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## Effective Caucasian Female Teachers Of African American Students

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EFFECTIVE CAUCASIAN FEMALE TEACHERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN  
STUDENTS

By

Wanda Walker-Bowen

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Educational Administration  
in the Department of Instructional Systems, Leadership, and Workforce Development

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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2007

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STUDENTS

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS**

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The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore and analyze the nature of and rationale for classroom pedagogical and management strategies used by two effective female, Caucasian teachers who taught predominantly low socioeconomic, African American students. Teachers' perceptions about the cultural and linguistic differences between low socioeconomic African American students and themselves were studied, as well as how these differences influenced their teaching and management strategies. Ladson-Billings' (1994) work on culturally relevant pedagogy and Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke's (2003) and Brown's (2003) models on culturally responsive classroom management served as conceptual frameworks for this study.

Qualitative data were collected using classroom observations and teacher interviews. Findings from the study indicated that these two teachers built positive, mutually respectful relationships with their students to better understand their students on

a personal level, delivered explicit behavioral expectations and classroom lessons, taught students the importance and applicability of lessons, demanded quality student performance, and possessed high expectations for student achievement. Both teachers selected pedagogical and classroom management strategies based on the individual academic needs of the students. Nevertheless, these teachers had difficulty identifying cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and their students. Therefore, cultural and linguistic differences did not directly influence teaching strategies they selected. However, these teachers inadvertently used culturally relevant pedagogical strategies without being aware of their own cultures and their students' cultures. Finally, these teachers did not understand the important role that students' cultures play in the classroom. Contrary to the findings of previous research, this study demonstrated that effective Caucasian female teachers do not need to understand the *general* cultural characteristics of African American students. However, on a *specific* individual basis, if the Caucasian female teacher understands the child, then she can successfully utilize pedagogical and classroom management strategies that will ensure the child's academic success.

Key words: Caucasian female teacher, culturally relevant pedagogy,  
classroom management; African American students

## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my husband, Darryl Bowen, and my son, Darius Bowen, for their support and understanding. This research is also dedicated to my parents, Wilson and Martha Walker, who instilled in me the desire to pursue knowledge.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Many schools in the United States experience difficulty meeting the educational needs of students. One reason for this difficulty is that schools are unable to attract and retain effective teachers. In the inner city, this problem is compounded by the social ills manifested in students' daily lives (Brown, 2003; Tillman, 2003). Inner city students require teachers to possess an array of pedagogical skills and classroom management strategies to be effective (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In the southeastern part of the United States, the majority of available teachers are Caucasian females, and the majority of teacher vacancies are in schools that serve a disproportionate number of low socioeconomic African American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Therefore, the retention and success of Caucasian female teachers is paramount to ensuring that all students, including African American students from lower socioeconomic families, receive instruction from highly qualified teachers. Schools cannot continue to lose knowledgeable Caucasian female teachers, due to their inability to work effectively with African American students. Ladson-Billings (1994) stated, "The pattern for some teachers is to endure a teaching assignment in an inner-city school until they can find a position in a more affluent district with fewer

children of color” (p. 53). Therefore, if Caucasian female teachers can learn to work effectively with low socioeconomic African American students, it is likely to increase the students’ academic achievement and decrease Caucasian female teachers’ attrition rate. As stated before, the flight of teachers cannot continue if all students are to receive instruction from highly qualified teachers.

I am a female, African American educator. I taught second and fourth grade students for 10 years, was an assistant principal for two years, and have been a principal for eight years, with 18 years of experience in urban schools that serve low socioeconomic, African American students. During my tenure as principal of an economically deprived student body, I have found it difficult to recruit and retain Caucasian female teachers. My experience has been oftentimes that Caucasian female teachers are unable to establish and maintain classroom order in classrooms of predominantly African American students with low socioeconomic backgrounds. The lack of effective classroom management prevented effective instruction. On the other hand, there were some Caucasian teachers who were effective teachers of African American students. I was curious about what these effective Caucasian female teachers knew and did. This problem and my wonderings became the impetus for this study.

Although the literature provides some information about culturally relevant pedagogy and classroom management strategies, the questions I had were not addressed specifically. Current research concerning this issue has mainly analyzed male and female Caucasian teachers, collectively, as they worked with various groups of students; research of female Caucasian teachers, in particular, has not been addressed. Because

most elementary school teachers are Caucasian females, a study of this group is important. Additionally, the research that has been conducted rarely analyzed pedagogy along with classroom management strategies and the impact that students' culture and language have on the teaching and learning process. In this study, I will analyze and explore the relationship between effective Caucasian female teachers' pedagogical and classroom management strategies, teachers' understanding of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and how the teachers' knowledge of herself and her students guides instruction of African American students.

As stated by Merriam (1998), "the researcher must be aware of any personal biases and how they may influence the investigation" (p. 21). As I analyze my racial, cultural, and professional backgrounds, it becomes evident that I have limited experiences with effective Caucasian female teachers. This paucity of experiences with effective Caucasian female teachers has led me to the perception that most Caucasian, female teachers are ineffective with African American students. I also acknowledge a belief that effective African American teachers understand the nuances of posturing, speaking, and demanding in a way that is familiar to African American students and aids in the establishment of classroom order. I also believe effective Caucasian female teachers interact in ways that are different from African American teachers who have a basic understanding of their students' cultural and linguistic differences. Therefore, to control personal subjectivity and bias, sensitivity and constant cognizance will be maintained through the use of a subjectivity file, member checking, and external audits by major professors.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Ladson-Billings' (1994) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy and Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke's (2003) and Brown's (2003) models of culturally responsive classroom management served as conceptual frameworks for this qualitative study. Each of these theories was utilized to better understand the perspectives and actions of effective Caucasian female teachers of African American students.

Ladson-Billings (1994) documented and analyzed the pedagogy of eight effective teachers of African American students. In this study, three out of the eight teachers designated as effective by parents and administrators were Caucasian females. Ladson-Billings selected these teachers through community nomination. She received nominations from parents who attended local churches located in the school zone. These parents identified effective teachers based on students' academic achievement, the teachers' willingness to involve parents in the classroom, the teachers' demand for academic excellence, and the teachers' ability to discipline students without resorting to demeaning or harmful methods. The parents identified 17 teachers from a total of 200 elementary and middle school teachers in the district. Ladson-Billings cross-checked these nominations by consulting with the principals of the one middle school and seven elementary schools in the district. The principals nominated 22 teachers based on student achievement, attendance, and the teachers' ability to manage the class. From the two lists, parents and principals nominated nine teachers. Eight of the nine nominated teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Ladson-Billings discovered that effective teachers of African American students utilize culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy occurs when teachers focus on students' academic achievement, develop students' cultural competence, and foster students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Culturally relevant teachers are cognizant of their own cultures and the cultures of their students. This type of consciousness allows culturally relevant teachers to build an atmosphere of cultural respect and to scaffold instruction in a manner that accounts for cultural diversity and promotes the academic success of students. Ladson-Billings succinctly defined culturally relevant pedagogy and identified culturally relevant teaching strategies.

Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) expanded the discourse on culturally relevant pedagogy by focusing on classroom management strategies. These researchers identified three fundamental prerequisites effective teachers of culturally diverse classrooms must possess in order to be effective classroom managers. First, a culturally responsive classroom manager (CRCM) understands the varied cultural differences of students and value, at a conscious level, the cultural beliefs and behaviors of their students. Second, a CRCM acknowledges the inequity of treating all students the same with little regard for students' family backgrounds, cultural norms for social interactions, and parental expectations for discipline. Third, a CRCM understands how schools can perpetuate and reflect discriminatory practices of the larger society. A CRCM makes management decisions that promote students' learning and foster a respect and understanding for cultural differences.

Brown (2003) conducted a qualitative study that involved 13 first – twelfth grade urban teachers in seven United States cities to determine how effective urban teachers developed classroom management systems that encourage cooperation among students with varied ethnic, social, and cultural needs. Nine of the 13 teachers were Caucasian, and several of these teachers were Caucasian female teachers. Three primary themes emerged from the interview data. First, the 13 urban teachers in this study showed a genuine concern for their students by getting to know each student on a personal level and by establishing a classroom community of respect, security, and safety. Secondly, these teachers exhibited assertiveness and authoritativeness as they dealt with their students. They exhibited a strong personality, competence, and confidence as a teacher and as the person in charge. Thirdly, these authoritative teachers’ verbal exchanges with students were specific and direct. They established explicit behavior expectations that allowed students to learn in a cooperative, supportive classroom environment. These teachers utilized their knowledge of students’ verbal and non-verbal communication styles to impact students’ cooperation, motivation, and engagement in learning activities.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Ladson-Billings (1994) studied effective teachers of African American children and culturally relevant pedagogy. Weinstein et al. (2003) and Brown (2003) studied culturally responsive management strategies used by effective teachers of urban students. The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the nature of and rationale for the

effective classroom pedagogical and management strategies of female, Caucasian teachers who teach predominantly low socioeconomic African American students.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the research.

1. What pedagogical and management strategies do effective Caucasian female teachers use with low socioeconomic African American students?
2. Why do these teachers choose the strategies they use?
3. What do effective Caucasian female teachers perceive are the cultural and linguistic differences between low socioeconomic African American students and themselves?
4. How do these perceived differences influence their teaching and management strategies?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms will be utilized throughout the study.

1. Pedagogy in its most basic form is the method of teaching which involves strategies and techniques employed by teachers to successfully facilitate the learning process.
2. Culturally relevant pedagogy is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994 p. 18).

Culturally relevant pedagogy occurs when teachers are cognizant of their culture and the culture of their students. This type of consciousness allows culturally relevant teachers to build an atmosphere of cultural respect and to scaffold instruction in a manner that promotes the academic success of students (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

3. Classroom Management is defined as the techniques and methods used to organize the classroom and direct students' behavior.
4. Culturally responsive classroom management involves teachers using knowledge of students' cultures to develop management strategies that promote equal opportunity for students to learn. A culturally responsive classroom manager (CRCM) realizes that all people possess some type of culture that influences their behavior and thought processes. A CRCM respectfully acknowledges linguistic and social interaction differences in their students and that the sociopolitical environment of schools can privilege some students based on their cultures and impede the academic growth of other students (Brown, 2003; Weinstein, et al., 2004).
5. Linguistics is the study of language and the acquisition of knowledge about language. In this study, linguistic differences focus on the variances between the teacher and the students in the area of semantics.
6. Effective Caucasian female teacher is one who has at least 70 % of her class scoring at or above grade level in reading, language arts, and math based on a

district or state criterion-referenced test and has fewer discipline referrals than her colleagues.

7. Low socioeconomic students are students who receive free or reduced lunches.
8. Strategies are planned actions or protocols used by teachers to provide students the opportunity to excel.
9. Culture is such a nebulous construct, and its meaning is so vital to this study that a detailed examination of the definition of culture is necessary. See below.

Culture is not easily defined. Many people confuse culture with race. People of the same race are more likely to identify with the same culture; however, individuals who share the same race can be culturally different. Delpit (1995) dealt with an assumption about culture when she stated, “It is important to remember that children are individuals and cannot be made to fit into any preconceived mold of how they are ‘supposed’ to act” (p.167). This assumption can easily be applied to adults also. Culture is not a static concept. It is very liquid and volatile and is based on the uniqueness of humans and their interactions with their environment and other humans. Therefore, it is erroneous to state what an individual would do, favor, or believe based only on the individual’s cultural affiliations.

Gay (2000) further examines the volatility of culture through a model that demonstrates the constant impact of various “mitigating variables and expressive behaviors” on each other and on ethnicity and culture (p. 10). She stated that mitigating

variables like gender, group affiliation, social class, education, geographic location, age, and immigration impacted each other while they also impacted the expressive behaviors of thinking, relating, speaking, writing, performing, producing, learning, and teaching. Gay (2000) explains that there is a constant back and forth continuum of influence of the various variables and behaviors between ethnicity and culture. Even though culture changes based on various variables and behaviors, Gay (2000) states, “Members of ethnic groups, whether consciously or not, share some core cultural characteristics” (p. 10). However, Gay warns that some of these core characteristics are likely to be visible in members of a culture group, but this does not imply that all group members will possess the exact same characteristics. Therefore, if culture cannot be generally perceived as quickly as race is easily identified, then what is culture?

Hilliard (2002) defines culture as “nothing, more nor less than, the shared ways that groups of people have created to use and define their environment” (p. 89). He goes on to assert that all cultures are complicated and transferred from one generation to the next.

Delpit (1995) discusses culture from the standpoint of power. Delpit asserts that the culture of power is a representation of the rules or codes of those who have power.

She posits:

This means that success in institutions—schools, workplaces, and so on—is predicated upon the acquisition of the culture of those who are in power. Children from middle-class homes tend to do better in school than those from non-middle class homes because the culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper

and middle classes—of those in power. The upper and middle classes send their children to school with all accoutrements of the culture of power; children from other kinds of families operate within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes and rules of power. (p. 25)

Delpit clarifies her perspective of culture by emphasizing that knowledge of a student's culture is only one way to develop effective instructional practices that account for the student's diversity.

Therefore, in this study, I will define culture as those understandings, behaviors, and ideas shared among group members that are constantly changing based on the group's dynamics. It is understood that an individual can possess several cultural affiliations, based on the group in which the individual is involved. For instance, a Caucasian female teacher from an economically deprived area of Appalachia who attended college and acquired a job in an urban area would probably become affiliated with several new groups. As this teacher affiliates with new groups, she will begin to adjust to the norms of the new group.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Due to the teacher shortage in low-income urban schools (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Tillman, 2003), it is imperative for urban schools to obtain and retain highly qualified teachers who are most available to be hired to effectively manage and teach low socioeconomic students. The majority of these students in urban schools are African American and Latino. More Caucasian female teachers are available to be hired for teaching positions than there are other ethnicities in public K-12 schooling (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Oftentimes in inner city schools, Caucasian teachers experience difficulty managing the behavior of low socioeconomic students, especially African American students (Arriaza, 2003; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). Caucasian teachers who do not possess effective pedagogical and classroom management strategies necessary to work with African American students will leave an urban school to teach in another school that is more consistent with their background (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The literature on Caucasian teachers' abilities to effectively manage classrooms composed primarily of African American students is not specifically delineated based on gender of the teacher, except in a few cases (Honaker, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Monroe, 2004). Even in these cases, data on Caucasian female teachers' effectiveness

with African American students was extrapolated from the total sample. Therefore, the studies that are reviewed below, in general, deal with how Caucasian teachers use pedagogical and management skills to teach African American students. Also, in an attempt to understand the impact of culture and language patterns in the educational process of African American students, this review analyzed studies that dealt with the cultural and linguistic differences between Caucasian teachers and African American students. Literature on culturally responsive classroom management strategies and culturally relevant pedagogy were reviewed to provide a clearer perspective on what effective Caucasian teachers do to teach African American students.

### **Cultural Impact on Students' Behavior**

Several studies have been conducted to analyze the impact of teachers' understandings of students' cultures and how variations of consequences for misbehavior are indicative of a lack of cultural understanding (Arriaza, 2003; Jackson, 2002; Monroe, 2004; Neal, McCray, Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). Arriaza (2003) conducted an ethnographic study to examine how social networks and protective agents (authority figures like teachers and principals) affect students' social capital development. Arriaza defined social capital as the ability of students to negotiate their social positions within and across different racial groups. The capacity for students to develop social capital is influenced by time and protective agents in schools. Protective agents assist students in the accumulation of social capital by ensuring students learn and achieve. Arriaza also examined how students resist efforts to be normalized in the dominant, mainstream

culture of schools and how teachers can help or hinder the development of students' social capital.

Arriaza's study took place in a middle school that served sixth to eighth grade students from low-income neighborhoods. Arriaza analyzed interpersonal conflict among students and authority figures to determine how social capital is built or diminished. He collected data through observing teachers and students, conducting in-depth interviews, organizing focus groups, and analyzing various documents. In the student focus group, there were six students selected, based on discipline data that indicated the students' problematic behavior. The teacher focus group included the principal and nine teachers who were identified, based on the high number of discipline referrals they submitted.

Arriaza found African American students were disproportionately referred to the office relative to their enrollment numbers primarily for defiance and repeated disruptions. These referrals from a small percentage of the faculty had a detrimental affect on the students' social capital formation. It was noted that only two of the nine teachers who were involved in the focus group were people of color (one African American male and one Filipino American female). The two teachers of color issued the fewest discipline referrals.

Arriaza (2003) observed classroom dynamics to ascertain root causes for the referrals. He discovered that when teachers wrote students' names on the board, often a full-scale confrontation would follow. Arriaza asserted, "In situations where it is obvious to the student that the teacher has no other means of communicating mutual respect, or engaging them in meaningful work, discipline becomes a simple control technique that

triggers the use of violent language among all participants” (p. 82). Other classroom dynamics observed dealt with the harshness students from low socioeconomic homes received as opposed to the gentle treatment given to other students. Teachers presumed the only language to which low socioeconomic students respond was rough language. While this type of treatment might encourage compliance, oftentimes students became oppositional.

Arriaza also observed the dynamics of “having an attitude” (p. 84) as a cultural resistance technique that escalates the conflict between the teacher and the student. The student with an attitude becomes disrespectful verbally and with body language/posturing. Arriaza concluded that discord between students’ behavior and adult cultural norms caused conflict in the classroom. Teachers addressed conflicts based on their cultural backgrounds and presumptions, which sometimes caused teachers to neglect opportunities to help students learn to negotiate their position in the hegemonic system of public education and society.

Arriaza found that for social capital formation to occur, rich and meaningful teacher-student relationships must be present in classrooms. As social capital is built, students can better negotiate and navigate within the institutional and cultural barriers of the mainstream culture. Arriaza also discovered that teachers who exhibit flexibility in understanding the functions of African American students’ talking back, attitudinal problems, and maintaining their reputation as cultural posturing help to build students’ social capital. With this understanding, teachers can help African American students

develop skills to obtain mainstream cultural knowledge and coping skills and to engage successfully in the larger social and economic systems (Arriaza, 2003).

Jackson (2002) examined cross-cultural differences in Caucasian teachers' perceptions of youth problems and whether students' misbehavior was attributed to situational or personal experiences. This study consisted of all Caucasian educators, which included 64 teachers, six paraprofessionals, and three administrators. The site was an urban K-5 elementary school in a southeastern state that served 38 % African American, 33 % Latino American, 20 % Caucasian, and 9 % other race students. Jackson examined 198 responses retrieved from referral forms submitted to the school's counselor to categorize teachers' explanations of students' behavior. The study's results indicated a clear racial difference between teachers' perceptions of students and the categorization of the students' misbehavior. The most frequent teacher explanation for Caucasian youth problems was attributed to home difficulties. However, for African American and Latino American youth problems, the most frequent teacher explanations on the referral form were disrespectfulness, hostility, aggressiveness, and unmanageability, which the teachers attributed to the students' personal choice. Jackson (2002) claimed that Caucasian teachers attributed situational causes (divorce, poverty, etc.) to the misbehavior of Caucasian students more often than to African American and Latino students, whose misbehavior was attributed to personal causes such as aggression, hostility, and defiance. Jackson (2002) stated:

Teachers who lack an awareness of what it is like to be an African-American or Hispanic-American child offer explanations for youth problems in terms of

personal characteristics. Whether this is due to lack of awareness or an attempt to maintain control, teachers appear to be saying that African-American and Hispanic-American children are responsible for their own actions, while European-American children are not responsible for their own actions. (p. 321)

The literature suggests Caucasian teachers' tendency to attribute African American and Latino students' behavior to personal choices may indicate the teachers' lack of awareness of minority students' social and cultural situations. Jackson recommended that Caucasian teachers increase their understanding of the cultural diversity of minority students to better deal with student discipline issues.

Additionally, Neal et al. (2003) examined teachers' perceptions of African American males' aggression, achievement, and referrals to special education based on the African American cultural movement styles. There were 136 middle school teachers from a suburban school district in a southwestern state who participated in this study. Over 90% of the 136 teachers involved were Caucasian, and over 80% of the 136 teachers were females. The researchers showed videos of two students walking and issued a questionnaire with adjectives to ascertain teachers' perceptions of aggression and achievement. A Likert scale was included with the questionnaire to determine if teachers thought students with certain walking styles needed special education services. Neal et al. found that teachers perceived African American and Caucasian students with stylistic walking movements to be of lower intelligence and more aggressive than students who walked in the standard, acceptable form. Another finding suggested that teachers perceived Caucasian males with African American stylistic movement styles to have

lower achievement and more deviant behaviors than African American students. This finding is connected to the complexities of teachers' expectations, perceptions, and biases about African American students. Neal et al. suggested ethnicity and culture are inextricably linked to how teachers might react to behavioral differences among students. They stated, "Teachers are highly likely to mistake cultural differences for cognitive or behavioral disabilities, and their ways of knowing are often incongruent with diverse students' educational realities and possibilities" (p. 55).

Irwin and Nucci (2004) conducted a study to determine the differences between pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of the source of students' discipline problems, to determine teacher perceptions of students' behavior in multicultural classrooms, and to determine whether culture was considered a factor in pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of students' locus of control of classroom behavior. The study included 120 pre-service teachers enrolled in a classroom management course and 120 randomly selected in-service elementary teachers from five randomly selected elementary schools in the southwest United States. As a part of the pre-service teachers' course work, the pre-service teachers received instruction that emphasized the understanding of a multicultural classroom. The in-service teachers taught in multicultural classrooms that reflected the population of the United States' southwest.

Irwin and Nucci (2004) developed a 14-item questionnaire to examine the in-service and pre-service teachers' perceptions on four dimensions of discipline. The four dimensions of discipline measured in the questionnaire were *source*, which dealt with the internal and external loci of control; *motivation*, which dealt with whether students were

motivated by rewards or punishment; *mechanism*, which examined whether the behavior of students was a choice of best alternatives or a result of habit; and *basis*, which examined whether students' behavior was a result of the teacher's request or the students' careful decision. The results indicated there was no significant difference between in-service and pre-service teachers in the discipline dimensions of source, mechanism, and motivation. However, there was a significant difference between pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions in the discipline dimension of basis. There was also a significant difference in the independent sample of the variable culture.

Both pre-service and in-service teachers perceived that the *source* of students' misbehavior was caused by external environmental factors; the *mechanism* of students' behavior to be the results of students weighing the consequences of their behavior prior to acting; and the *motivation* of students' behavior to be more about the satisfaction of rewards as opposed to the fear of punishment. On the other hand, pre-service and in-service teachers differed in their perceptions on the *basis* of students' behavior and whether or not behavior in the classroom was attributable to a students' culture. Pre-service teachers indicated that students controlled their behavior based on the teachers' requirements. Pre-service teachers viewed students' behavior as unreasoned, while in-service teachers viewed students' behavior as reasoned. In-service teachers indicated students know the desired behavior and choose to act or not act appropriately.

Irwin and Nucci (2004) suggested strategies based on the results from each dimension. In the dimension of *source*, both groups of teachers indicated that students' locus of control is external. Therefore, teachers can examine the environmental factors

that may cause students' behavior difficulties. With an understanding of the dimension of *motivation*, teachers can develop positive reinforcement to encourage and maintain students' appropriate behavior. As teachers consider the dimension of *mechanism*, students can be taught how to select the best alternatives that support appropriate behavior. The authors believed the findings from this study allow teachers to understand their perspectives about students' behavior and to implement strategies to assist students to comply with set rules and procedures. They also assert that the results can assist teachers in recognizing and utilizing culturally sensitive strategies.

Cultural differences and misunderstandings between Caucasian teachers and African American students cause a disproportionate number of discipline occurrences in the classroom and referrals to the office (Arriaza, 2003; Brown, 2003; Bullara, 1993; Jackson, 2002; Monroe, 2004; Neal et al., 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Weinstein et al., 2003). However, in most of these empirical studies, Caucasian female teachers' cultural differences were not specifically delineated. Most often the focus was on African American students' cultural discontinuity with the hegemonic notion of schooling and the normalization process teachers institute to obtain standardized, acceptable behavior. Additionally, Tyson (2003) points out that the goal of achieving conformity to the mainstream culture of schools conflicts and undermines other goals of educating African American students. Occasionally, the cultural characteristics of African American students were delineated. Some characteristics noted were African American students exhibit a lively, boisterous discourse style (Vavrus & Cole, 2002), a stylistic, rhythmic, and vervistic movement manner (Neal et al., 2003; Webb-Johnson,

2002), and a call-response engagement (participatory verbalizations to teachers' comments) during classroom lectures (Weinstein et al., 2004).

The next section of this review consists of a more focused examination of the role language plays in the cultural differences between African American students and Caucasian female teachers and the impact these differences have on pedagogy and classroom management strategies.

### **Linguistic Impact on Students' Behavior**

Caucasian female teachers' ability to work with African American students is impacted by a possible language gap, which causes miscommunication between students and a teacher (Delpit, 1995; Monroe, 2004; Skiba et al., 2002; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). Skiba et al. (2002) examined the disproportionate number of African American disciplinary consequences by perusing the disciplinary data of all the middle school students in a large, urban mid-western public school district. The discipline data were obtained from an existing database in the district. Of the 11,000 students, 56% of the students were African American, 42% were Caucasian, and 2% were Hispanic. The researchers discovered African American students in this district were suspended at a higher rate than other students because more office referrals were submitted for them. African American students were more likely to be referred to the office for subjective reasons like disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering. On the other hand, Caucasian students were referred to the office for more objective reasons like smoking, vandalism, obscene language, and leaving without permission. Therefore, Skiba et al.

concluded that the disproportionate number of suspensions originated at the classroom level. They suggested cultural misunderstanding leads to a cycle of confrontation and miscommunication. Caucasian teachers have difficulty understanding the expressive manner in which African American students communicate. Caucasian teachers can interpret African American students' communicative styles as disrespectful, argumentative, and combative. Skiba et al. believe that fear of African American males caused by stereotypical perceptions can lead to over-referral of students. They recommended teacher training in culturally competent methods of classroom management like relationship building strategies, knowledge of African American students' communication styles, and effective instructional practices.

According to Monroe (2004) and Arriaza (2003), African American teachers utilize an authoritative sternness that mirrors discourse in the students' home that requires respect and acquiescence. Caucasian teachers' communicative styles differ distinctly from African American teachers' styles, which increase the language gap between African American students and Caucasian teachers. Caucasian teachers generally communicate in a passive, receptive discourse manner where students are expected to listen quietly until the teacher finishes speaking and then respond individually to the teacher's questions (Weinstein et al. 2004). Consequently, when African American students respond in a more participatory fashion, they are reprimanded for blurting out.

Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined how race and gender in the classroom influenced the use of suspension when there were no obvious disciplinary infractions. The data for this study came from two ninth grade science classes observed during the

fall semester of 1997 in a five-year study beginning in August 1996 and concluding in the spring of 2000. These classes were located in a large Midwestern metropolitan high school. Vavrus and Cole observed and videotaped classroom interactions, and interviewed students, teachers, administrators, and safety personnel. They contended that the complexity of classroom communication and interactions among students and teacher during multiple disruptions often led to suspensions of students for nonviolent infractions. Vavrus and Cole suggested that the language and behaviors defined by teachers as disruptive depend largely on the individualistic style and intolerance of the teacher. They argued that African American and Latino students have difficulty understanding the subtle rules and codes of communication in the mainstream sociopolitical context of the classroom. Consequently, these students are more apt to be reprimanded due to their responses when involved in conversation with authority figures.

Skiba et al. (2002), Vavrus and Cole (2002), and Arriaza (2003) assert that the linguistic differences between African American students and Caucasian teachers cause misunderstandings, which lead to discipline problems and increased office referrals. African American students are accustomed to a participatory manner of discourse while Caucasian teachers utilize a more passive receptive discourse style (Weinstein et al., 2004). African American students are accustomed to a direct, authoritative communication style while most Caucasian teachers utilize an indirect, democratic style of communicating directives (Monroe, 2004). Ladson-Billings (1995) further asserts that the students' home language can be infused into the classroom environment to promote students' academic success. Nevertheless, these studies do not examine, in particular,

how effective Caucasian female teachers overcome the communication gap that may exist between them and their African American students. The next section will review literature on classroom management strategies that take into account African American students' culture and language styles.

Sulentic (1999) examined two combination fourth and fifth grade classes comprised of predominantly African American students to understand how two female teachers, one African American and one Caucasian, acknowledged and validated their students' use of Black English. Sulentic's study also investigated how the teachers facilitated and utilized students' ability to code switch between Standard English and Black English to help students become more successful in the classroom.

Sulentic's ethnographic study used a nesting design to illustrate the social and cultural context of language in the school. This type of design allowed Sulentic to examine the issue through the context of the classroom, school, school district, community, and the historical and political society as a whole. She used participant observation, audio taping, and semi-structured and structured interviewing to collect data from a community activist, district and school administrators, teachers, and students.

Sulentic's study revealed five common characteristics the two teachers possessed that helped them to ensure their students' success. First, the teachers' philosophical belief system focused on the entire child which was evident in the classroom environment of each teacher. Each teacher established a sense of community in the classroom through cultivating mutual respect, providing routines and procedures, displaying a genuine

interest in each student, giving students choices, and respecting the students' home language while teaching them Standard English.

A second common characteristic displayed by each teacher was being specific and direct in their expectations and teaching styles. Both teachers used an authoritative style which was based on their students' cultural background. The teachers also used voice control to sternly give directives which helped them to effectively manage their students' behaviors. Oftentimes, these teachers' simple, straightforward directives conveyed they were authority figures in the classroom. Sulentic also pointed out that both teachers quickly noticed inappropriate behavior and prevented the behavior from escalating. Sulentic stated that both teachers "understand African American children in the context of their culture. They understand the verbal playfulness of their students. They also know that most of their Black students expect them to act in certain ways as authority figures" (p. 208).

The third characteristic common to both teachers was their ability to reduce cultural mismatch in the classroom. These teachers acknowledged the individuality of their students with respect and dignity. They provided an environment where the students felt good about themselves. However, both teachers acknowledge that this type of belief system was the exception in their school district.

The fourth common characteristic Sulentic (1999) noted was the teachers' knowledge of teaching reading and writing. Both teachers skillfully used the students' oral language to direct and extend their students' reading and writing skills. The teachers' knowledge of their students' cultural background allowed the teachers to provide reading

lessons that involve controlled verbal playfulness. During reading discussions, the teachers allowed the students to engage in lively discussions concerning predictions about the story, give summaries as the story was being read, ask spontaneous questions during the reading of the story, and answer general questions from the teacher among themselves. Basically, the students were allowed to freely express themselves in an environment structured by the teachers.

Finally, Sulentic (1999) also noticed that each teacher invented pedagogy based on the cultural background of their students. The teachers combined knowledge of pedagogy and specific knowledge of the students to decide which instructional strategies to use in their classrooms. As Sulentic examined the data in this area, she realized that the teachers often used four main instructional strategies. First, each teacher understood the culturally related verbal nature of their students. They allowed the students many opportunities to freely express themselves without losing control of the learning environment. Second, both teachers also utilized the instructional strategy antiphonal response which is synonymous to call and response. Third, the teachers used code switching between Standard English and Black English to build on the language the students brought to school, to validate the students' home language, to help the students understand the necessity of code switching, and to stress an instructional point, behavioral directive, or add verbal playfulness to a lesson. Fourth, both teachers accepted language approximations, even though they realized the importance of the acquisition of Standard English. They used the students' home language to teach them Standard English.

## **Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Strategies**

There is a plethora of empirical, theoretical, and practical information on effective classroom management strategies. Therefore, literature reviewed for this section was limited to information that dealt specifically with management strategies for minority students, African American students in particular.

Monroe (2004) designed a study to examine the classroom practices and perspectives of effective African American and Caucasian teachers as related to student discipline. The study took place in two schools located in separate school districts in a large urban metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. Eight teachers who were identified as effective teachers by their principals participated in the study. Four teachers (two African American and two Caucasian) taught in an elementary school where the majority of the students were Latino. Four teachers (two African American and two Caucasian) taught in a middle school where the majority of the students were African American. Results of this study indicated African American and Caucasian teachers identified the same student behaviors as disruptive. The data obtained from observations and interviews suggested more similarities than differences in perspectives and practices between each group of teachers.

Monroe (2004) identified the six shared teaching characteristics used by all teacher participants that impacted their classroom management strategies. First, each teacher *clarified behavioral expectations* early and often in the school year. The teachers explicitly defined behavior limits to ensure there was a common understanding among class members. The second shared teaching characteristic dealt with *teacher subject area*

*competency and student engagement*. All eight teachers were skilled in the subject area they taught, which enhanced the teachers' abilities to promote academic instruction while maintaining behavior expectations. The teachers' abilities to create engaging and stimulating lessons lessened students' disruptions and improved students' engagement. Another shared characteristic identified that all eight participants had *prior experience in multicultural schools*. This previous experience allowed the teachers to reject deficit perspectives and develop positive images of the students. The fourth identified shared teaching characteristic dealt with the *role of parents*. All the teachers viewed parents as important to students' success. Therefore, the teachers viewed parents as resources, which encouraged the teachers to maintain contact with parents. These teachers went beyond normal parental contact and established strong relationships with parents outside the context of the classroom. Another shared characteristic indicated the teachers' *pre-service training* did not include explicit instruction on classroom discipline. The teachers received most of their classroom discipline knowledge from their pre-service cooperating teacher and from on-the-job experiences. The final identified shared teaching characteristic dealt with how the teachers *responded to classroom disruption*. Basically, all the teachers believed that preventive measures were the best way to avoid disruptions. Therefore, the teachers constantly provided engaging lessons and reminded students of expectations.

Monroe (2004) noted several differences between the Caucasian teachers, of which two out of four were female, and the African American teachers. While African American teachers used an authoritative disciplinary stance throughout their teaching, the

Caucasian teachers used a more facilitative approach to establish classroom rules and employed an authoritative style to enforce rules and consequences. Additionally, the Caucasian teachers connected classroom rules to their content more than the African American teachers. The Caucasian teachers used subject matter when devising rules to link the content (i.e., vocabulary development focus in rules construction, a reward system connected to a math assignment, etc.) to behavior expectations.

Culturally responsive classroom management strategies surfaced in Monroe's (2004) study. One Caucasian female teacher at the middle school used culturally specific strategies like using African American linguistic characteristics and body language to manage the behavior of her students. This teacher also used displays of humor and a no-nonsense style when students' actions clearly violated a classroom rule.

Weinstein et al. (2004) furthered the discussion of culturally responsive classroom management by identifying five essential components of culturally responsive classroom management. First, culturally responsive classroom management consists of teachers identifying and understanding their own culture backgrounds, biases, beliefs, and assumptions about other cultures. Weinstein et al. described many pre-service Caucasian teachers as unable to state how their cultural background affects them. These pre-service teachers exhibited a lack of awareness about their own cultural identity. Weinstein et al. stated, "They consider their own cultural norms to be neutral and universal and accept the European, middle class structures, programs, and discourse of schools as normal and right" (p. 29). Weinstein et al. asserted that Caucasian teachers need to explore and acknowledge the privileges that come with being Caucasian and become cognizant of and

examine the Caucasian worldview, which emphasizes individualism. Weinstein et al. asserted that elevating one's cultural consciousness decreases misinterpretations of students' cultural differences and leads to equitable student treatment.

Second, culturally responsive classroom management recognizes and respects the cultural background of students. A CRCM conducts home visits, consult with parents and community members, and read literature about various students' cultures. Most importantly, cultural knowledge is not used to denigrate and stereotype students. A CRCM uses cultural knowledge to show sincerity about students' cultures and to help them to achieve (Weinstein et al., 2004).

A third essential component of culturally responsive classroom management is teachers' awareness of the larger, sociopolitical context of schooling. Teachers who practice culturally responsive classroom management recognize inequities of institutionalized norms of the Caucasian middle class. They understand that cultural differences from dominant norms oftentimes lead to discriminatory practices (tracking, discipline referrals, exceptional education placements). Weinstein et al. (2004) explained that a CRCM recognizes systems and practices that privilege some students while marginalizing others. As related to classroom management, a CRCM is cognizant of institutional discrimination that causes a disproportionate number of African American boys to be subjected to disciplinary actions (Weinstein et al., 2004).

A fourth essential component of culturally responsive classroom management deals with teachers' willingness and ability to utilize culturally appropriate management strategies (Weinstein et al., 2004). These strategies include the creation of a classroom

environment that is conducive to academic and social learning, the enhancement of students' motivation, the establishment and maintenance of expectations for behavioral standards, the organization and management of instructional processes, and the development of working relationships with students' parents. A CRCM is cognizant of discontinuity between traditional classroom management and students' cultural backgrounds. A CRCM also discerns when to accommodate students' cultural backgrounds and when to expect students to accommodate to other requirements. Most importantly, this concept of mutual accommodation enables students to learn to adjust to the mainstream norms and behaviors without losing a sense of self.

The last essential component of culturally responsive classroom management deals with teachers' commitment to build caring classroom communities. A caring, productive community is produced through the cooperation of the teachers and the students. Oftentimes, students' cooperation is contingent on their perceptions of a teacher's caring. Teachers' lack of caring can produce inequities in educational opportunities for culturally different students. However, culturally responsive classroom management requires teachers to care in a manner that refuses to accept deficit perspectives and that demands high academic achievement.

Research studies support the idea that the initial step in providing a culturally responsive classroom management system begins with the teachers' awareness of their cultural attributes, backgrounds, and differences (Delpit, 1995; Varus, 2002; Weinstein et al., 2004). Varus (2002) believes if a teacher does not possess a consciousness of his/her own cultural perspective and the impact it has on relationships with other cultures, "a

teacher is likely to use mainstream teaching and learning approaches that can perpetuate an academic achievement gap between white students and children of color” (p. 1).

Therefore, in this study I specifically examined Caucasian female teachers’ cultural identity consciousness through interviews and observations to determine how and if this awareness relates to their utilization of culturally relevant pedagogical and management skills.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Effective teachers of low socioeconomic African American students must possess a combination of skills, which includes the ability to instruct and manage the classroom environment. In this section of the literature review, I will discuss the research that identifies and discusses culturally relevant pedagogy.

Ladson-Billings (1994) conducted an ethnographic study that analyzed the pedagogy of eight effective teachers of African American students. In this study, three out of the eight teachers designated as effective by parents and administrators were Caucasian females. Ladson-Billings selected these teachers through community nomination. She received nominations from parents who attended local churches located in the school zone. These parents identified effective teachers based on students’ academic achievement, the teachers’ willingness to involve parents in the classroom, the teachers’ demand for academic excellence, and the teachers’ ability to discipline students without using demeaning or harmful methods. The parents identified 17 teachers from a total of 200 elementary and middle school teachers in the district. Ladson-Billings cross

checked these nominations by consulting with the principals of one middle school and seven elementary schools in the district. The principals nominated 22 teachers based on student achievement, attendance, and the teachers' ability to manage the class. From the two lists, nine teachers were nominated by parents and principals. Eight of those teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Ladson-Billings (1994) conducted interviews and formed a research collective which allowed the participants and the researcher to analyze and discuss pedagogical strategies, conduct classroom observations, hold post-observation conferences, and videotape classroom activities that were viewed, analyzed, and discussed in the research collective. Ladson-Billings used dialogue extensively to obtain knowledge about the pedagogy of effective teachers of African American students. Through these techniques, Ladson-Billings defined culturally relevant teaching and identified three dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Ladson-Billings discovered that effective teachers of African American students utilize culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy occurs when teachers focus on students' academic achievement, develop students' cultural competence, and foster students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Culturally relevant teachers are cognizant of their own cultures and the cultures of their students. This type of consciousness allows culturally relevant teachers to build an atmosphere of cultural respect and to scaffold instruction in a manner that accounts for cultural diversity and promotes the academic success of students.

Ladson-Billings (1994) identified three dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy that exemplify characteristics of effective teachers of African American students. In the first dimension, Ladson-Billings noted that culturally relevant teachers view themselves, their students, and their students' parents in distinctive ways. These teachers possess an understanding of their cultural and racial attributes and acknowledge the differences between their students' racial and cultural attributes. Ladson-Billings stated these teachers have high self esteem and high regard for others. These teachers believe all students can learn; they help students make connections between their community and the rest of the world, and they view students as possessing knowledge. These teachers view themselves as artists and as a part of the community they serve. They perceive teaching as a way to give back to the community.

In the second dimension, Ladson-Billings (1994) found that culturally relevant teachers organize and structure the classroom to enhance the social relationships among students. These teachers establish teacher-student relationships that promote a family atmosphere where students are allowed to become leaders, ask questions, express feelings, and assist in the academic growth of each other. Culturally relevant teachers develop student/parent-teacher relationships beyond the classroom. They find ways to facilitate out-of-school interactions with parents and students. These teachers demonstrate a connectedness to each student to insure each student recognizes his or her individual importance.

Ladson-Billings' (1994) third dimension of culturally relevant pedagogy of effective teachers of African American students focused on how culturally relevant

teachers reject teacher-proof curricula and how they help students understand and build knowledge. Culturally relevant teachers understand that knowledge is continuously recreated, recycled, and shared among students and teachers. These teachers teach their students to think critically about lessons that are presented; are passionate about content and the development of necessary skills students will need to achieve academically, and acknowledge a broad range of excellence in their classrooms.

Howard (2003) analyzed the role of critical teacher reflection in implementing culturally relevant teaching practices. He proffered that teachers' critical reflection about their culture and their students' culture is essential for the creation of culturally relevant instructional strategies. Howard believed that teacher educators must prepare pre-service teachers to work in educational environments where their students' backgrounds will differ from their background and to recognize how these differences should impact instructional delivery. Howard examined three central ideas related to critical reflection and teacher/student racial and cultural incongruence.

First, Howard (2003) examined the impacts of race and culture on teaching and learning. He pointed out the academic deficiencies evidenced in African American's and Latino's achievement scores and their over representation in special education classes. These academic deficiencies require an examination of the impact of race and culture on teaching and learning. Howard asserted that once teachers become aware, through critical reflection of how racial and cultural differences impact learning, the teachers will recognize and respect the differences and utilize the differences to enhance students' learning.

Howard (2003) also examined why critical reflection is essential to the development of culturally relevant pedagogy. He stated, “To become culturally relevant, teachers need to engage in honest, critical reflection that challenges them to see how their positionality influences their students in either positive or negative ways” (p. 197). Howard identified three areas of critical reflection for the development of culturally relevant teaching. First, teachers must recognize and acknowledge the hegemonic notions in educating students and critique their thoughts and actions to prevent duplicating the negative notions of the norm. Second, teachers must recognize the relationship between culture and learning and respect and use the cultural background students bring to school to increase their achievement. Third, teachers must realize that hegemonic, traditional teaching practices are not as productive to students’ achievement as providing teaching practices that incorporate a wide range of engaging styles to meet the particular needs of the students.

Finally, Howard (2003) presented skills and suggestions to help teachers, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators to critically reflect about racial and cultural differences and to develop culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard suggested that teacher educators need to be individuals who are able to effectively address the volatile and complex issues of race and culture. Howard also reminded educators that critical, self reflection is a process that never ends. He also stated that critical, reflective educators understand what they are analyzing and why it needs to be analyzed. These types of educators recognize teaching is not a neutral act and it has political, social, and cultural implications. Finally, Howard stated that educators, who reflect critically about pedagogy

and the cultural and racial implications of educating diverse students, realize there are variances in groups which prevent them from stereotyping students based on the generalities that can be attributed to a particular group of people.

Hyland (2005) conducted an ethnographic study that consisted of four female Caucasian teachers who identified themselves as effective teachers of African American students. Hyland also examined the metaphors selected by these teachers that supported their roles and beliefs of what an effective educator is. Concurrently, she examined how these teachers' perceptions of effectiveness could perpetrate a racist ideology and a continuation of the status quo of hegemonic principles. Hyland closely examined how these teachers could unwittingly promulgate racist ideology when they thought they were providing African American students with a good education. Hyland also compared the four teachers' central metaphor, the main way the teachers describe themselves, to characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy.

This study was a part of a larger three-year ethnographic project at the only majority African American elementary school in a small mid-western city. The school was comprised of approximately 350 students—72% African American, 25% Caucasian, and 3% other. The students at this school usually scored lower on standardized tests than the other eleven elementary schools in the school district. Teachers' attrition rate was traditionally higher at this school. The faculty consisted of 35 professional staff (27 were Caucasian). African American personnel included the principal, Reading Recovery® teacher, four classroom teachers, and most of the instructional assistants and lunch aides. There were only two male teachers on the staff.

Hyland (2005) collected data from individual interviews, focus groups, observations, and teachers' journals. In order to identify central metaphors for each teacher, Hyland went through all of the transcriptions, observation notes, and field notes to locate words that the teachers used to describe themselves. Hyland used constant comparative data analysis to identify the four teachers' instructional practices and beliefs in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy. Hyland was able to ascertain how these teachers performed in racist ways, even when they thought they were affording their students a good education.

Each of the four teachers identified with different "central metaphors" (Hyland, 2005, p. 430). Pam, a veteran of 34 years, was an exceptional education teacher whose central metaphor was *helper*. She indicated she was a successful teacher of African American students because she was able to help the students and their families. Pam felt her helpfulness was indicative of caring for her students. Pam also considered herself a protector of people who are discriminated against. However, Hyland detected that Pam saw her students and their families as needy and incapable of taking care of themselves. Hyland further points out that Pam's actions demonstrated a sense of superiority which diametrically goes against the culturally relevant characteristic of respecting and valuing the students and their communities.

Sylvia, one of the four teachers, had taught for two years at the school and considered herself to be an *assimilator*. Sylvia was a Latina who had been raised by Caucasian adoptive parents and considered herself Caucasian. Sylvia believed she was effective with African American students because she could teach them how to navigate

the hegemonic norms of society. Sylvia believed students who chose to affiliate with the hegemonic norms (“whiteness”) of society would be successful like her. Hyland (2005) stated that Sylvia’s racist embedded assimilator metaphor caused her to have low expectations of African American and Latino students. In contrast, culturally relevant teachers have high expectations of their students.

Carmen, a teacher of six years, identified her central metaphor as *intercultural communicator*. Carmen placed an emphasis on understanding culture and felt she was good at becoming a part of a different culture. Carmen learned the group norms and imitated the norms of the group through communication styles and actions. Carmen stated she did not believe in the hegemonic ideas of the sociopolitical climate. However, Hyland wondered if Carmen had truly adopted the culture of African American students with respect or had she simply adopted their behaviors. Carmen saw Caucasian culture as de-politicized and neutral. She did not understand the honored position of being Caucasian.

Hyland’s (2005) final participant was Maizie. Maizie taught 3 years and considered herself to be a *radical*. When Maizie first began to teach, she used deficit perspectives to describe her students. Eventually, Maizie’s beliefs about students, teachers, and racism changed. Maizie began to understand the importance of analyzing and talking about racism. Maizie even challenged colleagues about how and what they said that was improper to students. Hyland believed Maizie was the closest approximation to a culturally relevant teacher, and sadly, this in itself was radical.

In conclusion, Hyland (2005) indicated the role of central metaphor highlighted how four Caucasian teachers defined themselves as effective teachers of African American students. Nevertheless, these perceptions manifested in actions that sustained racial ideologies. Hyland also found that the teachers' resistance to acknowledging racism was strong and supported within the context of school.

Honaker (2003) utilized a qualitative case study design to examine two effective Caucasian female elementary school teachers who taught African American students in Title I literacy classes. She selected effective teachers of reading based on the six critical qualities of knowledge and practice identified by the International Reading Association. Honaker conducted six interviews and eight classroom observations with each teacher and collected and examined artifacts to gain information about the teachers' effective pedagogical techniques. Honaker analyzed the teachers' personal experiences, beliefs, and instructional practices to ascertain what made them effective. She discovered that these two successful Caucasian female teachers routinely embedded cultural diversity into their reflective instructional planning and execution of lessons to ensure students received enriched educational experiences. These teachers successfully translated the knowledge of their students' cultural diversity into instructional strategies that made learning more palpable for the students.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this literature review was to gain knowledge about the impact of culture and language patterns in the educational process of African American students

and analyze the cultural and linguistic differences between Caucasian female teachers and low socioeconomic African American students. Another purpose of this review was to examine the literature on effective pedagogical and management strategies used by Caucasian teachers to teach low socioeconomic African American students. There are distinct language and culture gaps between African American students and Caucasian teachers that often lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and conflict. These cultural and language gaps are detrimental to many African American students' academic success and Caucasian female teachers' longevity in schools that serve low socioeconomic African American students. There needs to be continued research in this area to illuminate the specific cultural and linguistic differences faced by Caucasian female elementary school teachers and African American students. Specific information on how effective Caucasian female teachers utilize culturally relevant teaching and management strategies in elementary classrooms with predominantly African American students is limited. Because the vast majority of Caucasian elementary school teachers are females, researchers often extrapolate about their findings to relate specifically to this population. This scarcity of research on effective Caucasian female teachers working with low socioeconomic African American students evidences the need for further research. In this study, I specifically examined effective Caucasian female teachers' utilization of pedagogical and management strategies and their rationales for using the strategies with low socioeconomic African American students.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will describe the research design, including the criteria for site and participant selection, the process for gaining access to the site and receiving participants' consent, the qualitative research techniques that were used to gather data, the fieldwork time frame, the data analysis process, and issues of trustworthiness and credibility. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of the study.

#### **Design**

This study utilized a multiple case study design (Yin, 1994). A single case study is the intensive examination of a single place, person, or event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). However, a multiple case study “involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases” (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). Merriam explains that multiple case studies allow the researcher to present more convincing interpretations than single case studies, and multiple case studies allow the researcher to suggest trends about a phenomenon. Therefore, this design allowed me to describe, analyze, and interpret reoccurring themes and patterns that emerged across cases.

## Site Selection

An urban school district in a southern state with accreditation Level 4 and 5 schools that are in close proximity to the researcher was selected. Close proximity to the research site allowed me to spend extended lengths of time in the school without sacrificing professional and financial stability. Level 4 and 5 accreditation levels are given annually by the state Department of Education. A Level 5 (superior) is the highest designation level, and Level 4 (exemplary) is the next highest designation. Schools' accreditation levels are determined based on the number of students who meet or exceed proficiency levels set by the state. An urban school was needed in this study to examine the complexities among societal ills, racial/cultural issues, and Caucasian female teachers' attrition. Third through fifth grade classrooms were necessary to negate the impact of the role of assistant teachers in pedagogical and classroom management effectiveness. In this school district, kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classrooms have assistant teachers.

After permission to conduct the study was received from the district's Executive Director of Accountability and Research, Turner Elementary School (pseudonym), with a student body comprised of 95% African American students and at least 85% of the students qualified for reduced or free lunches, was selected. Another criterion for school selection was based on the availability of effective Caucasian female teachers teaching third, fourth, or fifth grade classes with at least 95% low socioeconomic African American students. Turner Elementary School was selected because the school has a high

percentage of students performing at or above grade level on the state's criterion-referenced test, which is indicative of effective teachers.

***Applegate Public School District and Turner Elementary School***

The school district in which this study occurred is the largest district in the southern state. There are 59 schools in the district: 38 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, eight high schools, one Career Development Center, and two specialty schools. The district serves approximately 32,000 students. Ninety seven percent of these students are African American, two percent are Caucasian, and the remaining one percent is comprised of Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students. Ninety-one percent of these students receive free or reduced meals.

On the southern outskirts of this district is the school in which this study took place. Turner Elementary is situated so far on the outskirts of the school district and city that there are no homes within a half mile radius of the school. All of the students who attend Turner either ride a bus or are transported by car. Turner Elementary serves approximately 635 students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. There is one pre-kindergarten class; five regular kindergarten and first grade classrooms; four second, third and fourth grade classrooms, and five fifth grade classrooms in the school. Ninety-nine percent of the students are African American, and the other one percent is comprised of Caucasian students. Eighty-five percent of the student body receives free or reduced meals.

Turner Elementary is a one story school with an “F” formation. Upon entering the tan brick school, the wide foyer opens to the administrative offices on one side and the music room on the other side. The foyer is professionally decorated with furniture that would easily fit in the décor of a traditional lawyer’s office. The leather brown couch and arm chairs form a “U” around the coffee table that holds parent information pamphlets and education magazines. The first wing of the school contains fourth and fifth grade classes and students’ restrooms. Down the main corridor, the cafeteria and a second set of students’ restrooms are found. Right past the cafeteria, the second wing has been designated for first grade classes, a pre-kindergarten class, the library, and the computer lab. If one travels through the doors at the end of the hallway, eight portable classrooms can be seen. These portables contain kindergarten students and exceptional education classrooms. At the lower end of the long main corridor, second and third grade classes can be found. The school playground and walking track are located outside the doors of this long corridor.

The school has many student work samples displayed on the walls of both wings. At the front of the building near the office, there are two 3’ x 6’ bulletin boards that display various student work samples. These boards are updated monthly. Throughout the building there are also 3’ x 2’ posters that display the descriptors of what makes Turner Elementary a great school.

Turner Elementary School’s climate can be felt as soon as a person enters the building. The voices of teaching and learning are heard immediately. One day when I entered the office, there was a group of first grade students and their teacher involved in a

scavenger hunt for academically focused notes that lead to new clues throughout the building. Turner Elementary is a school where children can talk and interact socially. Students' voices can be heard as they stand in the hallway to go to lunch or the bathroom. Albeit, the noise level is kept at an appropriate level, and if the voices get too loud teachers can be heard reminding students to lower their voices.

### **Participant Selection**

To increase the depth of understanding concerning effective Caucasian female teachers of African American students, a purposeful sampling method was utilized. Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants who are more likely information laden with respect to the purposes of the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Therefore, two effective Caucasian female teachers were identified for this study. Based on the criteria mentioned earlier for school selection, 12 elementary school principals in the Applegate Public School District were contacted in a face-to-face meeting or by phone. During this personal contact, the general purpose of the study was explained, and the principal was asked to identify potential participants for the study. Principals were given the following criteria for identifying effective Caucasian female teachers. First, teachers needed to teach a third, fourth or fifth grade class of predominantly low socioeconomic African American students. Another criterion required the teacher to have at least 70% of the students scoring at or above grade level in reading, math, and/or language arts on district or state criterion-referenced tests for the past two school years. The last criterion

required the teacher to have fewer discipline referrals than her colleagues who have similar class compositions.

Out of the 12 principals contacted, only seven principals identified teachers. There were 15 teachers identified. Some principals identified as many as three teachers, while others only identified one. After a particular principal identified two teachers and arranged for me to meet them, I quickly realized during the meetings with these teachers that I might not need to schedule anymore meetings with the 13 remaining teachers. These two teachers were willing to participate and seemed to be data laden, which was good for the study.

As mentioned previously, a conference was scheduled with each teacher to explain the purpose and benefits of the study and to ascertain their interest and willingness to participate in the study. I met with each teacher separately after school and introduced myself. The teacher's principal had already informed them about my purpose and helped to schedule the meeting. In my initial introduction, I stated the purpose of the study, how the teacher had been selected, and how the study could be beneficial to other teachers. I also expressed my gratitude to them for meeting with me and informed each teacher what her role would be during the study. I explained that I would slip into the classroom for observations and interview them periodically.

The teachers were asked to sign a consent form. Even though the teachers seemed willing to sign the consent form immediately, I gave them the opportunity to carefully read and think about the request for a week. When I returned to retrieve the consent form, each teacher had signed the form and warmly welcomed me into the classroom for my

first observation. The teachers seemed to be honored to participate in this study and basically seemed a bit awed that they had been selected based on their effectiveness. The consent form also explained how the study would be conducted, listed the study's expectations for the participating teachers, and stated any risks or discomforts the study might cause. For those teachers who consented to participating in the study, I conducted an initial observation in their classrooms to get a sense of their pedagogical and management styles. As Glesne (1990) states, "the strategy of participant selection in qualitative inquiry rests on multiple purposes of illuminating, interpreting, and understanding—and on your own imagination and judgment" (p. 30). Therefore, after the first observation, I selected the teachers who were more likely to be information laden and whom I judged would be easier to develop rapport and a productive relationship. As I observed, I monitored teacher/student interactions, classroom arrangement, and instructional delivery.

### *Mrs. Susie Green*

When people meet Mrs. Green, they notice the smile that envelopes her whole face. It starts at her mouth and quickly jumps to her brown eyes. Her inquisitive eyes seem to twinkle with the joy of being around students. Mrs. Green has a habit of tilting her head to the right and furrowing her brows when she is puzzled or in deep thought that also makes a noticeable first impression on a person.

Mrs. Green is a lifelong native of the city and a product of the public schools in which the study took place. Mrs. Green is 55 years old and appears to be healthy and

active. Even though Mrs. Green stands only 5'2" tall with a medium framed body, she seems to tower above all of her students—even when she is standing with one of her fifth grade boys, looking up at him with her hand on one of his shoulders. The admiration that flows back and forth between Mrs. Green and her students is what elevates her stature.

Mrs. Green dresses in oxford cloth shirts, modest A-line skirts, typically made of denim, or trousers with elastic in the waist. Her appearance is always neat, because she wears her shirt tucked at the waist. Her straight black hair is highlighted with a reddish, brown color. Her chic, somewhat spiked, short hair style is precisely cut and is always in place. She wears low, open back shoes, loafers, or sandals. This attire allows her to stay on her feet to move constantly from one student to the next and back to the overhead projector, which she uses for a podium and major teaching tool. Often she stands at the podium facing her students either with her reading glasses on the bridge of her nose, when she is reading from a book or the overhead projector, or her glasses will be swinging on a chain around her neck.

Mrs. Green graduated from one of the state's major universities with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a first through ninth grade teaching certificate. Mrs. Green has not attended graduate school; however, she has attended a plethora of professional development sessions offered by the Applegate Public School District.

Mrs. Green began her teaching career 27 years ago in the Applegate Public School District where she works currently. She has worked in only three schools during her 27 years of teaching. Her first teaching assignment was at a school that served predominately Caucasian elementary school students. She worked in this school as a

second grade teacher for one semester before she was transferred to another school. Mrs. Green was transferred because she lacked seniority. Since this transfer, the two successive schools where she has worked have been comprised of mostly African American students. In the first African American school, Mrs. Green taught fourth graders for 14 years. In her current school, she has taught either fourth or fifth grade students for the past 13 years.

During the 2006-2007 school year, for the first time, Mrs. Green looped up to fifth grade with her class of fourth graders. The principal asked Mrs. Green to move to fourth grade during school year 2005-2006, because of the poor academic level of the incoming fourth grade students. When her fourth graders were promoted to fifth grade, Mrs. Green asked the principal if she could move to fifth grade (loop) with her students from her fourth grade class. Mrs. Green was thrilled about looping with her students because she knew where they were academically, socially, and emotionally. She stated, "I did not have to waste nine weeks trying to figure out where they were." All of Mrs. Green's current students were not members of her class during the previous school year. Ten out of the 26 students were new to the classroom. Many of these new students transferred into the school and a few of the students were in other teachers' classrooms during the previous year. The principal moved some students who attended Turner Elementary during their fourth grade year into Mrs. Green's classroom for reasons of which she was unaware.

Mrs. Green's husband also carries a passion for working with children. Basically, every summer he coaches a Little League baseball team. She met her husband in a local

high school when they were 15 years old, and eventually married her high school sweetheart 35 years ago. They have two sons who are also products of the local school district. Her oldest son works in the school district as the Director of Information Technology and the youngest son is a freshman in college. Mrs. Green talks constantly of the importance of family and the need for parents to put their children first. She states, “My parents always put themselves behind to put me first. I did the same thing for my own boys. Every little bit of money went to them. Everything we did went to them.”

### ***Mrs. Susie Green’s Classroom***

Mrs. Green’s fifth grade classroom is located down the first wing of the school and is the typical elementary classroom with students’ desks, dry erase board, overhead projector, educational posters, and posted student work samples. The classroom appears to be small because there are at least 27 desks in the room. During the study, Mrs. Green rearranged the desks at least 4 times to better manage student behavior. On most occasions, the desks were arranged so that students were seated with a partner or in groups of fours. The classroom was organized with one teaching focal point which was the dry erase board. The overhead projector screen was affixed to the wall over the board, and Mrs. Green spent most of her whole group teaching time at the front of the room beside the overhead projector.

Across from the doorway is a wall of windows from the ceiling to three-fourths of the way to the floor. Most times, Mrs. Green kept the blinds drawn to the halfway position to let additional light in the room. Under the wall of windows is an old heating

unit that was used before the school district installed central air and heat. To the right of the doorway is the dry erase board. On the ledge of the dry erase board, there were books with African American characters and other books that would interest the students.

Mrs. Green's desk is a 3' x 4' executive desk located in the back of the room near a wall of cubbies that are used to store students' books, book bags, and coats. A comfortable black leather office chair that swivels around and tilts back and forward is located behind her desk. The only time I saw Mrs. Green sitting in this chair was in the afternoon after the students had left. She normally would be in her comfortable chair with her glasses on the bridge of her nose grading papers.

Mrs. Green's organizational skills were evidenced in the labeled crates above the students' cubbies, a filing shelf and cabinet located near her desk, and labeled subject trays for students to submit assignments. Everything in her classroom had a designated place. Students knew where to place or retrieve materials and resources, and they often did so without asking Mrs. Green. Mrs. Green's organizational methods allowed the students to freely locate and replace classroom items without interrupting her during instruction.

### *Mrs. Wilma Wood*

Mrs. Wood is a southern lady who grew up in Monroe, Louisiana, where she met and married her husband of 35 years. Even though she is a Louisianan, she lived in California for 20 years. Her husband was a pastor of a church there. Once her five children became older, Mrs. Wood's husband suggested she attend college. This had always been her dream. She enrolled at Fresno State in the elementary education program, where it took her seven consecutive years to graduate with her teaching credentials. It took her seven years because family constraints did not allow her to take full class loads.

After persevering through college, Mrs. Wood began to teach in California as a third grade teacher in a predominately Hispanic school. For the next 5 years, she worked as a third grade teacher in an affluent area. The majority of the school's student population was Caucasian. In this school, Mrs. Wood participated in professional development from the well-known math specialist, Marilyn Burns. Mrs. Wood was impacted greatly by the instruction she received under Marilyn Burns. She attributes much of her pedagogical strength to Burns' training sessions and materials. Mrs. Wood stated, "I have almost everything that AIMS ever had. I have the magazines, books, and kits." AIMS stands for the Academy of Instruction for Mathematics and Sciences.

In 2003, Mrs. Wood came to Mississippi where she was hired at Turner Elementary to teach fifth grade students. After one year teaching fifth graders at Turner, she was assigned to third grade, where she has been for the last three years. Mrs. Wood expresses a deep passion for students and their achievement. She stated, "I know what I

am doing is the best. I know that. I love to see kids figure out and know what they are doing and why they are doing it. I love children. I just love them.”

Mrs. Wood is an impressive sight with her long, straight platinum gray hair that she wears either with the sides pulled back with a barrette at the top of her head or flowing down below her shoulder blades. As Mrs. Wood walks back and forth in front of her class or down the hall, it is apparent that her 5 feet 3 inch, medium-framed stature has already begun to stoop forward.

Even though her posture and platinum gray hair might insinuate that she is an elderly, frail lady, the reality is totally different than what appearances would lead one to believe. Looks are clearly misleading in the case of Mrs. Wood. She is a very attractive, energetic, and fashionable lady. Mrs. Wood has a simplistic elegance about her and carries herself in a confident manner. She dresses in a simple manner; however each simple outfit has a splash of unique sophistication. She takes the typical teacher’s outfit of a skirt and blouse and enhances it by wearing uniquely styled blouses or skirts. Often she accents her outfits with a jazzy belt or fashionable shoes.

Mrs. Wood is measurably animated and energetic during her lessons. She constantly moves among the students to keep them attentive and mesmerized about what is being taught. When standing before her students, Mrs. Wood confidently delivers instruction with her hands on her hips or gesturing in the air. There is a hint of the authoritativeness and sternness of a drill sergeant in her demeanor. As she teaches, she demands, cajoles, and ensures her students think as they learn. She often tells her students, “You got to be a thinker. I am not thinking for you.”

There is a western toughness about this teacher who rides horses on a daily basis and lives on a 30-acre plot of land with her husband, grown children, and grandchildren. Her love for her family, especially her seven grandchildren is evident in her conversations. She stated, “We celebrate being a family. We all pull together to help each other.”

### ***Mrs. Wilma Wood’s Classroom***

Mrs. Wood’s third grade classroom is located near the end of the long main corridor. Her classroom is organized to promote cooperative groups and pairs. The 24 student desks are arranged in pods of fours and sixes which allows for more space in the classroom. Her room is organized in a manner that allows her to have two teaching focal points. One focal point is the dry erase board that is located in the front of the room, and the other focal point is the wall near the door that Mrs. Wood uses to project images from the overhead projector. During a lesson, Mrs. Woods moves in between both of these points.

Mrs. Wood’s desk is located to the side of the room near the wall of windows that have blinds pulled all the way to the top. Mrs. Wood’s desk reflects her personal interests. She has three framed pictures of family members, and family pictures can also be seen through the clear glass that covers the top of her desk. At the far left corner of her desk are a porcelain lamp and a desk fountain that has stones in it but no water. Occasionally, she has a scented burning candle on her desk. However, she seldom sits at her desk. Mrs. Wood is normally posted near the board or at the overhead projector stand.

On the wall near her desk, she displays her professional side. She has her framed diploma, teaching license, and professional training certificates displayed on the wall. She also has school-related memos, newsletters, and flyers nearby. On her desk is an Internet accessible computer. On the shelves behind her desk is an assortment of shelves and file cabinets used for storage and additional table space.

On the back wall Mrs. Wood has a word wall, and below this wall are the sink, an aquarium, bins of math manipulatives, cabinets, and her personal refrigerator and microwave oven. The classroom walls are decorated with commercial educational posters, teacher-made charts, and student work samples. Many of the posters are motivational in nature. Mrs. Wood's favorite poster states, "To Think You Can Is to Know You Can".

### **Data Collection**

To identify which pedagogical and management strategies effective Caucasian female teachers utilize with low socioeconomic African American students and to determine why effective Caucasian female teachers use these pedagogical and management strategies, I observed in classrooms and conducted interviews with teachers. These methods provided information that led to increased knowledge and understanding. In this section, I discuss the types of interviews that were used to collect data. The interview guide for the initial interview is provided. Then, I discuss how observations were conducted and how the observation data were recorded.

## *Interviews*

Initially, each teacher was interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. The semi-structured interview contained planned questions that both teachers were asked and follow-up questions that resulted from the teachers' answers to the planned questions. This type of interview allowed me to redirect and probe with questions that were generated from the teachers' responses to set questions (Merriam, 1998). Some questions asked information that was straight-forward, such as "describe your educational background." Other questions were more open-ended to allow the teachers to share their perspectives. The follow-up questions allowed me to ask for more information and clarification and helped me better understand the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 1998).

To conduct the initial semi-structured interview, each teacher was asked to specify the most convenient location and time for her. Each teacher stated that they preferred to meet after school in their classroom for the first interview. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. I tape-recorded the interview with the teachers' permission, and the tapes were transcribed by me as soon as possible after the interview was concluded. I used an Olympus Digital Wave Player which allowed me to download recorded interviews to my personal computer. This digital recorder is one inch wide and three inches long which made it unobtrusive. Tape recording the interviews allowed me to focus on the teacher as she spoke to capture more data than if I had only

taken notes, and the digital recorder's download capabilities allowed for easier transcription of the data.

Mrs. Green was interviewed four times for approximately 60 minutes each time. She was interviewed once in August, October, November, and February. Mrs. Green's initial interview occurred in her classroom one hot, muggy August afternoon three weeks into the new school year. The students had been dismissed for the day, and the custodians had begun to clean the school and her classroom—there was a small pile of trash on the floor. When I arrived in Mrs. Green's classroom, she was at her desk grading papers. She invited me to sit in a chair that was near her desk. I positioned the chair so we could sit facing each other without the desk being in between us. She sat in her executive chair, and I sat in a student chair. We both felt a bit awkward, since this was our first official conversation about the study. I continued to build rapport with Mrs. Green by acknowledging her effectiveness as a teacher and by stating the purpose of the study and the possible benefits that could stem from the study. I felt stating the purpose and the benefits would ease some of the apprehension that Mrs. Green might have been feeling. I explained to her that because she was already an effective Caucasian female teacher that an analysis of her pedagogical and management strategies could help other teachers to be as effective as she is with teaching low socioeconomic African American students. Mrs. Green responded to this compliment with a self-effacing comment. She stated, "I do not know if I have much I can tell you. I just love the students and I love teaching them." As the interview progressed, apprehensions subsided and Mrs. Green became more comfortable.

Mrs. Wood was interviewed three times for at least 60 minutes for each interview. She was interviewed once in September, November, and January. Mrs. Wood's initial interview occurred in the classroom after the students had gone to a special subject (Special subjects are music, library, counseling and physical education). We had not been able to meet after school as we had originally scheduled, due to unforeseen conferences and meetings. When Mrs. Wood and I met for the first interview, I had already observed in her classroom. Mrs. Wood seemed very comfortable with my classroom visits and observations. She conducted class as if I were not there. Therefore, a rapport had been established between the two of us. I began to establish rapport with Mrs. Wood when I gave her the consent form. We talked briefly about the study and her selection for participation. The need to ease any apprehension did not present itself during Mrs. Wood's initial interview. However, I stated the purpose of the study prior to starting the interview. Mrs. Wood and I sat across from each other at a low table in her classroom as she confidently pondered and responded to my queries. The interview lasted almost an hour and had to be concluded when the students returned from their special subject class.

The following pre-determined questions were in the interview guide.

1. Tell me about your educational background and experiences.
2. Tell me about your background.
3. Tell me what you know about your students' background.
4. Why do you think you are an effective teacher of African American students?
5. What cultural differences have you noticed between African American students and yourself?

6. How have these differences impacted the way you teach African American students?

The majority of the interviews in this study were unstructured, informal interviews that occurred after observations. The informal interviews were basically exploratory conversations that were not predetermined prior to the observation. These interviews were used to clarify observations and to explore new issues (Merriam, 1998). Informal interviews took place periodically after instructional time in the teacher's classroom. Each of the seven interviews lasted at least 60 minutes, were tape-recorded (with the teacher's permission) and transcribed.

### *Observations*

Observations conducted in this study allowed me to obtain additional information that might not have been captured during interviews (Gall et al., 2003). Observations also allowed me to monitor interviews for confirmations or discrepancies of the teachers' statements. This triangulation process allowed me to verify information gained from interviews, and to ask additional questions that surfaced due to an observation (Gall et al., 2003). My main purpose for classroom observation was to identify the pedagogical and management strategies effective Caucasian female teachers utilize with low socioeconomic African American students. I observed the teachers' lessons, the interactions between the teacher and students, and the classroom arrangement to ascertain and analyze effective strategies utilized by the teacher.

Observation data were obtained through the observer role. In the observer role, I observed and had little or no interaction with the teacher and students (Glesne, 1999). I sat in an inconspicuous location in the classroom where I observed and heard the interactions between the teacher and students. During observations, extensive notes that captured key phrases and events were taken, as well as, the materials the teacher and the students used, the activities in which they participated or initiated, and the classroom environment (including the arrangement of the room, for example student desks grouped in circles to promote small group discussion). As soon as possible after the observation, a detailed descriptive account of the observations was word processed. In addition to the descriptive account of the observations, I made reflective notes, which were designated as observer's comments (OC) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Observer's comments presented my feelings, reactions, hunches, questions, and preliminary codes about the observation (Merriam, 1998). I also remained conscious of and noted any subjective feelings during observations by writing SF for subjectivity file in my field notes (Glesne, 1999).

Each classroom was observed at various times during the school day during a six-month span. This allowed me to observe different aspects of the instructional day, including various strategies the teacher used to teach different subjects and how the teacher handled transitions during the day. Mrs. Green was observed six times with each observation lasting from 45 to 60 minutes. She was observed three times in September and once in October, November, and January. Mrs. Wood was observed five times with each observation lasting 45 to 60 minutes. She was observed twice in September and once in October, November, and January. This prolonged, persistent observation helped

to build trust, learn the culture of the classroom, and investigate new ideas and hunches that occurred during the study (Glesne, 1999). Periodically, after the field notes had been typed, I met with each teacher after instructional time at school to discuss her rationale for particular actions or language she used during interactions with students. These exploratory conversations helped me understand why the teacher used particular strategies and provided confirmation for emerging codes or hunches.

### **Data Analysis**

Glesne (1999) and Merriam (1998) state that data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously so that the researcher can focus and refine the study as needed. As data were collected during this study, the analysis of data informed further collection of data. As I analyzed the data during data collection, I read my research questions and made observer comments, noted as “OC” in my field notes and interview transcriptions. These OC’s reflected my reactions, interpretations, initial codes, and new questions to pursue during future interviews and observations. For example, during an observation in Mrs. Wood’s classroom, I saw a behavior chart taped on the right corner of the students’ desks. In my field notes, under observer’s comments, I noted that there were 14 criteria listed on the chart and that I needed to ask Mrs. Wood to explain the chart to me. In a subsequent interview, she gave me a very detailed explanation of the behavior chart.

As suggested by Glesne (1999), I also maintained a subjectivity file to remain cognizant of and control biases that could shape the data analysis process. I recorded any strong reactions or emotions that I experienced while in the field and during analysis of

data. In qualitative research, a researcher's subjectivity, once acknowledged, can be monitored to contribute to a more trustworthy study (Glesne, 1999).

Periodically, I read through the data to identify pervasive ideas, questions, and concerns. After perusing the data, I wrote memos to myself to record my interpretations and feelings arising from the data (Merriam, 1998). For example, after Mrs. Green's initial interview, I wrote:

Mrs. Green seemed afraid or cautious about the issue of race. Every time I asked a cultural background question, she answered me as if I asked a question about race. She gave the typical Caucasian person answer, "I don't see race as an issue." (I wrote in the field notes after this sentence in capital letters—SF for subjectivity file.) I must be able to get beyond the race issue in our conversations. Hopefully, this occurs with extended time with each other. I also must control my urge to talk and allow the teacher to talk more. I was too chatty today. I also felt some sensitivity to Mrs. Green's inability to separate race from culture—SF.

Additionally, after each day of data collection, the data were coded and categorized using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method is a continuous searching process of comparing data across and within categories to find patterns and themes in the data (Leedy, 1997; Merriam, 1998). As I constantly compared data, I generated, combined, and eliminated codes that gave me insights and directional leads to answer my research questions. The constant comparative method was begun in the field as data were collected. During data collection and the analysis after the data were collected, I constantly perused the data for initial

codes and categories and compared previous initial codes and categories to more recent ones. As data grew, new codes and categories emerged and some previous categories collapsed into the newer ones. Also, a multiple case study design was used where the data analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the data were analyzed within a single case. Once that was completed, a cross-case analysis was conducted to generate salient themes (Merriam, 1998).

At the end of the data collection stage, I organized the 93 pages of interviews, 76 pages of observation notes which I took while in the classroom, and the 48 pages of field notes I made that expanded the observations notes by giving a more descriptive account of the observation's context and my emotional disposition during the observation. The data were doubled spaced, and the pages and lines were numbered to ensure that once segments of data were separated from the original document, the data segments could easily be connected back to the original document. Original, hard copies of the data were organized chronologically by data type in loose-leaf binders, and electronic files were organized in folders in word processing files, which enabled me to easily locate data. For example, each teacher's data were separated based on whether the data came from interviews, observations, or field notes. Then the files from these different sections of data were placed in the notebooks, based on the date the data were gathered.

After the data were organized, I adhered to Bogdan's and Biklen's (2003) suggestion and began the formal data analysis phase by reading over all the data several times during an undisturbed length of time for each teacher separately. As I read, I developed a preliminary list of codes and numbered the codes based on the order in

which they were identified in the documents. Then the numbers were used to identify other data segments that related to the codes. Many data segments related to more than one initial code.

In Mrs. Green's data, 30 initial codes were identified, and in Mrs. Wood's data 44 initial codes were generated (see Table 3.1). The codes were defined based on examples of data and/or descriptions of what the codes involved. Then, I examined the codes to determine if they could be grouped into categories. The codes could be organized into four categories that correspond with the major focus of each research question. The categories were: Pedagogy, Classroom Management, Culture, and Linguistic. Therefore, I began to group the codes into these four categories. For example, when I looked at Mrs. Wood's preliminary codes, it was easy for me to discern that *tolerance for noise*, *management strategies*, *routines and procedures*, *specific behavioral expectations*, and *seating arrangements*, could be grouped under classroom management. These codes were grouped under the classroom management category because they dealt with the organization of the classroom or students' discipline. However, when the codes were organized into the four categories, there were codes that described data that were more emotional and reflected more affective aspects of teaching. Examples of these codes include the following: *do it to please me*, *sincerity and caring*, *speaking into existence*, and *belief in children*. Because these codes did not correspond with one of the four categories, I created a fifth category, Affective, in which to group these codes (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). In several instances, there were codes that were categorized under more than one category. For example, the code *praise* was placed in three categories: behavior,

pedagogy, and affective. If the teacher praised students for behavior management purposes, the data segment was placed in the behavior category; if students received praise for academic work, the data segment was placed under pedagogy, and if praise was given for motivational reasons, the data segment was placed under affective.

Table 3.1 Preliminary Codes for Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood

<b>Green's Codes</b>	<b>Wood's Codes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating Excitement</li> <li>2. Do It to Please the Teacher</li> <li>3. Call Students by Name</li> <li>4. Speaking into Existence</li> <li>5. Start at the Lowest Skill</li> <li>6. Emphasized Thinking</li> <li>7. Explicit Teaching</li> <li>8. Choral Responses</li> <li>9. Peer Interaction</li> <li>10. Ignore Poor Behaviors</li> <li>11. Prepared and Organized</li> <li>12. Account for Individual Differences</li> <li>13. Sincere Caring</li> <li>14. Makes Personal Connections</li> <li>15. Teach How to Apply Strategies</li> <li>16. Praise</li> <li>17. Loosely Structured in a Highly Structured Setting</li> <li>18. Specific Directions</li> <li>19. Kinesthetic</li> <li>20. Consequences</li> <li>21. Isolation</li> <li>22. Gentle Reprimands</li> <li>23. Tangible Rewards</li> <li>24. Crab Mentality</li> <li>25. Parental Statements</li> <li>26. Belief in Children</li> <li>27. Proximity</li> <li>28. Respectfulness</li> <li>29. Humor</li> <li>30. Tolerance for Noise</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tolerance for noise</li> <li>2. Practical real-life application</li> <li>3. Cooperative groups</li> <li>4. Direct instruction—Academic</li> <li>5. Management Strategy</li> <li>6. Thinker Emphasis</li> <li>7. Strategy Teaching</li> <li>8. Think Aloud</li> <li>9. Kinesthetic Involvement</li> <li>10. Praise</li> <li>11. Teacher Movement</li> <li>12. High Stakes Testing Emphasis</li> <li>13. Lowest Skill Review</li> <li>14. Time limits</li> <li>15. Free Movement</li> <li>16. Call by Name</li> <li>17. Student Led Lesson</li> <li>18. Protection from Adverse Consequences</li> <li>19. Eye Contact to Verify Attention</li> <li>20. Authoritative/Sternness</li> <li>21. Created Excitement</li> <li>22. Routines and Procedures</li> <li>23. Making personal connections</li> <li>24. Hands-on activity</li> <li>25. Racial/cultural blindness</li> <li>26. Love/caring</li> <li>27. Specific Behavioral Expectations</li> <li>28. Choral Responses</li> <li>29. Respect/Fairness</li> <li>30. Please the teacher</li> <li>31. Parental Involvement</li> <li>32. Rewards</li> <li>33. Cultural Awareness</li> <li>34. Seating Arrangement</li> <li>35. Wait Time</li> <li>36. Individual Help</li> <li>37. Student Interaction</li> <li>38. Teachable Moments</li> <li>39. Passionate about Content</li> <li>40. Organized and Prepared</li> <li>41. Voice Control</li> <li>42. Sarcasm</li> <li>43. High Expectations</li> <li>44. Listener</li> </ol>

For Mrs. Green's data, the codes were cut and pasted with glue on card stock to allow for easy manipulation of data segments. By the time Mrs. Wood's data was categorized, I used Microsoft Word to technically cut and paste the data segments under categories. This method also allowed me to easily manipulate the data segments. During this process, I assigned to the data segments labels that included the page numbers, line numbers, and abbreviations, which identified the type of document in which the data segment was located. I used "INT" for interviews, "FN" for field notes, and "OBS" for observations. For instance, under the Tolerance for Noise code, the entry *OBS 092606 p. 4 l. 8-10* means that this data segment came from an observation conducted September 26, 2006. The data segment can be located on page four and lines eight through ten (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.2 An Example of Mrs. Green's Categories and Codes

<p style="text-align: center;">Pedagogy</p> <p>Start at the Lowest Skill Peer Interaction Accounts for Individual Differences Makes Personal Connections Choral Responses Teach How to Apply Strategy Kinesthetic Emphasizes Thinking Explicit Teaching Praise</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Classroom Management</p> <p>Call Students by Name Ignore Poor Behavior Prepared and Organized Accounts for Individual Differences Makes Personal Connections Praise Loosely Structured in a Highly Structured Setting Specific Directions Proximity</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Culture</p> <p>Tangible Rewards Respectfulness/Eye Contact Tolerance for Noise Choral Responses Humor</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Linguistics</p> <p>Choral Responses Speaking into Existence Gentle Reprimands</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Affective</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Do It to Please the Teacher Sincere Caring Praise</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Speaking into Existence Belief in Children Personal Connections</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Do It to Please the Teacher Sincere Caring Praise</p>	<p>Speaking into Existence Belief in Children Personal Connections</p>
<p>Do It to Please the Teacher Sincere Caring Praise</p>	<p>Speaking into Existence Belief in Children Personal Connections</p>		

Table 3.3 An Example of Mrs. Wood's Categories and Codes

<p style="text-align: center;">Pedagogy</p> <p>Practical Real-Life Applications          Cooperative Groups          Direct Instruction          Thinker Emphasis          Strategy Teaching          Think Alouds          Kinesthetic          Praise          High Stakes Testing Emphasis          Lowest Skills Review</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Classroom Management</p> <p>Tolerance for Noise          Authoritativeness/Sternness          Prepared and Organized          Routines and Expectations          Praise          Time Limits          Specific Behavioral Expectations          Rewards          Free Movement          Voice Control</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Culture</p> <p>Racial/Cultural Blindness          Rewards          Respectfulness/Eye Contact          Cooperative Groups          Choral Responses</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Linguistics</p> <p>Choral Responses          Voice Control          Authoritative/Sternness</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Affective</p> <p>Loving and Caring          Respect/Fairness          Please the Teacher</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Make Personal Connections          Praise</p>	

Table 3.4 Wood's Classroom Management Category—Data Segments

(1) Tolerance of Noise
OBS 092606 p. 4 l. 8-10
OBS 101206 p. 1 l. 6-7
OBS 101206 p. 2 l. 2-4
(22/27) Routines and Expectations
INT 092106 p.12 l.4-17
OBS 092606 p. 1 l. 4-9
OBS 102406 p.1 l. 7-8
(40) Prepared and Organized
OBS 092606 p. 6 l. 8-9
FN 010807 p.1 l. 11-12
INT 011707 p. 1 l. 7-9
(10) Praise
OBS 091906 p. 3 l. 21-1
FN 010807 p. 4 l. 9-10
INT 111506 p. 4 l. 11-19
OBS 012407 p. 1 l. 13-18

During this phase of the data analysis, many of the initial codes were absorbed into other initial codes due to ideas that began to emerge from the data. One example of this occurrence applies to Mrs. Green's codes: *authoritative directives, specific directions, and review rules*. All three of these initial codes were eventually placed under the initial code "highly structured with a loose appearance." During the perusal and moving of data segments, I recognized a classroom management strategy that Mrs. Green utilizes to establish a classroom that appears to be loosely structured; however, in actuality it is highly structured.

During the next phase of data analysis in this multiple case study design, I conducted a cross-case analysis to determine similarities and differences between the teachers. I examined the themes for each teacher and discovered a common, salient theme

that indicated each teacher held a fundamental belief that student/teacher relationships were important to students' success. Then the data were compared based on the four research questions.

To ensure manageability of the data collection and retrieval process, I used Microsoft Word computer program. Data were filed chronologically based on data type into files using Microsoft Word and a rudimentary notebook system. During observations and interviews, many notes were taken manually and/or with a laptop computer word processing software.

Through the entire process of this study, from site selection to data analysis, I remained cognizant of issues of ethics, trustworthiness, and credibility. I closely followed the guidelines and procedures of Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board to ensure all participants were treated ethically. I also took a refresher course during the end of the study to renew my Institutional Review Board certification. To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, efforts were taken to represent the participants' perspectives accurately. I continuously involved the teachers by conducting member checks. Member checks are when initial interpretations of data are presented to participants in a study to ascertain if the interpretations are reasonable (Merriam, 1998).

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Qualitative researchers view reliability and validity differently than quantitative researchers (Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers believe that there is no *one* reality, because reality is a relative concept determined by the

individual. With this premise, qualitative researchers define validity and reliability in terms of the processes of qualitative research. In this study, the qualitative terms trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998; Glesne, 1999) and credibility (Gall, et al., 2003) will be used to discuss efforts taken to ensure the study's findings represent the participants' "constructions of reality—how they understand the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 203).

To increase the trustworthiness and credibility of this study, I utilized several basic qualitative strategies. First, an audit trail, which is documentation that can be used to examine my research process, was maintained through the use of field notes, reflective notes, explanation of data collection and analysis, a codebook, and a subjectivity folder (Glesne, 1999). These storage methods will allow others to understand my reflections and decision-making process from the start to the completion of the study.

Second, through the use of multiple cases, several methods of data collection, and different data sources, I triangulated the data to examine and confirm findings. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources and methods to validate common themes that appear in the data (Merriam, 1998). In addition, my dissertation advisor double-checked the codes and categories.

Third, member checks were used to ensure the participants' perspectives were captured accurately (Merriam, 1998). Periodically, after observations and interviews, participants checked audio recordings and observation notes to ascertain if tentative interpretations represented their reality. They also had the opportunity to extend or object to what I had recorded or written.

Fourth, prolonged engagement and persistent observation (Glesne, 1999) took place at the site. The study occurred from August to February. There were 11 observations and seven interviews conducted. Each observation and interview lasted from 45 minutes to 60 minutes. The length of engagement (six months) helped develop trust, promoted understanding of the culture of the classrooms, and allowed for the acquisition of information that was not captured in interviews.

Finally, I used two additional qualitative strategies to increase trustworthiness and credibility. A detailed, rich narrative (Merriam, 1998) of the phenomenon was presented to enable the reader to relate to the world of the participants at an intimate level. My dissertation advisor also conducted external audits (Glesne, 1999) to examine the study's documentation and processes.

## **Limitations**

The following limitations should be considered as this study is read.

1. This study has a narrow scope, because I only studied two female, Caucasian elementary teachers in a southeastern urban school that served at least 85% African American students who came from low income homes.
2. This study only examined teachers of third and fifth grade students.
3. Effective Caucasian female teachers working with African American students were the unit of analysis. Therefore, any comparison made to other racial or ethnic groups should be done with great care.
4. The influence of my presence on the teachers' actions and the interactions between teachers and students is not known.
5. The veracity of teachers' statements during interviews may not be conclusive because there is no absolute method to determine truthfulness.
6. Observations and interviews elucidated only a slice of the phenomenon. Other methods of data collection or analysis would provide different perspectives on the phenomenon.

## Summary

In this chapter, I described how I used a multiple case study research design to describe, analyze, and interpret reoccurring themes and patterns that emerged across cases in this study. I also discussed the criteria for site and participant selection, and the process I used for gaining access to the site and for receiving participants' consent. Then, I presented the qualitative research techniques that were used to gather data. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, unstructured, informal interviews, and observations. Next, the data analysis process was presented, which included a discussion of how I utilized the constant comparative method to analyze the data. Finally, I discussed issues of trustworthiness and credibility, my background and biases, and the limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

In this section, the findings are presented and discussed as they relate to the purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the nature of and rationale for the effective classroom pedagogical and management strategies of female, Caucasian teachers who teach predominantly low socioeconomic, African American students. These findings originated from data that were collected while working with two Caucasian female teachers teaching in the same school, but at different grade levels.

The findings are presented and discussed separately and collectively for both teachers based on the overarching themes that were apparent in the data. Then the research questions for the study, along with the overarching themes, will guide the presentation of the categories that were evidenced in the data. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What pedagogical and classroom management strategies do effective Caucasian female teachers use with low socioeconomic African American students?
2. Why do these teachers choose the strategies they use?

3. What do effective Caucasian female teachers perceive are the cultural and linguistic differences between low socioeconomic African American students and themselves?
4. How will the teachers' perceived differences influence their pedagogy and classroom management strategies?

Each of these questions will be discussed individually for each teacher, and then each question will be discussed based on the similarities and differences between the two teachers.

### **Mrs. Green's Overarching Themes**

From the plethora of data that was obtained concerning Mrs. Green's pedagogical and classroom management strategies, three pervasive themes were evident that illuminated her effectiveness as a teacher of African American students. Mrs. Green's effectiveness as a teacher can be attributed to her ability to build positive, authentic relationships with her students; her ability to develop mutual respect and esteem between her students and herself, and her ability to "speak into existence" what her students can be and do. Next, I will present descriptive data that will further clarify the meaning of each theme.

## **Build Relationships**

Mrs. Green's pedagogical and classroom management strategies are anchored on the relationships she builds with each student through personal connections based on love, care, and mutual respect. When asked if she purposely tries to build relationships with students, Mrs. Green spoke particularly about a specific student who had been a behavior problem previously. She stated,

Sometimes, with him, I am purposefully doing it. I knew I had to get to him—like I told you, the only way to get them to do what I want them to do, is to do it for me, and the only way they are going to do it for me, is if they start caring about me. So how do you get somebody to care about you, is to show them that you care about them. Some of them you have to go the extra mile with. He's one that I am deliberately trying to build a relationship with. Some of them, it is not hard to. Some of them, you have to find the key to. And if I can find the key and I can, I will do my best to build it. I think I found it with Tom.

During observations, Mrs. Green often connects topics in her lessons to what is occurring in the students' lives. She is able to obtain personal information from her students, because she spends a vast amount of time talking with her students. During one observation when Mrs. Green's class was at lunch, I noticed she ate her lunch, and then spent the rest of the time going from student to student talking and laughing with them.

During transition times when Mrs. Green's class is going from or to lunch or extracurricular activities, she takes the opportunity to have personal conversations with her students. Once when I observed her class going to the library, I overheard her talking

to one of her students about her confidence in him to behave appropriately during library. She told the student, "I know you will behave well in the library. Will you promise me you will behave well? I know if you make a promise to me you will keep it." As she held this conversation with the student, she walked alongside him with her hand on his shoulder. Eventually the student made the promise, and Mrs. Green told the student, "Now, I know you will behave and be nice to Mrs. Walters today." Mrs. Green and the child smiled at each other, and the student went into the library.

Mrs. Green also builds personal relationships with her students by becoming involved in out-of-school activities, like going to athletic games and birthday parties. Mrs. Green shared this story.

I had Terry all last year. Terry is a major project. Somewhere along the lines he has been retained a couple of times. Someone has told Terry that he is not smart, and so he doesn't believe in himself. Boy, he was a behavior problem last year, so I kept telling him all year that I didn't care how bad he acts, how many rules he breaks, I am not giving up on you [Terry]. He would give me this tough guy attitude. By the end of the year, he started softening a little bit. I requested him again this year. First day he walks in the door, I told you I am not giving up on you. I told him I was coming to watch him play football Saturday. He was like oh whatever. As soon as I walked in the stadium, he flies down those steps, grabbed me and gave me a big, big hug and put me down real quick and said, "Uh, I got go back." He realized what he had done, but now what I did was I came to school and said, "Y'all I went to see Terry play football. He is awesome. He is one fine

football player.” Now, what I am going to start doing is I am going to start talking to Terry about how he wants to go to college and play ball and go to the NFL—he’s got to make grades. I’m honing in on something finally that will mean something to him, but I had to go see him. I have to do something to get to Terry. I think the football will get it.

Mrs. Green believes displaying how much she loves and cares for her students will encourage them to love her. She often stated that if she wanted her students to behave well, then she must make them care about her and the only way she knew to make them care was to show them how much she cares for them.

### **Develop Mutual Respect**

Many times, during interviews, Mrs. Green discussed the importance of mutual respect in order to provide a productive learning environment. Mrs. Green talked about how treating students with respect teaches them to be respectful. Mrs. Green thinks establishing a respectful environment is the key to an effective classroom. She stated,

I think that’s the key to it. I do it by just respecting them. I don’t talk down to them. I talk to them like I would talk to you or anybody else. Don’t treat them bad just because they are children, as if they are not human beings.

Later in the same interview, Mrs. Green stated, “Just treat them like you would want to be treated.”

During observations, it was easy to see Mrs. Green’s sentiments about respect resonating in her actions toward her students. Whenever she had to redirect students, she

spoke calmly to them and reminded them of what they should be doing. When Mrs. Green was asked to explain this strategy, she gave the following explanation.

First of all, I try to give them the benefit of doubt. I never talk to them from the standpoint that they are wrong about something. I try to approach it from the standpoint that there is more than one way to look at something, so let me hear what you are thinking, as opposed to immediately jumping on them saying that—“That was wrong. You should not have done it.” I try never to make it personal—ever. It is always the action I did not like, whereas some other teachers make it personal. They say, “You’re stupid. I told you a thousand times not to do that. How many times do I have to tell you that?” I’ll say, “Let’s go back over the rule. I probably did not explain that to you very well.” I always put it on me. That it’s my fault if they are misbehaving, because I didn’t explain it well. Usually that will work. I just give them respect. I just treat them the way that I would want them to respect me. I don’t think they are ever messing up on purpose. I think some teachers take it that way. They are kids, so they forget. I just try to treat them with respect—not like they are out to get me. It’s nothing personal. I try to make them think we are all in this together.

Mrs. Green has high academic and behavioral expectations for her students. She is confident that her students will do well, and she constantly informs her students of her confidence in them. Mrs. Green showers them in positive talk and reinforcement—she speaks good behavior into existence, because she believes her students are fundamentally good people.

## Speak into Existence

“Speaking into existence” correlates to high, realistic expectations and building students’ confidence and self esteem through positive statements made by the teacher. Beyond her belief and high expectations, Mrs. Green supported and scaffolded students’ learning experiences, so that they could be successful. In the initial interview with Mrs. Green, she spoke about this strategy. When I mentioned that the test data also indicated her effectiveness as a teacher, she stated,

A lot of the key of it is to make them think that they are so smart. See at the beginning of the year, I start off telling them that we don’t know anything and we got to get better. But as the year progresses, oh, we are getting there. We are so smart, and by the end of the year, I have them so pumped that they believe in themselves. And when they look at that test I don’t think they are overwhelmed by it, because they think, “I [the student] can do this.”

Mrs. Green expresses to her students often that she knows how wonderful, kind, gracious, and smart they are. She believes students can do more than they think they can do, and one of the responsibilities of a teacher is to validate the child’s worth through improving how the child thinks about himself. Mrs. Green believes, “If they think that I think they are smart, gracious, and kind, they will perform like that.”

One day as Mrs. Green worked with individual students, a student stated she had done the problem wrong. Mrs. Green went to the student and stated, “No, you actually did not do the problem wrong. You just didn’t go high enough. You got the steps right. You got the hard part.” Mrs. Green left the student smiling and feeling good about her

ability to solve the problems correctly. The student said with pleasure and pride, “I got the hard part right. I got it right.” When I talked to Mrs. Green about why she makes correction by focusing on the positive aspects, she had the following to say.

That’s deliberately planned. I had classes when I was a kid. I and other people were intimidated in that classroom. The quickest way to intimidate a kid is to say that’s wrong and that’s not how to do it. You can tell them in a nice way that’s wrong. As soon as they hear that’s wrong, they do not want to hear anything else. All they hear is that and it hurts their feelings. Then, they won’t ask you when they need help, so I purposefully do that so they won’t feel intimidated. So that they will know that it is o.k. for something to be wrong. It’s o.k. to ask me. I don’t want them to feel intimidated. I want them to feel free to make mistakes. I tell them all the time they learn as much from making mistakes as they do from getting it right. What I hate is when they sit there and not have an answer or when they are blank and they don’t ask me for help.

Mrs. Green constantly tells her students that they are capable, and then she reinforces her statements with sincere praise about what they can do well. She focuses on the positive aspects of the students and assures them that they will do well. She believes that her genuine concern and high expectations motivate students to do their best for her. In an interview, she stated,

Because I love them and they love me and that’s the way I get them to work. I get them to care about me so much that they do not want to disappoint me. See, they are not motivated themselves. They won’t do it for themselves. They won’t do it

for mom and dad, but they will do it for me. The prouder I act of them, the more they will perform. Same way with behavior; they don't want to disappoint me. Therefore, Mrs. Green consciously builds students' confidence and self-esteem by becoming meaningful in her students' lives. She realizes that the prouder she acts, the more positive comments she gives, and the more she expects, the better her students will do academically and behaviorally. She stated,

Even if they think they are not a good person. If they think that I think they are, they will try to perform like that. That doesn't mean they always get to the level I want, but it sure is a lot better than if I were saying, "You are horrible. You're terrible. Sit down. You never do anything I tell you to do. Why am I bothering with you? I told you ten times I am not going to tell you again."

Basically, Mrs. Green elevates students' self-confidence by speaking into existence what they are capable of being. She has confidence in their abilities, even when the students think they may not have the ability. She cultivates and builds positive self images through what she says and how she treats her students. First, she believes they can be the best, and through her faith in them and her actions toward them, then the students realize that they can do well.

Mrs. Green's ability to build positive relationships, to develop mutual respect, and to speak into existence the potential of her students was exhibited in the following categories. During the data analysis process, these three themes were supported by five categories that corresponded to the questions regarding effective pedagogical and/or classroom management strategies: teaching how to apply skills, ensuring a solid

foundation, remaining cognizant of students' individual needs, providing a highly structured classroom that appears loosely structured, and using basic classroom management strategies.

## **Pedagogical Strategies**

### **How to Apply Skills**

Mrs. Green, the fifth grade teacher, used a variety of pedagogical strategies as she presented lessons to her students. I named one pedagogical strategy—How to Apply Skills. Mrs. Green believes that one part of her job is to ensure she gives students the necessary skills and strategies to be successful. This idea is intricately woven into her ability to build relationships that are based on mutual respect, so that when she tells students they are smart, the students aspire to fulfill her expectations.

During classroom observations, Mrs. Green often talked about which skills students should use and how to use the skills to work through a problem or assignment. One example of the How to Apply Skills pedagogical strategy occurred one day during a lesson on using graphic sources to understand a reading passage. In the lesson, Mrs. Green stated,

So when you come to something like the nine weeks' test or the state's test and when you come to a story and you see a graphic aid or graphic source, look at that graphic source first. Study it and you will have a pretty good idea of what that story is going to be about before you even read it.

Before she made this statement, she had introduced the lesson by using a drawing of a map of the United States that was on the board. As Mrs. Green stood at the front of the classroom beside the overhead projector, she used the map to lead the students into a lively and respectful discussion about time zones. The students sat at their desks which had been positioned in a “U” shaped formation with several desks in the middle of the “U”, and Mrs. Green eventually sat down in a chair beside the overhead projector.

As Mrs. Green and the students comfortably discussed how to read the map to understand time zones, I noticed how well the students asked thought-provoking questions and made statements about what they were learning. The lesson slipped into a learning conversation when Mrs. Green and the students exchanged comments and questions as if they were sitting in the family room of a house instead of a classroom. Students were able to freely participate in the conversation without the convention of raising their hands in order to speak. Several students gave scenarios or asked questions about calling a friend in another time zone. During this learning conversation, Mrs. Green and the students showed respect for the speaker. The students took turns asking their questions and gave wait time while classmates got their questions or comments out.

The way Mrs. Green structured this lesson introduction allowed her students to practice using a graphic source in a natural conversational manner, which involved relationships built on respect. As the lesson progressed, the students practiced using the skill, while Mrs. Green constantly gave students instances when to apply the skill. She concluded the lesson with a reminder of the importance of a graphic source to

understanding what is read, and she reminded students how and when to apply the skill of reading graphic sources to better understand the text.

Mrs. Green used the how to apply skills strategy often in her lessons. This strategy was intricately woven into the scaffolding process that allowed her to speak into existence students' success. This strategy allowed Mrs. Green to provide the academic support her students needed as they strove to reach her high expectations.

### **Ensuring a Solid Foundation**

Another prevalent pedagogical strategy utilized by Mrs. Green is also evidence of how the three themes of this study are interwoven into her pedagogy. In this strategy, Mrs. Green starts at the lowest level and moves forward based on the understanding level of the students. As she moves forward, she goes step-by-step to ensure any possible learning gaps will be covered or recognized. I named this strategy—Ensuring a Solid Foundation.

During one classroom observation, before Mrs. Green introduced a lesson on dividing by two-digit numbers, she taught a review lesson on dividing by one-digit numbers. On the board she had listed the steps in the division process—divide, multiply, subtract, bring down, and restart the cycle. As Mrs. Green stood at the overhead projector, she created excitement about the lesson by telling the students about a discovery she made at the school when she first came. She stated,

When I came to this school a long time ago, I found this division model in the closet. I have never seen any thing like it before and I haven't seen any thing like

it since. This is for teaching you how to divide. I know most of you know how to do it, but just to make me happy I want you to pay attention for just a minute.

This introduction captured the attention of the majority of the students. The students looked at the overhead screen to see how the model looked. Mrs. Green told the students that in order to divide they would need to know their multiplication facts. In the next step in learning to divide, she explained and modeled what division is—separating a larger group of things into smaller equal groups. She continued the lesson by presenting skills slowly or quickly, based on how the students responded to her queries. She also used the division model and referred to the steps that were on the board as she taught the lesson. After Mrs. Green assigned an independent activity, she worked with students individually. She was able to ascertain which students needed individual assistance by monitoring their independent work.

During an interview, Mrs. Green explained her rationale for the Ensuring a Solid Foundation pedagogical strategy. She said,

Basically, you can't take anything for granted. No matter what I start, I start from square one like they were children from another planet, and they have just set foot on this planet. And we start from the very beginning—we go way back and build a foundation, because if you take something for granted, who knows, that might be the one thing that they don't know that is keeping them from progressing forward further.

### **Individual Importance**

One of Mrs. Green's most prominent and widely used pedagogical strategies was how she remained cognizant of the individual needs and differences of her students. Mrs. Green presented mini-lessons within the main lesson so that she could determine if students understood what she had just taught. Then she assigned an activity. She would tell the class, "It's practice time. It's time to swim on your own. I have thrown you in the water now. It's time to swim." As soon as she finished making those types of statements, she normally left her position by the overhead and walked out among the students with her glasses perched on the tip of her nose, checking to see if they understood what to do. She even told them to raise their hands if they came to a point in the assignment that they did not understand.

Mrs. Green's knowledge of her students' academic levels was apparent during a reading class. She noticed that several students had completed their worksheet, so she issued those students leveled books based on their level. As she issued these books, she told the students how interesting the books were and how much fun they should have reading the books. Mrs. Green told one student that she liked the book and thought that the student would love the book because it was about dogs. (The student had recently received a puppy.) She also told several students they would love reading the book she had given them because they were great readers. Mrs. Green created excitement about the leveled books she issued in a manner that obscured the fact that the books were issued based on the reading level of the students. The excitement Mrs. Green created about the books caused the students to focus on the content of the book instead of the level of the

book. During one of the interviews, Mrs. Green discussed how she supported a student who had difficulties reading a book at his interest level.

David hates to read. He won't read, because he is not a good reader. I thought alright. We talked about getting him some lower leveled books, but David is smart enough to know those are second grade books. He wasn't going to have a part of that. That would embarrass him, so I thought what could he read—comic books? So I went to the book store and bought him a comic book. There are really big words in there. I told him that when he finishes this one I would buy him another one. "Here's the deal; every time you come to a word you don't know you have to ask me." He's pretty good about that. He will write them down on a sheet of paper and bring them back to me, but at least I got him reading. But now, of course, everybody in the room wants to read *Spiderman*.

Mrs. Green was constantly seeking to ensure her students understood the lesson. Many times after Mrs. Green had presented a mini-lesson, with laser precision, she would focus on students who looked as if they needed additional assistance or who requested extra help. Mrs. Green possessed an uncanny ability to see a student who was off-task or exhibiting difficulty while she was simultaneously working with another student. During one class, she discovered a student drawing. She stated in a calm, soft reassuring voice, "If you can draw, you can check your answers." She took the child to her desk and showed her the teacher's edition which contained the answers. The child went to a desk in the back of the room and checked her answers. After assisting other students, Mrs. Green asked the girl who was checking her answers if she had missed any. The student

said she had, and Mrs. Green told the student to bring the ones she missed to her desk so that they could talk about them.

Mrs. Green's desire to assure students received all the skills to be successful on an objective was evidenced in her constant assessment and individual lessons. As she met students where they were academically, she intervened and guided them to a level of success where they realized that they could be successful on their own.

### **Classroom Management Strategies**

Mrs. Green's classroom management strategies are also anchored in the three themes found in this study. In order to establish an effective classroom environment, Mrs. Green builds relationships based on mutual respect and admiration. This allows Mrs. Green to speak confidently about what her students can do, which motivates her students to aspire to meet her expectations.

### **Highly Structured with a Loose Appearance**

During observations, I quickly noticed a strange contradiction. Mrs. Green's class environment appeared to be very casual and informal. Often students talked softly among themselves after an assignment had been given. Students freely moved from their seats and walked around the room to retrieve necessary materials and as they did this, they also talked to their classmates. However, after a while I discovered Mrs. Green's class was actually highly structured. The students knew when certain actions were acceptable,

because from the beginning of school Mrs. Green had given students specific directions for expected behaviors.

During one interview, I asked her about the freedom of movement in her classroom, and she gave the following explanation.

How do they know when to get up that it doesn't bother me? We kind of go through that too. At the beginning of the year, I tell them, "Look, I am really not that hard to get along with. You can get up, go sharpen your pencil, and throw things in the garbage, if you don't do it while I am teaching. If I am standing in front of the room and I am teaching, you don't do that. Now, if we're busy and we are at our seats and you need to sharpen your pencil, please get up and sharpen it, because it is less disturbing." Sometimes, they would mess up and go back there when I was teaching. I would stop, freeze, and look at them. They would stop. Occasionally, one will go back there and just as soon as they stick it in [the pencil sharpener] they will remember. You just have to talk through it and explain to them there's a time to do it and a time not to—in fact, if one does [forgets] it now, the whole class just says, "Mrs. Green, just pop him." You just have to teach it to them.

Mrs. Green believes that students need to be taught how to behave. She does this by giving explicit instructions and by explaining to students what is expected instead of fussing and focusing on what they have done wrong. Therefore, Mrs. Green's classroom environment runs smoothly because students understand what is expected of them, what they can do, and where and when they can do it.

## **Basic Classroom Management Strategies**

Mrs. Green utilized a plethora of management strategies to manage the behavior of individual students and the collective behaviors of all the students. She commonly ignored behaviors, used praise, gave tangible rewards, changed seating arrangements, and used humor to create a classroom environment that was safe, supportive, and structured.

Mrs. Green is a master of knowing which behaviors to ignore. She has also taught her students the skill of ignoring or tolerating certain behaviors from other students in the classroom. Mrs. Green explained that knowing the child helps her determine which behaviors she should give her attention. When she was asked about a particular student, she stated, “Well, mentally I know he needs direction, but I also just realize that he is different, and he’s got to be handled differently.”

Mrs. Green uses praise and external rewards to motivate her students to behave well. Students have the opportunity to earn parties, go to the Treasure Chest that contains toys and snacks, and earn No Homework Passes. She also focuses on giving attention to appropriate behaviors and re-teaching classroom expectations when behavior issues occur. She gave the following examples concerning external rewards.

You see that chain on the wall. That’s one of the things we do. Every time someone other than me gives them a compliment for their behavior or their work, they get a link on the chain. When it touches the floor, they have a pizza party. We already had one, and we have started a new chain. If students make a “B” or “A” on a test, they get a chance to talk at the lunch table. I have two tables, a group that can talk and a group that can’t talk—those kinds of external things.

Mrs. Green's praise is unique in the sense that she gives what I have titled corrective praise. For example, if a student hurts another student, Mrs. Green explained how she would handle the situation. She stated,

I give them a way out. I say, "You may have hurt him, but I know you didn't mean to." That way they can say yes I did—I hit him, because I gave them a way out; they can say they didn't mean to. Then I might say, "You are a good person. Sometimes good people do bad things. They don't mean to, but you are a good person." Then they have an out, and they can say yes I did it, instead of saying they didn't do it. Most times they end saying, "Mrs. Green., I'm sorry."

Mrs. Green has a sense of humor that allows her to laugh about most issues. Her sense of humor coupled with the personal relationships she builds with the students allows her to set students up for good behavior. She explained that when she has a student that comes to school with a bad disposition, she normally jokes the child out of the bad mood. She explained that when a child comes with a bad disposition she asks the child to go back and get the good child of whom she is accustomed.

One of the oldest tricks of the classroom management trade is the constant rearrangement of seating. Mrs. Green rearranged the complete classroom setting at least four times during this study. One time she rearranged the classroom, because she had been told by some of her students that a lot of playing occurred when she turned her back. Mrs. Green also used seating arrangements to separate students who did not behave well when seated beside other students.

### **Why Mrs. Green Chooses Particular Strategies**

Mrs. Green utilized particular strategies based on the needs of the students. Mrs. Green emphasized that the individuality of each child should be valued. She discussed the importance of finding the “key” that will allow her to better teach and manage students. She mentioned on at least four occasions when discussing pedagogical and classroom management strategies about discovering the key. On one occasion, Mrs. Green stated, “A lot of the key of it is to make them think that they are so smart.” She lamented that students often enter her class believing they are not smart. She believes the key is helping them realize how smart they are.

As Mrs. Green discussed her pedagogical and management strategies, she often expressed that she had not thought about the rationale for doing what she does. During one interview when she was asked her rationale for using a particular strategy, Mrs. Green shared the following sentiments.

I don’t know. Those are things I have never thought about. How do I know to do that? Well, mentally I know he needs direction, but I also just realize that Ralph is different and he’s got to be handled differently. I am still learning about Ralph. He can disrupt this class in a heartbeat all by himself. Basically, I try to ignore Ralph as much as I can until I get through with the rest of the group, and then I go to him. I don’t know. I just know he can’t operate like everybody else. I also know that as much as I feel like just ignoring Ralph, I know I can’t do that. I don’t know how I know to do that. I didn’t know there was anything special about that.

It just feels right. I have never seen anybody teach except for myself. I just figured everybody does those things.

As Mrs. Green states in the above quote, she is unsure why she does what she does. She just knows it feels right and that it has worked previously.

## **Perceived Cultural and Linguistic Differences**

### **Cultural Differences**

When Mrs. Green was asked about cultural differences between her students and herself, she quickly began to respond to the question as if she had been asked about race. She basically claimed to be racially and culturally blind. Mrs. Green stated the following:

I haven't. I don't see. I don't know. Maybe I am not aware of those things. I don't get into those things. I just simply pay attention to them and make sure their needs are met. I'm trying to think if I can think of any specific incidences. I wish I could tell you more of the cultural differences, but I really don't delve in them—maybe that's the point. That's not a factor to me. They are who they are, and I am who I am. I have a job to do. They have a job to do. I love them. I hope they love me.

It's just that simple.

It is apparent from Mrs. Green's statements that she is uncomfortable discussing racial and cultural differences. She emphasizes that she works with students based on their individual needs and places no emphasis on cultural and racial differences. In fact

when asked about racial and cultural differences, Mrs. Green became uneasy and basically stated she does not pay attention to race and culture.

As the study progressed, Mrs. Green contemplated about the cultural differences she saw in her students. However, as she attempted to unmask her cultural blindness, she was only able to identify negative students' characteristics or deficits, instead of students' strengths. One of the cultural differences she identified was that African American children tend to be more aggressive and less protective of each other than other children. Mrs. Green gave the following explanation.

Of course, the only thing I can judge this by is me and my sons and his friends. Like when I was a kid and my son—the last thing you would do would be to get a buddy in trouble. These kids, ever since I have been teaching them, love to get somebody else in trouble as opposed to rallying around their friend. It's almost like getting someone in trouble elevates them. So that is a difference that I have never thought about that I see.

Later in the interview, Mrs. Green adds, "Talking about physically aggressive—they have no concept of an accident. If someone touches them, that's a reason to fight."

Another cultural difference identified by Mrs. Green was that African American students do not value animals. Mrs. Green elucidated this difference with the following explanation.

They don't seem to value animals. They seem to think animals don't have feelings. They don't feel pain. They don't hurt. A lot of incidences around here—a couple of years ago a little baby bird's eggs were on the ground. A killdeer had

laid eggs. A little kid came and showed it to me, and I put a box over it and put a sign on it. I came back a few minutes later, and they were stomped. A dog will come out on the playground, and they will throw rocks at it, and they will think it is hilarious. They come in everyday and say “Oh Mrs. Green, guess what so-and-so did. He drowned his cat in the pool.” They laugh about it. I have never seen that before. I don’t know what it is. When I tell them that hurts the animal they say, “No, it doesn’t. Mrs. Green, it’s just a dog. It’s just a cat.” I tell them, “Yes, baby it hurts the animal.” I don’t know. It’s like they can’t put their feelings on to something else.

A third cultural difference that Mrs. Green identified was that African American students have difficulty looking adults in the eyes. She expressed that she would become frustrated with students because they refused to look at her when she conferenced with them. Later, a colleague explained to her that African American students were raised to not look adults in their eyes, because it was considered disrespectful. Mrs. Green further stated that she had always taught her own children to look adults directly in the eyes and not waver eye contact. She taught her children it was disrespectful if they did not look adults in their eyes.

The final cultural difference that Mrs. Green identified was that African American students need external rewards. She stated she did not have any students that operated for intrinsic reasons. She stated that students requested rewards for making perfect scores on tests. Mrs. Green explained to her students that receiving the perfect score was the reward.

## **Linguistic Differences**

Mrs. Green had even more difficulty identifying linguistic differences than she did cultural differences. She talked about linguistic differences between African American teachers and African American students and the linguistic differences between African American students and herself. She stated that African American teachers were stern and used tones and statements that embarrassed students. She felt that some African American teachers were sometimes disrespectful to African American students when they corrected them. Mrs. Green also spoke of times when African American teachers interpreted colloquialisms for her. Mrs. Green shared the following story about how an African American teacher helped her to interpret and respond to a students' statement.

I would never forget them coming up and saying, "Mrs. Green, he's talking about my mama." And I would ask him what did he say? "He's talking about my mama." What did he say? It took me two years to figure out all they were saying was "Your mama." I remember thinking these children don't understand me and I don't understand them. But I think a lot of that now has filtered out. But I have picked up from Black teachers when the students say that, the Black teachers say, "He doesn't even know your mama. Don't worry about it." Now, I have started saying that.

Mrs. Green admits that she has always felt that she did not speak the language of her African American students. She gave the following explanation.

I have always felt like I didn't speak their language, and if I did, I could do a better job. But I don't know but one way to talk. So I just talk to them the only

way I know how. I have always wondered about that too. I always wondered if the way I talked to them helped them. Or I could get to them better if I understood their lingo and some of the terms. I have often wondered about that. I don't know. I think the lingo thing was more of a problem 20 years ago than it is now. I remembered when I first started, I remember thinking—I am not speaking the same language these children are. I don't think they understood what I was saying, because I certainly didn't understand [what they were saying]. When I first started [teaching], there was a big difference. I know I wasn't getting through to them. But now I think because Black people and White people are together more, I think all that's starting to, you know—we understand each other language better. They will get tickled at me. They will have a few phrases that I don't know. And they will say you want to know what that means, and I will say nope; I don't even want to know. They will laugh.

During observations, Mrs. Green spoke to her students in caring tones, even when she had to correct them for inappropriate behavior. When conducting direct instruction and even when holding informal conversations with students, Mrs. Green spoke to students using her vernacular. It was evident during observations that the verbal and non-verbal communication that occurred in the classroom was productive for pedagogical and classroom management effectiveness. Mrs. Green's effectiveness with communication was evidenced in the social interactions that occurred in the classroom, the academic understanding that was exhibited during class discussions and written assignments, and the smooth operation of classroom routines and procedures.

## **Influence of Perceived Differences**

The cultural and linguistic differences that were identified by Mrs. Green were unclear to her until this study began. Often, Mrs. Green stated that she had not thought about these issues before and had difficulty analyzing them during the study. However, her perception about her students impacted her pedagogical and management strategies through how she interacted with the students. Mrs. Green emphasized teaching to individual student needs, in order to meet them where they were and move them farther along academically.

Mrs. Green's focus on individuality did not encompass an awareness of the students' cultural or linguistic differences. As Mrs. Green struggled during this study to identify cultural and linguistic differences, in most cases, she was only able to identify differences with negative connotations. Consequently, Mrs. Green tried to repair her students because she perceived her students' cultural and linguistic differences indicated deficiencies in their character. As she discussed her perceptions of her students' cultural and linguistic differences, she stated how she improves the students' deficits. She gave the following explanation as she discussed African American students' aggressiveness.

As far as an accident, I will role play that for them. I'll say if I came up to you and brushed up against you, do you think I am trying to harm you? They'll say no. Well did it ever occur to you maybe your friend did the same thing. They'll say no. I will show them examples of accidents. I just talk to them—explain. It's not that they are mean children. It has never dawned on them. Nobody has ever taught them.

### **Mrs. Wood's Overarching Themes**

During data analysis, two major themes appeared that indicate why Mrs. Wood is considered to be an effective Caucasian female teacher of low socioeconomic African American students. Mrs. Wood's effectiveness as a teacher can be attributed to 1) her knowledge of each child and the ability to help students make personal connections with the curriculum and 2) her capacity to emphasize and promote critical thinking. In this section, I present descriptions that will clarify each theme. Under these themes, several categories were identified. The categories include the following: connecting lessons to real life applications, delivering explicit instruction, using an array of classroom management strategies, giving explicit behavior expectations, and organizing and structuring the classroom environment. These five categories will be described as the research questions are answered.

### **Know the Child**

Mrs. Wood, the third grade teacher, emphasizes the importance of knowing the child. She obtains knowledge about her students through personal connections she makes through talking and listening to them. Mrs. Wood allows classroom discussions to go beyond an academic focus. She often relates classroom discussions to what is happening in her life or the lives of her students. The students also exhibit the freedom to initiate discussions that build personal relationships among class members. During an interview, Mrs. Wood shared the following story about a conversation between two students that led to a personal connection.

I learn a lot about my students by listening to them talk to each other. It was kind of remarkable the other day when two students I had sitting by each other began to talk. I heard them talking and all of a sudden, they got real excited about what they were talking about—it wasn't math, and I looked at them and said, "What are you doing? You are getting a bit loud." They said that they had just found out they were kin to each other. And I said, "What!" And it started because one of them said something about his dog, and they called the dog's name. This happened because I just had gotten a puppy, and I asked the class to think of a name for my puppy, so that we could take a vote and they could help name my puppy. They were talking about that dog and the other boy said, "My cousin so-and-so has a puppy named that, and then my brother's name is this, and that's my uncle's name." They got to figuring it all out, and then they found out they were cousins.

She believes talking about her personal life allows the students to see her as more than just a teacher, but as a regular human being. Mrs. Wood believes the personal information she shares with her students helps to build strong personal relationships, which allows her to be a better teacher. She explained this notion of thinking through the following statements.

I talk to the kids a lot about me and where I lived, things I have done in my life and the way things happen at my house, like our horse, our this, or our dogs. So I talk to them a lot about me, and so they want to talk to me about them. When they see me as a—I don't want to say a human being, well you know, they can see that

I am not just a teacher. I am someone that they can talk to that cares about them. It [educating students] is not just a starch [straight forward] thing—open your book and do this. It [building relationships] takes time.

Mrs. Wood went on to explain that sometimes students come into a new classroom timid and with their guard up because they do not know her. She stated, “When they let their guard down, that’s when I can teach them.” The process of making personal connections through talking and listening allows Mrs. Wood to get to know her students and allows her students to get to know her, which results in students who “let their guard down.” Through this process, Mrs. Wood explains her philosophy about knowing the individual child and how that knowledge impacts her delivery of instruction for the child. She stated the following:

After a while, you learn what is going to work for the child, and my philosophy is that, of course, what you do for one is not going to work for every child. You may have a higher tolerance for one child that you may not have for another, because that child is giving you the best that they can give you. You are fighting a losing battle if you are going to sit there and try to get them to mold [fit] down to what you want them to be, and it’s not going to happen.

## **Promote Critical Thinking**

Mrs. Wood believes that one of the most important responsibilities of being a teacher is to require students to think critically. Mrs. Wood also believes the ability to think is the difference between success and failure. She impresses upon her students that they must be thinkers and problem solvers. This particular theme is interwoven intricately in all her academic lessons. During observations and interviews, she constantly discusses the importance and the power of being a thinker. She even has a commercially-produced banner in her classroom above the white board that says, "I Think, Therefore I Know".

During a lesson on telling time, as Mrs. Wood worked between her overhead projector and the dry erase board, she questioned the students in a manner that required them to review several skills in the lesson. Students were required to go beyond just telling time to the nearest minute. Mrs. Wood asked the students questions and gave them problems that required them to work together and to think critically to determine how much time would elapse until they went to lunch, special subject classes, or home. Then the students had to determine if the time would be a.m. or p. m.

There was a general learning buzz as the students worked at their cluster of four to six desks. As students worked to solve the problems that Mrs. Wood assigned, she assisted groups or individual students. Often she could be heard telling students, "You got to be a thinker. I am not thinking for you. Tell me what you are thinking. I want to hear your thinking." Alternately, Mrs. Wood would draw the students' attention back to her so that she could deliver another battery of questions. She introduced, reviewed, and reinforced skills through questioning techniques that required students to think

individually or collectively to answer questions. Mrs. Wood also required her students to explain their answers. Often Mrs. Wood required a student to go to the board or overhead to explain and demonstrate how a problem was solved. She compelled the other students to watch intently and quietly while their classmate completed the problem. She told the students to determine if their classmate was working the problem correctly and not to say if the problem was correct or incorrect until their classmate had finished. After the student completed the problem, then Mrs. Wood asked the class if their classmate had done the problem correctly. Inevitably, there would be a student who disagreed with their classmate's answer. Mrs. Wood required that student to explain what they thought was wrong. In an interview, Mrs. Wood stated, "I love to see kids figure it out and know they know what they are doing and why they are doing it. They just can't tell me that this is the way to do it. They must tell me why."

In another interview, Mrs. Wood made the following statements concerning her philosophy about teaching children to think critically.

I want to hear their thoughts and what they are thinking. I try to express to them that the people—whoever makes the tests—really want to know if they can think. Anybody can follow a pattern—do this, do this, do this. I express to them if you want to work in a minimum paying job—I use Taco Bell for an example. Then you are going to open the [taco] shell up, you are going to put this in, you are going to do this, and you are going to do that. This type of work takes no thinking skills. If you really want to make the big bucks and you really want to be someone that someone admires, then you have to think. The tests are geared to see if you

are thinking. I am trying to teach them to think. You always got to be thinking, because thinking is something that people can't take away from you. I express to them all the time the importance of thinking. I want to see your brain think. If you look at people who are successful, they are thinking people. That's what happens when you think, so you have to decide what you want to do. You want to be a thinker, or do you want to be just a grazer? I try to express thinking because they got to be able to think for themselves. They got to be problem solvers.

From Mrs. Wood's statements and actions, it is clearly evident that she sees teaching students to think critically as being essential for their future success. This overarching theme is woven into all of her pedagogical practices, as will be shown in the following sections that answer research question one: What pedagogical and management strategies do effective Caucasian female teachers use with low socioeconomic African American students?

## **Pedagogical Strategies**

### **Connecting Lessons to Real Life Applications**

Mrs. Wood's lessons are embedded with the enhancement of thinking skills and the explanations of how skills can be connected with her students' everyday lives. To increase the relevancy of activities, Mrs. Wood often uses the personal information she has about her students to relate the lesson to ways the students can utilize the skills.

One day during a lesson on adding and subtracting money, Mrs. Wood stood at the overhead and led students through a worksheet that had a menu of food items. She began the lesson by requiring students to locate several items on the menu to determine the total value of the items. As she taught this lesson, she reviewed rounding and estimation skills. She used role play to teach students the strategy of putting themselves into the problem. On the menu, students identified the cost of shrimp as \$4.10. She stated, “If I go up there to buy that shrimp and I give the man \$4.00, did I give the man enough money?” The student answered no, and Mrs. Wood asked her how much more money she needed to pay for the shrimp. Then Mrs. Wood asked the student to explain how she knew the answer. Next, Mrs. Wood asked a student if \$4.10 was closer to \$4.00 or \$4.50. While the student tried to solve the question mentally, Mrs. Wood said, “Estimate; think about it. Somebody else think about it. That’s a good thinking question, because you don’t have paper in front of you. That means you have to think.” Next Mrs. Wood directed the students to determine the total cost of two items from the menu. A student, who was having difficulty with determining whether to add or subtract, was directed to go to the overhead projector and act out the problem. Mrs. Wood told the student to imagine she was the cashier in the cafeteria, and he wanted to buy two items from the menu. Mrs. Wood asked the student if he would be putting the items together, comparing them, or taking the items away from each other. Mrs. Wood’s questioning and role playing enabled the student to deduce that he needed to add to get the total cost of the two items.

Often during lessons, Mrs. Wood asked her students to imagine what they would do in real life to use the skill. In the aforementioned scenario, Mrs. Wood referenced the cafeteria, because she knew many of her students often bought extra snack items during lunch. In several interviews, Mrs. Wood stated, “I am trying to teach them to think, think, and think. I tell them to put themselves in real life situations.”

### **Explicit Instruction**

Mrs. Wood teaches in an explicit, deliberate step-by-step fashion. She starts at the lowest skill and moves forward to ensure students are not missing any skills. When asked to discuss some of her most effective teaching strategies, she made the following statements about meeting students where they are academically.

I think one of the most effective things is that I begin where the kids are. I back track until they get to the point where they know what they are doing, and then I go forward. I think that’s the trick to a lot of it. A lot of the time we [teachers] keep going, going, and going. If we just went back to just the one part they [students] didn’t know, because that could be the crack that ruin[ed] everything from then on, so I just kind of go back.

As Mrs. Wood teaches, she methodically explains what students are to do. She even writes specific steps and reminders on the board. As she teaches, she constantly monitors to ensure her students understand the lesson. If students exhibit difficulty, she presents the lesson in a different way. During one observation when students were having problems understanding, Mrs. Wood asked a student to come to the overhead projector to

demonstrate and explain how she obtained her answer. In an interview Mrs. Wood stated, “They [her students] learn from each other, and when I let them talk and whatever, it comes to a certain level of learning.”

Another aspect of Mrs. Wood’s explicit teaching is how she displays her own thinking through thinking out loud for students. During lessons, Mrs. Wood often emphasized the importance of thinking and modeled for students how she solved a problem or answered the question. When discussing standard capacity units of measurement, Mrs. Wood conducted the following think aloud.

Look at number 1. Read the directions for me. (The directions required the students to select the best estimate.) So we don’t want to know exactly do we? We want to know an estimate—that’s mean just about, a pretty good guess. Number 1 has a picture of a milk carton and looks to me like something you drink in the cafeteria. If it is something you drink in the cafeteria, then you know about what size it will be. The directions say to choose the best estimate for the container. Do you think that milk carton will hold one cup or one gallon? Tell me why you think one cup. O.k., where’s my cup? Here it is [holding the cup-sized container]. This is one cup. Do you think that the milk [in the carton in the cafeteria]—you have to think because you won’t have it in front of you. You got to think. In front of your mind, you got to say one cup looks like this and one gallon is going to be bigger because I know one gallon[‘s] got 16 of these in it. So if I got 16 cups in this gallon, will my milk carton in the cafeteria hold one of these or 16 of these? Which one makes better sense? Right—one of these (a cup-sized container). You

don't have to have the cup in front of you. You just got to be able to see what it will hold. You [have] got to be a thinker.

### **Classroom Management Strategies**

Mrs. Wood stated that classroom management was not one of her strengths, especially as it relates to discipline and she could use assistance in this area. However, my observations of her organizational skills and classroom discipline did not support her statement. Mrs. Wood's classroom was well-organized and disciplined. Mrs. Wood believes her high tolerance for learning noise has to be maintained at a lower level, so that other school personnel will not think her classroom is out of control.

### **Explicit Expectations for Classroom Behavior**

Mrs. Wood gives very clear and direct instructions. She believes that explicitly given expectations are important to a well-managed classroom. She establishes the classroom climate for instruction before and often during lessons. She shared the following sentiments during an interview.

The child must know what I expect and how they can do what I expect. I think that is the point. I tell them what I am expecting. "This is what we are doing. This is our task, and let me explain to you exactly what we are going to do first." For example, yesterday we did two of them; today we did the others. I told them before they even walked in the room—they were lined up outside--I told them to, "Go to your desk. Put your books away. Sit at your desk with your feet under your

desk, with your hands on top of your desk where I can see them and no voices. That's what I expect from you." So when I walk in and I see someone not doing that, I call it to their attention that they are not doing what I was expecting. So I tell them the steps they are to be doing. I write down the steps, and I walk around and monitor them. If they are not following the steps, I redirect them back to what they [were supposed to do].

Mrs. Wood gives explicit directions so students will know what is expected of them. She is able to keep a tight rein on her students, because she constantly monitors and redirects, when needed.

One day when her class was returning from a special subject classroom, Mrs. Wood exhibited her ability to give specific behavior expectations. As the class stood quietly in the hallway, Mrs. Wood introduced the objective for the lesson and informed the students about the materials on their desks. Then she gave specific instructions to walk quietly in to the room, pull out their chairs, sit down quietly with their hands in their laps, and not to touch the materials in the basket on their desks. After Mrs. Wood had given these directions, she allowed the students to enter the classroom. As they entered, she praised students for following her directions. Of course, several students could not resist the colorful straws that were in the basket. As soon as Mrs. Wood detected some students were not complying, she called them by name and reminded them of the rules. Next Mrs. Wood reviewed the objective of the lesson and began the instructional process.

Mrs. Wood is a staunch believer in direct, explicit instruction in academics and behavior. She stated she gives explicit directions and specific instruction, because explicit

instruction does not take for granted what the child knows or can do. She views this strategy as a support for students who do not understand or may have forgotten a skill, rule, or procedure. Mrs. Wood's utilization of direct and explicit instruction produces an environment where students know what to expect and do.

### **Prevalent Classroom Management Strategies**

Mrs. Wood used an array of classroom management strategies during every lesson to ensure that learning occurred. She spent a substantial amount of energy and time using management strategies. However, her use of the various management strategies did not subtract from, but added to, her presentation of lessons. The way she blended pedagogy and classroom management was almost seamless. This occurred because Mrs. Wood naturally taught lessons and managed behavior as if the two were the same. Mrs. Wood taught classroom management like she taught pedagogy. She constantly reviewed expectations and taught her students how she wanted them to behave at various times and in particular settings. Mrs. Wood used the following classroom management strategies on a consistent basis during lessons. They were the countdown method, tangible rewards, praise, call student's name, eye contact, proximity, office referrals, pep talks, behavior chart, seating arrangement, and hand signals.

For instance, during a math lesson on elapsed time, she used the following management strategies. As the students worked individually and cooperatively at their desks, Mrs. Wood often asked them how much time they had spent since the lesson started and to estimate the amount of time that would go by if they worked until a certain

time. When Mrs. Wood went back to whole group teaching, she would use the 1, 2, 3 countdown management strategy to get students' attention—at 3 all students became quiet. Then she called on students to give the answer and she required them to explain their reasoning. Next, Mrs. Wood displayed on the overhead problems on telling time, which included a discussion of p.m. and a.m. Mrs. Wood reviewed the steps and strategies for working the problems. As she did this, she called students' names and walked near them to keep them focused and on task. She modeled the use of a strategy for finding elapsed time and reminded students of steps they needed to use to get the answers. Mrs. Wood then assigned five problems for the students to complete. During this five-minute lesson, Mrs. Wood smoothly, without interruption to the lesson, used three management strategies: countdown method, call students' names, and proximity.

Mrs. Wood also kept a behavior chart on each child's desk where she recorded instances of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The chart was comprised of 14 numbered criteria. During the day, Mrs. Wood recorded the number for the infractions on each child's chart. At the end of the school day, Mrs. Wood transferred the information on the chart to a note that was sent home to the parents. The parents were asked to sign the report and return it to school. Sometimes Mrs. Wood placed stickers on the chart for students who displayed appropriate behavior.

Mrs. Wood believed her most effective management strategy was to instill in students a commitment to respect and fairness. She made the following statements during an interview.

I try to always instill in the kids respect and fairness. I will be fair with them, and I will respect them, if in turn they do the same for me. Eventually, it kind of kicks in and they learn that. They know that I really care, and I want them to achieve. I talk a lot in here about their future and what they are going to achieve.

Mrs. Wood went on to say she regularly held class meetings in which she stopped and gave students pep talks about where they were academically and what they needed to do in relation to their futures. One day she brought an empty cumulative folder into the classroom and explained to students that each one of them had a cumulative folder where their efforts in school were recorded. She explained to them that the cumulative folder was a permanent document. Therefore, she told her students they needed to do well academically and behaviorally, so they would have a cumulative folder they could be proud to show to others. Mrs. Wood stated, “I think that [the pep talk] really made an impact on the kids. They seemed to do a lot better, so I hope they just remember it.” Mrs. Wood stated she gives pep talks, which vary in length, approximately once every two weeks. Sometimes, the talks are as short as five minutes, and other times they can be as long as 30 minutes. Mrs. Wood explained further with the following statement.

When I know I really got their attention and they are reaping from it [the pep talk], I will carry it on and go with it. They will ask a lot of questions. It is just like a teaching point—you know this is the time to stop and do this right here. I would say about every two weeks I probably do it [give pep talks].

Mrs. Wood uses a variety of behavior management strategies at any given time. She constantly alters, combines, and eliminates strategies based on her students’

behaviors. Her behavior chart is a constant strategy that she uses all year long. However, she couples that strategy with intermittent strategies like passing out blue tickets. Mrs. Wood stated that she constantly changes strategies, because once students become accustomed to a strategy, it loses its effectiveness. One day as Mrs. Wood escorted her class to the music room, I observed her using various classroom management strategies. I wrote the following description in my field notes.

As I walked down the hall to Mrs. Wood's classroom, the school was abuzz with sounds that accompany a typical lunch hour. Teachers were moving students to and from the cafeteria and bathrooms. Students were talking, laughing, and being playful. As I continued down the long corridor, I was able to make out Mrs. Wood's silhouette. She told her class to line up, and she walked back and forth up and down the line. Every so often she allowed the students to move to a designated spot in the hall. The students were all in line on the third block [floor tile] from the wall. I continued down the hall and soon met Mrs. Wood and her class. As I got closer to the class and Mrs. Wood, I heard her reminding the students how to stand on the third block.

I quickly told Mrs. Wood I would tag along with them to music. As I walked down the hall with them, I heard Mrs. Wood use praise to encourage students to comply with her expectations. She told several students, "Excellent." She also used proximity to get students to comply. She constantly walked up and down the line whenever it was stopped and reminded students by saying, "Third block--I am looking for model students—excellent."

As described above, the children in the hallway at Turner Elementary School were very talkative and busy. However, Mrs. Wood moved her class to music in a well-organized manner. Once when the class stopped, she stated, "Isaiah show me what you know." Isaiah quickly turned around and stood on the third block. Several other students who were close to Isaiah also got in the right position. Mrs. Wood used blue tickets as she stated, "I am looking for a model student. I see four. Let's see who is going to get one of these." The students instantly responded to this statement better than any of the other strategies she had used.

Mrs. Wood used proximity to ensure students were monitored closely. She walked in the back to the middle of the line, moving and looking constantly at her students. Once she used a hand signal, and the students immediately responded with quietness. She also stood at the corner where the students turned to go to the music room. She used hand signals to direct students.

After Mrs. Wood dropped her students off for music class, she and I walked back toward her classroom. I asked her about the blue tickets. She explained that the tickets were a new management strategy that she had begun to use. She explained that she gave the tickets to students at various times. For example, she gave tickets to students for completing their homework, for obeying rules and procedures, and for other actions that reinforce obedience to her rules. She went on to say that the students got a chance to put the tickets in a jar and then each Friday she pulls at least four names from the jar to receive prizes. Mrs. Wood stated, "For this Friday, I went to the post office and got four gold dollar coins, and I am going to give the four students, whose names are called, a

gold dollar.” I asked Mrs. Wood how she knew what kinds of things students would value as prizes. She stated, “They are not hard to please. They just like getting things. I keep trying different things also.”

As evidenced in the previous description, Mrs. Wood utilized a plethora of management strategies at any given time. Her effective utilization of an array of strategies allowed her to transition her students from one location to another in an orderly and safe manner.

### **Organizing and Structuring the Classroom Environment**

Mrs. Wood’s seating arrangement validates her belief that when students have an opportunity to work cooperatively, learning is increased. During the duration of this study, Mrs. Wood arranged students’ desks in pods of four or six. Mrs. Wood made the following statement.

I think they learn from each other. They need to be in groups, and they need to be able to work together. When I let them talk and whatever, it comes to a certain level of learning. You can tell what is learning noise and what is playing. A teacher will know that and might have a high tolerance for noise, which I do.

During observations, students worked together to answer questions posed by Mrs. Wood and to complete activities that were assigned. During these times, students began to discuss and demonstrate to each other ways to get the answers.

Mrs. Wood had strong beliefs about how her classroom should be arranged. She stated she had been taught not to place students in rows of desks with her desk at the front of the room.

I think they learn from each other. If they are sitting in a desk looking at me they, well then, they will think they are at college, because that's the way it is at college. And community building—grouping was deeply embedded in me in California. Don't sit your kids in rows, facing the front, sitting up straight, and da, da, da. Don't do that.

Mrs. Wood's seating arrangement allowed her students the opportunity to talk about assignments and to get assistance from members of their group.

During observations of Mrs. Wood's lessons, she constantly gave students time limits to keep them focused on tasks. She also used time limits to teach telling time. During one lesson she did the following.

Mrs. Wood called the students' attention to the classroom clock. She asked a student to tell what time was displayed using a.m. and p.m. Then she reminded students that they would go to lunch at 12:00. She asked them how much time they had to complete their problems. Then she told them if they did not remain focused on the problems, they would not complete their work before lunch. The student became focused again and started to work on solving the problems with each other.

Mrs. Wood's time limits ranged from 10 seconds to 10 minutes to longer intervals. However, when she gave students longer intervals of time, she always

reminded students how much time remained. Often when she gave students a short amount of time to finish, she basically wanted them to practice the task, and then report to her what they had done. Many of her lessons were broken into small intervals, mainly to maintain students' interest and to motivate them. Often when Mrs. Wood gave students a short length of time, students would groan but work more feverishly toward completion.

The way Mrs. Wood structured and organized her classroom and her lessons enhanced students' learning experiences. Students got excited about a task, helped each other to complete the task through discussions, and requested help from Mrs. Wood as needed. Additionally, Mrs. Wood's time limits helped the students to stay focused on the task.

### **Why Mrs. Wood Chooses Particular Strategies**

Mrs. Wood had difficulty identifying the strategies she uses to teach and manage students' behavior. When asked to describe the strategies she uses to manage students' behaviors, Mrs. Wood stated, "I just do simple things." Then she asked, "Do you mean like giving them something [e.g., a prize] or verbal [e.g., encouragement, reminders]?" In my observer's comments, I noted that Mrs. Wood had difficulty articulating the plethora of strategies she uses. Her final response to my query was very narrow. She basically discussed how she used praise to manage students' behaviors. However, Mrs. Wood concluded her explanation about praise with the following statement: "I try to put it [a

behavior strategy] in a real life situation, so they will know those skills when they are older.”

When pressed to analyze why she teaches and manages the way she does, she stated, “. . . to put themselves in real life situations.” In essence, Mrs. Wood chooses the strategies she uses to prepare her students for what they will face in their everyday lives and to prepare them for the future. Mrs. Wood validates this premise often during her lessons. She often reminds students about district and state testing and gives them techniques to use to do well on these tests. Mrs. Wood often stated, “How well you listen and think now, will help you show your thinking skills when you take the district and state’s tests. Test makers want to know if you are thinking.”

Mrs. Wood also discusses her awareness of the individuality of her students and how she tailors her pedagogical and classroom management strategies to each student. However, Mrs. Wood seemed unable conceptually to make the connections between the strategies she utilizes and the students’ cultural characteristics. Mrs. Wood successfully meets students where they are, but she does it in what might be described as an automatic teacher mode. She does not consciously think about what she is doing or why she does it.

Furthermore, Mrs. Wood’s selection of strategies is influenced by test data analysis. She explained how she used test data to group students to better meet their individual needs. During an interview, she gave the following explanation.

I am continually evaluating the kids. I just did something the last few days with every benchmark. I wrote every benchmark down, took our benchmark book, copied it, and made copies of every example in there. I taped all them together

with the benchmark and gave that to the kids. Then I made a grid of which student did this, did this, did this—that way I know how to group my students. That works better for me. It just has to be really plain for me—not any thing fancy. This way shows me what the kids need. If this group didn't get a benchmark, then that's what I am going to work with them on in small groups, so that's how I do that.

Even though she utilized pedagogical strategies to meet her students' individual needs, at no point did Mrs. Wood connect the above process to her selection of pedagogical strategies.

### **Perceived Cultural and Linguistic Differences**

In this section, I describe Mrs. Wood's perception of the cultural and linguistic differences between her low socioeconomic African American students and herself. First I describe what she perceives to be the cultural differences and in the next section, the linguistic differences she understands.

#### **Cultural Differences**

Mrs. Wood received diversity training in her undergraduate program at Fresno State University in California. She believes that this training has helped her to understand other cultures. Mrs. Wood shared the following.

In my degree, I studied about Mexican cultures. See, in California it [the predominant student population] was Mexicans, so I had to study that culture. I

think understanding that culture helped me to understand other cultures. I don't know everything about Black culture, but I know quite a bit, but I am not a great authority on it.

When Mrs. Wood was asked to explain how she knew about Black culture, she referred to her experience teaching African American students and exposure to Black History units. Mrs. Wood believes there is not enough emphasis placed on other cultures in the curriculum she teaches now. She elucidated her sentiments with the following statements.

I have noticed that we deal a lot with Martin Luther King. I understand that, and I know why we do that. And I don't disagree, but I don't understand why, if we are in a teaching setting, we don't deal with everything--like a lot of my children don't know anything about the Mayflower. They have no ideas about Pilgrims, and that's part of our life. That's part of their heritage, because they are Americans. We all are Americans, you know. I want to know about Martin Luther King, you know. And, so I don't discredit that, but I am saying, let's expand. Let's do it all [teach other cultures]—let's do everything. I think diversity is going to help children to grow. And diversity—sure this part is true and demands our attention, but there are other things that demand our attention just as—maybe not as much, because you want to know where you came from—but it demands our attention. I just think diversity is where it is at. If they don't ever get exposed to that, they are not going to grow. They're going to stay right there in that one little

box. And it is going to be passed down, passed down, and passed down. Get out of that box.

Even though Mrs. Wood received diversity training, she had difficulty identifying cultural differences between the students and herself. Mrs. Wood answered the question from a racial perspective, and she perceived that if African American students are not taught cultural diversity, future generations of students will lack this information. Nevertheless, Mrs. Wood stated she did not see any major differences between herself and her students, but she believed there were cultural differences between the students' parents and herself.

I don't know if this will be cultural. The difference I see is that I don't feel any type of prejudice, and I don't see any from my kids, but I sense at points that parents put that in their child towards me. I see prejudice comes from the other side [African American parents]. I don't feel that way [prejudiced]. I don't—you know whatever. I don't sense that. My kids say little...Like yesterday I read a story. It was "Uncle Jed's Barbershop." I read it, and it talked about black and white. At first, I felt a little uncomfortable about blacks not being able to go to the white bathroom, so forth and so on [as she read the book]. And I felt a little uncomfortable. I just acted like I didn't, so as I was reading the story the kids were kind of relating to that [discrimination].

I noticed last year I had two incidents that happened to me. During the summer my skin gets darker because I am in the sun a lot, and I tan very easily. I have a great tan. You can't tell now, but anyway one of my kids, I was working

with her [a student], and one of my kids said—they put their hands down by mine—they go, “Ooh, Mrs. Wood.. the longer you are with us the more you look like us.” That had to be the cutest thing I have ever heard. I looked at her and said, “What?” and she said, “The more you are with us the more you start looking like us,” and I thought that was really unique. It was really sweet. The kids this age don’t have a prejudiced bone in their body. They don’t know that, but when they hear grandmother--usually grandparents--not immediate father or mother usually--they will hear that [prejudiced remarks], and then they will want to come in and say something like—well it has hardly ever happened. For instance, I had one student, one year--it might have been last year--I corrected her, and she said something under her breathe to where the students at the table could hear it. It was reported back to me that she said, how did she say it, “I don’t have to listen to you white woman.” And so one of the other little girls came and told me. I went to her group because she said it in front the group. In a calm voice I said, “You offended me. I would never offend you, and you have offended me. I have never caused a division line between you and me, and now you are doing that. I don’t understand that, and I know more than likely you really don’t feel that way. You were just angry, but I want you to know what you said really hurt me. I want you to think about it.” I walked away and left it alone. Nothing more was ever said or done. I hope I handled it right. I don’t know. I just made sure the group heard that. Once again, I think the kids bring things in that they have heard. They don’t know any

difference [between African Americans and Caucasians]. These kids will hug on me like they would hug anybody else.

Mrs. Wood believed that if there were any prejudices harboring in her students, it was due to the students' grandparents or older relatives. She believed that her students were not aware of the differences between them and herself, unless older family members focused on the racial differences. Mrs. Wood also had difficulty understanding why there was such an intense focus on Black History lessons. She felt African American students needed to receive curricula lessons that would expand their understanding of other cultures, in addition to Black History lessons.

During another interview, Mrs. Wood identified a perceived African American cultural difference by focusing on how parents discipline their children. She compared Hispanic, Caucasian, and African American parents she had worked with during her teaching career. She stated that Hispanic parents had high expectations for their children and disciplined their children in a relaxed fashion. Caucasian parents were highly involved in the classroom and disciplined their children in private, and African American parents were supportive of the teacher and disciplined their children by publicly berating them. She stated that African American parents would more likely discipline their children by screaming and hitting them in front of the class, outside the classroom, in front of the teacher, or even in stores. Mrs. Wood stated that she is cautious about calling some of her African American parents, because she knows what will happen to the child.

Furthermore, Mrs. Wood stated she does not see her African American students as Black children. She stated her effectiveness with Black children comes from her basic

love for children. As she grappled with trying to explain her effectiveness with African American students, she gave the following explanation.

I don't see them as black. I don't. I love children. Just love them. And I love the children here. I don't see it as black. I see it as, I don't know. Maybe cause I am a pastor's wife. You know we have black people in our church. I love them just as much as I love the others. I have a son-in-law who is Mexican. I don't see any difference in him. You know—I just don't know. The kids know I love them. They hug me. I hug them. We love each other. I don't see a difference.

Mrs. Wood had a lot to say about her understanding of cultural diversity as she discussed her sentiments on Black History units and on the cultural diversity training she received as an undergraduate student. She also claimed to be colorblind; therefore, she could not identify and articulate any cultural differences between the students and herself. Albeit, she purports the ideology that knowing the students is paramount to teaching them. She even says, "You have to know their culture, and why they do what they do, because every culture is different." Yet she was unable to articulate what she knew about her students' cultures. Similarly, she prided herself in knowing students as individuals, yet she did not acknowledge their cultural differences.

### **Linguistic Differences**

Mrs. Wood stated that she understood her students' language well and did not have any problems with linguistic differences. Yet, she was unable to identify any

linguistic differences other than how her African American colleagues talk to African American students. She gave the following explanation.

Before I ever came to Mississippi, I was taught that if you ever raised your voice you had lost control. That's what they [California educators] told us as teachers. If you raised your voice, you had lost control. I see it all the time. I remember the first time I taught in Mississippi; I told my husband that I could not get over the teachers who were screaming at their children. Yeah, I can understand a lot of reasons why they [African American teachers] do that, because that's what they [African American students] are accustomed to. That's what I have been told, and that's cultural. They are accustomed to that, and they don't hear anything but that. That's the way they were raised, and that's what they know.

### **Influence of Perceived Differences**

In this section, I described how Mrs. Wood's understanding of students' cultural and linguistic differences influenced her choices of pedagogical and management strategies.

Mrs. Wood believed that students' culture was important to the educational process; however, she was unable to specify cultural and linguistic differences between her students and herself. She only talked about the differences she saw in students' parents and her African American colleagues.

Mrs. Wood claimed that her pedagogical and classroom management strategies were influenced by her knowledge of individual children. She often discussed the

importance of knowing the child and the child knowing her. She stated that a child can not be taught effectively until a teacher is able to build a personal relationship with the child. Personal relationships between the teacher and child help the child to let his or her guard down. Mrs. Wood stated, “When they let their guard down, that’s when you can teach them. I love kids.”

## **Cross Case Findings**

### **A Comparison of Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's' Strategies**

The data from both classroom observations and teacher interviews indicated a similarity in an overarching theme. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood understand and value teacher and student relationships and the impact these relationships have on students' academic achievement. Both teachers purposely orchestrated opportunities to build relationships with their students. Each teacher learned about the students they taught through listening and talking to them. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood differed slightly in some of the methods they used to build personal relationships with their students. Mrs. Green attended students' activities outside of the school day. On the other hand, Mrs. Wood shared personal information about her family and life away from school. Mrs. Wood thought it was most important for her students to see her as a regular person, instead of just seeing her as a teacher.

Conversely, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood exuded different philosophical views about how best to teach students. The teachers' individuality surfaced in what they believed contributed most to their students' success. Mrs. Green believed that connecting to the affective domain of the students would motivate them to excel. On the other hand, Mrs. Wood believed teaching students to think critically would give them lifelong skills that would enhance their chances for success. Based on these basic philosophical beliefs, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood utilized various strategies to effectively teach low socioeconomic African American students.

Pedagogically, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood shared the same sentiments about teaching students from the lowest skill and progressing further to ensure that any learning gaps were covered. Both teachers were direct and explicit in their instructional delivery. As they taught lessons, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood constantly monitored students' comprehension and attention levels. Each teacher broke down her lessons into mini-lessons to keep students' attention and to check students' individual progress. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood exhibited the tendency to apply lessons to real-life experiences; however, Mrs. Wood stressed this strategy more than Mrs. Green. Mrs. Green stressed providing more individual instruction.

In the area of classroom management, the analysis of the data indicated that Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood maintained highly structured classroom environments. Both teachers discussed the importance of students knowing the teacher's expectations and knowing what to do and when to do it. These teachers also connected the importance of personal relationships to their classroom management success. Mrs. Wood used more basic classroom management strategies, like proximity, calling students' names, praise, and tangible rewards, than Mrs. Green. Mrs. Wood also had to repeat her expectations more often than Mrs. Green. Mrs. Green was a more silent classroom manager as opposed to Mrs. Wood's continuous reminders and reviews of the rules and procedures. Mrs. Green's strategies dealt more with the affective domain. She spoke positively about students' potential to behave well. Each teacher had a high tolerance for learning noise, and their classrooms were characterized by learning chatter and freedom of movement at designated times.

### **Teachers' Rationale for Selecting Strategies**

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood exhibited difficulty articulating why they use particular pedagogical and classroom management strategies. However, when compelled to analyze their strategies, both teachers indicated that the individual students dictate what strategies they use to help students achieve academically and behaviorally. Mrs. Wood implied that she teaches the way she does because she wants her students to be prepared for everyday situations and future life experiences.

### **Teachers' Perceptions about Differences**

Ironically, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood attested to being color blind. They stated they did not see color, and they only saw their African American students as they would see any other students. Both teachers answered questions about culture from a racial perspective. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood found it difficult to identify cultural and linguistic differences between their students and themselves. When differences were identified by each teacher, the differences had negative connotations.

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood identified and discussed the linguistic differences between African American teachers and African American students and Caucasian teachers and African American students. Mrs. Green stated African American teachers helped her to understand some African American colloquialisms. Mrs. Wood identified and discussed the cultural and linguistic differences among Hispanic, Caucasian, and

African American parents. Surprisingly, Mrs. Wood was unable to identify and discuss differences she saw in her students.

Based on interviews with Mrs. Wood, she appeared to possess more knowledge about cultural diversity than Mrs. Green. In fact, Mrs. Wood had taken a course that focused on cultural diversity as part of her undergraduate teacher education program. Nevertheless, she did not recognize that her knowledge of students' culture was related to her choice of pedagogical and management strategies. In addition, she attributed children's knowledge of African American cultural differences to what they learned from parents and grandparents—she believed that students were not aware of differences between themselves and her.

### **Influence of Perceived Differences**

Both teachers noted cultural differences between themselves and their students, albeit addressed these differences dissimilarly. Mrs. Green regarded differences between herself and her students as things to be repaired or eliminated. Mrs. Wood acknowledged cultural differences in her students' parents; ironically, she did not believe her students were different from herself. Due to Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's inability to identify substantial cultural differences between themselves and their students, the teachers disregarded students' cultures. However, both teachers claimed to take into account students' individual differences. It appeared that they selected and utilized pedagogical and classroom management strategies based on the individual academic needs of their students without regard to cultural and linguistic differences.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the findings from each teacher (or case) and then compared the findings across cases. The research questions guided the organization of the findings.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The demographics of public schools have changed in the past three decades. In urban areas, this change has been more pronounced than in rural and suburban areas. Most urban public schools have high populations of minority students. In the South, the majority of these students are low socioeconomic African American children. However, most of the certified teachers are Caucasian females, particularly at the elementary level. In urban public schools, there is a high attrition rate among Caucasian female teachers. One reason for this is their difficulties working effectively with African American students. Schools cannot continue to lose Caucasian female teachers who are knowledgeable about content and pedagogy. Due to the current demographics of students and elementary teachers and the issue of Caucasian female attrition, this study was conducted to explore and analyze the effective pedagogical and classroom management strategies of effective Caucasian female teachers who teach predominantly low socioeconomic, African American students.

To conduct this study, I used a qualitative multiple case study design to study the pedagogical and classroom management strategies of two Caucasian female teachers who were identified as effective by their principal. The data were collected in a total of eleven

observations and seven interviews over a six-month period. The findings from this study are based on two Caucasian female teachers who taught third and fifth grade low socioeconomic African American students in an urban elementary school in a southern state.

In this final chapter, I summarize and make recommendations from the findings for these two Caucasian female teachers. This study only presents a part of this phenomenon. Therefore, suggestions for further research will be provided along with recommendations for teachers, principals, and pre-service teacher education programs.

### **Summary and Discussion of Themes**

The three major themes that originated from Mrs. Green's data were her ability to build positive, authentic relationships with her students, her ability to develop mutual respect and esteem between her students and herself, and her ability to "speak into existence" what her students could be and do. The two themes that stemmed from Mrs. Wood's data were her ability to make personal connections in order to better understand the child and her focus on critical thinking. These themes related to everything that Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood did in their classrooms. They describe the essence of Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's pedagogical and management strategies.

Building relationships with students was a similar theme that came from the data of both teachers. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood understood and valued positive teacher/student relationships and the impact these relationships have on students' academic achievement. Researchers have presented the importance of genuine concern

and respect for building personal relationships with students and have substantiated the impact of student/teacher personal relationships on pedagogy and classroom management ( Arriaza; 2003; Brown, 2003; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Weinstein et al., 2004). Additionally, Gay (2000) stated, “Teachers who genuinely care about students generate higher levels of all kinds of success than those who do not. They have high performance expectations and will settle for nothing less than high achievement” (p. 47).

Even though Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood shared a common theme, other themes that originated from each teacher’s data were different. In Mrs. Green’s case, two themes related to the affective domain. These two themes dealt with developing mutual respect and esteem and speaking into existence her students’ potential. Mrs. Green spoke into existence her students’ potential because of her faith in them and her ability to expect and get the best out of her students. Mrs. Green’s caring and faith met Gay’s (2000) idea that caring causes teachers to act. Mrs. Green’s caring included “emotions, intellect, faith, action, and accountability” (p. 48).

The remaining theme, from Mrs. Wood’s case, dealt with the acquisition and processing of knowledge. Mrs. Wood believed that one of her major responsibilities, as a teacher, was to enhance students’ abilities to think, so that they could analyze everyday situations or problems. Mrs. Wood believed that her students possessed valuable knowledge that she could bring to the surface through effective questioning. Ladson-Billings’ work (1994) supports this idea in her discussion of the conception of knowledge. She described culturally relevant teachers as teachers who excavate knowledge instead of simply dispensing it.

All of the themes that originated from Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's data reflect what Ladson-Billings (1994) describes as culturally relevant pedagogy and what Weinstein et al. (2004) calls culturally responsive classroom management. These themes are indicative of characteristics that evidence why these two teachers are considered effective teachers of African American students. However, these teachers cannot be considered culturally relevant teachers, because their pedagogy and management strategies did not evolve from a cultural frame of reference.

When Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood inadvertently utilized culturally relevant strategies, they did so without understanding the students' culture. Howard (2006) stated, when teachers of African American students failed to take into account their students' culture, they continue the practices of hegemony.

### **Summary and Discussion of Strategies**

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood were identified as effective female Caucasian teachers of African American students by their principal and from information obtained from test data and discipline referrals. However, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood do not exactly fit the typical profile of successful teachers of African American students. Ladson-Billings (1994) described successful teachers of African American students in three dimensions. Some of the descriptors from the dimensions were consistent with Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's practices, but some were not.

One major discrepancy between these two teachers and Ladson-Billings' dimensions was related to their conception of self and others. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood

had difficulty making connections with and understanding their own and their students' cultural identities. The underlying principles of Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's pedagogy and classroom management strategies were inconsistent with the premise that Caucasian teachers must acknowledge and grapple with the cultural differences between themselves and their students if they are to be effective teachers of children of color (Gay, 2000; Howard, G. 2006; Howard, T., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paley, 2000; Siegel, 1999).

Mrs. Green's lack of awareness or inability to articulate her students' cultural identities was highlighted in several of her comments during interviews. Mrs. Green mentioned that when her boys were younger, she compared her African American students to her boys and their friends. Since Mrs. Green has taught African American students exclusively for the past 27 years, there's a possibility that she has such an intimate knowledge of African American students' that she fails to easily identify cultural differences. When asked which cultural differences she noticed between her students and herself, she stated,

I haven't. I don't see [color]. I don't know. Maybe I am not aware of those things. I don't get into those things. I just simply pay attention to them and make sure their needs are met. I'm trying to think if I can think of any specific incidences. I wish I could tell you more of the cultural differences, but I really don't delve in them—maybe that's the point. That's [differences] not a factor to me. They are who they are, and I am who I am. I have a job to do. They have a job to do. I love them. I hope they love me. It's just that simple.

Mrs. Green answered the question about cultural differences from a racial perspective, as if culture is synonymous to race.

Mrs. Wood attended an undergraduate diversity course and possessed a general knowledge of cultural diversity. She acknowledged that cultural differences should be considered when working with students from diverse cultures. However, Mrs. Wood could not identify any cultural differences between the students and herself. Therefore, she did not connect her selection of pedagogical and classroom management strategies to the students' cultures. Ironically, Mrs. Wood espoused the same sentiments toward race that Mrs. Green mentioned in interviews. Mrs. Wood stated,

I don't see them as black. I don't. I love children. Just love them. And I love the children here. I don't see it as black. I see it as--I don't know--maybe because I am a pastor's wife. You know we have black people in our church. I love them just as much as I love the others.

Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's responses are typical of Caucasian teachers who demonstrate cultural unconsciousness (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Weinstein, 2004).

To discuss culture or race seemed to be a taboo type of conversation for Mrs. Green than Mrs. Wood. Mrs. Wood talked more comfortably about culture and race. Mrs. Green might believe that if she notices students' cultural differences, then she would treat students differently rather than equally. Mrs. Green loves and values her students too much to treat them unequally because of their race or culture and face the accusation of being called a racist. Mrs. Green implies that the recognition of her students' differences

is wrong and prejudicial. Howard (2006) stated that cultural unconsciousness is related to “denial and defensiveness” (p. 38) about the hegemonic power of social positioning for Caucasians in America. Howard also asserted that this difficulty could be related to how Caucasians are able or unable to view their own social dominance. He purported that Caucasians who declare they are colorblind are trying to eliminate and ignore racial and cultural differences to create an illusion of sameness and equality. He further stated that Caucasians who support the color blindness perspective assume that the acknowledgement of differences is wrong. Howard (2006) wrote:

The proponents of colorblindness assume that the mere perception of difference is a problem. “If I see race, I must be a racist. If I don’t see color, or other differences, they go away.” For these people, the mere existence of the difference causes discomfort and must be ignored or denied. Of course, the underlying assumption is that human difference in itself is a problem (p. 57).

Howard’s explanation explains why Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood may have had difficulty identifying cultural differences, and possibly why the differences identified were problem areas for the teachers.

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood used five pervasive pedagogical strategies to ensure academic success. Mrs. Green taught her students how and when to apply skills relative to academic requirements, ensured mastery of prerequisite skills, and met individual students’ needs. Mrs. Wood connected her lessons to real-life applications and delivered explicit instruction while emphasizing critical thinking. Mrs. Green’s and Mrs. Wood’s

pedagogical styles were different. However, they believed that explicit instruction should begin at the prerequisite level to ensure learning gaps were eliminated.

The pedagogical strategies utilized by Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood are supported by research. Ladson-Billings (1994) reported that effective teachers of African American students help them understand and build knowledge, think critically, and make academic connections to the world. Sulentic (1999) stated that effective teachers of African American students give specific and direct instructions and acknowledge students' individual needs.

In the area of classroom management, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood did not exhibit difficulty managing students' behavior, which was contrary to what researchers reported when teachers were culturally unconsciousness (Arriaza, 2003; Jackson, 2002; Monroe, 2004). Arriaza (2003) reported that African American students resist efforts to be normalized in the dominant, mainstream culture of schools and that discord between students' behavior and teachers' cultural norms caused conflict in the classroom. These difficulties were not noted in Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's classrooms because these teachers built personal relationships that allowed them to know which classroom management strategies would be effective with individual students.

Five major effective classroom management strategies were identified from this study. There were more similarities between Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood in the area of classroom management than pedagogy. Each teacher gave explicit behavior expectations, used an ever-changing series of basic management techniques like eye contact, proximity, and seating arrangement, and organized the physical environment to promote

adherence to the behavioral expectations. Even though the teachers were more similar in this area, they used different styles to implement the classroom management strategies. Mrs. Wood was more authoritative and direct, while Mrs. Green was more democratic in her expectations. Each teacher articulated the importance of students knowing what to do and when to do it. Mrs. Green reviewed expectations periodically, whereas Mrs. Wood often discussed expectations. The work of Sulentic (1999), Weinstein, et al. (2003), and Monroe (2004) substantiates the value of explicit expectations, use of a variety of basic management strategies, and organization of the classroom environment as effective classroom management strategies for African American students.

### **Rationale for Selecting Strategies**

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood exhibited difficulty reflecting on their pedagogy. Each teacher attributed most of her use of strategies to instinct or experience. When Mrs. Green was compelled to analyze the rationale for selecting strategies, she stated that they were based on the individual needs of the student. Gay (2000) described this professional stance as a “paradoxical manifestation of the notion that good teaching is devoid of cultural tenets” (p. 23). Gay stated further that it is a common practice among some educators to think that valuing the individual student is all that matters in effective teaching. Nonetheless, the type of professional stance that values the individual without being cognizant of the cultural tenets of the individual leads to hegemony.

Mrs. Wood also stated she selected particular strategies based on the individual needs of the students. Her ultimate reason for teaching the way she does is rooted in

preparing students for life—today and in the future. Mrs. Green’s and Mrs. Wood’s difficulty in expressing their rationales for using various strategies is explained by researchers. Good and Brophy (1994) and Howard (2003) assert that most teachers are unaware of why they select the strategies they use.

### **Teachers’ Perceptions about Differences**

Mrs. Green had difficulty identifying cultural and linguistic differences between her students and herself. When she was able to identify differences, she identified differences that had negative connotations. Mrs. Green stated that African American students are more aggressive than other students; they do not value animals; they do not look adults in their eyes, and they are motivated externally.

Mrs. Green was unable to identify any substantial linguistic differences. However, she was cognizant of a difference between how African American teachers communicated with African American students. She also acknowledged that sometimes she felt that she did not speak the same language as her students. Mrs. Green stated that she wondered how this language barrier might have affected her students. Mrs. Green went on to say that she thought the communication between her students and herself has improved over the years because of more interactions between Caucasian and African American people.

Mrs. Wood appeared to be more knowledgeable about cultural diversity than Mrs. Green. Mrs. Wood discussed knowledge that she gained in a cultural awareness course, but she did not apply that knowledge to her students. Mrs. Wood did not identify any of

her students' cultural and linguistic differences. She only speculated about parental racism toward her and explained what she perceived to be the different ways Hispanic, Caucasian, and African American parents discipline their children. She was aware of the linguistic difference between African American teachers' and Caucasian teachers' communicative styles when working with African American students.

Both teachers lacked the cultural consciousness to be designated as culturally relevant teachers. However, they have been deemed as effective teachers of African American students. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood display many of the characteristics of culturally relevant teachers. Paradoxically, these teachers possessed a personal knowledge of their students and selected strategies based on this knowledge. However, they had no idea the important role that culture plays in the classroom. These two effective Caucasian female teachers did not recognize aspects of their students' cultures, even though they could identify students' individual academic and behavior differences. The old adage is true—they could not see the forest for the trees. For instance, during an interview, Mrs. Wood stated, "The only problem I have in behavior will be talking. They can't stop talking. They love to talk—talk, talk, talk." Mrs. Wood failed to connect this general characteristic of her African American students' boisterous discourse style to their culture. Mrs. Wood had not conceptually made the connection that her use of cooperative learning strategies takes into consideration her students' verbal profuseness. The same situation applies to Mrs. Green. Both teachers used strategies that accommodate for their students' cultural differences, but they did not realize what they were doing for lack of knowledge about the culture of their students.

Due to Mrs. Wood's and Mrs. Green's cultural unconsciousness, their students are more likely to be assimilated into the hegemonic practices of middle-class Caucasian America without the coping skills to move between cultures and without an appreciation and validation of their African American culture. Arriaza (2003) reported that protective agents (teachers and other authority figures) who exhibit a cultural understanding of students help African American students develop skills to engage successfully in the larger social and economic society. Furthermore, Arriaza stated that protective agents need to ensure students can negotiate and navigate within institutional and cultural barriers of the mainstream culture. Both Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood lack the cultural knowledge and skills to ensure African American students acquire necessary navigational skills to shift between mainstream America and African American culture.

### **Influence of Perceived Differences on Strategies**

Mrs. Green's and Mrs. Wood's selection of pedagogical and management strategies cannot be attributed to their knowledge of cultural and linguistic differences. Neither teacher indicated modifying or adopting a strategy based on cultural characteristics of their students. At first, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood even had difficulty articulating the rationale for what they did while teaching. Eventually, they were able to say that their pedagogical and classroom management strategies were based on the individual needs of students.

As stated earlier, these teachers cannot be considered culturally relevant teachers, due to their lack of understanding about their own culture and the culture of their

students. Both teachers are well intentioned in their desire to educate their students to the maximum capacity and their students demonstrated academic achievement as measured by the state curriculum test. However, due to their lack of knowledge, they perpetuate the hegemony of America society, because they fail to or are unable to see racial and cultural differences as acceptable and valuable.

### **Recommendations for Educators**

This study substantiates the research on effective pedagogical and classroom management strategies. Effective teachers build positive, mutually respectful relationships with their students to better understand their students on a personal level, deliver explicitly behavioral expectations and classroom lessons, teach students the importance and applicability of lessons, demand quality student performance, and possess high expectations for student achievement. Therefore, classroom teachers can extract from these strategies to improve their effectiveness.

Principals can utilize findings from this study to support teachers in their efforts to teach students who are different from themselves. Principals must begin to deal with the misconception that color blindness is appropriate and acknowledging differences is racist. Principals also can become reflective about their own cultural consciousness and begin to promote discussions of race, culture, and linguistics among teachers to develop a school climate where cultural and linguistic differences are identified and then valued as resources to educate students. Principals also can ensure professional development

opportunities are provided in the areas of cultural diversity and consciousness and linguistic differences.

Pre-service teacher education programs can use this research to emphasize and implement a cultural diversity class that assists pre-service teachers in the acknowledgement or development of their own cultural identities. Pre-service teachers also need assistance in identifying cultural differences in students, and they need to know how to use the students' cultural differences to enhance their teaching. Pre-service teacher education programs should help teachers understand hegemony and how schools are structured to continue hegemonic practices. Pre-service teacher programs can structure and provide cultural immersion activities that require aspiring teachers the opportunity to visit culturally different environments and analyze the importance of understanding different cultures. Pre-service teachers should also be required to design lessons that take into consideration various students' cultures.

## Conclusion

Clearly, this study has demonstrated that effective Caucasian female teachers do not need to understand the *general* cultural characteristics of African American students. However, on a *specific* individual basis, if the Caucasian female teacher understands the child, then she can successfully utilize pedagogical and classroom management strategies that will ensure the child's academic success.

However, this study illuminated the need for teachers' cultural awareness and validation to prevent the continuous practice of hegemony without respect to students' culture. Hyland (2005) examined how teachers' perceptions of effectiveness could perpetuate a racist ideology and a continuation of hegemonic principles. Hyland closely examined how teachers unwittingly promulgate racist ideology when they thought they were providing African American students with a good education. These two polarized ideas of effective Caucasian female teachers, effective on an individual level, but unaware on the cultural level, carries an unwittingly detrimental effect on African American students.

This study has shown a critical need to educate teachers about differences in terms of race, culture, and language use and how these differences can positively impact their teaching and understanding of their students. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood are effective teachers who exhibit genuine concern, respect, and love for their students. These teachers are competent facilitators of the learning process, and they expect and demand the best from their students. However, these teachers were uncomfortable with the acknowledgement of racial and cultural differences. Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Green

efficiently used culturally relevant strategies, but due to their lack of knowledge about culture and linguistic differences and perhaps because of fear of being perceived as racist and treating children differently, they did not recognize that they selected their pedagogical and management strategies based on the cultural characteristics of their students. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Wood could have easily identified the individual academic and behavior differences of their students without any discomfort. As both teachers met the individual needs of their students, they unconsciously met their cultural needs. For instance, Mrs. Wood was aware that many of her students needed freedom of movement and many opportunities to talk about what they were learning. Therefore, Mrs. Wood's lessons included opportunities for students to discuss their learning and activities that allowed movement. African American students' cultural characteristics include verbal profuseness and a need for active lessons that are kinesthetically inclined.

Teachers need to understand that the recognition of cultural and linguistic differences is acceptable, appropriate, and important. Caucasian teachers should not fear seeing a black child as being black. Paley (2000) discussed the need for children to be seen as they are and valued and respected for their differences. She stated that differences should not be ignored, because "anything a child feels is different about himself, which cannot be referred to spontaneously, casually, naturally, and uncritically by the teacher can become a cause for anxiety and an obstacle to learning" (p. xix).

## **Implications for Future Research**

This study was conducted to analyze and explore the pedagogical and classroom management strategies of effective Caucasian female teachers working with low socioeconomic, African American students. The findings from this study will add another dimension to the bodies of research on culture, pedagogy, and classroom management, as they relates to effective teachers of African American students who are not culturally conscious. However, in the process of answering research questions for this study, other questions surfaced.

1. How can pre-service and in-service teachers become more conscious of their own cultures and linguistic patterns?
2. How can Caucasian teachers who are culturally unconscious transform into culturally relevant teachers?
3. As more and more students of different cultures become prevalent in U.S. schools, how can teachers, principals, and other school personnel become more culturally conscious so they can design instruction that is sensitive to students' cultural and linguistic differences?
4. How aware are effective African American teachers of the cultural and linguistic differences of students who are different from themselves?
5. How aware are African American students concerning Caucasian teachers' cultural consciousness?
6. In effective Caucasian teachers' classrooms, how is the lack of cultural consciousness manifested into hegemony?

7. What would a study of effective middle and high school Caucasian female teachers, which has the same purposes as this study, reveal?

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