Participants described classrooms, transportation areas, cafeterias, and other areas where they were separated from White students, whom the participants felt received the majority of teacher attention and instruction. Participants consistently wanted additional time from teachers so that they could successfully complete assignments and to feel accomplished overall. Alvarez and Bali (2004) suggested that teacher expectations and the racial makeup of students make a significant difference in student achievement.

Lack of teacher time with Black students is consistent with a study by Ferguson (2003), which found that teachers appear to be less flexible in their expectations of Blacks, girls, and students from low-income homes. As a result, Black students suffer from their teachers' self-fulfilling prophecy. Findings indicated that participants believe that teachers deny them adequate support and grading rewards when they attempt to work hard. These data were supported by Cook and Ludwig (1998), who suggested that schools tend to have fewer expectations for their hardest working Black students than for their hardest working White students.

Researchers have indicated that teachers need to develop personal characteristics that encourage all students to succeed academically (Anderman & Midgley, 1997; Gregory &

Mosely, 2004; Patrick & Turner, 2004). Gregory and Mosely (2004) found that Black students are often frustrated when teachers refuse to spend extra time helping them with assignments. Frustration of Black students who want additional teacher time results in student discipline problems in the classroom. Black students said that they were often disruptive in class because of poor teaching practices, or because they were simply ignored. Participants mentioned many incidents pertaining to friends who also constantly became disruptive to avoid teachers whom they felt were unfair or boring. Cotton (1995) found that teachers must encourage the academic efforts of all students by stressing the positive aspects of students' behavior and supporting those efforts.

Findings indicated that teacher apathy often translates into student apathy. Students explained that they did not care if they completed assignments when teachers behaved in an apathetic manner. Black students wanted teachers who taught in an encouraging manner and who spent extra time teaching and reteaching subject matter. Participants expressed that they did not want to return to classes with teachers who did not want them in class.

Student Motivation

Black students tend to experience academic success and are motivated when teachers display high expectations (Ferguson, 2003; Au & Harackiewicz, 1986; Bretherton, 1990; E. L. Brown, 2004; Ferguson, 2003; Larocque, 2007; Main, 1996). The participants wanted teachers to talk about the students' promising future and to expect excellent academic work. They wanted teachers to expect the same caliber of work from them that they expected from White students.

Participants consistently worked harder for teachers who held high expectations of them and who insisted that they complete the same amount of work as White students. This finding is consistent with those of other studies, which have concluded that Black students are motivated to learn when teachers raise their expectations (Ferguson, 2003; Gardner, 2007; Gregory & Mosely, 2004). The finding of the impact of high teacher expectations on Black student achievement, however, was not consistent with Fryer and Levitt's (2004) finding on this issue. Specifically, they found that Black student achievement did not increase with increased teacher expectations, but rather, with increased teacher quality.

Black students were motivated to learn by teachers with whom they could speak about areas other than class subject matter. Students wanted teachers to speak to them and acknowledge them to avoid feeling inadequate. They were motivated when teachers talked to

them about personal situations and sometimes made arrangements to talk to them after school and during electives. Black students expressed a need for this outlet and wanted teachers to listen with an open mind. This finding, that teacher characteristics motivated the participants to learn, is consistent with the findings of a study by Patrick and Ryan (2001), which indicated that students who are encouraged by teachers demonstrate a greater desire to excel academically. Raider-Roth (2005) concurred that teacher interaction with students is very important to students and influences classroom atmosphere. Mansfield (2001) found that a student's view of teacher care and support greatly encourages the student to have greater academic engagement. This study, in accordance with existing literature, supports the relationship between academic achievement and teacher sensitivity when interacting with students.

Student Trust

Another significant finding that emerged from this study is that participants are motivated by teacher trust. Noddings (1995) stated that teachers must educate students through developing a trusting relationship with sensitivity to create competent adults. Black students may be more positively affected than White students by their experiences with teacher academic demands and trust in their cognitive abilities (Neuliep, 1995). There was a high premium placed on teacher friendliness and genuine concern for students. Participants appreciated teachers who could look beyond their present academic issues and inspire them to work hard. Literature indicated that student academic success is partially a product of a child's perceived relationship with the teacher (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta et al., 1995). Many times, Black students mentioned that they would increase their work effort for teachers whom they could trust. Research has shown that students achieve at a higher academic level when they feel that they can trust the educators who teach them (E. L. Brown, 2004; Freeman, 1999; Vars, 2001). Students saw teacher trust as a sign that the teachers truly cared for them.

Similar to Parsons's (2001) study, findings corroborate that teacher encouragement is a necessary ingredient for student academic success. Most participants felt that Black students seldom receive positive feedback and stated that they would work hard for teachers who encouraged them. This finding was consistent with research by E. L. Brown (2004) and Love (2004), who suggested that encouragement and sensitivity are especially important for teachers when they interact with a diversified student group. Black students in this study consistently mentioned teachers who encouraged them to reach for their aspirations.

Students insisted that displaying encouragement through love and support, which further established trust, motivated them to learn. Participants indicated that they were motivated to learn by teachers who treated them with respect and care. They indicated that they would work hard for teachers who expected their best and who were willing to treat them like other students from other race–ethnicities. Many Black students simply wanted to know that teachers cared about their welfare. Participants resented teachers who made them feel inadequate or "dumb." Caring was mentioned by most students as being the number one desired characteristic of motivating teachers. This concurred with findings by Mansfield (2001) that a student's feeling of care and support encourages the student to have greater academic engagement. Current research confirmed that Black students and students of poverty require extra emotional, instructional, and research-based strategies to ensure their motivation to learn (Barr & Parrett, 2007; Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008; Kuykendall, 2004; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Payne, 2006).

Racism

Researchers have suggested that Black students often face racial issues that are ignored by teachers (Gardner, 2007; Gregory & Mosely, 2004). DiAngelo and Sensoy (2009) defined *racism* as a type of oppression that leads to structures, beliefs, and actions that allow for an unfair distribution of power, resources, and privileges. Lewis (2003) explored how school and teachers become "racializing agents" (p. 4), however unintended these actions may be. Participants were very race conscious and experienced racism in classrooms and other educational areas.

Black students mentioned many classroom incidents in which they were not acknowledged or treated as if they were "invisible" by the teacher. Racist practices were consistently mentioned. Students' awareness of racist practices is important because research has shown that student–teacher racial experiences seem to have a greater effect on academic outcomes for Black students than for White students (Gregory & Mosely, 2004).

The findings indicate that teachers may have been unaware of their own racist practices (primarily concerning privileges and fairness), and they did not acknowledge these events. The participants viewed White students as being chosen more often to run teacher errands and as being allowed to line up first during school events. According to Gardner (2007), many teachers claim that they never see students as being of different racial–ethnic groups and are surprised

when Black students raise this issue. Lewis (2003) similarly noted that teachers in school with few minorities do not see racial differences.

Black students found that they frequently spoke with White students about these occurrences. The participants maintained that racism is still prevalent in the educational system. Black students felt disrespected when teachers refused to let them have bathroom privileges, while granting almost total bathroom access to White students. They added that teachers often tried to link the amount of completed classroom assignments to Black students' privilege of using the restroom. Student experiences about teacher behaviors may be accurate or inaccurate, but have been shown to be real to students (Mirkamal, 2001).

The racial status of students, combined with teacher expectations, can make a significant difference in student achievement. Alvarez and Bali's (2004) finding is consistent with this study's finding that there are still racist practices occurring in the classroom. Participants spoke with angry expressions as they recounted many of their experiences, which made them distrust certain teachers. Black students mentioned that White students received higher grades, even though Black students worked just as rigorously in class. Grading practices were seen as favoring White students regardless of the amount of effort Black students displayed. These grading incidents are consistent with research by Cook and Ludwig (1998) that suggested that low teacher expectations may translate into lower grades for Black students, who may feel that they are not expected to perform well in their academics. One participant mentioned that she felt that teachers thought White students had "bigger brains." Ferguson (2003) argued that teachers appeared to be less flexible in their expectations for Black students.

Although racism was mentioned often by the participants, the researcher did not observe racism during his time in the field. The participants' focus on racism may illustrate that many of the participants were willing to abdicate power to teachers when issues pertaining to directing their own destiny arose in the educational setting. I noted that few students spoke about their own experiences with racist teachers but eagerly shared the racist experiences of other Black students. These participants may be projecting their own experiences onto histories that concern others, rather than themselves. In addition, participants appeared to give teachers control over their destiny, instead of accepting responsibility for their own fate. Nevertheless, racism still exists in the classroom, and students continue to have strong opinions about this issue.

Limitations of the Study

This study has a number of limitations that are important to discuss. First, the study focused on middle school students' experiences. These findings may therefore not transfer to elementary school students, high school students, or other student populations. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the participants' elementary school experiences were also examined during data collection.

Second, the participants were selected from a school system in rural central Virginia. The findings may therefore not be relevant to other regions of the United States or to urban or suburban school systems. The convenience sample that was used in this study was small, which is characteristic of most qualitative research. The transferability of these findings is largely a judgment that is made by the reader.

Third, all the participants were Black middle school students. It is therefore unclear to what extent these findings are generalizable to middle school students from other ethnic–racial groups. A study of Hispanic, Asian, or Native American students may provide further insight into minority students' experiences of learning and achievement and the role that teachers play in these phenomena.

Fourth, all of the participants were public school students. Their experiences may therefore not be reflective of the experiences of middle school students who are enrolled in various types of private school. Students who are in private school settings may have different experiences of interacting with other students, interacting with teachers, and learning and achievement.

Fifth, all the participants' teachers were White. The degree of transferability of the findings to other middle school students whose teachers are from other ethnic–racial groups is therefore unclear. Teachers from other ethnic–racial groups may interact differently with Black students than did the White teachers in this study. Similarly, Black students may respond differently to teachers from other ethnic–racial groups.

Sixth, I am a 52-year-old man and the principal of a middle school. Participants were aware that I was an educator and, more precisely, a school administrator. This significant difference in our ages and status shaped the data that were collected. A power differential was present during the data collection, and participants may therefore have altered their responses (e.g., self-censoring, providing additional self-disclosure) because of my formal position. A

researcher whose age was closer to that of the participants, or a researcher who was not an administrator (or otherwise affiliated with the school system), may have been able to establish a greater level of rapport with the participants, establish a different kind of researcher–participant relationship, and collect different data.

Seventh, as a Black researcher, I developed a relationship with each of the participants that may have differed, in important ways, from the relationship that a researcher from another ethnic–racial group may have developed with them. As a result, another researcher may have collected different data. Participants may have been more willing to disclose some aspects of their experiences, and less willing to disclose other aspects of their experiences, with me than with another researcher.

Eighth, during classroom observations, I used passive participation (Spradley, 1980) in that I was present in the setting but did not participate in classroom activities. The use of active participation (Spradley, 1980), which involves interacting with students and their teachers, would have provided other types of insight into the investigated phenomenon. More specifically, active participation would have allowed me to gain greater insight into participants' thoughts, feelings, and motivations and the meaning that they assign to their own actions and those of others.

Finally, as a novice interviewer, I tended to comment frequently during the first several interviews that I conducted with participants. With time, however, I became more proficient at drawing out the participant and questioning and probing more effectively.

Implications for Further Research and Practice

While this study of Black students' middle school experiences contributes to the existing literature, further study is warranted. Areas for future research could include developmental studies in K–12 education, race–ethnicity and socioeconomic concerns, and suggestions for a mixed methods approach. Conclusions determined that educational experiences, instructional time, motivation, trust, and racism influence current practices within school classrooms.

Developmental Studies

Educational levels that go beyond the middle school experience need to be considered. As education is, for the most part, a continuum within a child's experiences, examining experiences that occurred in their elementary and high school years could provide further insight to previously conducted research.

Elementary students. A relationship between early positive teacher expectations and student academic achievement, according to McKown and Weinstein (2008), has been noted in several research studies. Teachers gave higher quality instruction to students for whom they had higher expectations. The findings of this study agree with the suggestion that students work harder for teachers who expect quality work. Henfield, Moore, and Owens (2008) advocated that teachers avoid offering the same services to all students but create a classroom atmosphere in which the needs of Black students are respected and valued. Further research should be conducted in this area because providing high expectations for Black students in the early years is essential for later student achievement (Ferguson, 2003). E. B. Brown and Medway (2007) suggested that teachers should insist that all children can learn and that it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure that this occurs.

High school students. Recent findings indicate that Black high school students are influenced by their school environment and by positive teacher attitudes and expectations toward students (Stewart, 2007). These findings corroborate with my research, which suggests that teacher expectations are vital to Black student achievement. Furthermore, Black students found that they were supported less by White teachers and given lower grades. Schmidt and Shernoff (2008) found that the potential grading bias was higher for Black students than for White students. My study shows similar biases, which resulted in students experiencing a lack in their motivation to learn, and ultimately hindering their relationship with their teachers. Research by Rodriguez (2008) suggested that the recognition of a student's personal issues transmits to the student that the teacher recognizes the student's existence. This recognition could lead to greater student motivation. Black students desire a close relationship with their teachers. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) expressed that Black students face a discipline gap in schools in which they mistrust teachers because many educators have a history of unfair treatment of Black students. This mistrust signals a need to examine positive teacher–student relationship research at the high school level and the impact it may have on the high dropout rates of Black students.

Race–Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status

Race–ethnicity. This study demonstrates that teachers give students of other races more instructional time and better instruction than Black students. McKown and Weinstein (2008) purported that teacher expectations for Hispanic students are below teacher expectations for White students, while teacher expectations for Asian students are equal to those for White

students. Research is needed to determine the factors for this uneven level of teacher expectations. Student–teacher relationships greatly impact students of color, and the inequities that these students face in society are often repeated in schools (Rodriguez, 2008). Further quantitative research is needed to examine the relationship between race–ethnicity and student motivation. The relationship between student achievement and student–teacher relationships presents a paradox because research has proposed that students of color and Black students are more engaged academically in school than White students (Schmidt & Shernoff, 2008). In terms of future qualitative research, a study of Hispanic, Asian, or Native American students may provide further insight into students' experiences of learning and achievement and the role that teachers play in these phenomena.

Socioeconomic status. E. B. Brown and Medway (2007) have suggested that teachers base student expectations on student income and race. Students from low-socioeconomic homes believe that they have more barriers to quality education than wealthier students (Graham & Taylor, 2007). The fact that students feel that these barriers exist is consistent with my findings. Black students expressed that teachers spent less instructional time with them as compared to their White counterparts. Cooper and Doubek (2007) found that teachers of low-socioeconomic students need to monitor the instructional time they spend with students to increase students' academic progress. Research is needed in this area to discover why some Black students indicate that they feel this way. Why students continue to feel this way, and how these feelings positively or negatively impact their academic success (such as discipline or racial concerns), needs further study.

Suggestions for Mixed Methods

Booker (2006) indicated that there has been little mixed methodological research that examines Black students' feelings about school and academic progress. A mixed methods approach could give researchers an opportunity to explore a wealth of questions about students' emotions and experiences, while reinforcing findings with statistical data. This study could be replicated using the interview protocol along with quantitative data from established databases such as the National Educational Longitudinal Study and the Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development. Combining students' feelings of their educational experiences with statistical data may yield findings that go beyond findings in this study and the existing literature.

Implications for Further Practice

Implications for further practice in relation to Black students' academic success are discussed accordingly: educational experiences, instructional time, student motivation, trust, and racism. The last section focuses on teacher professional development as it pertains to teacher characteristics. Understanding these practices may provide educators with more appropriate or accurate ways to successfully educate Black students.

Educational experiences. Carter (2008) found that there is a positive relationship between race, school behaviors, and Black student achievement. Students desire to achieve academically regardless of their race and in spite of the fact that they face barriers in educational institutions. Many Black students feel that they are unable to achieve academic success without being a victim of institutionalized barriers (Hudley & Irving, 2008). Students want positive relationships with teachers, while recognizing their Black identity. They desire mentorship relationships with teachers, knowledge of the teachers' past experiences, and high teacher expectations. E. B. Brown and Medway (2007), Henfield et al. (2008), and McKown and Weinstein (2008) agreed that teacher–student relationships and high teacher expectations are essential to Black student success. Further research is needed to examine the effect of student educational experiences on Black student achievement.

Instructional time. Black students express a desire to be recognized by teachers and to spend a large quantity of instructional time with them (Rodriguez, 2008). Students experience a desire to converse with teachers about personal issues, to spend extra time with teachers who are willing to remediate lessons, and to avoid being ignored while White students monopolize teacher time. Cooper and Doubek (2007) purported that teachers could create successful climates for Black students by creating more opportunities to spend time with them. Examples of good time quantity climates could include teachers who display caring and loving attitudes, are welcoming, are understanding, and speak to students about their futures. Students want to talk to teachers, have good relationships with teachers, be engaged personally with teachers, and be acknowledged by teachers (Rodriguez, 2008). While Booker (2006) agreed with the aforementioned studies, he further indicated that teacher–student relationships encourage students to learn by giving them a sense of school belonging. Examining how quantity of time influences Black students' motivation to learn would add greatly to the educational knowledge base.

Student motivation. This study concludes that Black students are motivated by teachers who hold high expectations, discuss personal issues with students, and give students advanced and challenging content. McKown and Weinstein (2008) supported the idea that high teacher expectations motivate students to learn, and E. B. Brown and Medway (2007) supported these findings by suggesting that Black students are motivated to learn in classes in which teachers hold high expectations for all students.

Students are motivated to learn when they receive positive messages from teachers about themselves and when they attempt to excel academically because they feel that they have the ability to impact their own lives (Cogburn, Neblett, Philip, & Sellers, 2006). Haynes's (2008) research explained that Black students are motivated to learn when teachers build relationships with students by allowing them to converse with them about their families, communities, and experiences. Findings from my study are consistent with the findings of these researchers, as students found that they worked harder for teachers who gave them positive encouragement, even when they did not enjoy the subject matter.

Barr and Parrett (2007) and Marzano et al. (2001) found that Black students are motivated to learn when they are given research-based strategies that promote student engagement. Examples of these strategies include, but are not limited to, manipulatives or other hands-on activities. Future research concerning teacher characteristics that motivate students might explore which factors have the greatest impact on student achievement.

Student trust. Early detection of Black students' mistrust of teachers is essential in preventing future mistrust within their educational careers (Hudley & Irving, 2008). Findings from my study agree, as many students expressed that they formed their opinions about trusting teachers at an early age. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) found that one predictor of Black students' ability to trust teachers is how teachers demonstrate teacher caring. The capability to care is not always an apparent skill in teaching. Elias and Haynes (2008) proposed that school officials who attempt to intervene on behalf of Black students should focus more on teacher support of students. Administrators could accomplish better communication and trusting relationships between teachers and students by providing them with these skills through professional development opportunities (further discussed in a following section). Students also did not trust teachers who disciplined them disproportionally to White students. Inequality in how discipline is implemented was supported by Stevenson (2008), who indicated that Black

students are disproportionally disciplined and suspended by school systems. Exploring factors that impact Black student distrust in early years might yield significant data in regard to increasing trust in classrooms. Students most preferred teachers were caring teachers whom they could trust.

Racism. Racism still exists in our classrooms. Black students consistently experienced racist practices in the classroom that manifested themselves in unfair practices. Jost, Jost, and Whitfield (2005) found that most White teachers ignore racial injustice in the classroom and bring many racially stereotyped thoughts and practices into their classrooms. This propensity toward racism concurs with my findings, which suggest that teachers ignore racist practices and even evoke them when it pertains to student bathroom privileges. Dee (2004) found that Black students face less racism and academic gain over a period of time when taught by a Black teacher. Whether Black students benefit more from having a Black teacher may require future research.

Professional Development

This study has many implications for teacher training and future professional development. Teacher preparation training should systematically be taught in schools centering on teaching Black students with dignity and by employing instructional practices that focus on Black culture (and the cultures of other minorities; E. B. Brown & Medway, 2007; Payne, 2006). Many students experience negative confrontations with teachers. When the roots of these confrontations remain unresolved, Black students (as do students of other races) are likely discouraged, which is expressed in a lack of motivation in class or in trust for their teachers. Training programs for educators might address the bases of these institutionalized biases within our current educational system (Jost et al., 2005) such that steps toward resolving them can be taken.

As previously stated in this chapter, a lack of time capital was related to preventing teachers and students from developing positive educational experiences, promoting students' motivation to learn, and establishing trust with one another. The importance of teachers' use of quantity of time cannot be overlooked as it can be directly linked to ameliorating the aforementioned concerns. While the primary burden falls on administrators and teachers to improve and increase the quantity of instructional time spent with their students, some suggest

that teachers could promote programs to encourage students to become change agents for themselves (Hudley & Irving, 2008).

Equally as important as the issue of time capital, racism and racial concerns between teachers and students must also be addressed through professional development opportunities for teachers. Educators should strategically obtain knowledge to eliminate the causes of racism (Cross, 2009). In many instances, racist acts have been pervasive in counteracting positive relationships in student–teacher trust and motivation. Administrators need to teach educators racial sensitivity to avoid negative circumstances or, in some cases, benign neglect, which simply ignores that any problem, such as racism, exists. There is a great need for school administrators to utilize research-based principles with their staff (Barr & Parrett, 2007). On the basis of this study, it is recommended that teachers not be allowed to use the amount of work completed by a student to determine bathroom privileges, nor should race–ethnicity determine the amount of time students are given for classroom instruction, as was perceived to be the case by some participants in my study. Finally, professional development should attempt to create a sense of self-worth among Black students to instill a greater appreciation of self-image and, ultimately, academic success.

Conclusion

The Black–White achievement gap continues to exist, although it appears to be decreasing over time (Viadero, 2008). Black students continue to struggle economically because they are not receiving an adequate education (Goldsmith, 2004). Although factors such as family structure and socioeconomic status influence this disparity, factors such as students' positive experiences with teachers and educational experiences of encouragement, racism, trust, and instructional time also impact Black students' motivation to succeed academically.

I examined 8 Black middle school students' experiences of various teacher characteristics that were influential in their learning achievement, including trust, encouragement, and expectations. The participants were motivated to learn by teachers who shared instructional and personal time, spoke positively to them about their future, told them about their educational experiences, and taught them with a caring attitude. The participants were not motivated by teachers who were viewed as racist, yelled at them, refused to spend instructional time assisting them, or displayed an attitude of apathy.

The participants faced many challenges in the classroom. They and their Black classmates were denied bathroom privileges, separated from Whites in class, treated as if they were "invisible," and allowed to feel like second-class citizens. The participants viewed these disparate actions as racist and indicated that racism was also prevalent in teacher grading practices.

At the time of this study, the debate continues as to whether the Black–White achievement gap can be attributed to culture, race, or both. For example, Cooper and Doubek (2007) suggested that professional development for teachers in reading would also give Black students a better opportunity to close the immense reading gap with White students. Yet the findings of this study suggest that these Black students are motivated to learn by teachers whom they can trust, teachers who provide encouragement, and teachers who have high expectations. The findings suggest that professional development that centers on the affective and interpersonal academic needs of Black students may also be important in closing the achievement gap. Lewis (2003) indicated that the differentiation of race is an institutional phenomenon and that students do not enter school with ideas of a divisive sense of racial identity. Lewis argued that race and racism are learned and that they are promulgated in schools and embedded in the ways that teachers instruct and behave. Thus educators may need to revisit and change established race-promulgating practices in educational institutions. An absence of Black voices is also apparent in the literature, particularly the voices of Black students. This study is one effort to represent these students' perspectives; however, it is clear that more of these voices need to be heard if we are to achieve greater insight into Black students' educational experiences and their motivation to learn.

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APPENDIX A

CODES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CATEGORIES

Category/code	Student	Interview
Elementary school experiences		
Gossip	F4	1
no motivating teachers right now	M3	1
after-school activities	F2	1
field trips	F4	2
fun stuff	F4	1
younger when liked school	F3	1
ask other students for help	F4	1
be good	F3	1
be serious	F4	1
Black and White kids sit in different parts of room	F4	1
Black and White kids sit in different parts of room	F2	1
Black and White kids sit in different parts of room	F1	1
Black and White kids sit in different parts of room	M3	1
Black kids are quiet, White kids are noisy	M3	1
Black students sit in front of bus	F1	1
Care	F1	2
clown, but works hard	F1	1
come to work	F1	1
deserve better grades	F1	2
didn't notice any teacher unfairness	F1	1
do work	F1	1
do work	F1	1
do work always	F1	1
doesn't encourage goof-offs	M1	1
doesn't work with other students who goof off	F4	3
doesn't matter if teacher cares	M4	2
don't care when teacher doesn't	M3	1
don't get in trouble	F4	1
don't say anything	F2	1
don't trust teachers	F4	2
excited about good class	F1	2
feel good	M4	1
feel good	M1	1
figure out reason for not passing	F3	1
go forward	F2	2
good attitude	M4	2
got mad and worked harder	M1	1
have fun	F4	1
help boys open up	M1	1
ignore racist teachers	F1	1

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
ignore teacher when they put students down	F1	1
ignore teachers having a bad day	M1	1
ignore trouble	F2	1
ignores favoritism	F2	2
know when your teacher is picking on you b/c of color	M1	2
knows when to play and when to work	M1	1
learn better	F4	1
listen to teacher	F3	1
not give someone a reason to fail me	M1	1
Organized	M2	1
other students don't care	M1	1
other students don't care	M1	2
other students get mad without help	M1	2
other students might have different experiences	F1	1
pay attention	M1	1
pick on teachers until they loosen up	M1	1
respect teachers	M1	1
say good things about teacher	F1	2
should forgive	F1	2
show that they care	M1	2
some friends get in trouble	M4	1
some keep talking	F2	2
some students are lazy	F3	2
some students come to school to play, talk, fight	M2	1
some students skip class so won't get in more trouble	F2	2
some students stay out of classes they don't like	M1	1
some talk back	F4	1
some work hard	F1	1
still works even when angry	M4	1
students are mean when teachers are mean	F1	2
talk about teacher	M1	1
talk to friend about teachers	M1	1
talk to friend about teachers	M1	1
talk to friends about good vs. bad teachers	M4	1
talk to teacher	M4	2
talk to teacher same way teacher talks to them	M1	1
talk to teachers	F2	2
talks with teachers	F1	2
teachers keep pushing students then finally send them out	M1	1
try best	F3	2
try harder	F1	1
Work	M4	1
work better relaxed	M4	2

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
other students notice different treatment, too	F4	3
Playground	M1	3
science teacher cares	F2	1
Sleeping	F4	1
some good, some bad teachers	M1	3
some good, some bad teachers	F4	1
some students care, some don't	F4	2
Talked	F4	3
teacher wanted students to learn	F1	3
teachers push	F1	3
teachers were encouraging	F4	1
view of Black students depends on teacher background	M1	3
White kids think it's OK to be racist	F4	1
Whites aren't discriminated against	F4	2
Instructional environment		
treat all same	M2	2
treat all the same	F4	2
treat everyone the same	F4	2
treat everyone the same	M2	2
treat students nice	M2	2
Trusting	F3	2
Trusting	F3	2
trying to help students	F4	2
Understanding	F2	2
want to be treated like everyone else	F4	2
what works, what doesn't	F2	2
work on fun stuff	F1	3
don't fuss at students	M3	2
don't assign seats	F1	3
don't get an attitude	M3	2
don't segregate class	M4	2
makes students feel dumb	M3	2
Worked	M1	2
Mean	F1	3
Playful	M3	2
Activities	M1	2
Activities	F1	3
add loving support for students w/o supportive parents	F1	3
be equal	M3	2
be helpful	M3	2
be more open	M1	2
be serious with work	F1	2
Black students need more encouragement	M4	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
break it down	F1	2
build student confidence	F1	2
can talk about anything	M1	1
Care	M1	1
class is working	M1	1
do fun stuff	F4	2
don't be racist	M4	1
don't fuss at students	F4	1
don't fuss for dumb things	F3	1
don't give Black students a hard time or they won't work	F2	1
don't have an attitude with Black students	F2	3
don't ignore	F2	3
don't put down	M4	2
don't yell at students	F2	1
Encourage	F2	3
Encourage	M1	2
Encourage	F4	1
Encourage	F2	1
encourage black students more	M2	1
Encouraging	M4	2
Encouraging	F2	1
Encouraging	M2	2
equal not picked on	M1	2
focus on kids who want to learn	M1	2
force students to work	M3	2
Fun	F2	2
Fun	F1	3
fun stuff	F3	1
Future	F2	1
Games	F2	2
give more examples	M4	2
group activities	M4	2
hands-on stuff	M1	1
have fun with	M3	2
help go to college	M2	2
help improve grades	M1	2
help out	F4	1
help students that do bad	F2	2
help with work	F1	2
judge by who you are	M4	2
lab work	F2	1
look to future	M4	1
more review for tests	M4	1

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
Motivate	M1	3
Motivate	M4	2
Motivating	F2	2
Motivating	M4	1
need more encouragement	M1	2
Nice	F4	1
Nice	F2	2
no reverse discrimination	F2	2
no special treatment	F2	3
no special treatment	F3	3
not bored	F2	2
not bored	M3	2
not mean	F2	1
not racist	M2	1
push you to work hard	M3	2
Respect	M3	2
Respect	M1	1
Respect	M2	2
respect students	M2	1
Respectful	F4	1
student enjoys working	M1	1
take time	M1	1
Talk	F2	1
talk to students	M2	2
teach their very best	M4	2
teacher encourages dreams	F4	3
teacher should review more	F4	1
teachers care	M1	1
teachers reward behavior	M4	2
teachers s/b glad to see you	M4	1
teachers who push	M3	2
tell teacher needs	F4	1
time flies	F2	1
treat all the same	M1	2
Student motivation		
Courage	M2	2
Friends	M1	2
Games	M4	2
Grandpa	F3	1
Honest	M1	2
Mother	F1	3
Parents	M4	1
Sister	M3	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
Support	F4	2
Support	F2	2
work with friends	F2	3
Friends	M1	3
friends get in trouble when act up	F3	2
some friends work hard, some don't	M1	1
Friends	M3	1
half teacher, half mom	F2	3
Parent	M1	3
Atmosphere	M1	3
can go places when someone helps you	M4	1
Candy	M4	1
Candy	M1	2
Care	F2	1
caring teachers	F4	3
college scholarship	F2	1
college/professional	M3	1
don't want to get sent to the school where bad kids are	F1	3
Encourage	F2	1
Encourage	F4	3
Encouragement	M1	3
encouragement makes you try harder	M3	1
Encouraging	F4	1
Faith	F3	1
Family	F2	1
Food	F2	1
Friends	F2	1
Friends	M3	1
Friends	F4	1
fun in class	F1	3
fun stuff	M2	1
Girls	F2	1
go to college	F2	1
go to college	M2	1
going to camp	M2	1
going to college	M2	2
good grades = no punishment	F2	1
good teachers	M1	3
grades motivate students to work harder	F2	1
grades motivated by sports eligibility	M3	1
Grandfather	F4	1
Grandpa	F2	1
guidance from grandfather	M2	2

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
high effort	M3	1
high expectations	M1	3
high expectations	M1	3
History	F3	2
Humor	F3	1
if don't work you will fail	F2	1
in my blood	M2	1
Joke	F2	1
keeps kids out of trouble	F1	3
Love	F1	3
make parent happy	M1	3
Math	F3	1
Mom	F1	2
Mom	F1	2
Mom	M3	2
Mom	F3	1
Mom	F1	3
Mom	F3	2
more responsibility	F4	3
play games to study	F2	3
positive motivation from teacher to get good grades	F1	2
principal helps put	F1	3
promotion to next grade	F4	3
recess/socialization	F1	3
Rewards	M1	2
Rewards	F4	3
Rewards	F3	2
Rewards	M1	3
school helps you be successful	F4	2
schoolwork is important	M4	3
share what is on your mind (w/ teacher)	M4	3
some teachers	M4	3
Sports	F4	3
Sports	F2	2
student government	M4	2
teacher cares	M2	3
teacher encouragement	F1	3
teacher encouragement	F1	3
teacher expects you to go somewhere	M1	2
teacher influence	M4	2
teacher pushing you	F1	3
Teachers	F1	2
Teachers	M1	1

Category/code	Student	Interview
tell doing good work	M1	2
through fun stuff	M1	3
trustworthy teacher	F3	2
wants to do best	F1	2
when teachers want you to do better	F1	2
work hard for good teacher	F2	2
work harder	M1	2
work to your potential	F4	3
Yelling	M1	2
getting put down	F2	3
make you feel bad	M1	2
students don't pay attention	M1	2
students fault	M1	2
students fault	F1	1
students' not learning	F1	1
teacher sometimes	M1	2
when not teaching	M4	2
whole class failed	M1	2
could be no connection between student and teacher	F4	2
expectations are different	M3	2
failure is fault of student	M1	2
fault of student not doing his or her work	F1	2
good vibes	M1	2
goofing off	M4	2
kids approach things differently	F1	2
not teacher's fault	M1	2
not working hard	F1	3
poor studying	F1	1
student not asking for help	F3	2
student not trying	M1	3
student's fault	M4	3
students not listening	M1	3
built with good teacher	M1	3
good grades = future	F2	2
Friends	M1	2
Grandpa	F1	3
Mom	M1	2
all want you to do your best	F1	3
called student dumb	F4	3
can talk about anything	F2	2
can talk about other stuff	F2	2
Care	F3	2
do what they say	F1	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
Encourage	F4	3
Encourage	F4	3
Encourage	M3	2
Encouraging	F3	2
Encouraging	F1	2
Encouragement	F1	3
Encouragement	F1	2
ensure understanding	F1	2
extra work	F1	2
Friendly	M1	2
Friendly	M1	2
fun stuff	F1	2
furthers your understanding	F3	2
games (trash ball)	M4	3
get good grades	M1	3
give notes	F3	1
gives hints	F3	2
good grades lead to good life	F1	3
help student pay attention	M3	2
help study	M2	3
help you understand	F4	3
help you understand	M4	3
Helpful	M1	2
helps a lot	M1	2
helps students improve	F3	2
helps with tests	F2	3
helps with work	M3	2
Hugging	F2	3
Humor	M3	2
Humor	M2	2
individual attention	F2	1
interactive teaching style	F1	1
Jokes	M3	1
make up work	M3	2
make up work	F1	2
Personal	M1	1
push you hard	M1	1
relate to what doing	M1	3
review questions	F1	2
Rewards	F1	2
same for everyone	M1	2
same to White as Black	M1	2
say good luck	M3	1

Category/code	Student	Interview
say should try harder	M4	1
second chances	M1	2
send for guidance	M3	2
sit down with students	M3	1
work with you on problems	M3	1
writes notes down	M1	1
Young	M1	2
assigning written work all the time	M1	1
Boring	F3	2
can't use the bathroom	F3	1
class is like jail	M4	2
different standards	F1	2
different standards	M2	1
don't allow students to do stuff	F1	2
ask about future	F1	2
ask how doing	M1	2
ask if you need help	M1	1
ask nicely	M4	2
be your best	M1	2
being hard	M1	2
Black teachers care more	M1	2
both races were helpful	M1	2
call teachers outside of school	M3	1
Calm	M3	1
can be trusted	F1	2
can get extra help and time	M3	1
can talk about anything	M3	1
can talk about anything	F1	2
can talk with them in class	M1	2
can teach well	F1	1
can trust them	F1	2
Candy	M3	2
Care	F3	1
Care	F1	1
Care	M1	3
care about Black students	M2	3
care for all students they respect regardless of color	M4	1
care when they think about you	F2	1
Encourage	F1	2
Encourage	M3	2
Encourage	F3	1
Encourage	M3	1
Encourage	M3	2

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
Encourage	M3	2
Encourage	M3	2
Encourage	M3	1
Encourage	F1	1
Encourage	F1	2
encourages Black kids	M3	1
Encouraging	F1	2
Encouraging	M4	2
Encouraging	M1	1
Encouraging	M3	1
Encouraging	F1	2
Encouraging	F1	2
Encouraging	M2	2
Enthusiastic	F3	2
equal with everyone	M2	1
even when class is crazy teacher still helps	M1	2
hands-on activities	M4	1
Hard	M3	2
hard on you	M1	3
hard on you for real stuff	M1	1
have a good attitude	M1	2
have fun	M1	2
have influenced a lot	F1	1
Help	M1	1
Help	M1	2
help you	M3	2
help a lot	M1	2
help calm down bad temper	M3	2
help in class	M3	2
help learn	M4	1
help stay out of trouble	M3	1
help w/ bad days	M1	3
help when miss work	M1	3
help with stuff	M1	2
help with stuff	M1	3
help with temper	M1	3
help with work	M1	1
help you	M1	1
help you	M3	1
Helped	M1	3
helped a lot	M1	1
helped with math	M1	1
helped with work	M3	1

Category/code	Student	Interview
Helpful	M1	3
Helpful	M3	1
Helpful	M1	2
helpful in life	M1	1
Helping	M1	1
Helping	M1	2
Helps	M1	3
helps you	F3	2
high expectations	F3	1
Honest	M2	2
Honest	M2	2
Honest	M3	1
interactive learning	M2	2
job to teach us	M3	1
Joke	F4	2
Joke	M4	2
joke around—some can some can't	F3	2
keep pushing	F4	2
keep secrets	M2	2
keep student confidence	F3	2
keep you out of trouble	M4	2
knew family	M1	3
know I care	M2	1
know what need	M3	2
know what you are doing	F4	2
learn	M2	2
learn in class	M3	2
let students have some freedom	M1	1
lets work	M1	1
lots to do	M1	2
make sure do everything	M4	1
make sure we know stuff	M4	2
makes us work harder	M2	2
met with mother	M3	2
more personable out of class	F4	3
more specific	M2	2
more specific	F2	3
Motivate	F1	3
Motivate	M3	2
Motivate	F4	2
Motivating	M1	2
Motivate	M4	1
move from one topic to the next	F4	2

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
Nice	F1	1
Nice	M1	1
Nice	F4	2
Nice	M2	2
Nice	M4	2
Nice	M3	2
Nice	M4	2
Nice	F1	2
Nice	M2	2
no hiding things	M1	2
no preconceived notions	M2	2
no racism	M3	2
no surprises	F3	2
not bored	M2	2
not hard on you	M2	2
not mean	F4	1
not picking	M4	3
not play around	F1	3
offer extra help	M4	2
offer extra help	M4	2
offer help	M4	2
OK to be written up if teacher knows you	M4	2
pay attention	M4	3
pay attention in class	M3	2
Personal	F4	2
Personality	F3	2
Personality	F2	2
personality good	F2	2
politely ask not to do something	M4	1
positive influence	M4	2
positive motivation from teacher to get good grades	M4	2
Praise	M3	2
Privacy	F4	2
push you	F4	2
push you hard	F2	2
pushed hard	F2	1
pushed to do homework	F4	2
put effort into work	M2	2
really care	M2	2
talk about anything	M3	2
talk about grades	M3	2
talk about other stuff	M4	2
talk about problems	F3	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
talk about stuff beyond class work	M2	2
talk about teacher's friends	M2	3
talk things through	F2	2
talk to students	M4	2
talk to students out of class	F2	2
talk to teacher	M1	2
talk to you	M3	1
talk with teacher	F2	2
tall = trust	F4	1
teach about life	M3	1
teach me	F3	2
teach more	M1	1
teach us	M4	1
teach well	F4	1
teach you new things	F4	1
teacher talks to you	F4	1
teachers are perfect	M1	2
teachers willing to help	F4	2
teaches so can understand	M3	2
Teaching	F2	2
teaching	F3	2
teaching style	F4	1
tell stories about own (teacher's) life	M1	1
tell student to get to work	M1	1
tell to stop talking	M1	2
telling to do stuff	M3	2
telling what to do	M2	2
tell you they want you to pass	F2	2
they care	F4	1
they care	M2	2
threaten to call mom	M2	2
time to study	F4	1
treat everyone the same	F3	1
treated all students as equals	F3	1
treated everyone the same	M1	2
treated you well	F3	2
treats other Black kids well	F3	1
tries to make it easy	F3	2
don't understand teaching	F2	1
Favoritism	M4	2
fuss at you for dumb stuff	M4	2
Fussing	M4	2
hold grudges	M2	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
if the teacher doesn't care, they (student) don't care	M4	1
ignores Black and White students	M2	2
just book work	F4	2
kind of helping but not really, didn't care	F3	1
let you get bad grades	M3	2
low expectation	F3	2
low trust	M2	2
Mean	F3	2
misunderstanding student background	F3	2
no belief in students	M2	2
no chances for do-over	F2	1
no one listens	F4	2
not always fair	M2	2
not answer questions	M2	2
not caring	M2	2
not focused, worried	M2	2
not OK to be written up if teacher doesn't know you	M3	2
not pushing	F2	1
not sharing	M2	1
only a few hate Blacks	M2	3
Picking	F3	2
put down students	M2	1
quiet all the time	F1	2
Racist	M1	1
Racist	F2	2
Racist	F4	3
Sarcasm	F4	2
some can teach but can't be trusted	M2	1
some like Black students, some hate them	F2	2
some were racist	M2	2
sometimes bad attitude	M1	2
sometimes doesn't want to help Black students	F1	2
spend more time with White kids	F1	2
stuck up	F1	2
talk about you	F2	2
treat some kids better than others	F3	2
unhelpful teachers sometimes White, sometimes Black	M4	1
when need extra help, teacher won't help	M3	2
when student needs help and teacher doesn't see or won't help	M4	2
won't take extra time	M2	2
Worksheets	F3	2
write up Black kids, but not White	M2	2
Yell	M4	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
yell a lot	M4	1
yelled all the time	M2	2
yelled at everyone the same	F4	3
don't care	F4	1
don't care about students, then students don't work	F4	1
don't do anything	F3	1
don't know the problems	M1	2
fuss at Black students, not White	M3	2
give warnings	F2	1
making you suffer	F2	2
negative enforcement	F4	2
no control of class	M3	2
not letting you use bathroom	M2	2
not rushing students	M2	2
quick to write up	F4	1
Racist	F4	2
send to office	F1	1
should be balanced work	M4	2
single out students	M4	2
some racist	M1	2
Strict	M4	2
telling to do stuff	M3	2
toss you out for talking to your friends	F1	1
won't let you make up missed work from absence	M4	1
won't help	F3	2
write up just because (teacher) in a bad mood	F1	1
write you up	M1	1
Yelling	M1	2
act good	M4	1
after-school help	F4	2
all teachers care if you pass	F3	2
all teachers spend extra time	F3	2
all treated the same	M2	2
all want you to do your best	M2	2
always be available	M1	1
answer questions	M1	1
Student trust		
take time	M1	1
Talk	M2	2
talk about own youth	M4	1
talk about self	M1	1
talk about things	M1	1
talk about yourself	M2	1

Category/code	Student	Interview
talk about future	M2	2
talk to you	M3	2
talk to you more	M3	2
teacher will let you know when to work	M3	2
treat you smart	M1	1
Trust	F2	1
trusting behavior	M2	1
trusting personality	M2	2
try your best	F1	2
work hard	M3	1
work together	F3	2
don't care	M2	2
don't care about students, then students don't work	M4	2
Cares	F1	2
cares about you	F4	2
cares about you	F1	2
cares about you	M1	2
Caring	M4	1
Caring	M2	1
Caring	M2	1
class is interactive when teacher encourages	F3	2
College	M2	2
come talk to you	F2	2
compliment students	F4	3
Confidentiality	F1	2
do everything right	F1	2
do exciting things	F1	2
do homework with you	F4	1
do stuff other than read out of book	F4	2
do your best	F4	2
doesn't yell	F4	2
don't play in class	F3	2
don't repeat things	M2	2
don't talk to Black kids in a bad way	M2	2
Trust	M2	2
Trust	M3	2
Trust	M3	2
Trust	M2	2
Trust	F2	1
trust Black teachers and other teachers	F4	1
Trusting	F4	1
Trustworthy	F3	2
Trustworthy	F4	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
Trustworthy	M4	1
try best to do work	M2	2
try to help	F3	2
try to teach	F3	2
Typical	F4	1
Understanding	F4	2
Understanding	F4	2
Understanding	M2	2
want a teacher to be hard	M2	2
want you to do good	M2	2
wants students to succeed	M2	2
wants to help	M2	2
Work	M2	1
Work	M2	1
work hard	M2	2
work in groups	M1	2
work with students	M2	1
works with class	M2	2
writes notes down	F4	1
ask how doing	F4	1
be nice	F2	1
Bubbly	F4	2
builds trust	F4	2
can talk to	M3	2
Care	F4	1
Care	M3	2
check on work	M3	2
class activities	M1	2
did not notice any racism	M3	2
don't take bad day out on other	F2	2
Enthusiastic	F3	1
excited about content	F4	2
Experiments	M2	2
extra help	F2	2
extra help	F3	2
Fun	M3	1
get students excited	F4	2
group work	F4	1
group work	F3	2
have fun	F3	2
help Black students	M3	2
just helps	M1	2
makes you want to learn	F3	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
Movies	M3	2
Movies	M3	2
open	M4	2
Outgoing	M4	2
Personable	M4	2
Personality	M3	2
Quizzes	M3	2
quizzes for review	M2	2
respect students	M2	1
Review	M4	1
share experiences	F4	2
share personal experience	M3	2
Sharing	M3	2
show cares	M2	1
shows care	M3	2
talk to students	F3	2
talk to teacher	M3	2
Trust	M3	2
Tutor	F3	1
wants students to learn	M3	2
act differently toward Black and White students	M2	2
ask for help and not get it	M4	2
asked to be quiet when others aren't	F1	2
bad attitude	M1	1
Boring	M1	2
call on White students first	M3	1
can't depend on any of them	F3	2
didn't learn in some classes	M3	2
didn't review	M4	2
differences between all kids, not just Black and White	F1	2
does not ask Black students to do things	F1	2
don't teach well	M1	2
don't care	M3	2
don't care if you pass	F3	1
don't learn	F3	1
don't talk with you	F1	1
don't teach enough	F1	1
don't think kids are working hard	F1	2
Fairness	F2	2
find out problem	M4	2
everyone should trust teacher	F3	2
expect best from student	F4	2
expect same for everyone regardless of race	F2	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
expect to work a lot	M4	1
expect you to work hard	M4	1
explain in detail	F2	2
explained stuff	M2	2
explained stuff	M2	2
Explains	F2	2
extra help	M4	1
Fair	F2	2
Fair	F2	1
Fair	F2	1
Firm	F2	2
flexibility in class	F2	2
free time	F2	2
friend of family	F2	2
Fun	F2	2
Fun	F2	1
fun activities	F2	1
fun and learn at the same time	F2	1
fun stuff	F2	2
gave helpful hints	F2	1
get to know you	F2	1
get to know you	F2	1
give things to help students	F2	2
give chance to make up	F2	1
give chances	F2	1
give chances	F2	2
give chances	F2	2
give examples	F2	1
give time to make up work	F2	2
gives chances	F2	2
go back and talk to	F2	1
go through step by step	F2	2
goes over stuff	F2	2
Good	F2	2
Good	F2	1
Good	F2	2
good spirited	F2	2
good teacher	F2	2
good teachers	F2	2
group work	F2	1
like own child	F2	2
like teaching style	F2	2
Listens	F2	2

Category/code	Student	Interview
really care	F2	2
Respect	F2	2
Respectful	F2	2
Respectful	F2	2
Respectful	F2	1
Respectful	F2	2
Respectful	F2	1
Respectful	F2	2
Review	F2	3
Review	F2	3
Reviews	M4	2
reviews for tests	F3	1
Rewards	F2	1
reword questions you don't understand	F4	2
same toward White as Black	F4	2
science teachers have helped	F4	1
send to guidance	F2	2
Serious	F3	1
Serious	F2	1
share stories	F3	1
show how to be good	F2	2
shows how to do better	M3	2
social studies helpful	F3	1
some are good people	F4	2
some are good teachers	F3	2
some can be trusted	F2	2
some trusted	F4	1
stay off street	M4	1
stay on me	M4	2
stay on me	F3	1
stay on student	M3	2
stay on you	M3	2
stay student	F2	3
stayed after to do work	F4	2
stayed on him	F2	1
stays on you	F3	2
still learning	F2	2
Strict	F1	1
student should work as hard as possible	F1	2
Support	F1	2
support from Black and White teachers	F1	3
support when in trouble	F2	1

Appendix A
(*continued*)

Category/code	Student	Interview
Supportive	F4	2
talk @ street life	F2	1
Racism		
call on White students first	F2	2
different treatment for White and Black	F1	3
friends feel invisible	F4	1
grades not equal to found card	M1	1
laugh at White jokes, not Black	F1	3
more sexist than racist	F1	3
no difference in amount of work	M4	3
no difference in the way treated	F3	1
no racism	M4	2
not asking questions	F3	2
not calling on you	F1	1
not doing what they are supposed to	F1	2
pick on you	F4	3
racist administrator	F4	1
some Black teachers were racist against Blacks	F4	1
some friends have had racist teachers	M4	3
some White teachers were good	M4	2
student feels invisible	F2	1
student feels invisible	F2	3
teacher acts differently toward Black and White students	F2	3
teacher behaves differently	F2	2
teacher ignores Black students	F4	1
when you work hard and are treated unfairly	F3	1
White people stand out more	M1	1
racism plays a role	M3	2
some African Americans talk and play around a lot	M2	2
some teachers don't care	M3	2
Teachers	F2	2
teacher fault	F3	1
Black kids need more encouragement than White	F4	2
sometimes teachers don't address things	F3	1
when there is racism, it is typically the teacher's fault	F4	1

APPENDIX B

PARENTAL PERMISSION LETTER

Dear Parent/Guardian _____,

       I am currently a doctoral student in educational leadership and policy studies at Virginia Tech. I am conducting a study to describe Black middle school students' experiences with teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations and the influence those behaviors may have on students' motivation to learn. Your child has been selected to participate in the study.

       I will need permission to interview and observe your child at the middle school site. Three interviews will be audiotaped and will be approximately 55 minutes in duration. The interviews will occur during a time agreed on by the school administrators. There will be at least one observation in your child's English class. All student information will be held confidential, and no information will be released or used in the study that identifies the school, the student, or the school division. In addition, your child's participation is voluntary, and you have the right to deny participation without penalty. Please sign below on the parent signature lines and return this letter to me by February 2, 2007, if you give permission for your child to be in my study. Your child will be eligible to participate in a drawing for a fifty dollar savings bond.

       Please contact me at (276) 638-3921 or ztalley@vt.edu if you have questions. You may also call any member of the Virginia Tech staff listed below if you have additional questions.

I agree to have my child participate in an audiotaped interview and to be observed in English class.

_____   _____
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature   Date

Zebedee Talley Jr.
Assistant Principal
Doctoral Candidate
Martinsville Middle School
201 Brown St.
Martinsville, VA 24112

Penny Burge, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Lisa Driscoll, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Virginia Tech, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
(540) 231-5111

IRB Chair: David Moore
              moore@vt.edu, (540) 231-4991
              Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
                      Virginia Tech

APPENDIX C

STUDENT ASSENT LETTER

Dear Student,

You have been selected to participate in a Virginia Tech study describing Black middle school students' experiences with teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations. I want to learn how those teacher behaviors affect your desire to learn.

For you to participate in this study, I need your assent. By giving your assent, you are saying that you agree to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary. Your participation will consist of being involved in three 55-minute interview sessions and being visited and observed by me while you are in English class. All of your responses during the interview sessions are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Your name, the name of your school, and the name of your school division will not be mentioned in the study. When I enter your English class, your teacher will not know that you are being observed.

Please sign your name on the line marked "Student Signature" and take a permission form home for your parents to sign. I will provide a stamped return envelope. The parent permission form should be returned in an envelope to the guidance office no later than February 2, 2007. If you are selected after volunteering, I will contact your parent.

I agree to be interviewed:

_____   _____
      Student Signature   Date

I agree to be observed:

_____   _____
      Student Signature   Date

I agree to have my interview tape-recorded:

_____   _____
      Student Signature   Date

Zebedee Talley Jr.
Assistant Principal
Doctoral Candidate
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Martinsville, VA 24112

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Virginia Tech, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061

(540) 231-5111

IRB Chair: David Moore
                          moore@vt.edu, (540) 231-4991
                          Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
                          Virginia Tech

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Date

Division Superintendent's Name
School Division
Address

Dear _____,

  I am currently a doctoral student in educational leadership and policy studies at Virginia Tech. My advisors are Drs. Penny Burge and Lisa Driscoll. I am working toward completing my dissertation research by conducting a phenomenological study to describe the lived experiences of Black middle school students concerning teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations and the influence those behaviors may have on student motivation to learn.

  To conduct this study, I am requesting permission and endorsement to select one of your middle schools as a data collection site. Data collection will occur during a 5-week period and will consist of interviewing and observing 8–10 Black eighth-grade students in English classes. I will also need your permission to distribute flyers calling for student volunteers.

  I will call your office within the week to request an appointment with you so that we can discuss in greater detail the data collection process and procedures and to request the participation of your school division and a middle school for data collection. Please contact me at (276) 638-3921 or ztalley@vt.edu if you have questions prior to scheduling the appointment. You may also call any member of the Virginia Tech staff listed below if you have additional questions. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Zebedee Talley Jr.
Assistant Principal
Doctoral Candidate
Martinsville Middle School
201 Brown St.
Martinsville, VA 24112

Penny Burge, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Lisa Driscoll, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Virginia Tech, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
(540) 231-5111

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS FOR VIRGINIA TECH STUDY

School
Experiences

?

?

?

?

WHAT DO BLACK STUDENTS REALLY THINK?
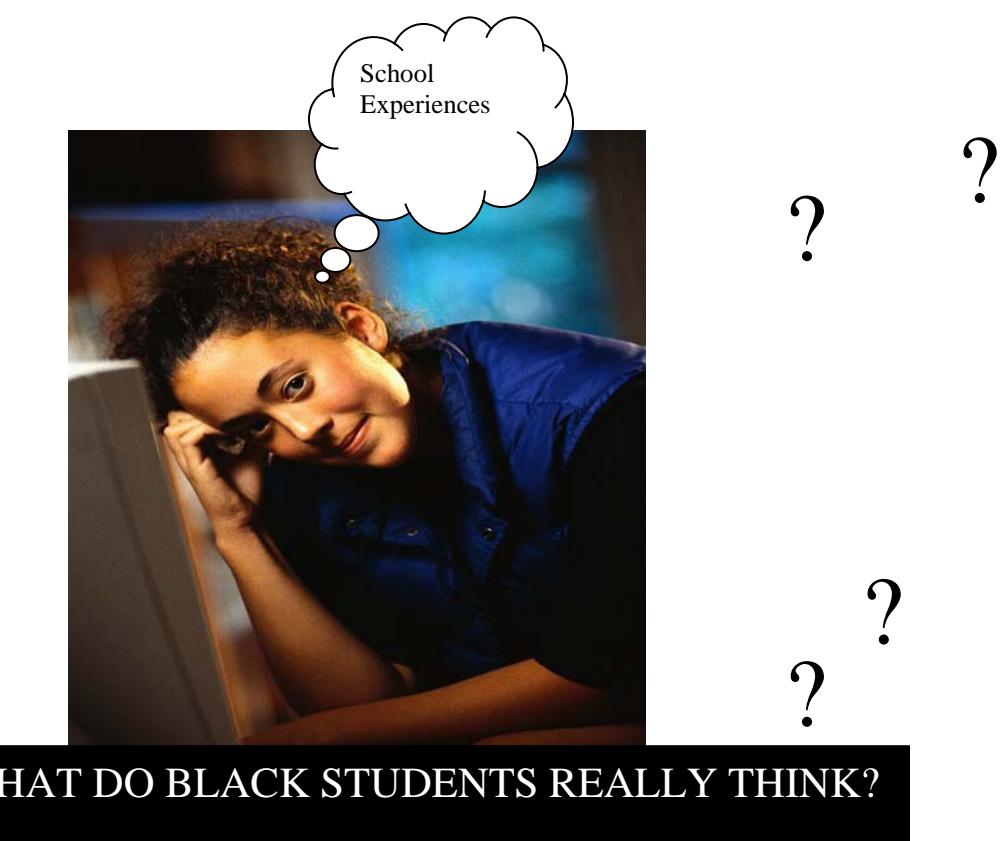
IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT Zeb Talley Jr. 1-276-638-3921 ztalley@vt.edu
to participate in a Virginia Tech Research Study.

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Date

Building Principal
School Division
Address

Dear _____,

       I am currently a doctoral student in educational leadership and policy studies at Virginia Tech. My advisors are Drs. Penny Burge and Lisa Driscoll. I am working toward completing my dissertation research by conducting a phenomenological study to describe the lived experiences of Black middle school students concerning teacher trust, teacher encouragement, and teacher expectations and the influence those behaviors may have on student motivation to learn. The superintendent of schools has given me permission to collect data from 8–10 Black middle school students. Your school has been selected as the site for data collection.

       To conduct this study, your assistance with the data collection process is requested. Data collection will occur during a 5-week period and will consist of interviewing and observing 8–10 Black eighth-grade students in their English classes. Your assistance will be needed to distribute flyers for securing student volunteers to be interviewed and observed. I will call your office within the week to request an appointment with you to review the interview and observation procedures in more detail, to finalize the procedures for accessing students and visiting their English classrooms, and to discuss confidentiality of information. If you have questions prior to scheduling the appointment, I can be contacted at (276) 638-3921 or ztalley@vt.edu. You may also call any member of the Virginia Tech staff listed below if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Zebedee Talley Jr.
Assistant Principal
Doctoral Candidate
Martinsville Middle School
201 Brown St.
Martinsville, VA 24112

Penny Burge, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Lisa Driscoll, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Virginia Tech, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
(540) 231-5111

APPENDIX G

GATEKEEPER FORM

Date _____

Site _____

Time _____

Gatekeeper _____

Position _____

Phone _____

Address _____

_____

E-mail _____

Gatekeeper's job description _____

_____

_____

Gatekeeper's role in study   _____

_____

_____

Gatekeeper's participant connections _____

APPENDIX H

LETTER REQUESTING TEACHERS' PERMISSION FOR OBSERVATIONS

Dear Mrs., Ms., Mr. _____,

       I am completing my dissertation research at Virginia Tech. The superintendent of schools and the building principal have granted permission for me to observe and interview students who have volunteered to participate in my research study. The study focuses on student perceptions of teacher trust, encouragement, and expectations as motivations to learn.

       Students in your eighth-grade English class have been selected to participate in three tape-recorded interviews and to be observed during a 45-minute instructional block. Your permission is requested to observe these students in your classroom. For purposes of confidentiality, teacher and student names will not be used in the study, and no information will be released about teacher identity, the identity of your school, or the students.

       Thank you for your assistance. Please contact me at (276) 638-3921 or ztalley@vt.edu if you have questions. You may also call any member of the Virginia Tech staff listed below if you have additional questions.

I agree to allow observations _____

I refuse to allow observations _____

_____   _____
Teacher signature   Date

Sincerely,

Zebedee Talley Jr.
Assistant Principal
Doctoral Candidate
Martinsville Middle School
201 Brown St.
Martinsville, VA 24112

Penny Burge, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Lisa Driscoll, Ph.D., Co-Chairperson
Virginia Tech, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
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IRB Chair: David Moore
                  moore@vt.edu, (540) 231-4991
                  Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
                  Virginia Tech

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview 1: Early School Experiences of Participants

1. Describe things that encourage you to learn.

2. Discuss your idea of being motivated to learn.

3. What behaviors of adults make you feel that you can trust them?

4. Describe positive experiences with teachers during your elementary years.

5. Discuss negative experiences that you had in school during your elementary years.

6. Tell me some things that have made you successful in school.

7. Tell me some things that have hurt your success in school.

8. Describe your elementary school experiences about being motivated to learn in class.

9. Describe any feelings that your friends have shared with you about their classroom experiences that might have affected the way that you feel.

Interview 2: Phenomenon Discussion

1. Discuss your ideas about students feeling that they can trust teachers.

2. Describe things that indicate teachers care.

3. Tell experiences that you have about trusting teachers to help you with your work.

4. Discuss how teachers encourage you.

5. What things make you feel good about your teachers?

6. Tell experiences that you have concerning teachers wanting you to do well in class.

7. Describe the amount of classroom effort your teachers expect from you.

8. Discuss what you have experienced about teacher expectations.

9. Discuss things that show that you can trust teachers.

10. Discuss how much influence your teachers have had on your desire to learn.

11. Explain what you think teachers can do to influence you to learn.

12. Imagine that you are a new student. What teacher actions would you like to experience so that you can be successful in school?

13. Some people say that when students fail, it is the fault of the student. What would you say?

14. What actions would your teacher take if you refused to work in class?

15. Describe a typical class with a teacher whom you feel really cares about you.

16. Describe a typical class with a teacher who encourages you to learn.

Interview 3: Participant Reflection

1. Discuss any feelings that you have at this point about any question that I have asked in earlier meetings.

2. Discuss whether you feel the interviews accurately told your story.

3. Are there statements that you would like to take out?

4. Are there statements that you would like to add?

5. What are your overall feelings about teacher attitudes toward Black students?

6. What advice would you give teachers about teaching students to be successful?

7. What things would you tell teachers to avoid if they want successful students?

8. How can educators learn more about how students view teachers?

9. What is your opinion of how your experiences affected your education?

10. How would you like teachers to treat you?

11. Discuss how your view of teachers may be different from students of other races.

12. Compare your feelings about teacher caring about students to the feelings of other friends or students with whom you often talk.

APPENDIX J

FIELD NOTES TRACKING FORM

Date _____   Participant _____

Site _____   Interview number _____

Interview week _____   Time _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX K

LIST OF CODES FOR LABELING DATA

Code	Meaning
Interview week	
01I	First interview
02I	Second interview
03I	Third interview
Observation	
001	First observation
002	Second observation
003	Third observation
Researcher	
R01	Data planning stage
R02	Data collection stage
R03	Data analysis stage
Findings	
F01	Positive findings
F01	Negative findings
F03	Unexpected findings
F03	No impact findings
Participant	
P01	Active participant
P02	Casual participant
P03	Reluctant participant

APPENDIX L

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FORM

Date _____

Time _____

Site _____

Student Code _____

Interview Week _____

	Yes	No
Student has good posture in seat	___	___
Student appears alert in classroom	___	___
Student appears to have a positive relationship with teacher	___	___
Student seems comfortable asking questions	___	___
Student has positive body language, nonhostile appearance	___	___
Student appears to be enjoying academic success	___	___
Student receives encouragement from teacher	___	___

Other notes from things observed:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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APPENDIX M

CATEGORIES AND RELATED SUBCATEGORIES

Category	Subcategories
Elementary school experiences	Teacher–student interactions
	Negative experiences
	Student interactions
	Negative student behavior
	Positive student behavior
	Encouraging teacher actions
	Discouraging teacher actions
Instructional environment	Desirable teacher
	Characteristics
Student motivation	Factors that increase student motivation
	Factors that decrease student motivation
Student trust	Teacher characteristics that contribute to student trust
	Teacher characteristics that decrease student trust
Racism	