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TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN CULTURE AND  
STUDENT BEHAVIORS, AND EXPERIENCE USING CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE  
BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS

A dissertation submitted in partial requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Special Education at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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for all the sacrifices you have made for Didi and I, and I can only hope to one day be the mother that you have been to us.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom and dad. I would not be here without you.

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## **Abstract**

### **TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN CULTURE AND STUDENT BEHAVIOR, AND EXPERIENCE USING CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS**

By Toshna Pandey, M.Sc.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021

Director: Kevin S. Sutherland, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Counseling and Special Education

Students belonging to racially minoritized groups experience more frequent and intense disciplinary consequences for similar rule violations as their White peers. Factors such as deficit-oriented perceptions and implicit biases among teachers have contributed to the disproportionate exclusion of racially minoritized students, thus negatively affecting their social, emotional, behavioral, and school success. Using semi-structured interviews, this study sought to explore elementary school teachers' views on the intersectionality between race/culture and student behaviors. Additionally, it also examined their experiences using behavior interventions effective for racially minoritized students. Findings suggest that participants often attributed challenging behaviors to student-level factors such as family and community culture, faced challenges such as backlash from communities and families, and reported using group contingency behavior interventions to support minoritized students with behavioral challenges. Future research should examine the use of the behavior interventions using direct observation measures to record teacher behaviors, in addition to interview responses to accurately measure their skills and knowledge. Finally, study limitations and implications for practice are discussed.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The conceptualizations of race and racism have seen a shift from biological explanations to cultural transformations (Barkan, 1992). In that, this shift was characterized by irreversible sequential steps in the development and growth of minoritized people— competition, overcoming conflict and accommodation, and finally, assimilation (McKee, 1993, p. 110). This cultural understanding posits that the goal for non-dominant racial and ethnic groups was to, through an evolutionary process, uniformly and completely conform to and accept the dominant culture. In the context of this study, non-dominant racial and ethnic students were referred to as racially minoritized students (i.e., who have endured mistreatment and have faced prejudice because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) These notions of assimilation infantilize racially and ethnically minoritized people through the belief that they can be developed or civilized to become fully human, like White people (Kendi, 2018). Unfortunately, this worldview of minoritized individuals being capable of change and civility has also permeated into schools and impacts how minoritized students are viewed (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 1982; Steele, 1997; Yi, et al., 2020). At the macro level, teachers often regard practices and policies that hinder minoritized students' success as being beyond their influence or control. However, at the micro level, achievement gaps or school failure are attributed to their “uneducability” due to internal or cultural “deficiencies” (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018).

These deficit-oriented conceptions about minoritized students are apparent in their academic outcomes compared to their White peers as teachers attribute school failure to “internal deficits or deficiencies” (Valencia, 2010, p. 6). Lately, the explanation for the disproportionate school failure of racially and ethnically minoritized students, especially Black and Brown

students, has been attributed to teachers' lack of efficacy to improve students' academic, behavioral, and social outcomes (Valencia, 2010). Attempts at making systemic school reforms to change the outcomes of low-performing schools are often met with barriers such as schools' or teachers' tendencies to blame minoritized students' parents and/or communities for their poorer outcomes (Peterson et al., 2011). The argument for students to change background factors such as cultures, values, and family structures to perform better at school is indicative of assimilationist views (Walker, 2010). Specifically, the assimilationist view suggests that if minoritized students can change their way of life to become more "civilized", they too can become successful in school, thus closing the achievement gap (Kendi, 2018).

These patterns of deficit-oriented thinking are not only used to predict minoritized students' academic outcomes but are also evident in the way discipline is administered in schools (Collins, 2011; Thornberg, 2007; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). The discipline gap in schools is indisputable given the disproportionately higher rates of office discipline referrals, in- and out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions among minoritized students compared to their White peers (Aud et al., 2010; Noltemeyer & McLoughlin, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace et al., 2008). These trends can be explained by the over-selection and excessive sanctioning of minoritized students at the school and teacher level (Gregory et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2012). Therefore, challenging and dismantling teacher- and school-held stereotypes about these students is crucial in changing perceptions about deficiencies and the unworthiness of minoritized students (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018).

Well-intentioned and caring teachers might still hold these prejudiced views about minoritized students, and although they spend the majority of the time with students, they cannot be held solely responsible for these biases and acts of discrimination (Garcia & Guerra, 2004).

School climate greatly influences students' achievement (Guo & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2011) and how teachers interact with their students (Cohen & Geier, 2010). Recognizing the biases as manifested in the preferential treatment of non-minoritized students and consequently, incorporating a positive school culture can help shift the conception of success and failure (Garcia & Guerra, 2004).

### **Race and Education**

Despite the rising enrollment among racially and ethnically minoritized students compared to their White peers in public schools (National Center on Educational Statistics [NCES], 2015), education systems are plagued with unjust and racialized school policies (Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2018), Eurocentric standards of testing and evaluation (Milner & Howard, 2014), over-policing of racially minoritized bodies, and in turn, maintaining oppression over the minoritized. With the advent of social media and wider technology use, the similarities between injustices against minoritized adults and school-aged children are stark (Bever, 2017; Fausset & Southall, 2015). These injustices shed light on the many acts of discrimination due to racial disparities, stereotypes, and biases that are so deeply ingrained in our society (Morgan et al., 2014; Padres y Jovenes Unidos, 2011; United States Department of Education [DOE], 2014). Furthermore, overt acts of racism are evident in the excessive use of exclusionary practices such as out-of-school suspensions and expulsions among racially minoritized students (OCR, 2018). Several researchers and academics have warned against the adverse effects of otherizing these students such as deteriorating social and academic outcomes, exacerbated behavioral outcomes, and an inability to form and/or maintain social relationships between children and adults (Carter et al., 2014).

While these data are essential to establish the current state of affairs in schools, it is equally important to examine the reasons behind these discriminatory acts. One major contributor to these disproportionate disciplinary acts is the mismatch between teacher and student racial and ethnic identities (Monroe, 2005). The equal representation of racially minoritized teachers to educate a deeply diverse student body in public schools helps address and reduce racial disparities of achievement (Villegas & Jordan Irvine, 2010). Furthermore, due to their commitments and passions to teaching within urban schools (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011), racially minoritized teachers are more likely to culturally match with minoritized students (Sleeter, 2001; Weisman & Hansen, 2008), serve as cultural brokers (Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011), and view minoritized students as more than just ‘educable’ (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000; Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011). Cultural mismatch between teachers and students manifests in the form of “unawareness of the tactics, rules, nuances, and idiosyncrasies that exist between teachers and their students” (Davis, 2009, p. 24). For instance, the various ways in which students learn and communicate may be perceived as disruptive or disrespectful by teachers using Eurocentric standards of teaching and learning (Milner & Howard, 2014). These misunderstandings either due to biases or limited experiences with other cultures have resulted in higher numbers of and more intense punishments for minoritized students (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014).

Discipline disproportionality is also a result of a racially charged school climate (Skiba et al., 2014). While addressing racial and ethnic racism is vital to the growth and development of schools, students who self-report acts of racism are most likely to be expelled and excluded (Mattison & Aber, 2007). This is further exacerbated in predominantly minoritized schools with a high volume of racially otherized students. For example, predominantly Black dominated

schools report a higher number of instances related to exclusionary discipline compared to their predominantly White school counterparts (Welch & Payne, 2010). Further, the overrepresentation of racially minoritized students in school discipline records has been examined using a national dataset to disaggregate office discipline referrals (ODRs) by race and ethnic background. Skiba and colleagues (2011) found that Black students in elementary schools were twice as likely as their White peers to receive ODRs. Moreover, this statistic is likely to increase twofold (i.e., they are four times as likely as their White peers to receive ODRs) by the time they are in middle school.

In addition to recording these instances of disproportionate discipline, it is also crucial to study student-teacher racial/cultural mismatch and its long- and short-term effects on student outcomes. One such consequence is disengaged learners. The amount and quality of time spent in the classroom while engaged in the academic content improves student achievement (Greenwood et al., 2002) and reduces school alienation (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Disengagement and subsequent lowered achievement outcomes have robust associations with dropouts and other future behavioral problems (Henry et al., 2012). The consequences of these poorer student achievement outcomes could lead to substantially lowered earnings (Ritter & Taylor, 2011; Rouse, 2005), long-term unemployment (Couch & Fairlie, 2010; Pager et al., 2009), considerably poorer health (Muennig, 2005), significantly higher chances of engagement in criminal activities (Boynton et al., 2014; Gibbons et al., 2010; Moretti, 2005; Pascoe & Richman, 2009), juvenile detention (Hirschfield, 2009), adult incarceration (Pettit & Western, 2004), and recidivism (Jung et al., 2010).

Often due to the lack of knowledge and/or experience with other cultures, or ambiguous information, teachers tend to rely on stereotypes to fill the gaps to form their inferences



(Okonofua et al., 2016). However, as teachers become more severe in their punishments, the likelihood that students will undergo long-term emotional and social deterioration is high (Okonofua et al., 2016). These rejections in early years can create racially stigmatized children prone to anxiety, distress, aggressive behaviors, and interpersonal difficulties (Brown & Bigler, 2005; Downey et al., 1998; London et al., 2007; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002).

### **Teaching Minoritized Students**

The dramatic shift in the student demographics in public schools with higher racially and ethnically minoritized student enrollment seems to have negatively influenced student-teacher relationships (Aud et al., 2013; Okonofua et al., 2016) and student outcomes (Gay, 2000, 2002). As the enrollment of minoritized students has increased, the teaching workforce which is predominantly White middle-class females (NCES, 2014), has reported feeling inadequately prepared to support these students (Canedas et al., 2018; Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017; Cisneros & Lopez, 2016; Dabach, 2015; Jefferies & Dabach, 2015). Although early works placed significant importance on ensuring mastery of content and pedagogical skills, recent scholarship and practice have focused on the inclusion of multicultural education and equipping teachers with the necessary skills to support diverse learners in culturally-responsive ways (Gay, 2001).

Misinterpretation about students' classroom behaviors because of their culture could potentially cause conflict, thus, negatively influencing student-teacher relationships (Gay, 2000; Townsend, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004). Much too often, teachers fail to recognize how challenging student behaviors might be a manifestation of students' culture, thus inhibiting them from making informed judgment about appropriate means to address them. Consequently, this lack of preparedness to recognize the relationship between behaviors and culture negatively influences teachers' ability to implement appropriate behavior interventions for minoritized

students (Bergeron, 2008; Gay, 2000; Hill, 2009). Fostering positive relationships between teachers and minoritized students is also contingent on culturally-responsive communication, building a sense of community, and recognizing and honoring differences with respect to race, ethnicity, language, and nationality (Gay, 2000).

The hallmark of a culturally-responsive teacher goes beyond the awareness of differences between ethnicities and the general acceptance of these differences (Gay, 2001). Teachers must celebrate differences by fostering positive relationships with students, families, and communities to create a culturally-responsive classroom and school environment (Gay, 2001). For example, teachers often fail to see how subjects such as math or science can relate to discourses around diversity and cultural differences, thus arguing against the compatibility of their course content and multicultural teaching strategies (Gay, 2001; Lee & Buxton, 2010; Nasir & Cobb, 2007). Although content integration is essential in the development and fostering of multicultural education, it should not be the only gold standard of an inclusive learning environment. Intentional inclusion of diversity and a reformatory educational movement does not only benefit the minoritized students (Glazer, 1997), but it is also integral to the development of their non-minoritized peers (May, 2012).

Contextualizing multicultural education as only content integration is misleading. The goal must be to correctly conceptualize the various aspects of multicultural education by recognizing that teaching situations are as important as content integration to embrace diversity (Banks, 2015). By developing active, cooperative, and motivating teaching styles, teachers of math or science can learn to motivate minoritized students to become more involved in these subjects rather than forcibly infusing their cultural contributions to these fields (Banks, 2015). Therefore, educating teachers about the need for multicultural education includes the appropriate

contextualization by creating an empowering school culture and social structure, and implementing equity pedagogy (Banks, 2015).

Schools can be conceptualized as a social system with various working parts including curriculum, instruction styles, teaching strategies, counseling programs, and administrative leadership. Brookover and Erickson (1975) explained that the socio-psychological phenomenon of internalizing the concept of self is entrenched in the structure and ethos of educational institutions. Therefore, examining the messages conveyed to students about race, ethnicity, inclusion, and social-class diversity helps to foster a positive school ethos. It also challenges tracking and labeling practices, gifted programs or grouping practices so as not to promote racial and social inequities in schools (Banks, 2015).

### **Behavior Interventions for Minoritized Students**

Disproportionality in schools, especially, as it relates to discipline, is influenced by an array of factors, all of which seem to share common ground. Historically, Black and Latino/x communities have been on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, which is a strong predictor of school success (i.e., impacting student test scores and engagement in extra-curricular school activities) (Noel, 2018). Furthermore, school failure has strong association with exclusionary and punitive discipline which is most often used with minoritized students. Therefore, the role of proactive and culturally-responsive behavior interventions is essential to minoritized students' school success (Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994; Nieto 2004).

Despite successful implementation of proactive behavior interventions being an essential skill for teachers to better address behavior infractions or rule violation (Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006), it is insufficient to address the behavioral needs of all students (Siwatu & Starker, 2010). More specifically, although these strategies have helped reduce overall exclusionary discipline,

minoritized students, especially those who are Black, continue to be excessively punished and excluded (Larson et al., 2018). For example, although Native American and Latino/x students face disproportionately higher exclusionary discipline relative to the White peers, Black students experience exclusionary discipline twice as frequently as White students (Losen et al., 2015; Losen et al., 2015; Porowski et al., 2014; Skiba et al., 2011).

Often, this over-representation of racially minoritized students in discipline disparities is due to cultural, ethnic, nationality, language, or racial student-teacher mismatch (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). This mismatch could entail different communication and learning styles, language patterns, and values (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). It is often the case that teachers fail to recognize the intersectionality between race and culture by imposing Eurocentric style of education and regarding them as the gold standard (Boykin 2001; Diaz-Greenberg 2001; Howard 2001; Milner & Howard, 2013). As a result, they impose unrealistic expectations upon their students and risk straining relationships (Wallace, 2000). This problem is further exacerbated by the over-representation of White, English speaking, middle-class, female teachers in the teaching workforce, educating a diverse student population (NCES, 2014, 2015).

Additionally, the highly strained relationships resulting in disproportionate exclusion of minoritized students can also be associated with factors such as traditional pre-service education models (Kea & Trent, 2013; Trent et al., 2008). Absence of meaningful feedback or limited exposure to cultural/racial diversity (Kea & Trent, 2013) leaves pre- and in-service teachers feeling underprepared to manage behaviors exhibited by minoritized students. Next, the ill-effects of student-teacher mismatch could also arise from deeply-entrenched teacher-held stereotypes and negative perceptions about minoritized groups, especially those against Blacks (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Siwatu & Starker, 2010). For example, teachers may

interpret White middle-class students and families as being more serious or engaged in school and academics (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013) due to the ease of interaction and/or a sense of familiarity with which teachers interact with these parents. Contrarily, White middle-class teachers often interact with distrust and restraint with minoritized parents (Lareau and Weininger, 2003).

However, the recent movement towards creating congruent home and school environments to better support minoritized students has enabled teachers to positively influence students' wellbeing and social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth (Cholewa et al., 2014). These culturally-sensitive practices include ecological perspectives and strength-based views of minoritized students (Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994; Nieto 2004). However, viewing minoritized students' cultures as strengths challenging requires deficit-oriented thinking and an understanding of socio-historical influences on these students' trajectories (Lopez, 2017).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The educational system, which is dominated by the White middle-class values, norms, and attitudes, expects all students, irrespective of their racial heritage or socio-economic background to share and adhere to the same standards. This notion, which promotes the maintenance of social stratification and cultural capital, is called the Social Reproduction Theory. It asserts that schools tend to reproduce, and consequently, exacerbate inequalities of race, class, and gender (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) because the cultural norms and values of racially and socio-economically minoritized students can "irritate" educators leading to alienation and marginalization of these students (Bernstein 1986; Delpit 1995; Farkas 1996; Gilmore 1985; Heath 1983; Ogbu 1978). The presence and maintenance of standards dominated by communities that possess cultural capital influence school success and discipline (Morris,

2005). Although students enter school with different socio-economic and racial backgrounds, Bourdieu (1977) asserts that the educational system seems to exacerbate inequalities because those students with more and “correct” wealth of cultural capital and families with preferences and skills of the dominant culture are better able to succeed at school.

Since capital falls on a spectrum of dominant and non-dominant, socialization plays a significant role in how children perform at school. For those who do not have access to the dominant social advantages, their culture and knowledge are viewed as inferior, thus being treated differently by teachers and administrators. Significant evidence suggests that students who possess different speech patterns and dress codes compared to the middle class standard are more likely to experience lower expectations from teachers, further separating them through social stratification. These differences of speech, clothing, and demeanor are viewed as negative and defiant despite them being standards and the norm in the child’s social, cultural, and familiar context (Roscigno et al. 2006; Lareau 2003; Ferguson 2000; Lareau 2000; Oakes 1985; Rist 1970).

Student-teacher conflict over differences in school standards, be it, clothing, behavior, or language, becomes exceedingly complex due to resistance from students and the need for control by school authorities. When minoritized students deem their educational system to be unfair, uncaring, and unnecessarily strict, they could use their clothing and behaviors to purposely oppose the prescribed standards. Consequently, this resistance is met with bodily discipline and regulation to ensure cooperation and compliance into normative and acceptable behavior (Morrison, 2005). This seems to be a cyclical process of resistance by students and the attribution by authorities that minoritized students are deserving of excessive discipline. Following this understanding about cultural capital and the social reproduction theory, the

present study seeks to situate the findings from the teacher interviews within the tenet that the possession of “high culture” results in fewer disciplinary actions and higher chances for school success. More specifically, this study aims to examine how teachers’ assumptions about minoritized students influence the ways in which they interpret behaviors and enforce discipline.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Consequently, researchers have urged for empirical research on behavior interventions to better support minoritized students; the blame for inconclusive results cannot solely be put on teachers since the best approach these practices is still unknown (Larson et al., 2018). In a recent systematic literature review investigating models of culturally-responsive practices for educators, Bottiani et al. (2017) found that of the 179 peer-reviewed studies included in the review, only 10 studies reported empirical findings from intervention research. The remaining majority of the studies focused on teacher characteristics or theory-based recommendations over outcome-based interventions. Furthermore, these studies also failed to meet the What Works Clearinghouse design standards, thus exposing the dire need for more empirical and outcome-focused empirical research associated with the professional development of teachers in cultural responsiveness (Bradshaw, et al., 2018; Pas, Larson et al., 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate in-service elementary teachers’ views on the intersectionality between culture/race and student behaviors and their experience using culturally-responsive behavior interventions to better support racially minoritized students.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Overview

Effective educational settings are dynamic environments that offer safe and positive learning opportunities by establishing healthy relationships between teachers and students. The pressure on educators to meet standards of academic excellence while serving an increasingly diverse student population (e.g., racially and historically minoritized groups, those with disabilities, English Language Learners, children living in poverty, etc.) is constantly rising (Ross et al., 2012; Sleeter, 2001). Therefore, the increased emphasis on accountability for student achievement and discipline problems are turning the focus to a positive school climate by reducing these misbehaviors (Bradshaw et al., 2010). By creating positive behavior expectations at the school and/or classroom level, universal positive behavioral supports are put into place to systematically manage challenging behaviors. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS; Horner et al., 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Sugai et al., 2002) is one such way to prevent disruptive behaviors through proactive measures by creating primary (schoolwide/universal), secondary (targeted/selective), and tertiary (individual) systems of support.

A portion of the present study will focus on universal support for racially minoritized students exhibiting challenging behaviors. Given that Black students are most frequently and intensely punished or given office discipline referrals (Kaufman et al., 2010), PBIS has shown effectiveness in reducing these behaviors by using this data source to develop and implement intervention plans (Rusby et al., 2007). Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found a small but positive effect of race/ethnicity on the number and type of referrals. Similarly, several others have found



that Black and Hispanic students were more likely to get referrals and face disciplinary actions compared to their White peers (Bradshaw, Mitchell et al., 2010; Girvan, 2016; Girvan et al., 2017; Krezmien et al., 2006; Lai, Hoffman et al., 2013; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen et al., 2015; McIntosh et al., 2014; Staats, 2014). Therefore, without familiarity and/or training in cultural diversity and competence, teachers can impose unrealistic expectations upon students and mistake different cultural behavior norms as misbehaviors that consequently strain student-teacher relationships (Wallace, 2000). However, it is crucial to note that the educational disproportionalities, especially as they relate to discipline, cannot solely be the outcome of teachers' racial biases. Although student characteristics such as race (Skiba et al., 2014) and socio-economic status (Noltmeyer & McLoughlin, 2010; Petras et al., 2011) are significant predictors of exclusionary discipline, several school-level factors also contribute to disproportionate disciplining. For example, principals' perspectives partly explain the rates and disparities in disciplinary outcomes (Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Edl, & Rausch, 2007; Skiba et al., 2014). Research suggests that principals who take context into consideration and have a well-established philosophies guiding disciplinary actions enforce fewer disciplinary actions compared to those who strictly adhere to the schools' disciplinary policies (Mukuria, 2002). However, some contest that the phenomenon of exclusionary discipline and its correlation with racial bias and discrimination is inconclusive (Skiba et al., 2014; Steinberg & Lacoé, 2017). Upon taking a closer look, some researchers suggest that explanations for discipline disparities go beyond teachers' biases; in that, other variables within the school may contribute to these disparities. For example, Mendez et al. (2002) found that students who require free or reduced lunch were strongly correlated with higher disciplinary rates. However, Skiba et al. (2014) found that higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students in schools was not significantly

related to out-of-school suspensions and predicted lower rates of expulsion. Next, even though race and income are closely correlated (Akee et al., 2017), several studies have found that race disparities in suspensions and referrals persist even after controlling for students' socioeconomic status (Petras et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Additionally, Skiba et al. (2002) posits that disproportionality due to race is usually a by-product of factors such as parents' education, family structure, two parent homes, etc. However, Wallace et al. (2008) noted that socioeconomic indicators have relatively little impact on racial and ethnic discipline disparities. Given the many factors influencing exclusionary disciplining of racially minoritized students and inconclusive results, it is crucial to acknowledge that this is a complex phenomenon which requires continued research. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to present data on the growing diversity in schools and related statistics on discipline disproportionality among minoritized students. Next, the primary researcher will examine the causes for these disproportionalities and the role of teacher preparation programs in maintaining the status quo. Finally, this chapter will conclude by examining behavioral interventions effective in reducing challenging behaviors exhibited by racially minoritized students.

## **School Discipline**

Foucault's (1977) assertion that schools are institutions of social control has become increasingly apparent in recent decades (Beger, 2002; Skiba, 2000). The harsh nature of discipline in schools has become more intense, mirroring the trends of escalating punitive discipline in the criminal justice system (Welch & Payne, 2010). These trends are not inconsequential as demonstrated by the Advancement Project (2005). They found that students who are perceived or categorized to be in the "school to prison pipeline" receive harsher punishments for relatively minor violations. Upon examining the reasons for higher and more

intense punishments, Vavrus and Cole (2002) found zero-tolerance policies to be a possible factor. However, they assert that sanctions placed upon students are not always a culmination of more frequent violations, rather they are, in part, a result of individual teacher and administration discretion.

The presence of subjectivities in punishing misbehavior based on race can lead to several detrimental outcomes among students receiving these consequences (Staats, 2016). However, zero tolerance policies and harsh punishments do not show promise of decreasing problem behaviors either (Curran, 2016). Moreover, school suspensions predict higher frequency of misbehaviors and further suspensions rather than reducing these instances (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003). These exclusionary practices also have negative implications for academic achievement (Beck & Muschkin, 2012; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba & Rausch, 2004), school dropout (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; American Psychological Association, 2008; Ekstrom, et al., 1986), and involvement in the juvenile justice system (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; Balfanz, et al., 2003; Fabelo et al., 2011; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009).

Several researchers over the years have studied the relationship between disciplinary exclusion and student outcomes (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; American Psychological Association, 2008; Beck & Muschkin, 2012; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba & Rausch). For example, the American Psychological Association found that zero tolerance policies had negative impacts on the relationship between schools and the criminal justice system as juvenile justice systems have become increasingly involved in school discipline related issues. Consequently, zero tolerance policies also harshly influence child development because of severe punishments (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) found concerning evidence around the relationship between child development and zero tolerance policies as contributing to higher dropout rates. Based on these findings, Skiba et al. (2014) published an overview of the relationship between school exclusion and school to prison pipeline. They found that school exclusion was widespread while especially impacting racially minoritized students. Additionally, they discussed the short-term negative impacts of disciplinary exclusion on student engagement, loss of educational opportunities, higher dropout rates, and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

When excluded from classrooms, students lose out on crucial instruction time and opportunities for social interactions and development. Losen and Whitaker (2018) found that students lost up to 11 million days of instruction due to out-of-school suspensions. Furthermore, this is especially worse for Black students compared to their White peers. These disciplinary infractions are given out at alarming levels (Welsh & Little, 2018) and the disproportionate disparities among these groups of students are prevalent at all settings and grade levels (Skiba et al., 2016).

Exclusionary discipline is used disproportionately to impose sanctions on minoritized students (Burdge et al., 2014; Sprague et al., 2013; Sullivan et al., 2013). Of these, Black males are most often and intensely disciplined (OCR, 2018). The U.S. Department of Education data show persistent racism in schools and this discrimination and prejudice often takes the form of unjustified disciplinary actions. To illustrate this, the OCR (2018) found that in the 2015-2016 school year, despite a 20% drop in overall school suspensions, racially minoritized students with behavioral challenges continued to be over-policed and excessively punished through suspensions and other exclusionary practices. They also found that Black students represent only

15% of the student population but account for 35% of students suspended once, 44% of the students suspended more than once, and 36% of the students expelled from schools (OCR, 2014). Furthermore, racially minoritized students were also more likely to receive harsh punishments for subjective offenses such as showing disrespect, and as a result, they were disproportionately missing school time for trivial reasons (Skiba et al., 2002).

Over the years, these numbers have become worse. Losen and Colleagues (2015) studied out-of-school suspension rates in every state in the US over one academic year. Their findings revealed that there was an overall increase in suspensions over four decades as well as an increasing gap in suspension rates among White and racially minoritized students. They reported an increase in suspensions rates from six percent to 16% among Black students compared to a mere three percent of White students. These findings are consistent with several others (for example Losen & Skiba, 2010; Sartain et al., 2015; Skiba et al., 2011; Welch & Payne, 2010).

There are growing concerns around the effectiveness of exclusionary discipline and how it negatively impacts student achievement (Welsh & Little, 2018). Particularly, Black students are significantly less likely to become academically proficient which is evidenced in their performance on standardized tests compared to White students (Morris & Perry, 2017; NCES, 2014). Morris and Perry (2017) explained the intersectionality between race and income, in that they found that one fifth of the Black-White achievement gap exists because of disproportionate suspensions. Relatedly, several other researchers have posited that race, income, and gender disparities in disciplinary exclusion to be significant contributors of achievement gaps (Gregory et al., 2010; Losen et al., 2015; Skiba et al., 2016).

Fortunately, there has been a movement towards revising these punitive and exclusionary zero-tolerance policies, as evidence shows its disproportionate application to racially minoritized

students (Anderson & Ritter, 2017). In recent years, research on rehabilitative interventions as an alternative form of discipline has gained traction. Rehabilitative discipline practices such as restorative justice or trauma-informed approaches give weight to “rehabilitation of individuals and/or personal relationships” (Marcucci, 2020, p. 51). By using rehabilitative discipline in the school context, when a misbehavior is identified, teachers respond with language and interventions that focus on supporting the students by encouraging them to make prosocial choices in the future. Instead of using punishments to deter future infractions, rehabilitative discipline is an opportunity to foster socio-emotional learning (Marcucci, 2020). However, despite this push, affecting meaningful change remains a challenge due to the biases and prejudices plaguing school systems.

### **Implicit Bias**

Staats (2016) contends that the teaching profession “is full of well-intentioned individuals deeply committed to seeing all children succeed” (p. 29). However, despite having the desire to foster growth and development of their students, the presence of implicit biases, deeply-held prejudices, and negative stereotypes damagingly impact teacher behaviors (Staats, 2016). It is vital to recognize that implicit biases are outside the conscious awareness of individuals. Nonetheless, it is this lack of conscious awareness about biases, despite professing egalitarian intentions, that calls for teachers and teacher educators to be mindful of these beliefs to truly create equitable learning environments.

Implicit biases and stereotypes are often activated by factors such as race, sex/gender, ethnicity, or age (Fishbein & Azjen, 2010). Consequently, tangible teacher actions in reaction to student behaviors are guided by these factors. Research suggests that teacher-held implicit biases may play a causal role in disproportionately sanctioning punitive discipline against minoritized

students (Skiba et al., 2002; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Gilliam et al., 2016). Deeming behaviors “good” or “bad” and the subsequent consequences are usually a result of subjective evaluations due to situational ambiguity or inexperience with the wide student demographic in question (Staats, 2016). Situational ambiguity and subjectivity are major contributors to discipline disparity, especially among racially minoritized students. For example, Skiba and colleagues (2002) found that racially minoritized students were more likely to be sent to the office or face disciplinary action for subjective offenses such as creating excessive noise or being disrespectful while their White peers were more likely to be sent to the offices for infractions such as vandalism or smoking. Teachers with stronger implicit biases are more prone to interpreting racially minoritized students’, especially Black students’, behaviors as threatening and consequently delivering punishments, thus negatively influencing student learning and other life outcomes (Gregory et al., 2010; Lacoé & Steinberg, 2019).

Subjective infractions account for a vast proportion of disciplinary actions. Despite this, there are no standardized means of assessing infractions objectively. These infractions include being “disruptive”, or “disrespectful” (Staats, 2016). Some schools have attempted delineating parameters to develop a code of conduct and related consequences, but subjectivities continue to influence these judgments. Introducing subjectivities can cause severe repercussions, especially when teacher-held implicit biases are driven by race. Freedom granted to teachers to decide punishments based on their subjective assessment of the severity of the infraction inhibits the student from recognizing what they did wrong (Staats, 2016).

Teachers’ implicit biases are of significant import as they can have several potential negative consequences on students (Chin et al., 2020; Quinn, 2017; Starck et al., 2020; Warikoo et al., 2016). Teachers’ implicit biases can influence their warmth towards and interaction with

students. Especially since many teachers are now working in environments that are packed with racial disparities in academic outcome and discipline (Morris & Perry, 2016; Reardon et al., 2019), circumstances, over time, can worsen teacher-held stereotypes about White students' capabilities thus strengthening their biased beliefs (Ferguson, 2003; Wright et al., 2014). Moreover, these behaviors and biases are often detectable by students which negatively impacts student-teacher relationships (Dovidio et al., 2002). These teachers are also liable to provide biased evaluations of academic performance, contributing to racially minoritized students' self-fulfilling prophecies (Papageorge et al., 2016). Specifically, children learn how to gauge teachers' expectations (McKown et al., 2010) and stereotypes early on (McKown & Weinstein, 2003) and when they experience low expectations from teachers, their school success is at risk (Taylor & Walton, 2011). These impressions have negative effects on students, ranging from stress and challenge avoidance to disengagement from school and rejecting teacher feedback (Perry et al., 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Taylor & Walton, 2011).

Other researchers have studied teachers' evaluation biases using observational, experimental, and quasi-experimental designs (Quinn, 2020). In a meta-analysis conducted by Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007), results showed that teachers had biases in favor of White students when compared to Black and Hispanic students when asked to rate students based on vignettes, work samples, and photographs. A vast literature suggests that teachers often have racially-biased evaluations of students (Malouff & Thornsteinsson, 2016; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). These biased evaluations can lead to actual poorer performances in school through self-fulfilling prophecies or teacher expectancy effect (Ferguson, 2003). They also have further consequences on future teachers who are likely to base their evaluations of the same students based on previous teachers (Quinn, 2020).



To evidence the prevalence of teacher bias, Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) conducted an experiment to study the “Black escalation effect”. In their study, they recruited K-12 teachers to participate in a racial priming procedure wherein they read discipline records of students with stereotypically Black and White names. Although no apparent racial disparity was found after reading the first infraction, the teachers felt more troubled by and were open to harsher punishments for Black students. Furthermore, subsequent infractions by Black students were attributed as “patterns” and were perceived as “troublemakers”. In a similar study, Gilliam and colleagues (2016) used eye tracking techniques and racial priming to study early childhood teachers’ implicit biases in perceptions of behaviors and discipline. They used standardized vignettes of Black boys and girls, and White boys and girls to ask teachers to identify instances of misbehavior. They found that the teachers were more likely to track Black boys when asked to look for misbehavior.

### **Deficit-Oriented Thinking**

Throughout the twentieth century, racially minoritized groups were characterized as deficient (Brown, 2009; Milner, 2010). These discourses portrayed racially minoritized people, especially Blacks, as “lacking in skill, experiences, beliefs, and values needed to succeed in schools and society” (Brown & Brown, 2012, p. 12). Bondy and Ross’ (1998) seminal work on longstanding myths held by teachers about Black students based these myths, collectively, on the deficiency perspective. They found that teachers assume that Black students, their families, and communities do not care about education, lack the motivation or interest to learn, and do not possess or pass down appropriate intellectual experiences or support. Thus, the basic premise of the deficiency perspective posits that Blacks cannot succeed at the same level as their White counterparts (Sleeter, 2008).

These biases and stereotypes have serious negative consequences on students. Despite the Every Student Succeeds ACT (ESSA, 2015) requiring teachers to be highly qualified so as to close the achievement gap, teachers continue to hold ideas that are detrimental to the growth and development of the underserved children. Despite this legislative measure, Black students continually receive the lowest scores and have the highest dropout rates. Yong (2013) attributes this trend to the “stereotype threat” which ascribes disproportionately low academic achievements to Blacks’ intelligence inferiority.

Underrepresentation of racially minoritized students in gifted programs are tell-tale signs of inequities in education and resources due to lower expectations from them. Black students are the most underrepresented group in gifted programs and are consequently most often the focus of litigation in these programs. Hispanic students represent the next group of underrepresented students in gifted programs. Although Hispanic students represent roughly 25% of the public school enrollments, they only account for 16% representation in gifted programs (Ford, 2010, 2013; OCR, 2009, 2011). On the other end of the spectrum, racially minoritized students are overrepresented in special education (Oswald & Coutinho, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Zhang et al., 2014). Coutinho and Oswald (1998) present two hypotheses regarding this disproportionality. First, they suggest special education referrals, assessments, and eligibility standards are based on culturally and linguistically loaded processes and instruments that are applied differently across ethnic groups (Coutinho & Oswald, 1998), due at least in part to inappropriate and inaccurate attribution of behaviors to disability over diversity (Gay, 2002; Ortiz, 1997). Behaviors that are considered standards in minoritized cultures are often mistakenly seen as misbehaviors by teachers due to incongruent home and school expectations. Consequently, these behaviors are seen as biological malfunctions or intellectual limitations

(Gay, 2002; Ortiz et al., 2006). However, contradicting research suggests that overrepresentation of minoritized students in special education is not always a consequence of race. Coutinho and Oswald's (1998) second hypothesis suggests that minoritized groups are more susceptible to educational disabilities due to environmental, demographic, socio-economic and educational disadvantages. Socio-economic and environmental factors such as maternal health or prenatal exposure to substances or alcohol contribute to disability identification (Goodlad et al., 2013; O'Connor & Paley, 2009). Nonetheless, many of these biological, socio-economic, and environmental risk factors are highly correlated with race and ethnicity due to historical oppression, discrimination, and segregation (Claycomb et al., 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This literature is further supported by Morgan et al. (2017, 2018) who found that minoritized students' overrepresentation in special education has little evidence of misidentification based on race or ethnicity. These findings potentially reflect a different type of implicit bias wherein White teachers elicit a deeper and more responsive concern for White students and therefore, provide them with empirically validated treatments. Either way, the manner in which teachers perceive their students can greatly affect their academic performance and behaviors in school. These incongruities in expectation standards causes teachers to view these students negatively, putting at a disadvantage (Gay, 2002).

Discourse around challenging deficit-oriented thinking should also be made a significant part of the teacher education curriculum to assist in developing teachers' repertoires of diversity (Milner, 2010). Notions of deficiencies inhibit teachers from appropriately challenging minoritized students, thus obstructing their development trajectories. For example, teachers' deficit ideologies tend to confound what they ought to teach, how, and to whom, which is further exacerbated by their beliefs about students who belong to lower socio-economic and racially

minoritized groups. Therefore, positionalities of deficit further widen the achievement gap by influencing the nature of curriculum offered to racially minoritized students (Milner, 2010).

Alternately, extant literature challenges these notions about achievement gaps. Although several discourses portray minoritized students as deficient and inadequate compared to their White counterparts, Ladson-Billings (2006) challenges the very existence of an achievement gap. She asserts that there is not so much an achievement gap, rather there is an educational debt that the wider institution owes to these historically minoritized groups. This assertion, essentially, challenges the deficient ideas about underserved groups while placing the responsibility on the system and society to rectify and dismantle the biases and prejudices. Irvine (2010) further argues that the gap does not relate to the achievement as much as it does to other overlooked factors such as gaps in teacher quality, teacher training, challenging curricula, school funding, nutrition, school segregation, wealth, health, etc.

In order to overcome this way of thinking, it is crucial to challenge teachers' questioning of what students possess cognitively, what they can do, and what other resources they bring to the learning context. Eurocentric standards of teaching and learning have permeated the education systems by making dominant and oppressive perspectives that White people, their beliefs, experiences, expectations are the norm to which all non-dominant groups must be compared to, measured against, and evaluated based on (Sheurich & Young, 1997). Viewing the experiences, cultures, beliefs, and values of non-dominant groups as assets and using diverse systems to measure excellence and success are key ways to challenge deficit-oriented thinking (Milner, 2010).

## **Teacher Preparation Programs**

Public schools have a diverse student population, but a predominantly homogeneous teaching workforce (i.e., White, female, middle-class, English speaking) (NCES, 2014, 2015). Given this, it is not surprising that implicit biases and prejudices in teachers might originate from inadequate and racially-biased teacher preparation programs that center Whiteness in a myriad of ways (Sleeter, 2017; Walker, 2009), as well as include textbooks that center Eurocentric ideologies (Calderon, 2014). These established systems render opportunities for racially minoritized students to be endemically unequitable as educational outcomes are structurally linked to learning opportunities (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Oakes, 2005).

Discontinuity among student and teacher identities further exacerbates the problem of discipline disproportionately (Whitford et al., 2016). Although evidence suggests that most teachers are well-intentioned, dispositional empathy or the tendency to react to observed experiences of those who are different from themselves contribute to their negative implicit attitudes and biases (Devine et al., 2012; Fiske, 2000; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Konrath et al., 2011). Implicit biases have the power to impact teachers' empathy and decision-making capabilities regarding discipline and exclusion in significantly consequential ways (McIntosh et al., 2014). A substantial number of implicit biases are rooted in racial and cultural stereotypes, and their power and stubbornness have been attributed to a lack of personal awareness (Devine et al., 2012; Nosek et al., 2007). Teachers working with racially minoritized students, when asked about the cause of the discipline disproportionality, placed blame on factors outside the academic environment such as poverty and family structure and support, asserting that Black students bring problems with them when entering the academic environment (Gregory & Mosely, 2004). When specifically inquired about discipline disproportionality among Black male students,

teachers placed blame on their urban living situations and poverty (Howard, 2013). Relatedly, literature demonstrates that many teachers hold deficit views about racially minoritized students, prefer not to teach in urban schools, and feel underprepared to work with students from diverse backgrounds (Marx, 2004). In his seminal work, Sleeter (2001) reported that:

Most White [teacher candidates in predominantly White institutions] are fairly naïve and have stereotypic beliefs about urban children, such as believing that urban children bring attitudes that interfere with education (Avery & Walker, 1993; King, 1991; Su, 1996, 1997). Most White [teacher candidates] bring little awareness or understanding of discrimination and its effects. (p. 95)

Another significant factor influencing student-teacher relationships and students' school outcomes is the underrepresentation of racially minoritized teachers in the workforce (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Meier & Wood, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Most racially minoritized students belonging to diverse backgrounds and the homogeneous teaching workforce have different life experiences, making it challenging for both parties to relate to the other's experiential realities. As a result, interactions become sporadic and superficial, thus, causing distorted beliefs and attitudes towards racially minoritized groups (Gay, 2010). Nieto (2005) pointedly asserts that since many prospective teachers pick up the negative perceptions and misconceptions about racially minoritized communities early on, they need to engage in deep self-reflection about their beliefs and attitudes.

Although the foundational work of Gay (1995) spans over two decades, the majority of discourse on cultural-sensitivity and responsiveness is around curriculum and pedagogy (Weinstein et al., 2004). Despite growing evidence that Eurocentric standards of behaviors and teaching are being applied to serve racially minoritized students, issues relating to culturally-

responsive behavior interventions are under-studied and under-implemented. For instance, the limited familiarity and/or training in cultural diversity and competence has evidently led them to use culturally-insensitive behavior interventions that could potentially strain their relationship with students (Scheuermann et al., 2016). These data make for a strong argument for incorporating cultural-responsiveness training in pre-service education for a predominantly White teaching workforce. Thus, there is dire need to better prepare and equip teachers to provide culturally-responsive instruction and behavior interventions.

Granting flexibility to students and their respective backgrounds while disciplining enables teachers to use their subjective understanding of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences. For teachers to provide effective classroom instruction that leads to meaningful student learning, they must possess the skills to proactively manage challenging behaviors (McIntosh et al., 2008). Additionally, a mismatch in student-teacher racial identities could lead to conflicts. Limited knowledge in multiculturalism is a result of assuming that behavior expectations and definitions of appropriate behaviors are not influenced by culture (Weinstein et al., 2004). Gay (2000) suggests that European-American teachers are accustomed to passive-receptive forms of participation from their students. However, an active participatory display from Black students manifested in the forms of reactions and comments is often perceived as disruptive and rude.

Ladson-Billings' (1995) seminal work emphasized the significance of teachers' recognition and acknowledgement of the socio-political ramifications of discrimination and racism on students' growth and development (see also Ladson-Billings, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). Focusing on culturally-responsive teaching and teacher dispositions by emphasizing the importance of knowledge and understanding of empathy as a tool for self-reflection can benefit pre-service teachers in preparation programs (Warren, 2017).

Warren (2014) asserts that empathy implementation is a crucial precursor to culturally-responsive practices in preparation programs due to the high likelihood that teachers will work with racially and historically minoritized groups.

Devine et al. (2012) further studied the significance of empathy interventions for teachers as a vital tool to reduce implicit biases and positively contribute to improved student achievement outcomes (also see Arghode, 2012). Despite the growing push for inclusion of culturally-responsive practices with a focus on empathy building, teachers' misunderstanding, lack of awareness, lack of training, and/or avoidance limit the use of these practices (Brown, 2004; Milner, 2010; Young, 2010). Researchers assert that this lack of awareness or avoidance explains why teachers' concern for minoritized students is often lacking. When teachers lack understanding about disparities of academic and discipline outcomes, they may be more likely to use more punitive and harsher punishments by acting on their negative biases about these minoritized groups (Whitford & Emerson, 2019).

### **Behavior Interventions for Racially Minoritized Students**

It is well documented that early school years are critical for children's academic, social and behavioral development; unfortunately, many of these children often enter school life being underprepared and with behavioral challenges which can impact the nature of their educational experiences (Spilt et al., 2012), and increase the risk of subsequent behavioral difficulties (Conroy et al., 2008). These early years potentially have significant and long-term influences on their academic and social/behavioral outcomes (O'Conner et al., 2011; Sutherland et al., 2008). Furthermore, these early years are also crucial to racial minoritized students in understanding the power of knowledge construction (Banks, 2013), and for them to take ownership in their cultural production. Therefore, the establishment of appropriate behavior interventions requires the



development and fostering of cross-cultural competence (Lynch & Hanson, 2011; Sue et al., 2009).

To highlight the disproportionality in discipline and incorporating culturally responsive practices to improve student behaviors, Bottiani and colleagues (2012) developed a robust framework with five components. The CARES Framework emphasizes the development and maintenance of culturally-responsive instruction and behavior intervention (Hershfeldt et al., 2009). The five major components include: (1) reflective thinking about social, cultural, and class memberships; (2) authentic cross-cultural relationships; (3) effective cross-cultural communication; (4) connecting culture with curricula; and (5) sensitivity to students' culture and situational messages.

The first component, reflective thinking about social, cultural, and class membership encourages teachers to critically self-reflect not only their own memberships but also that of their students. It promotes the understanding of the concept of culture and its significance, students' cultural and historical contexts contributing to behaviors, examining their own biases, and using actionable steps to understand differences (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The second component involves creating authentic cross-cultural relationships by expressing warmth, actively listening, and participating in the students' lives, and choosing to listen overreacting to overt student behaviors. These have the potential to improve strained student-teacher relationships, enhance students' encouragement to engage and learn (Koenig, 2000; Monroe, 2006).

The third component encourages teachers to recognize that their students might have communication styles that do not conform to school norms (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005). This involves the understanding that behavior referrals are often a result of cultural

misunderstandings rather than actual disciplinary issues. Teachers can engage in effective cross-cultural communication by understanding the communicative functions of student behaviors, limiting judgmental verbal interactions, and finally, facilitate with code-switching (i.e., guiding students to recognize that different contexts requiring different standards of behavior) (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Gay, 2002; Richards et al., 2007). The fourth component emphasizes the importance of integrating examples from students' cultural and historical context into lessons. Visual cues, modifying cognitive and learning styles to better match students' family and community environment, and promoting unity between teacher and students to master goals are essential to connecting culture with curricula (Gay, 2002; Ross, Kamman, & Coady, 2008). Finally, the last component emphasizes the need for increased awareness that racially and culturally minoritized students may have different behaviors than those prescribed by the school. Making genuine connections with the students' family and cultural community communicates a genuine interest to understand and helps reduce behavior infractions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Keeping in mind this model of culturally-responsive behavior intervention, the next section will review the literature on behavioral interventions that show evidence of effectiveness in reducing challenging behaviors among racially minoritized elementary school students. Note that researchers using these interventions do not claim that they work more effectively with racially minoritized students; they do, however, show effectiveness when used with samples that include racially minoritized students. These interventions include one or a combination of the aforementioned components of the CARES framework.

**Tootles.** Student misbehaviors show associations with several negative outcomes for students as well as teachers. These misbehaviors often lead to teacher burnout (Aloe, Shisler et al., 2014) due to interference with teaching and instructional time (Riley et al., 2011; Robers et

al., 2014). These classroom interruptions and disruptions create an environment which potentially also lead “well-behaved” students to become disengaged and disruptive (Barth et al., 2004). Moreover, these disruptive behaviors not only predict proximal negative outcomes, but they also predict future poor outcomes, such as antisocial behaviors (Trentacosta et al., 2009; van Goozen et al., 2007).

One way to combat the focus on undesirable behaviors is the promotion of peer reporting of prosocial behaviors. Consequently, “tootling” was developed to improve daily social interactions among diverse students. The term “tootling” was constructed to represent the opposite of “tattling” or the expression, “tooting your own horn” (Skinner et al., 2000). For successful implementation of this practice, students are encouraged to “catch” their peers engaging in prosocial or desirable behaviors (e.g., opening doors, giving positive verbal comments, helping peers with tasks, etc.) and writing those behaviors on a card, which they submit to the teacher or put in a jar which are then read by the teacher publicly. This interdependent group contingency helps build cohesion as it enables all students in a classroom to work together to earn a group reinforcement or reward (Slaavin, 1991).

Encouraging students to engage in observing and reporting their peers’ prosocial behaviors (Skinner et al., 1998) reduces disruptive behaviors and helps promote academically engaged behaviors (AEB), especially among racially minoritized students (Dart et al., 2014; Kaya et al., 2015). Several studies over the years have found that upon the promise of receiving reinforcement for public posting of prosocial behaviors, increased class-wide appropriate behaviors increased, disruptive behaviors decreased, and AEB increased (Skinner et al., 2000; Cashwell et al., 2001; Cihak et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2015; Lum et al., 2017; McHugh et al., 2016).

Finally, the evidence of effectiveness of tootles as an interdependent group contingency is consistent with Thorne and Kamps' (2008) assessment that group contingencies are becoming increasingly popular tools in educational settings to manage challenging behaviors in large groups. They posit that interdependent group contingencies may be especially effective because they (i) increase teachers' attention to appropriate behaviors, (ii) are more efficient compared to individual interventions, and (iii) increase the likelihood of individual student's appropriate behaviors are reinforced (Thorne & Kamps, 2008). Hence, group contingency interventions allow teachers to focus on content and quality of instruction.

**Good Behavior Game.** At the student level, disruptive behaviors hinder the teaching-learning process, contribute to distractions, and poorer school performance. Consequently, these have a negative impact on teachers as they affect teachers' sense of self-efficacy and subsequently, adding to feelings of burnout and fatigue (Tingstrom et al., 2006; Van Lier et al., 2004). The Good Behavior Game (GBG) is an intervention technique which reduces disruptive behaviors by providing a group of students a set of predetermined instructions that they are expected to follow. More specifically, students are divided into two or more teams and are reminded about the expectations or rules. Teams are either awarded points for good/expected behaviors or have them taken away if they exceed the preset criterion for behavior offenses (Ruiz-Olivares et al., 2010). Since its advent and evidence for efficacy decades ago by Barrish and colleagues (1969), several studies have continued showing evidence for its efficacy and effectiveness in reducing disruptive behaviors in education contexts (McCurdy et al., 2009; Poduska et al., 2008; Ruiz, et al., 2006; Tingstrom et al., 2006).

A significant advantage of using the GBG is its effectiveness across cultures, languages, socio-economic strata, and other diverse demographic markers (Gu et al., 2011; Thuen & Bru,

2009; Tingstrom et al., 2006). Additionally, longitudinal evidence suggests that students who received the GBG intervention in elementary school exhibit fewer externalizing behaviors (Perez et al., 2005; Perez, Rodriguez et al., 2005; Petras et al., 2008; van Lier et al., 2004; Witvliet et al., 2009), mental health issues (Huizink et al., 2009; Wilcox et al., 2008), attention problems (Dion et al., 2011), and showed improved academic outcomes (Bradshaw et al., 2009) as adolescents and adults.

In a review by Tingstrom et al. (2006), the GBG was examined from 1969 to 2002. The authors reported that GBG has been effective in its original and modified form in reducing disruptive behaviors, increasing prosocial behaviors, improving oral hygiene, and improving academic behaviors. In addition to studying how GBG positively influences student behaviors, Tanol et al. (2010) examined how teacher behaviors influenced student behaviors, implementing response cost and reinforcement with two separate teachers using GBG. They found that although both variations of the intervention were effective in reducing challenging behaviors, GBG-reinforcement showed slightly better effects. The visual analysis indicated that GBG-reinforcement produced slightly lower percentages of rule violations than GBG-response. With being successfully replicated multiple times (Nolan et al., 2014), showing effectiveness with diverse students (Gu et al., 2011; Thuen & Bru, 2009; Tingstrom et al., 2006), and benefitting multiple stakeholders, GBG has been endorsed by several prominent researchers (Osher et al., 2010; Simonsen et al., 2008).

**Mystery Motivator.** This is another group contingency behavioral intervention which involves a contract that outlines a written description of interdependent relationships between student performance, teacher performance, and reinforcing consequences (Schloss & Smith, 1998). When implemented in the classroom, the teachers use variable ratio reinforcement

schedule to randomly select the days or class periods during which students may earn an unknown reward for exhibiting previously agreed-upon behaviors (Beeks & Graves, 2016; Kowalewicz & Coffee, 2014). The Mystery Motivator is based on a lottery-like system that allows the students to select high- and low-value prizes for their engagement in positive or desirable behaviors (Wesley & Mattiani, 1999). Due to the unknown nature of the rewards, the Mystery Motivator has been effective in reducing challenging behaviors and increasing appropriate behaviors in the classroom due to the anticipation and interest created by uncertainty (Kraemer et al., 2012; Schanding & Sterling-Turner, 2010).

The Mystery Motivator is a flexible tool that can be implemented as an individual independent contingency or an independent group contingency to improve student behaviors. When used to improve compliance among young children, the Mystery Motivator resulted in substantial reduction in noncompliant behaviors (Robinson & Sheridan, 2000). Additionally, when used to improve accuracy and completion of academic work, the Mystery Motivator was effective in doing so and enhancing motivation for completion of assignment (Madaus et al., 2003). A more recent study (Lynch et al., 2009) explored the effectiveness of three separate modifications of the Mystery Motivator – independent, dependent, and interdependent reinforcements upon completion of task. They found that all three variations increased students' rate of task completion and that the interdependent contingency was the most effective in increasing rates of task accuracy.

Several researchers have studied the Mystery Motivator in the context of interdependent group contingencies with the unit of analysis being the whole class (Bennett, 2010; Hoag, 2007; Kraemer et al., 2012; Murphy et al., 2007; Schanding & Sterling-Turner, 2010). Robichaux and Gresham (2014) found the Mystery Motivator to be highly effective in decreasing disruptive

behaviors. They further explored if differences existed between student-selected rewards and mystery rewards. They found that both options were equally successful in reducing challenging behaviors. Finally, the most significant advantage of using this intervention is its flexibility to be implemented in multiple settings with diverse populations who are targeted for a variety of behaviors and can be offered student-selected or mystery rewards (Robichaux & Gresham, 2014). Specifically, Kowalewicz and Coffee (2014) studied this intervention as a tool for reducing challenging or externalizing behaviors in several general education elementary school classrooms consisting of a mix of White and racially minoritized students and found it to be effective. Similar studies with participants ranging in age, sex, and racial or ethnic identity have shown effectiveness among White and racially minoritized students (Schanding & Sterling-Turner, 2010; Miller et al., 2015). There are several researchers who have studied the effectiveness of the Mystery Motivator in reducing disruptive behaviors; however, there is a need for continued research on how this intervention benefits racially minoritized students.

**Consultation Model.** Consultation between teachers and school psychologists to provide psychoeducation services to children is a common approach (Kratochwill, 2008). There are various types of consultation models such as mental health consultation (Caplan, 1970), behavioral or problem-solving consultation (Kratochwill, 2008; Kratochwill & Bergab, 1990), and problem-solving conjoint behavioral consultation (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2010). All three approaches or variations focus on a triadic relationship between the consultant (school psychologist), consultee (teacher or parent), and the client (student) (Sanetti et al., 2015).

Problem-solving consultation is a model widely used by school psychologists to lend support to teachers to identify student concerns, collect and analyze baseline data, plan and implement an intervention, and monitor progress (Kratochwill et al., 2014). Despite the

availability of these services, research indicates that teacher consultees struggle to demonstrate suitable implementation fidelity resulting in poorer student outcomes (Noell & Gansle, 2014). Fortunately, research directed towards improving implementation fidelity has gained traction (Dart et al., 2012; Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015; Sanetti et al., 2013; Simonsen, et al., 2013; Sterling-Turner et al., 2002), which is a significant step towards improving consultation outcomes (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015).

Improving consultees' treatment integrity for intervention implementation has been studied vigorously over the past two decades. Evidence suggests that collaborative relationships between the consultant and consultee so as to share responsibilities to develop an integrity assessment plan is effective in intervention implementation as intended (Kelleher et al., 2008). Dart et al. (2012) found that providing consultees with choices of multiple interventions by the consultant helps the consultees to maintain high levels of treatment integrity. The use of technology, such as videos, has been used to show the consultees how an experienced teacher would implement the intervention (DiGennaro et al., 2010). Finally, researchers have also evaluated the effectiveness of performance feedback as a strategy to increase treatment integrity within consultation (Noell, 2010).

This data-based decision-making approach provides proactive implementation support to consultees, gauging consultee responsiveness, and modifying or intensifying the implementation support, if needed (Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015). Using this model, several studies have reported evidence of effectiveness for addressing a variety of concerns in varied settings among racially minoritized students (Pianta et al., 2008; Raver et al., 2009; Upshur et al., 2009; Williford & Shelton, 2008). For example, using a randomized control trial, Raver and colleagues (2009) found that consultation helped reduce internalizing and externalizing behaviors among



participants in the treatment condition compared to the control group. Similarly, a consultation model (Sanetti et al., 2018) also successfully reduced challenging behaviors among racially minoritized students. In this intervention, teachers received on-going consultation for identifying problem behaviors, and developing and implementing a classroom management plan. This value-added intervention decreased disruptive behaviors following the implementation of consultation and was considered acceptable, feasible, and easy to use by the teacher participants.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, due to an array of sequential factors such as student-teacher racial mismatch causing teachers' inexperience with this population, and the subsequent implicit biases and deficit views, there is widespread discipline and academic disproportionalities among racially minoritized students. Therefore, the review of behavior interventions showing effectiveness in reducing challenging behaviors among these students was conducted. The review suggested popular use of group contingencies for classroom management. A majority of the work used interdependent group contingencies to manage challenging behaviors in the classroom. The efficiency and integrity with which these systems of classroom management are implemented determines the likelihood of success in reducing challenging behaviors of multiple students as well as reducing the workload of the interventionist (Cooper et al., 2007). This trend is consistent with Thorne and Kamps' (2008) assessment that group contingencies are becoming increasingly popular tools in educational settings to manage challenging behaviors in large groups. They posit that interdependent group contingencies may be especially effective because they (i) increase teachers' attention to appropriate behaviors, (ii) are more efficient compared to individual interventions, and (iii) increase the likelihood of individual student's appropriate behaviors are reinforced (Thorne & Kamps, 2008).

The implementation of group contingency interventions which include a predetermined set of expectations and a reward system based on the successful demonstration of desirable behaviors is pervasive in these findings. Group work, especially as a tool for supporting students of color has gained traction over the years. Research indicates that racially minoritized students are likely to work better in group settings over individual work (Pang & Barba, 1995). This is consistent with the tenets of social cohesion theory of cooperative learning which posits that forming groups creates positive dependency among the group mates. By forming groups consisting of students belonging to various racial and cultural backgrounds to create positive dependency, teachers can enable students to bring various perspectives and the different means of sharing them. These groups have the potential to enable students and teachers to engage in people-oriented learning styles to meet a shared goal. Being mindful that the values, cognitive and learning styles, behaviors, and language of students of color are different from those of the dominant cultures is an essential tool for supporting minoritized students (Gay, 2000). One form of group work which has shown strong evidence of effectiveness for students of color is cooperative learning (Slavin & Oickle, 1981). This involves small heterogeneous groups of students working together to improve learning (Vaughan, 2002). The results of individual studies in this review which indicated strong positive changes in behavior outcomes of racially minoritized students are consistent with seminal works (Devries & Slavin, 1978; Okebukola, 1985; Slavin, 1985). These findings suggest this demographic shows greater academic gains in cooperative learning settings over traditional classrooms.

The evidence of effectiveness of group contingencies that emerged from the included studies is consistent with the assessments of several recent reviews (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2015; Flower et al., 2014; Tingstrom et al., 2006). Furthermore, since group contingencies are cost-

effective, efficient, and effective in improving outcomes for students with or at-risk for chronic challenging behaviors (Landrum et al., 2003; Popkin & Skinner, 2003), they are especially useful in urban schools serving racial minoritized students with fewer resources (Beeks & Graves, 2016; Lannie & McCurdy, 2007).

These group contingencies help to build group cohesion by promoting group-based work towards a shared goal or reinforcement (Slavin, 1991). Other interdependent group contingencies included in this review which help to build cohesion and efforts towards achieving a common outcome were the Good Behavior Games (GBG; Tanol et al., 2009) and Mystery Motivator (MM; Kowalewicz & Coffee, 2013). These interventions are geared towards reminding students about behavior expectations followed by a class-wide reward or reinforcement upon successfully displaying the appropriate/desired behaviors. Furthermore, all these group contingencies show success in reducing behaviors such as out-of-seat behaviors, inappropriate talking, time spent by teachers on redirecting (Saeker et al., 2008), and rule violations (Tanol et al., 2010).

Due to the prevalence of Eurocentric standards of appropriate behaviors and teachers' limited experience with racially minoritized students and communities, many teachers fail to understand how cultures influence behaviors (Weinstein et al., 2004). There are several published quantitative studies on the discipline disparities plaguing public schools (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Girvan, 2016; Girvan et al., 2017; Krezmien et al., 2006; Lai et al., 2013; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Losen et al., 2015; McIntosh et al., 2014; Staats, 2014), however, qualitative work investigating teachers' notion of the intersectionality between culture and behavior is sparse. Additionally, qualitative work on the reflections of in-service teachers' use of culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions is also limited. This will help to conceptualize culturally-responsive teaching using teachers' reflections. Therefore, chapter three will describe

the methods used in this study, which include semi-structured interviews with elementary school teachers to examine their views on the intersectionality between culture and behavior, and their experience using culturally-responsive teaching and behavioral interventions.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The previous chapters illustrated the changing trends around racial and ethnic diversity in the US and the related demographic shift in public schools. Subsequently, the consequences of teacher-student racial/ethnic identity mismatch and the resulting implicit biases and stereotypical deficit-oriented thinking was linked to academic and discipline disparities. This chapter discusses the ways in which data were collected to investigate how in-service elementary school teachers conceptualize the intersectionality of culture/race and student behaviors, their experiences using behavior interventions discussed in Chapter 2 to reduce challenging behaviors among racially minoritized students. To collect these data, I used semi-structured interviews with nine participants with each interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. To analyze these data, I used content analysis as it is a descriptive tool useful for describing communicative messages and examining latent and manifest messages (Maier, 2017).

#### **Role of the Researcher**

Objectivity is considered the cornerstone of empirical scientific research, which is grounded in the traditional natural sciences. However, this has been criticized for purposefully excluding the influence of human subjectivity and experiences (Fink, 2000). To remain indifferent when engaging in qualitative inquiry poses its own challenges as inhibiting oneself from immersing in the lives of participants and restricting personal involvement could result in distrust and collection of inauthentic data (Tutty et al., 1996). However, the allowance of this freedom and subjectivity could introduce biases. Therefore, given these arguments, the following

potential biases that I experienced in the role of the researcher and ways in which I addressed these impediments were addressed.

Bearing in mind the positive relationships that I hoped to foster with the participants, there were several factors that posed as challenges. One such potential impediment was my inexperience as an educator. Since I have never been a teacher, there was some inevitable transference resulting from power imbalances. Upon self-reflection, I acknowledged feeling like an imposter as I had never assumed the role of an educator. However, simultaneously, being a doctoral student with research expertise in this area of work also created conflicting feelings. Therefore, to counteract any biases from percolating into the findings, I recruited a research assistant as a secondary coder. Second, since researchers are often portrayed as experts whose aim is to discover what is unknown to the masses (including the teachers), there was a high probability of perceived power imbalances influencing the researcher-participant relationship. Consequently, I tried to be aware of the significance of language as it often plays a crucial role in determining the nature of relationships and possible power imbalances. Thus, it was vital to help equalize the partnerships and avoid hierarchical power relations. To help address concerns about the researcher as the “expert”, I expressed to the participants that they were co-creators of knowledge. This proposed solution regarding language was kept in mind while developing the interview protocol as well to elicit and construct knowledge together.

Finally, my racial/ethnic and cultural background and my position as an international student also potentially influenced parts of the inquiry process. Given the sensitive nature of this project and its emphasis on culturally-responsive practices, it is possible that the participants provided responses that comply with their perception of what I consider appropriate (i.e., respondents’ bias). Unfortunately, this could have resulted in inauthentic and socially desirable

responses. To rectify this, I tried to demonstrate a neutral stance by developing non-leading interview questions, being aware of my body language and facial expressions, and through strong validity checks (member check, in this case). This, I hope, allowed for the collection of true and authentic data and will ensure accurate interpretation and representation of findings.

## **Methodology**

Intricacies of culturally-responsive pedagogy have been studied for over two decades but a clear understanding about how these conceptions of race and culture intersect with behavior and related interventions is still lacking (Scheuermann et al., 2016; Wallace et al., 2004). This seems like an obvious problem given the disproportionate gap between teacher and student racial/ethnic identities, the consequent lack of awareness about minoritized cultures, and the Eurocentric standards applied in schools. Bearing in mind the budding nature of this area of research and the ongoing development of foundational understanding, the present study used a qualitative research approach to explicate how teachers currently understand the intersectionality of culture/race and student behaviors, and their experiences using specific behavioral interventions. Using qualitative research allowed me to comprehensively collect an array of teacher experiences and beliefs regarding these under-studied and under-implemented vital processes (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

Data were collected as part of a larger grant-funded research project examining a Tier II behavior intervention, BEST in CLASS- Elementary (BiC). As this grant was approved by the IRB, an amendment to conduct these interviews was submitted and approved. All interviews were conducted before my prospectus hearing; however, the interview protocol was approved by two experts: a dissertation advisory committee member and a research expert and faculty in the field.

Before collecting data, I conducted a literature review to identify behavior interventions effective in reducing challenging behaviors among racially minoritized students. This review resulted in the identification of five group contingency interventions. Next, I created a handout with definitions of each intervention as well as that of group-contingency interventions. This handout was created to ensure that standard definitions were used for all participants. Next, data were collected using a semi-structured interview to investigate teachers' experiences with the aforementioned behavior interventions, followed by exploring their views on the intersectionality between culture and behavior, and their experiences using culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions.

### **Research Questions**

Recognizing the inadequate training provided in teacher preparation programs, the lack of professional provided to in-service teachers, and the widening gap between student-teacher racial/ethnic gap, the purpose of this research was to investigate in-service teachers' understanding about the intersectionality between culture and behavior, and their experiences using specific behavior interventions. Therefore, I proposed to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are in-service teachers' beliefs about the intersectionality between culture and behavior?
- ii. What are in-service teachers' experiences using culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions?



## **Participants and Setting**

The participants were nine elementary school teachers working in public school and who participated in a larger grant-funded research project exploring a Tier II behavior intervention. Eight of the nine participants reported having majority Black students in their classrooms, with the exception of Tara, who reported having more White students. On an average, participants had 15 students in their classrooms. These trends are consistent with the overall school demographics (i.e., one school consisting of 93% Black students, followed by 0.027% White students, and the second school consisting of approximately 51% Black students, followed by 41% White students). Finally, all the participants reported that their students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Participants were contacted by a research assistant via an invitation email with brief details about the semi-structured interview, point of contact, and the tentative duration of participation (see Appendix A). Once participants expressed interest, I shared the details about the topical areas that will be covered and the consent form. At this point, I expressly requested the interested teachers not to sign the consent form until after it was discussed in our meeting. Subsequently, the participants and I decided on a mutually agreed upon time to meet. During this meeting, I discussed the consent form (see Appendix B) with the participants and addressed questions or concerns. Once the participants felt confident in the study and their participation, I started the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C). The first part of the interview focused on assessing participants' experiences using behavior interventions found during literature review. I used a handout (Appendix D) with standard definitions of each of the interventions. The next part of the interview sought to examine participants' understanding about the intersectionality between race/culture and behaviors, and their experiences using culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions. All interviews were conducted online due to the

outbreak of COVID-19 and were video and audio recorded to ensure accuracy of findings. All data were identified by ID numbers instead of names and were stored separately from data collection records in a locked research area. All personal identifying information were kept on password protected files which will be deleted five years after the close of the larger federal grant.

I used purposive sampling to recruit participants due to their experience and knowledge working in school with racially minoritized students (Elo et al., 2014), given that the city in question consists of approximately 90% racially minoritized students in its public schools. Furthermore, I recruited elementary school teachers because it is well documented that early school years are critical for children's academic, social and behavioral development, Unfortunately, many of these children often enter school life being underprepared and with behavioral challenges which can impact the nature of their educational experiences (Spilt et al., 2012), and increase the risk of subsequent behavioral difficulties (Conroy et al., 2008). These early years potentially have significant and long-term influences on their academic and social/behavioral outcomes (O'Conner et al., 2011; Sutherland et al., 2008). Furthermore, these early years are also crucial to racial minority students in understanding the power of knowledge construction (Banks, 2013), and for them to take ownership in their cultural production. Therefore, the establishment of appropriate behavior interventions requires the development and fostering of cross-cultural competence (Lynch & Hanson, 2011; Sue et al., 2009). Next, the selection criterion for the optimal sample size was contingent on the saturation of data (Guthrie et al., 2004; Sandelowski, 1995) to ensure credibility of this study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). By ensuring that the data are saturated, I was able to confidently verify the comprehensiveness and completeness of categories (Morse et al., 2002).

## **Human Subject Protection**

The proposed research involved the recruitment of elementary school teachers. I, Toshna Pandey, a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University conducted, reviewed, and monitored all research related tasks and informed consent procedures.

**Human Subject Involvement and Participation.** The primary goal of the proposed research is to investigate teachers' beliefs about and experiences with culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions, their understanding of the intersectionality between culture and behavior, and experiences using certain behavioral interventions. Participants were elementary school teachers working in public schools. Every attempt was made to recruit participants from varying socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and age.

**Recruitment and Informed Consent.** Before securing informed consents, research assistants sent preliminary emails to potential recruits explaining, in brief, the purpose and goals of the study. Upon approval of the proposal, consent forms were obtained from the recruited teachers. The consent forms detailed the goals and objectives of the proposed research, communicated the right to voluntary participation, and offered details regarding the semi-structured interview. Furthermore, details regarding the risks and benefits associated with the project, how the collected data were stored and used for research purposes, and ways to withdraw participation from the study were provided. My contact information was provided to the participants for additional information about the research project. No modification or waiver of the elements of the consent were sought for this project.

**Potential Risks/Benefits.** Risks of participation included breach of confidentiality. Potential identifiable information about participants consisted of information provided to the larger federal project. Data were collected for research purposes only. Access to all data was limited to study personnel. All answers were kept confidential; however, information from the study, information from classrooms, and the signed consent form might be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by the sponsor of the research and by Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings will be presented at meetings or published in papers, but names will not be disclosed in these dissemination outlets.

Participation involved some loss of privacy. There could be a small risk that someone outside the research study could see and misuse information provided by the participants. Participants might have also learned things about themselves that possibly affected their views about themselves. Finally, teachers, schools, and students might have benefitted indirectly from the findings of the proposed study. Specifically, teachers might have benefitted professionally by contributing to the pool of evidence about the state of affairs in teacher preparation programs. Finally, participating teachers received a payment of \$50 in the form of e-gift cards for their time.

**Protection Against Risk.** All data were stored in secure research databases and computer systems to help monitor and maintain oversight of research. Participant information was kept in these databases and were only accessible to individuals working on this study or authorized individuals who have access for specific research related tasks. Identifiable information in these databases were not released outside Virginia Commonwealth University unless stated in the consent form or required by law. Although the findings from this research might be presented at meetings or in publications, identifiable information will not be disclosed. Finally, if participants

indicated tendencies of hurting themselves or others, study personnel were required by law to alert authorities.

### **Design Procedures**

To analyze the raw data, I used qualitative content analysis to create the coding framework and interpreting meaning (Schreier, 2012). I used this method as it allows for systematic and objective means for describing phenomena (Maier, 2017; Schreier, 2012). Qualitative content analysis can use inductive or deductive analysis procedures, but for the purpose of this research, I used inductive coding. Implementing an inductive coding process involves open coding and creating categories (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). By using qualitative content analysis, I was able to describe and interpret the messages and focus on the creators of those messages (Maier, 2017). Since the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences and beliefs about the intersectionality of culture/race and student behaviors, qualitative content analysis was especially helpful because the messages were "close to the communicator", in that they were created by the participants and recorded to describe manifest messages and infer latent messages. Finally, this method helped provide knowledge and understanding about phenomena under study by using systematic coding and classifying data to reveal patterns and themes (Weber, 1990).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I collected data using semi-structured interviews via Zoom. I began this process by seeking approval to audio and video record the interaction, followed by reviewing the consent form with the participants, and addressing any questions and/or concerns. Next, I introduced myself and my academic standing at Virginia Commonwealth University, provided a brief

overview of the topics that were covered, followed by providing a tentative duration of the interview. During the interviews, first, I investigated the participants' experiences using behavior interventions showing effectiveness in reducing challenging behaviors among racially minoritized students. I used a handout with overviews about each of the interventions, followed by asking questions about their usability, social importance, practicality and cost-effectiveness, and longevity. Next, I asked questions about the intersectionality between race/culture and behaviors in addition to their experiences with culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions. Following are sample questions: "What are some instances where you have experienced/witnessed a behavior to be a by-product of culture? Could you give me an example?", "When you experience challenging/problem behaviors in your classroom, do you modify your behavior interventions strategies to individualize support according to the student's racial/ethnic background? How so?" (see Appendix C)

After the interviews, I uploaded the audio and video recording onto a secure database on a password protected computer. Next, the research assistant transcribed all the interviews verbatim and removed repetitive words such as "umm", "like", or "you know" to facilitate smooth reading and comprehension of the transcript. After completing the transcription, all identifying information were removed and pseudonyms were assigned to ensure participant anonymity.

To begin the data analysis phase, I met with a second researcher assistant who played the role of the second coder, to train them in the process of this qualitative inquiry. During this meeting, I discussed the research questions and the purpose of the study with them, the process of creating codes, and directions to use the data analysis tools. Subsequently, the secondary

coder and I created preliminary codes to help develop a working codebook. This codebook was modified repeatedly as new and relevant themes arise.

Next, I analyzed data from the semi-structured interviews using qualitative content analysis. This method was used to systematically describe the meaning of the qualitative data (Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2012) by assigning successive parts of the individual transcript to themes using a structured coding framework. This method involved a set of predetermined procedures, coding framework, definitions of coding units, and segmented materials into coding units (Schreier, 2012). The coding process involved mutually exclusive main categories and related sub-categories, and all relevant materials covered by main categories in exhaustive ways to ensure saturation of data. Finally, the coding process also included the possibility of residual categories should themes that do not fall under main codes arise (Schreier, 2012).

### **Trustworthiness**

Establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research speaks to the truthfulness of the findings and the conclusions made based on the voices of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When using qualitative content analysis, Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert the importance of trustworthiness which aims to support arguments that the findings are worth heeding.

According to Elo and colleagues (2014), using this evaluative approach is especially important when using inductive content analysis since categories are formed from raw data without a theory base. The following section presents the criteria for trustworthiness involved in the various facets of qualitative inquiry.

**Credibility.** This refers to the truth of the data or participant views and the subsequent interpretations and representations made by the researcher (Polit & Beck, 2012). The credibility

of research findings and the inquiry process is enhanced by the researcher's efforts to describe their own experiences and by verifying the findings with the participants (Cope, 2014). To ensure that the essence of participant views was captured accurately, I used investigator triangulation to help reduce biases and uphold the integrity of participant responses. This included using a second-coder to confirm findings across investigators. Finally, to ensure the integrity of coding and the coding process, I held booster sessions with the second coder by continuously reviewing the coding framework and code definitions to ensure that we understood the codes in the same ways.

**Dependability.** This refers to the “stability of findings over time” (Bitsch, 2005, p. 86). To evaluate stability, participants ensure that the findings, interpretations, and the representation of findings are all supported by the data provided by the informants (Tobin & Begley, 2004). I included an audit trail to improve the validity of the data by accounting for all research procedures and activities involved in data collection, analyses, and the overall inquiry process (Bowen et al., 2009; Li, 2004). Additionally, the use of a second coder ensured the inclusion of stepwise replication to ensure separate inquiries with the purpose of comparing the findings (Ary et al., 2010; Chilisa & Preece, 2005).

**Transferability.** This component is the qualitative equivalent of external validity, in that it is the degree to which the findings of qualitative research can be applied to other contexts, across other respondents (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Bitsch (2005) asserts that when the researcher provides a detailed description of the inquiry process and uses purposive sampling, they are facilitating the transferability of findings. To ensure transferability, I presented extensive details about the context and research processes in the report to facilitate replication by other researchers in similar contexts.



**Confirmability.** This refers to the degree to which the results of the research can be corroborated or confirmed by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). This allows researchers to certainly establish that the interpretations of findings are clearly derived from the data and are not “figments of the inquirer’s imagination” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). I established confirmability by maintaining a reflexive journal to record reflections, tentative plans for data collection, interpretation, and the representation of findings.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to delineate the steps involved in the inquiry process. Since teachers’ understanding about the relationship between culture/race and student behaviors are understudied, this inquiry followed an exploratory qualitative approach. Using qualitative content analysis to better understand teachers’ latent and manifest messages allowed for a systematic process of creating a coding framework to describe and interpret teachers’ beliefs and experiences. Finally, this chapter also described the role of the researcher, participant recruitment, data collection procedures, and trustworthiness. Chapter Four explored the results and themes in the data.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate in-service teachers' views on the intersectionality between culture/race and behaviors and their experience using culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions to better support racially minoritized students. This chapter will describe the findings from nine semi-structured interviews with elementary school teachers in the form of categories and sub-categories. Upon analyzing the data, four overarching categories emerged: (i) cultural-responsiveness; (ii) attributions for student behaviors; (iii) teacher challenges; and (iv) behavior interventions. Under each of these main categories, sub-categories are also described, and every category consists of codes describing same or similar experiences or contexts. The following sections will describe the participants and their experiences using evidence from individual interviews.

#### **Description of the Participants**

Participants included nine teachers from two schools, all of whom consented to participate. The participating teachers were all females, teaching a variety of grades within the elementary school setting, ranging from kindergarten to third grade. School demographics varied in terms of racial/ethnic background of students. Of the two schools, one consisted of majority Black students at 93%, followed by 0.027% White students, 0.017% Asian, 0.013% Hispanic, and 0 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Native American/Alaskan Native students. The second school consisted of approximately 51% Black students, followed by 41% White students, 0.02% Hispanic, 0.003% Native American/Alaskan Native, 0.011% Asian, and 0.005% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders. Consistent with school demographics, most participants reported having majority Black students in their classrooms, with the exception of one participant who

reported an equal mix of Black and White students. Additionally, both schools have a majority of students eligible for free lunch at 97% and 99%, respectively. Other student and participant demographic markers are included in Table 1. Pseudonyms are used in lieu of participant names.

Table 1

*Participant demographics*

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>BiC Condition</b>
Cecile	Black	Female	25	2	Treatment
Niyah	White	Female	9	3	BAU
Kendra	White	Female	4	3	Treatment
Ellie	White	Female	18	1	Treatment
Kim	Other	Female	20	1	BAU
Aria	Asian (Filipina)	Female	29	K	Treatment
Diane	Native American	Female	38	K	BAU
Tara	White	Female	7	2	BAU
Anna	White	Female	30	2	Treatment

## Cultural-Responsiveness

**Definitions and understanding.** This theme describes the participants' definitions and understanding about cultural-responsiveness which were extracted from the transcriptions. The following direct quotes are examples to illustrate the participants' experiences using culturally-responsive teaching, their views on the intersectionality between culture and student behaviors, and their definitions of culturally-responsive teaching and how it manifests in their classroom.

There were some responses that were representative of a broad understanding of cultural-responsiveness, however, the definitions provided by the participants were generally varied and did not include concrete examples about procedures for implementation. For example, Kendra's understanding about cultural-responsiveness seemed general with respect to race, religion, and personal beliefs. She said, "it's not just your skin color, um, it's not just your religion. Sometimes I even think that like the culture is like what you believe your culture is or what you accept." Next, Kim's response was indicative of her disposition that she treats all of her students in the same way. She said, "I'm not a mom, but I treat them like they're my own kids. I treat them like.... I just teach. I don't, I don't see them as like, I don't see it. I don't treat them any differently than I'd treat my cousins or my God kids. I just, I just teach."

Anna said that she relied on data to educate herself and justify her actions. She mentioned reading a study that showed a man "in the video was saying that if it were a black teacher and had a white gifted kid and a black gifted kid, both would probably go [to the gifted classroom]. But if it was a white teacher, statistics showed that the black kid wouldn't have as much an advantage. And I don't think that way, but this was proven by data." Others reported reliance on data, literature, and history to incorporate cultural-responsiveness in their practice. For example, Tara reported using books that are representative of all her students. She reported, "So you're

reading books that have people of all different cultures. There's some really wonderful books out there. Um, so yeah, just exploring different types of literature.” Others cited their life experiences and ethnic identity to incorporate cultural-responsiveness into their practice. Aria reported,

So for them to see and kind of put their shoes in other people's shoes, I think that's, that's great. Like they know I'm a Filipino. They know I came from a different country, but what is being a Filipino? So I showed them videos of kids going to Philippines school settings. And we compare and we tell them, we analyze. Like, look at you guys, you have a computer, all these kids in my country. They don't have computers. They're not complaining, you know, the value. And I bring it out. You know, you see how helpful they are. They listen to the teachers.

Similar to Aria, Cecile also uses her personal experiences to educate and incorporate cultural-responsiveness. She said that she encourages asking questions about the unknown. For example, she said, “ It's like someone asking me, ‘can I touch your hair?’ "Sure. Touch it, touch it. It's okay. They don't know, they don't know. It's okay.”

An exception to all other participants was Ellie's response. When asked the same question, she was unable to answer, she said,

I don't know, I really don't know. I think the last couple years have made that an even harder question, um, because it doesn't seem to be treating people with disrespect. Like, you know, like it, it's almost like every person almost has their own definition of this cultural responsiveness. And then as the teacher, I'm supposed to make sure that I say the right thing or do the right thing to fit your definition. I think that's hard.

Despite the varied understanding about cultural-responsiveness, all participants reported requesting or receiving external support from stakeholders. Participants used them as resources

in several different ways to incorporate cultural-responsiveness into their teaching and behavior management. For example, Kendra reported inviting members of the community to engage with the students.

I also have friends who are, you know, community helpers in the city. So I've had the mayor come through, cause I'm on his teacher council, the superintendent come, you know, he's a white guy, the mayor is black, and I may have them come in. I may have my friends in the department come in. He's the black guy. My friend who is a postal worker, he's from Egypt. So, I invite different people from the community of different colors and I have them come in and talk to kids about whatever, to be reading them a story or their jobs, or give them a lesson on Egypt or just having fun with the kids

Other teachers reported using other teachers as resources to help them guide sensitive situations. For example, Diane reported requesting aid from an ELL teacher to better connect with a Ghanaian student who could not speak or understand English. Next, Niyah, who identifies as White, was offered assistance by a Black colleague who explained the importance of hair and offered to help the situation.

I'm not sure sometimes if I feel like I can't get through to a child or that maybe I'm not understanding what the issue is, I will seek out a colleague who's a person of color. Maybe I could say.... even with the hair thing, that was something that I had to learn. These kids would just freak out if their hair looked terrible, especially the girls, you know, second or third grade. And it took a colleague of mine who was like, "you know, they really feel so uncomfortable. Let me just fix their hair."

Several participants also described community engagement efforts to relate with students and their parents. Cecile described how a fifth grade football coach interacted with second grade students and their teachers to foster positive relationships.

We've had coaches from the different leagues come into the school and talk to the teachers and to see academically how their players are doing, which is phenomenal. I know one of the coaches from when I was in fifth grade. And so, he would come and check on my second graders. I think that's wonderful because it shows the students, "Hey, my coach really cares." And they come in and check on them, "how's he doing behavior wise?" Because it all plays a factor, because you have to be a good sportsman.

Similarly, Tara reported her school's efforts to celebrate significant historical figures and events through plays and sketches. Similarly, Anna used food to help students relate to one another better. She described a Soul Festival where they served "pigs' feet and collard greens"

### **Attributions for Student Behaviors**

The first major category, attributions, was discussed in various forms by all participating teachers. Broadly, attributions are causal explanations used to explain events, behavior, and mental states (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). The participants discussed a variety of factors explaining the occurrences of behaviors in their classroom. Using those attributions, the following subcategories were created: (a) teacher-related attributions and (b) student-related attributions. Within each of these sub-categories, several factors will be discussed.

Table 2

*Major categories and sub-categories*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-Categories</b>
Cultural Responsiveness	Definitions and understanding
Attributions for Student Behaviors	Teacher-Level Factors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal experiences</li> <li>• Behaviors</li> </ul>
	Student-Level Factors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home environment</li> <li>• Influence of race/culture</li> </ul>
Teacher Challenges	Race/Culture Mismatch
	Backlash from Community
Behavior Interventions	Individual vs. Group Contingencies
	Social Validity Markers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tootles</li> <li>• Mystery Motivator</li> <li>• Good Behavior Games</li> <li>• Consultation</li> </ul>



## **Teacher-Related Factors**

This section consists of two subcategories describing the role teachers' lived experiences have played in attributing student behaviors. Specifically, this section will describe the role of teachers' biases influencing their behaviors. Teachers' decision making, thoughts, and beliefs influence the educational processes and motivate their behaviors and interactions with students (Brophy, 1986).

**Teachers' Personal Experiences.** This subcategory includes factors such as teachers' personal experiences, behaviors, classroom climate, and years of teaching experience which influence their attributions of student behaviors. For example, Anna described how salient childhood experiences shaped her perceptions about minoritized communities.

I, um, my father kidnapped me and my two sisters, we lived in Pennsylvania when I was small and flew us to St. Croix. And so we were the only white kids in the school. And then we got a woman from St. Kitts to take care of us and never knew back then. And that's back in the sixties. Never knew the difference between white and black though. I do remember one time, um, we were in a hurry and my dad said, get in the bathtub with Jules, come on quick. I said, no, her Black's gonna rub off on me....

Furthermore, childhood experiences, especially as they relate to geography, were described by several participants as a significant factor in their behaviors and attitudes towards their students.

For example, Niyah described how the differences in the nature of her hometown led to culture shock when introduced to a more diverse community.

So this was my 10th year teaching for ABC city [urban]. Uh, it was really a learning curve for me. I mean, I grew up in the mountains outside of Charlottesville, just a very

different environment. And so, ABC city has been, like I said, a real learning curve. Um, I didn't know how to.... there were some cultural things that I didn't, you know? I was just shocked by at first, um, you know, some of the things that they would say, they would talk about, you know, I worked in one of the housing developments when I first worked for ABC. Um, and those kids would come to school and talk about how there was a dead body in the alleyway all weekend, you know, I mean, I just didn't know how to respond to that.

Prior professional experiences also played a role in how teachers relate with their students. For example, Diane described how her prior employment as a police officer shaped her as a teacher,

I taught Catholic school for 10 years. I've been a police officer in the city of ABC. So I've been through a lot. I can pick out if a child has been sexually abused, you know, just things that are happening with that child's personality, their mood, their physical the way they are in the classroom. I can tell all of that, but that's because I've had years of experience.

**Teacher Behaviors.** These perceptions linked to childhood and adulthood experiences play a crucial role in consequent actions and behaviors in the classroom. Teachers' decision making, thoughts, and beliefs influence the educational processes and motivate their behaviors and interactions with students (Brophy, 1986). Aria describes the differences in her opinion about White versus and racially minoritized students.

I see with the frequency [of challenging behaviors] for some white kids just once or twice, but for the African-Americans, I need to keep repeating and model it.... Model and

demonstrate it. Because they might not know how to treat other people, so you have to show them.

Aria's experience aligns with Ainscow's (1988) assertion that perceptions about their students and their learning guides teachers' design, selection, and use of teaching strategies. However, her perception was uncommon, in that, majority participants reported that they did not differentiate instruction or behavior interventions based on students' race. Kendra, like many others, explained that although she recognizes student differences based on race, she does not alter her practices based on those dissimilarities.

The same respect that I'm giving my black students, I'm going to give to my white students, I'm going to give to my Hispanic students, but, and every kid is different, you know, just, you know, there could be a white student who they're family and incarcerated and they're living with grandparents, you know, they have that same trauma. And so I feel like for me, no matter what their color is, I need to think about their background and how I need to approach the situation

Teachers also attributed their years of experience and teaching styles to behaviors seen in their classrooms. For example, Kim stated, "At the beginning of each year, cause I am so strong and so demanding." Similarly, Cecile reported building a strong foundation with her students to establish long-term trusting relationships.

They were phenomenal because they're kids, you know, and it's a little easier with children because I wanted them to trust me as a teacher and know that I was their foundation for that day, um, for the year, for the month they needed anything. I was the adult in the room and I was their foundation and wanted that trust with them.

## **Student-Related Factors**

Teachers' perceptions about the ownership of challenging behaviors are often attributed to external factors such as student personality, parental/familial support, caregivers' level of education, etc. The findings from this study are consistent with this assertion as is evident from teachers' attributing challenging behaviors to factors external to them. The following subcategory describes those student-related factors that teachers attribute to challenging behaviors.

**Home Environment.** Broadly, most participating teachers attributed challenging behaviors to student-related factors. The most commonly cited factor was the role of families or home environment. More specifically, teachers attributed the home environment as a contributing factor to students' overall school success and educational experiences. As Cecile succinctly points out, "A lot of times it started from home and they just brought it into the, you know, into the school." Anna stated several factors such as a disruptive or unstable home environment as causes for challenging behaviors. She said,

I have homeless kids. Um, I have kids that are being, I remember my first year here, I couldn't believe how many kids went in and out of the classrooms all the time. And I found out that they are having to leave because dad was incarcerated and uncle Joe can't take care of me anymore. And I have to go to live with grandma because mom's in rehab and all of those things.

More specifically, emerging patterns illustrate that parental involvement or home environment impacts students' academic engagement as well as behaviors. For example, Aria explains the influence of lack of parental involvement,

Um, behavior they're pretty wild. I guess I can say they're most of them are wild and, um, um, I guess the manners, yeah. Maybe home training is also one factor. Academic wise. Um, you've really need to get them [students] for them to learn. And it's not like automatic.

Next, participants also pointed out that home environments influence student behaviors. For example, Niyah explained that regardless of families' minority or non-minority status, the stresses at home spill into school time.

Yes, I do. Actually, I do 100% and I don't think that just has to do, um, just because I work in a minority school or neighborhood doesn't mean that it just has to do with minorities, but I think that, you know, students who come from a house that's disrupted, um, but, or maybe just not stable, they definitely have a harder time adjusting and now they might get adjusted throughout the day

Next, participants also attributed student's challenging behaviors to the role of changing family structures and dynamics. They discussed the elevated reliance on grandparents to help raise their children and its effects. For example, Anna reported

Um, you know, those kinds of things. Um, but he was very used to having his own way. He's very spoiled, grabbed by grandma. And grandma says, um, again, only child grandma says he's her baby, mom is single. Um, both say they're supportive at home. Grandma is the one behind all of that. Like he's also still her baby. So, he doesn't have to worry about attention issues and staying focused at home, and he does at school.

Participants also attributed challenging behaviors to the size of the family and their finances. For example, Niyah reported,

And then I've had students too, who, you know, I had this kid a couple of years ago, he came from... his mom was wonderful, but there were a lot of kids in the house and just not a lot of money. And, um, just a lot of stress, just a lot of stress.

Participants cited other factors related to family structure and dynamics as they relate to potential traumatization of the student. For example, Niyah reported that one of her students, who she believed was “going to be a voice for change” had trouble regulating her emotions in the classroom due to the several disruptions in her life. She said,

But she just, she's been to 10 different elementary schools and back and forth to our school from kindergarten. Her parents would get into a little spat or they'd have an argument, they'd break up and then they'd send her and her sister to live with a cousin or an aunt or a grandma. So, she had been to school and Philadelphia, she'd been to school in California. She'd been to school in Texas, you know, and then she'd come back to our school and then she'd go there, and she'd come back, and she'd go there. Um, and she was incredibly intelligent and with it, and normally what you see is that these children, um, are behind in schoolwork because, you know, there's just so much disruption, but she, she didn't have that issue. What she had was just that she had a difficult time every morning coming in, she'd come in crying almost every single morning because there'd been a fight at home or just something, um, or she was trying to help her sister, or she couldn't get onto her do her schoolwork or, you know, it just, it was just something every single day.

**Influence of Race/Culture.** The next factor which was most frequently cited was the influence of race and/or culture on student behaviors. Several participants linked external factors such as trauma or stressors to students' culture or race. For example, Kendra reported that her

students living in urban settings experience trauma, which they are unable to process or express. She described how this manifested in her classroom,

Like the major ones [behaviors] that you really worry about, not too much about like the talking and, you know, stuff like that, but like really those emotional outburst or violent outbursts, I think is, you know, something stemming from some sort of trauma that they experienced.

Kendra further discussed her experience transitioning to an urban school after student teaching at a suburban school. She reported,

Um, so I have been a teacher for five years and all five years I've taught, um, in ABC [urban city] obviously. Um, and students of, you know, mostly African-American. Um, um, so, and then in college I student taught in XYZ [suburbia] where it was completely different. I had all white students, so going from that to ABC was different and I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but I really kind of loved it.

Kendra also discussed the differences in student performance and parental involvement based on how geography influences the racial makeup of communities.

There were a lot of stay-at-home moms. I mean, every day there was a parent in there helping and, um, I mean, there was, there's definitely a difference in achievement. Um, I don't, I don't think it's because of the students. I definitely think my students still worked hard. Um, but there is a difference in their academic performance. Um, you know, my students in XYZ were, you know, a little bit easier to work together in groups. Whereas my students in ABC, it was kind of like pulling teeth most of the time.

Kim described her experience regarding the relationship between lack of parental involvement and race/ethnicity. She reported that all her students in the previous year were Black and delineated how parental examples influence students' perceptions of productivity in school and learning. She reported,

You know, a lot of parents don't work, so they don't see their mom getting up in the morning or dad getting up in the morning to go to work or to do anything productive, they're at home. So, they're not used to seeing productivity in their household. Does that make sense? That sounds horrible, but it's just what I see.

Distinctions in behavior based on race were salient during the interviews. These were presented as strengths as well as challenges. For example, Ellie recounted her experience with a student from another country whose behaviors seemed problematic to her at first, but she later learned that those behaviors were considered normal in the child's country of origin. However, these differences in students' behaviors based on race were seen differently by Aria. She reported specific ways in which White and racially minoritized students were different in their behaviors and learning.

White kids. Hmm. I think with white kids, they're more receptive when you talk to them, one-on-one, they, listen, you make eye contact and, um, you solve the problem like in a few minutes they listened like right away, they respect authority, but for the non-white, um, my experience in the past, I struggle. I struggle. Like, "why do I need to listen to you? You're not my mom", stuff like that.

Aria made further distinctions between Hispanic and Black students based on their motivation to go to school and academic engagement.



...the Hispanic kids, they don't know in the beginning, but when they get it all, you can't stop them. They just soar and parents, they don't understand you, but they come and observe me because they want, they want to learn how to teach them. And they will find somebody to translate the homework, you know, that willingness to learn. I see that with the Hispanic, but with the African American, it's just hard, you know, like pulling hair, you know, you beg like, come on, come to school, I'll give you a cookie. Come on. You know? That's what I'm seeing. It's like a pattern... You know, um, because the Hispanics, I can tell that they value education, for the African-Americans, I don't see that much maybe to some, but not to most of them in my experience.

### **Teacher Challenges**

The participating teachers reported an array of experiences, teaching methods, and perceptions about racially minoritized students; however, there were some similarities in their reporting about the challenges they face. The following categories emerged: racial/cultural mismatch between them and their students and backlash from the students' communities or parents.

**Racial/Cultural mismatch.** Teachers reported various ways in which they were acutely aware of the differences between their racial identity and that of their students. For example, Kim reported her observation about her colleagues' discomfort to discuss racial or cultural issues. She attributed this discomfort to the racial or ethnic mismatch between them and their students. She reported, "maybe they didn't feel as though they have no right to respond to them because they're not black or Puerto Rican or whatever." When asked about how this racial or ethnic mismatch manifests, she responded,

But when it comes to relating to the kids culturally, they don't always get it. Like when a child comes in wearing a certain outfit or their hair a certain way, they may say, no one has said to the child, “what happened to your hair? Why is your hair all over your head?” But I've seen looks where I'm like, “why is that teacher looking at their child like that?” You know? So I think that they just wanna come in there and do their job and they're not trying to relate to the kids on a personal level.

Similarly, Anna described her experience learning about the significance of hair in minoritized communities and passing down her learning to her non-minoritized students to educate them about cultural differences. She also described another learning opportunity where she recognized the differences in communication and language based on culture and ethnicity. She said,

Like one boy told me you're getting on my GD nerves. And I realized, I found out later that “you're getting on my nerves” is a common thing that wasn't...that I'd never....if I told somebody that they were getting on my nerves, that would hurt me. If someone said that to me now, he's just saying, "Oh, you're driving me crazy." That's what he meant. But I didn't know that.

Recognition of racial or cultural mismatch did not solely happen between students and teachers. Diane described her conversations with other teachers that highlighted the ‘us versus them’ sentiment. More specifically, she highlighted her colleagues’ prejudiced opinions about teachers at urban schools and her response to the negative comment. She reported,

I know one time I was in the teacher's lounge and some of the teachers were talking and they were saying, "you couldn't get me to work in a ABC public school [urban]”.....So I

spoke my mind and I said, "well, you know what? You all come to school, everybody has on makeup, looking pretty. You leave here in the evenings, you have your makeup, your lipstick still on. ABC public school [urban] teachers, they come in, they have the makeup on, hair in place and everything. We leave out. We don't look like that." And we don't because we put so much energy and effort into trying to teach these children because we know once they leave us, a lot of these kids, you can forget it. They don't have anybody to help them, you know, sit down and work with them and do homework with them. So, we try to give them as much as we can in that classroom.

Niyah, with a similar experience, described her unawareness about the experiences of her culturally or racially minoritized friends, and her struggle to educate herself to become more culturally aware. She reported,

I did grow up very differently and I am white. So, I have to come to terms with the fact that I just grew up unaware of things happening for people of color. There've been a couple of people from my high school that are wonderful, sweet, big Teddy bears. And he told us some stories that happened where we grew up and I just messaged him. And I was like, "I had no idea and no idea that that was your experience. And I would've never guessed." So, I just try, I know I'm going to have my own thoughts and that's going to be sometimes a struggle and I'm just going to have to try.

**Backlash from community.** The next salient challenge reported was participants' experiences with backlash from parents, communities, and school administrators. For example, Ellie, a veteran teacher, reported that her ability to teach at an urban school was questioned after her words were misconstrued by the student's parents as racist.

My kids run through the hall. I'm like, "Oh, come here, you little stinkers", you know. Apparently, I said that to one of my students, and I said it in a playful way. And I was told how I was racist because I said that. And I was like, at first, I didn't even know I said it. Like, if I said it and in hindsight, I may have said it, you know, because I say that, you know, to my kids... "You're a little stinker, stop doing that". I say in a playful way. Like I would never look at my children and say something that I felt was hurtful and I treat my students at school, like my children at home. And so it really upset me....and it was the parent saying that to me, but I felt like the principal was supporting it. But obviously to that parent, I was being culturally insensitive that apparently, I dunno, my principal said something about how, you know, sometimes children of color would be called those names. I had no clue.

An unintended consequence of the fear of backlash is the feeling of worsened cultural gap. Ellie described her unease with discussing racial/cultural matters and feeling on guard, especially because she believes that teachers are underappreciated in society and that she was "only trying to love your child and expect from them what they need to do and treat them with respect, you know?"

Backlash was also described as lack of trust in teachers. Kendra reported that her fear that her intentions to motivate or reinforce her students through the use of incentives could be misperceived as charity by parents due to her racial identity and socio-economic status. She said,

Um, I guess you could, I feel like you definitely have to think about culture, right?

Because, um, like maybe these parents don't want them to get candy out of the candy jar, you know? Um, maybe they feel like me giving them a, uh, you know, I did like a student

of the month drawing where they would get like a \$5 gift card. Like maybe they see that as like a handout.

Surprisingly, the fear of backlash was not only felt by White teachers. Cecile, who identifies as Black, described her hesitation to discuss current events due to their delicate nature. She reported feeling underprepared to handle discussions about race relations in America for the fear of upsetting the parents.

We're going through a lot now in society and in the community; it's very sensitive. And that's another thing that it's going to be hard to handle when we get back to school. We're going through a lot as a culture, as a black culture. It's all on the news. I know the kids hear it and see it. The unfairness, it's very touch and go, you know, sketchy situation because they're children and parents have to have the talk early because of the situation about society. So, it's very sketchy and sensitive right. To me. Just don't know how to handle it in the way that I need to handle it as a teacher, you know what to do as a parent.

This fear of backlash resulted in Cecile delineating roles for teachers and school counselors. Cecile reported feeling pressure to teach subject matter as well as have cultural discourses with her students.

Well, I can't take on the world. That's why we have the guidance counselors and I think it's very important and I hope they implement it this year, when the guidance counselor has come in at least once a week and talk to our children about these different situations, because there would be a load off of the teachers, because I already have such a heavy burden academics. I don't even want that burden. I don't want it on my plate. And I don't think I should have to have it on my plate. I think the guidance counselors should attest to that because they've had the training or they should have, but they should get it.

## **Behavior Interventions**

Behavior Interventions, which is the last major category to emerge, is divided into two sub-categories: individual versus group contingencies and social validity markers. This section will describe the use of individual versus group contingencies, participants' experience using the behavior interventions that were identified as a result of the systematic literature review, and their views on the social validity of those interventions.

**Individual vs. Group Contingencies.** Of the nine participants, seven reported using a combination of individual and group contingencies, one participant reported using only individual contingencies, and one reported using only group contingencies. Teachers used a range of individual contingencies including behavior specific praise, redirecting disruptive behaviors, incentives such as candy or stickers, home-school partnership, and clip charts. Contrary to the evidence supporting the use of cooperative or communal behavior interventions with racially minoritized students, most participants used individual contingencies to manage challenging behaviors. For example, Ellie described group contingencies as being unfair because those who follow directions are not rewarded unless all the students follow the instructions.

So, I'm more of a believer in the individual because....If I tried to do group rewards, not saying I didn't try, but we had some that were always on their best behavior, always doing the right thing. And some, I even think that, you know, when they knew they had the control of the group would purposely crash the day; it was a control type thing. I'm not one that believes that every child has to have the same thing. Um, I tell them just like I tell my own children, you get what you need. So, some children may need more frequent stickers, some may need leadership roles in the classroom because they are always doing the right thing. So, for me, group rewards can be a little bit difficult. Um, I

do believe in giving, like they all got a compliment then yes, we all celebrate that, uh, working together.

Group contingencies were divided into two sub-categories: independent and interdependent contingencies. Between these two, independent contingencies were used more often ( $n = 4$ ) compared to interdependent contingencies ( $n = 3$ ).

**Social Validity Markers.** This section will describe teachers' views on the four markers of an intervention's social validity by intervention (Table 3). Specifically, (i) the social importance of the challenging behaviors occurring in their classrooms, (ii) the usability or ease of implementing these behavior interventions, (iii) interventions' practicality and cost-effectiveness, and (iv) if they will continue to use these interventions over an extended period of time.

**Tootles.** This intervention rewards behaviors associated with monitoring and reporting prosocial behaviors exhibited by peers. Of the nine participants, none had either heard of or used tootles. However, they were excited by the concept and reported looking forward to incorporating it into their behavior intervention strategies. For example, Kendra reported, "I've had experience with all of them. Um, Tootles, I've never heard it called that. That's pretty cute. I feel like I might have to steal that." However, two participants reported using praise to reinforce desirable behaviors themselves instead of positive peer reporting. For example, Cecile reported, "I normally called it 'caught doing something good.' If a student is standing in line quietly, if I see a student that's helping another student, they get recognized. I call them out and let them know, give them a big mouse clap, give them a good, big mouse clap."

**Mystery Motivator.** For this, teachers randomly select the days or class periods during which students may earn an unknown reward for exhibiting previously agreed-upon behaviors.

Six participants reported that they had used mystery motivator or a similar version in the past. For example, Tara described her version of the Mystery Motivator,

When you have the kids come and sit to read with you, um, everyone in the classroom should be quiet so that you can really get an accurate account of their reading abilities. And so, at times I would just pick randomly a person and I would give them an extra sticker or at the end of the day, I would let them pick from the prize box because the entire time when we were doing the assessments, they [rest of the students] would read to. So, to me, they were following directions. And so, the kids would get really, really excited cause they didn't know when it would happen.

Furthermore, Kendra reported that the mystery motivator helped her greatly after spring or summer breaks, however, instead of choosing an unknown reward, she chose an unknown recipient of the reward. She reported,

like those times when I could tell that we needed a reset, I would just pick like a mystery student, write their name on a post-it note and stick it on the board with magnetic ink. And if I didn't have to speak to that person or anything like that, especially like walking in the hallway, like a mystery Walker in the hallway. If that student did good, like they would get a point and, you know, maybe at the end when they get 10 points, they got like something extra.

**Good Behavior Game.** For this, teachers offer systematic responses (stickers or clipping down) to a pre-specified set of rules that result in some form of visual consequence for the team. This was the most commonly used behavior intervention which was used in group settings (independent and interdependent). Kendra described how she implemented the good behavior games in her classroom, “I also had a compliment jar. So, if we were walking in the hallway, and



a teacher was like, ‘y'all are so quiet in the hallway. Great job.’ Then the whole class would get a star for our compliment jar. And once they filled their jar, that's when you would earn the reward.”

This intervention was also widely described as “easy to implement and cost-effective. Niyah reported that when all her students met the behavior expectations, they would get rewards in different forms.

I had a classroom donor, basically a guy that came in and helped out with reading and stuff. And then he actually offered to pay for the parties each month. So, he gave them these elaborate cakes and whatever they wanted...he brought them toys and balloons once a month. Um, so that made it really exciting. But if I didn't have that donor, then I still would do things that were cost-effective like pajama parties, extra computer time, bringing your own toy day.

**Consultation.** This was defined as on-going consultation for identifying problem behaviors and developing and implementing a classroom management plan. Five teachers reported using a version of consultation as a behavior intervention strategy; however, either their reports of using consultation did not meet the definition as per published academic literature or they did not provide sufficient information about the procedures and personnel involved. Therefore, even though some teachers reported using it, these instances were not included in the frequency count. For example, Niyah illustrated how she understood consultation,

I've done consultations for the whole class, including this year. Um, that's like, rule-making basically, what do we expect in this classroom? You know? And then we post it up and then we'll say, “okay, look at rule number one that you made, what should be the consequence for that?” And they helped me come up with all of that with some guidance.

Anna described her use of consultation as making note of whether the parents are supportive or not supportive. She mentioned including these notes “in my behavior booklet. You know, I have certain folders that I keep just for certain kids because I’m constantly either putting paperwork in there or problems.”

Table 3

*Table represents the frequency count of group interventions used by participants (interdependent and independent)*

	Experience	Usability	Social Importance	Practicality and Cost Effectiveness	Longevity
Tootles	0	0	0	0	0
Mystery Motivator	6	6	6	6	6
GBG	7	7	7	7	7
Consultation	0	0	0	0	0

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate in-service teachers' views on the intersectionality between culture and behaviors and their experience using culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions to better support racially minoritized students. In this chapter, results from nine semi-structured interviews were presented in the form of categories and subcategories. During the interview, four major categories emerged: (i) attributions for challenging behaviors; (ii) teacher challenges; (iii) culturally-responsive teaching; and (iv) behavior interventions. For each of these four categories, two subcategories each emerged which helped to provide specific evidence of experiences. The next chapter will consist of a discussion about these results, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate in-service teachers' views on the intersectionality between culture/race and behaviors and their experience using culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions to better support racially and ethnically minoritized students. This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings presented previously, focusing on (i) attributions for student behaviors, (ii) teacher challenges, and (iii) behavior interventions. I will also discuss limitations of the study, implications of the findings, and offer recommendations for future research.

#### **Overview of the Study**

The historic deficit-oriented perceptions about racially and ethnically minoritized students and the belief that these students' "uneducability" is due to internal deficiencies is still prevalent in school systems in the US (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018). More specifically, Bondy and Ross (1998) found that teachers attribute Black students' school failure to their families' and communities' indifference towards education, lack of motivation to learn, and not possessing the appropriate intellectual experiences to support their children. These unconscious biases about minoritized students are also linked to how behaviors are assessed, the consequent discipline that is enforced, and the severity of the consequence (Collins, 2011; Thornberg, 2007; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). Issues related to exclusionary discipline based on racial biases are further exacerbated by the homogeneity of the teaching workforce (NCES, 2014) which serves a highly heterogeneous student body in the US (Aud et al., 2013; Okonofua et al., 2016) due to teachers' lack of understanding about cultural differences and the subsequent feelings of under

preparedness to effectively serve them (Canedas et al., 2018; Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017; Cisneros & Lopez, 2016; Dabach, 2015; Jefferies & Dabach, 2015).

This study sought to explore participating elementary school teachers' views on the intersectionality between culture/race and student behaviors and their use of culturally-responsive teaching and behavior interventions presented in the literature via semi-structured interviews. The researcher collected data from nine elementary school teachers who were recruited using purposive and convenience sampling. The analysis of data suggests that four major categories emerged. The following sections will discuss the categories that emerged from data analysis.

### **Cultural Responsiveness**

There are several theories that emphasize the importance of socio-cultural viewpoints in education. The significance of these viewpoints and their development have been discussed as being necessary for cognitive development to exist in society with others and to make sense of behaviors (Vygotsky, 1987) necessary for teaching as it predicts knowledge, skills, and tendencies (Bandura, 1969), and helping to mold children and young adults to develop a worldview and a personal cultural identity (Kadioglu, 2014). Given these assertions, teachers play a vital role in the development of these macro and micro identities (Kadioglu, 2014) by recognizing and supporting the different cultural backgrounds and experiences in these changing public school demographics (Karatas & Oral, 2015). However, in order to incorporate the principles of culturally-responsive pedagogy, teachers must understand what it means to be culturally-responsive. Irvine (2010) refers to culturally-responsive teaching as effective teaching in a diverse classroom; Ford (2010) asserts that,

When we are responsive, we feel an obligation, a sense of urgency, to address a need... so that students experience success. When teachers are culturally responsive, they are student-centered; they eliminate barriers to learning and achievement and, thereby, open doors for culturally different students to reach their potential... [when culturally responsive] teachers proactively and assertively work to understand, respect, and meet the needs of students who come from cultural backgrounds different from their own (p. 50).

Consistent with these assertions, Ladson-Billings (1992) proposed three criteria on which to base culturally-relevant pedagogy: (i) students' academic success, (ii) student development and maintenance of cultural-competence, and (iii) the development of a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo and existing social order. Briefly, students' academic success involves attending to students' academic needs and developing their academic success despite social inequities. Developing and maintaining cultural-competence encourages students to include cultural integrity and strive for educational excellence. Finally, cultural consciousness extends beyond maintaining academic excellence and remaining culturally grounded. It encourages the development of sociopolitical consciousness, critiquing the status quo, enhancing citizenship, and encouraging learners to critically engage society (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Given these various definitions and criteria, I asked the participants to express how they view or define cultural-responsiveness. The majority of participants provided responses that were fairly consistent with the first two criteria offered by Ladson-Billings, indicating a focus on individual academic achievement and remaining culturally grounded. The absence of the third criterion, cultural critical consciousness, could be indicative of unclear understanding about self-reflection (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Self-reflection is often mistaken as describing "reflections

about issues, ideas, and events” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 182) instead of engaging in critical introspection and the ongoing reconstruction of knowledge (Stronge, 2002). The act of critical self-conscious consideration about themselves and others in relation to society is an act of reflexivity. Holding traditional beliefs about mastery of concepts inhibits experiencing reflexivity (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1993, Danielewicz, 2001) as is evident from Kendra’s outlook of “treating all students the same way”. Similarly, the hesitation to critique socio-cultural and political status quo is inconsistent with the principles of self-reflection to develop cultural critical consciousness. Therefore, although Cecile acknowledges the recent racially-motivated events and their consequences, especially within the Black community, she delineates the roles of teachers as facilitating in content mastery and those of guidance counselors as being responsible for having difficult socio-cultural conversations with students.

However, research suggests that greater access to school counselors reduces disciplinary incidents and improved graduation rates (Carey & Harrington, 2010; Lapan et al., 2012), national data suggests that the median counselor-to-student ratio is 411:1 which is considerably higher than the American School Counselor Association’s recommendation of 250:1 (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016). These statistics reveal the disparate realities between schools in the 25th percentile with 292:1 ratio versus those in the 75th percentile with 642:1 ratio. These trends have major implications for students in urban schools which serve predominantly minoritized communities as national data suggest that only 4.2% of those school districts meet the recommended ratio compared to 25.5% of rural school districts. School counselors are tasked with addressing students’ social/personal, academic, and vocational needs; however, an important component of school counseling includes collaborating with teachers, families, and communities (American School Counselor Associations [ASCA], 2019a). Therefore, schools can

address racism and bias by encouraging teachers to continue challenging conversations in the classroom in the absence of school counselors (ASCA, 2019b). Furthermore, since students spend a significant amount of the school day in their classrooms, it might be more efficient for teachers to have crucial and sensitive conversations with them.

The other explanation for the lack of critical consciousness displayed by teachers emerged in the form of fear of backlash from parents and communities. Critiquing socio-cultural and political phenomena through reflexive thinking, engaging in critical discourses, and the conversion to praxis is avoided due to the fear of disrespecting others in the community (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). For example, Ellie found the question about defining cultural-responsiveness challenging because of her assumption that everyone understands the concept differently and that the expectation of being correct or “doing the right thing” to fit others’ understanding of the concept due to her role as a teacher is taxing.

### **Attributions for Student Behaviors**

Positive interactions between students and teachers improves the quality of their relationships, reduces the occurrences of externalizing student behaviors, and improves students’ social skills and peer interactions (Baker et al., 2008; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; O’Connor et al., 2011). Having a caring and supportive relationship with an adult, especially with teachers, also enhances students’ social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development and outcomes (Gambone et al., 2002; Pianta et al., 2003). However, much too often, the interactions between teachers and their racially minoritized students are contentious and result in the use of insensitive teaching practices (Gay, 2000; Townsend, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004). The racial/ethnic mismatch between students and teachers has left teachers feeling underprepared to support students and making uninformed decisions about managing stressful situations (Marx, 2004).



Next, a lack of understanding or exposure to non-dominant cultures and races also results in the attribution of minoritized students' behaviors as defiant, disruptive, or aggressive due to perceived cultural or personal deficiencies (Bergeron, 2008; Gay, 2000; Hill, 2009). This attribution of behaviors to personal or cultural deficiencies is consistent with Weiner's (1985) interpersonal attribution theory which posits that students' perceived behaviors, intentions, and capabilities influences teachers' emotional and overt responses. Broadly, attributions are causal explanations used to explain events, behavior, and mental states (Fiske & Taylor, 2013).

The majority of responses from the interviews attributed students' behaviors to home environment and racial mismatch which is in keeping with the research on self-serving bias. Specifically, most participants made external attributions for student's perceived failures and believed that these behaviors were controllable, instead of making attributions internal to themselves to improve interactions and implement practices recommended in research (Andreou & Rapti, 2010; Bibou-Nakou et al., 2000; Carter et al., 2014). These attributions result in harsher and more punitive discipline if teachers consider students to be in control of these behaviors (Brown & Weiner, 1984; Kulinna, 2007, Soodak & Podell, 1994). These findings are consistent with those from a systematic review of literature examining teacher attributions for challenging, in that they found three broad teacher attributions: locus, stability and control (Nemer et al., 2019).

When justifying a situation, teachers often attribute challenging behaviors (i.e., disruptions) to students (external to themselves) and as controllable by the students, thus influencing consequent actions (i.e., reprimand). However, if the teachers attribute challenging behavior to factors within themselves and uncontrollable by the students, overt responses are more positive (i.e., shows sympathy towards the student, assists in finding solutions) (Nemer, et

al., 2019). Similar findings were reported by the present study, wherein, multiple teachers listed home environment as the main cause for the challenging behaviors (i.e., attributing problems external to themselves). They attributed unstable homes, parents' role in students' academic engagement, family finances, single parent homes, differences in racial/ethnic backgrounds, and geographic location as the leading causes for challenging behaviors, thus situating the problem on factors external to themselves. However, these attributions might implicitly represent the intersectionality between race and income. Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are consistently at the lower end of the total income distribution compared to Whites and Asians (Akee et al., 2017). These income inequalities and lack of economic and social mobility have negative consequences for those who find themselves in the lower half of the income distribution ladder. Specifically, several studies show race and ethnicity to be highly correlated with employment opportunities, educational opportunities, household characteristics, and lowered incentive to invest in higher education (Ritter and Taylor, 2011; Black et al., 2006; Ramraj et al., 2016; Fryer, 2011; Bayer and Charles, 2016). It is possible that income inequality and lesser social capital, in addition to unstable homes, absent parents, family finances, etc. had cumulative effects on disproportionate discipline of racially minoritized students (Gregory et al., 2010). More recent data suggest similar trends in discipline disproportionality. Specifically, Anderson and Ritter (2017) found that Black students who were on free or reduced lunch were more likely to face exclusionary discipline.

In their study, Akee et al. (2017) draw comparisons between in- and out-of-school suspensions for poor and non-poor students. They found that poor students were more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions compared to their non-poor peers. Furthermore, they also found that Black students were more likely to face out-of-school suspensions compared to their

White peers. These data were contrary to their initial hypothesis that poor students are more likely to receive in-school suspensions because they are less likely to have somewhere to go after school due to caregivers' inflexible work schedules. It is worthwhile to note that the authors reported not believing that differences by race or socio-economic status are plainly discriminatory, and that school administrators might have valid reasons for making different decisions for different students.

Next, when determining the controllability, participants attributed challenging behaviors as controllable by parents/caregivers. For example, Kim stated "You know, a lot of parents don't work, so they don't see their mom getting up in the morning or dad getting up in the morning to go to work or to do anything productive, they're at home. So, they're not used to seeing productivity in their household." This example illustrates Kim's belief that the parents are choosing to be unproductive, thus attributing challenging behaviors to parental controllability over uncontrollability.

Furthermore, participants used differences between racial/ethnic backgrounds of teachers and minoritized students to explain challenging behaviors. For example, Aria expressed frustration when drawing comparisons between her White, Black, and Hispanic students. She attributed the negative outcomes to factors external to herself and viewed behaviors of students to be controllable. Specifically, she assumed the behaviors to be controllable and seemed to hold harsher biases towards Black students who did not change their behaviors compared to her White and Hispanic students. Next, her assessment of the stability of her Hispanic students shifted from stable to unstable as they changed their behaviors over time upon her requests. The same was not said about the Black students, whose behaviors she attributed as external to herself, and

internally controllable by and stable over time for Black students, thus becoming more permanent.

Another reason why negative outcomes were attributed to factors external to themselves could be the influence of early experiences. Research suggests that traces of past experiences linger into adulthood or recent personal experiences, thus influencing actions (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Rudman, 2004; Wilson et al., 2000). These implicit biases are regarded as representative of unconscious representations that have roots in early experiences (Gawronski et al., 2007). For example, Anna described how her early perceptions about Black communities have shaped her biases and consequent actions as a teacher and adult.

Biased perceptions about racially and ethnically minoritized communities, their home environments, parental involvement, and motivation to learn also maintain social stratification by reproducing and exacerbating the inequities of race or class in society (Roscigno et al. 2006; Lareau 2003). The American education system is dominated by a White, middle-class, and female teacher workforce who implicitly or explicitly measure all students against their own norms and attitudes (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). These behaviors, expectations, and value-based notions constitute the Social Reproduction Theory. Several participants seemed to have maintained these social stratifications by expecting their students to communicate, dress, and present themselves in ways that are acceptable to the dominant White, middle-class. For example, Aria shared her views on the differences between her Black and Hispanic students by comparing them against dominant White standards. She described her Hispanic students as capable of excelling because they possess the desire to learn, however, she described her experiences with Black students as “like pulling hair” because of her perceptions about their

unwillingness to learn. By holding these views and inadvertently acting on them, Aria is contributing to the social stratification of White, Hispanic, and Black students.

Similarly, Cecile, who had predominantly Black students in her classroom, attributed her students' home environment as being the reason for the challenging behaviors. Often, Black individuals are viewed from a deficit perspective, in that they are considered to be lazy or unmotivated, as uncaring about education, or not possessing the ability to pass down intellectual support (Sleeter, 2008). This sentiment expressed by Cecile is consistent with the notion that those who do not belong to a dominant social group or enjoy their advantages are considered inferior, thus being treated differently by teachers and school personnel and have lower chances of school success (Roscigno et al., 2006; Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

### **Teacher Challenges**

The two prominent sub-categories that emerged for this major category are racial/cultural mismatch and community/parental backlash. With public school student enrollment becoming more representative of the larger American society and the teaching workforce remaining homogeneous, unconscious biases activated by racial differences can potentially worsen teacher-held stereotypes about racially minoritized students' capabilities (Ferguson, 2003; Wright et al., 2014). The evidence for the effects of mismatch suggests that there are differences in teachers' expectations of school success for their White and racially minoritized students. It also suggests more abstract and vague interactions with parents of racially minoritized students (Bourdieu, 1993). This has the potential to further widen the socio-cultural gap existing in the US as people tend to choose and belong to specific social groups (e.g., sports teams, political affiliation, nationality, race/ethnicity). These memberships exist as a part of individuals' social identity by prescribing to attributes of the said group. Thus, when one social identity becomes salient in

specific social contexts, people tend to conduct themselves as per the in-group stereotypes, and the perceptions of out-group members is guided by out-group stereotypes (Hogg et al, 1995).

Consistent with the social identity theory, participants expressed certain ‘us versus them’ feelings with their racially minoritized students and their families as well as their minority teaching colleagues. For example, Kim reported being acutely aware of the racial differences between her students and herself because “maybe they didn't feel as though they have no right to respond to them because they're not black or Puerto Rican or whatever.” Kim’s example suggests the strict placement of individuals within social categories as her racial identity becomes her most salient one in these contexts.

Social identities are not only descriptive and prescriptive of attributes, but they are also evaluative. An identity belonging to a specific social group will furnish an evaluation of another social category and all its members, relative to their own and other social categories. These self-evaluative consequences of belonging to social categories encourages members to adopt behavior strategies that are normative to their category to maintain the in-group/out-group identity comparisons (Hogg et al., 1995). Anna’s experiences with one of her Black students who told her, “you're getting on my GD nerves” left her feeling confused and hurt. She later explained that she did not know “it was a common thing”. This experience demonstrates the salience of Anna’s racial or cultural identity which inhibited her from realizing that communication styles, physical appearances, and learning styles might be different based on one’s culture, race, or ethnicity.

Similarly, the feeling of us versus them due to social identities was also evident in Ellie’s experience where she used a phrase that is considered a racial slur by certain members of the Black community. Although when brought to her notice, she realized its significance, however, it

still left her feeling hurt and on guard, and caused a feeling of unease with discussing racial or cultural matters. These experiences seem to have pushed individuals further into their social groups and prescribe the normative behaviors prescribed by those groups.

### **Behavior Interventions**

The evidence for the effectiveness of group contingencies to support students displaying challenging behaviors is strong (Thorne & Kamps, 2008). Furthermore, group work is not only effective with White students, it has also shown evidence of effectiveness with racially minoritized students because of its ability to facilitate cooperative learning. Eight of the nine participants in this study used some form of group contingencies in their classrooms to manage challenging student behaviors which is consistent with literature suggesting that racially minoritized students prefer people-oriented learning styles to meet a shared goal. The ability of group work to cohesively bring a racially heterogeneous group of students together builds positive dependency and perspective-taking skills. The responses from participants indicate a high likelihood of teachers' use of group contingencies over an extended period of time because of the social importance of the challenging behaviors, the practicality and cost-effectiveness of the interventions, and their ease of implementation.

The widespread use of the Good Behavior Game across eight of nine participants suggests that teachers relied on teamwork to ensure student compliance with predetermined set of behavior instructions. Furthermore, it was also reported to be effective for most participants who reported having majority Black students. These findings are supported by literature that suggest a significant advantage and effectiveness of using GBG across several cultures, languages, socio-economic status, and other demographic markers (Gu et al., 2011, Thuen & Bru, 2009; Tingstrom et al., 2006).

However, due to the real-world nature of classrooms, it is highly likely that the various versions of GBG implemented were not always used with fidelity. Fidelity is defined as the degree to which treatment procedures are implemented as intended (Gresham et al., 1993). It is essential to record data on integrity to make accurate causal assumptions about treatment and outcome (i.e., to verify that the changes in the dependent variable are attributed to manipulations of the independent variable (Gresham, 1989). However, it is possible that when asked about implementing GBG, the participants' responses reflected their adoption of GBG principles of group work and reinforcement, instead of their strict adherence to, competent delivery of, and the frequency of using specific practice procedures. Nonetheless, research suggests that while low levels of treatment fidelity are related to poorer treatment outcomes (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Noell, 2008), deviations from treatment procedures may make the intervention contextually relevant because of the flexibility and adaptation it allows in its implementation of intervention procedures (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Regardless, this is an empirical question that deserves further investigation.

Next, the extensive use of the Mystery Motivator and teachers' willingness to continue its use because of its flexibility is evidenced in the literature (Robinson & Sheridan, 2000). In the context of the present study, most teachers who used this intervention interdependently reported feeling satisfied by its use. Although the literature suggests that different modifications (i.e., individual, independent, and interdependent) are all effective, researchers have found that students' rate of task completion increased (Madaus et al., 2003) and that of disruptive and noncompliant behaviors decreased (Robichaux & Gresham, 2014) when used interdependently (Lynch et al., 2009).



Finally, the results concerning Tootles and Consultation were surprising as Throne and Kamps (2008) suggest popular use, especially in large settings. It is possible that because the participants had never heard of the term Tootling, believe that too much praise is counterproductive, or because they understand academics to be their primary roles as opposed to socio-behavioral intervention (Hamre & Pinta, 2005). Furthermore, teachers could be concerned about cultural sensitivity and avoid instances where neutral and free of stereotypical language might be used (Murphy & Zlomke, 2014). With respect to consultation, it is possible that the absence of an experienced consultant results in infrequent teacher implementation due to a lack in teacher behavior as a function of consultation (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990). Additionally, although consultations require teacher and caregiver involvement, the latter's active participation could be a deterrent as consultations are typically teacher generated and teacher-caregiver communication around implementation is often limited (Galloway & Sheridan, 1994).

Finally, most participants' efforts to incorporate cultural responsiveness into their practice was evident in their reporting of the implementation of behavior interventions. Specifically, their responses were consistent with the five components of the CARES framework which include fostering authentic cross-cultural relationships, reflective thinking about social, cultural, and class memberships, effective cross cultural communication, connecting culture with curricula, and sensitivity to student's culture (Bottiani et al., 2012). Participants reported being aware of the socio-political climate and its effects on racially minoritized students and engaging in critical conversations about current affairs. They built strong relationships with their students' parents by maintaining consistent communication and considering them stakeholders in their child's education. Teachers also reported embedding books, visual cues, food, and personal experiences into their teaching practices, thus, showing sensitivity to diverse students' cultures.

## **Limitations**

Within qualitative research, the researcher plays the key role of data collection and analysis (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). However, with this type of research, “researchers do not remain indifferent to the lives of the people they talk with, and such personal involvement is welcomed and not distrusted” (Tutty et al., 1996, p. 9). Bearing this in mind, my role as a teacher coach on the parent study from which the participants were recruited places me in a unique situation of personal investment and knowledge of challenges that teachers face. However, despite the presence of a secondary-coder to establish triangulation and incorporate different perspectives into data analysis, bias is indelible. Next, although member checks were intended, time constraints prohibited its implementation. Furthermore, to eliminate as much bias as possible, I engaged in bracketing my preconceptions that could be deleterious to the overall study procedures and findings. I did this by maintaining reflexive notes throughout the planning and implementation of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriman & Tisdale, 2016).

Although efforts were made to collect rich data and reach saturation, the sample size of nine participants does not capture the experiences and knowledge of the teachers in the United States. Factors such as geographic location, personal biases and experiences, support of the school administration, community, and parents have the potential to influence participant responses. However, these confounding factors play a significant role in capturing the impact of subjectivity in responses. Next, the sampling was carried out using convenience and purposive sampling. The pleasant experiences of the participating teachers on the parent study could have influenced their decision to participate in the current study. Moreover, because participation in both studies was voluntary, it is possible that the participants were already motivated to engage in critical self-reflection and improve their practices before they were approached for

participation. And finally, the second-coder's role as a coach on the parent study could have influenced her analytic lens. Having been a teacher themselves, the second-coder's personal experiences, biases, and preconceptions could have swayed the findings in a particular direction.

### **Implications for Practice**

According to a qualitative study (McMahon, 2013), teachers' attributions develop prior to pre-service training; however, these have the capacity to evolve and develop. Consequently, teacher preparation programs should be equipped to help teacher candidates recognize their biases and bring targeted changes in these perceptions (Thijs & Koomen, 2009). These changes in the foundational stages of teacher development and training can better prepare teachers to use proactive racially and culturally-sensitive practices (Andreou & Rapti, 2010; Bibou-Nakou et al., 2000; Carter et al., 2014). Given that established conceptualizations are capable of change over time, regularly revisiting biases about student behaviors and the role of race and ethnicity is a powerful tool. Wang and Hall (2018) posit that initiatives promoting teacher wellbeing and motivation are essential to countering maladaptive interpersonal causal attributions. Attributional Retraining (AR) is an intervention which enables teachers to attribute adaptively so as to encourage positive student outcomes or their own psychological health. Furthermore, AR can also facilitate in maintaining teachers' wellbeing and motivation by employing attribution-based interventions or retraining to critically evaluate flawed misconceptions.

Next, while the policing of racially minoritized students using suspensions has decreased (OCR, 2018), the problem of exclusionary discipline is still prevalent. If factors such as hiring and retaining racially and ethnically minoritized teachers, comprehensive revamping of pre-service programs, and ongoing professional development encouraging attributional retraining are not addressed, educational institutions will continue to follow trends of punitive discipline

consistent with the criminal justice system (Welch & Payne, 2010). In addition exclusionary discipline such as suspensions predict higher frequencies of future misbehaviors (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003), academic achievement (Beck & Muschkin, 2012; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba & Rausch, 2004), school dropout (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; American Psychological Association, 2008; Ekstrom, et al., 1986), and involvement in the juvenile justice system (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; Balfanz, et al., 2003; Fabelo et al., 2011; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009).

In order to interrupt deficit perceptions about racially minoritized students to create a genuine sense of caring will also require a comprehensive redesign of teacher preparation programs to include community-based learning experiences, deepening the understanding about equity and social justice, and recruitment of racially minoritized teacher candidates (Sobel et al., 2011). Meaningfully engaging in understanding students' social, political, and historical contexts by using their communities as assets help to meet the academic and social needs of racially minoritized students (Murrell, 2000). Therefore, community-based field experiences provide opportunities for teacher candidates to deepen their socio-cultural conscious about racially minoritized students (Sobel et al., 2011). Next, understanding the intersectionality between race, class, socio-economic status, and culture by critically examining socio-political histories of notions of equity and social justice enables self-examination of one's own privilege and bias, and how these play a role in the ways teacher candidates will interact with racially minoritized students (Saifer et al., 2011).

While critical self-reflection is a powerful tool to incorporate culturally-relevant pedagogy, the recruitment gap in teacher recruitment also plays a significant role in revamping the teacher preparation programs. Feelings of us versus them or the inability to relate to racially

minoritized students are symptomatic of disparate trend in teachers' race and ethnicity. Innovative recruitment strategies to attract more racially minoritized teachers are needed to help broker the racial mismatch between students and teachers. Additionally, racially minoritized teachers with a disposition of culturally-responsive teaching can serve as mentors to novice teachers. This can help to critically examine school cultures of White dominant norms and the adoption of deficit perspectives about racially minoritized students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Several researchers have emphasized the effectiveness of self-reflection to understand who teachers are as people, the contexts in which they teach, and how questioning their assumptions about students' cultural contexts helps to develop critical consciousness (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Palmer, 1998). Teacher preparation programs can create effective learning climates by incorporating self-reflection and critical cultural consciousness as normative demands or routines (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Encouraging teacher candidates to examine the ramifications of newly gained knowledge on their personal and professional life helps to understand their roles as teachers and the cultural contexts in which they teach. Finally, teacher educators and mentors can help develop critical cultural consciousness by incorporating its principals into the modeling process. When mentors and teacher educators model using the concepts of ethnic learning styles, display an understanding about the differences in values and beliefs about racially and ethnically minoritized groups, provide opportunities to role play and provide constructive feedback, they enable student teachers to gain confidence in confronting issues related to educational equity for racially minoritized students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

## **Future Research**

The present study offers a foundational understanding of elementary school teachers' understanding about the intersectionality between race/ethnicity and student behaviors and their experiences using effective behavior interventions. However, additional research on the barriers to intervention implementation is needed to improve treatment integrity and teachers' motivation to continue their implementation. Factors such as personal beliefs and resources can influence efficacy, burnout (Ringwalt et al., 2003), and emotional exhaustion (Ransford et al., 2009). Next, support from school leadership influences implementation by teachers (Beets et al., 2008; Gregory et al., 2008). Principals set expectations for teacher behaviors and school climate, therefore, teachers' and staff's perceptions about the leadership can influence implementation. Next, teachers' own willingness to adopt and implement interventions and motivation determine intervention acceptance and implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2015). Lastly, consult-consultee alliance influences teachers' perceptions about the intervention and its consequent implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2008).

Future research should examine teachers' use of the four behavior interventions using direct observation measures to record teacher behaviors, in addition to interview responses to more accurately measure skills and knowledge. Specifically, direct observation measures that record discrete and objective target behaviors operationally defined by the researcher as opposed to the subjectivities of interview responses. Furthermore, using these data will also enable teachers to receive feedback and adjust their practice according to researchers' recommendation and self-reflection. Finally, few studies examine the influence of teacher behaviors on student outcomes (Wang & Hall, 2018). Future research could include the use of attribution measures such as the Preschool Teaching Attributions (PTA; Carter et al., 2014) and Teacher Attribution

Measure for Early Elementary (TAM-EE; Nemer, 2019) measures to empirically record how teachers' attributions of challenging behaviors influences student outcomes. Future research should also examine how the implementation of effective behavior interventions influences student outcomes with teacher attributions of challenging behaviors as a moderator of treatment effects. According to Weiner's attribution theory (1985, 2000, 2010), teachers' attribution of student behaviors and performances influences their emotions which, in turn, predicts their teaching behaviors. If this is the case, when teachers' attribute student behaviors as external to themselves, the negative emotion it evokes could affect their implementation of the behavior intervention.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore teachers' views on the intersectionality between race/ethnicity and student behaviors, and examine their experiences using effective behavior interventions. Initial findings suggest teachers' varied understanding of cultural-responsiveness, students' display of challenging behaviors as external to themselves, and a sense of us versus them by dileanting differences in behaviors of students based on nationality, race/ethnicity, or home environment. Finally, although these preliminary findings represent teachers' understanding and role in intervention implementation, other barriers to implementation that are external to the teachers should also be studied.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Invitation Email**

Hi Xxx,

I hope you're doing well and staying safe. I'm writing to touch base about your interest in participating in the BEST in CLASS end of year interviews. This is an opportunity for our teachers to give us feedback regarding their experience with BEST in CLASS this year. We are also interested in learning more about your students' social relationships and hearing your thoughts regarding cultural responsiveness. Your input will be used to improve our program for future participants. If you are interested, we anticipate that the interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes (via Zoom), and you will receive compensation of \$50 for your time.

If you are interested, we look forward to hearing from you. Have a wonderful summer!

Take care and stay safe.

Best,

Yyy

## Appendix B

### Semi-structured Interview Consent Form

Please complete the following consent form below pertaining to participating in BEST in CLASS semi-structured interviews.

Thank you!

**STUDY TITLE:** Conceptual Replication of BEST in CLASS: An Efficacy Study of BEST in CLASS Elementary

**VCU INVESTIGATOR:** PI: Dr. Kevin Sutherland

**SPONSOR:** Institute of Education Sciences

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

VCU IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER: HM20013345

#### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Dear Teacher,

We would like to learn about how we can improve the BEST in CLASS-Elementary program and learn more about the classroom experiences of teachers and students. We are contacting you to ask if you would be willing to be part of our interviews at the conclusion of the study. We anticipate the interviews will last approximately 30-60 minutes and will be held by a project member over the phone or by virtual conferencing (e.g., zoom). The first part of the interview will include questions about your views on cultural-responsiveness and experiences with certain behavior interventions. The second part of the interview will focus on exploring your thoughts and views on students' social relationships in your classroom. The interview will be audio

recorded so that we may accurately record teacher responses to the questions we have. These recordings will be transcribed and all names will be removed.

This study is funded by the Institute of Education Science U.S. Department of Education. It is important that you carefully think about whether being in this study is right for you and your situation.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decide to not participate in this study. If you do participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to take part or to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Participating teachers will receive payment (\$50) for their participation.

**Do I have to participate?**

You can stop being in this research study at any time. Leaving the study will not affect your medical care, employment status, or academic standing at VCU. Tell the study staff if you are thinking about stopping or decide to stop.

**Do I get to see study results?**

We will be happy to provide you with outcomes after the study is finished if you would like. In general, we will not give you any individual results from the study. Once the study has been completed, we will send you a summary of all of the results of the study and what they mean.

**Are there any risks involved in participation?**



We do not anticipate that your participation will cause any discomfort. If for any reason you are not comfortable answering interview questions, we will end the research session and discuss the situation with you directly.

Risks of participation include breach of confidentiality. Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of information you have provided to BEST in CLASS through interviews. Data are being collected only for research purposes. Your data will be identified by ID numbers, not names, and stored separately from data collection records in a locked research area. All personal identifying information will be kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted five years after the close of the project. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel. We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study, information from your classroom, and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by the sponsor of the research or by Virginia Commonwealth University. What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

Participation in research might involve some loss of privacy. There is a small risk that someone outside the research study could see and misuse information about you. Also, you may learn things about yourself that you did not know before and that could affect how you think about yourself.

The researchers will let you know about any significant new findings (such as additional risks or discomforts) that might make you change your mind about participating in the study.

**How will information about me be protected?**

VCU has established secure research databases and computer systems to store information and to help with monitoring and oversight of research. Your information may be kept in these databases but are only accessible to individuals working on this study or authorized individuals who have access for specific research related tasks.

Identifiable information in these databases are not released outside VCU unless stated in this consent or required by law. Although results of this research may be presented at meetings or in publications, identifiable personal information about participants will not be disclosed.

Personal information about you might be shared with or copied by authorized representatives from the following organizations for the purposes of managing, monitoring and overseeing this study:

- The study Sponsor, representatives of the sponsor and other collaborating organizations
- Representatives of VCU
- Officials of the Department of Health and Human Services

If you tell us that you may hurt yourself or someone else, the law says that we must let people in authority know. In the future, identifiers might be removed from the information you provide

in this study, and after that removal, the information could be used for other research studies by this study team or another researcher without asking you for additional consent.

### **Questions or Concerns?**

If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about your participation in this research, contact:

Kevin Sutherland, Ph.D. Professor

Virginia Commonwealth University 1015

West Main Street Richmond, VA 23284-2020

(804) 827-2652

The researcher/study staff named here is the best person(s) to call for questions about your participation in this study. If you have general questions about your rights as a participant in this or any other research, you may contact:

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Research  
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000  
Box 980568  
Richmond, VA 23298  
Telephone: (804) 827-2157

Contact this number to ask general questions, to obtain information or offer input, and to express concerns or complaints about research. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or if you wish to talk to someone else. General information about participation in research studies can also be found at <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.html>.

**If you are interested in participating this year please complete, sign, and return this form to a BEST in CLASS Team Member**

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have been provided with an opportunity to read this consent form carefully. All of the questions that I wish to raise concerning this study have been answered. By signing this consent form, I have not waived any of the legal rights or benefits to which I otherwise would be entitled. My signature indicates that I freely consent to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of the consent form for my records.

**Completed by Teacher:**

1) **Teacher Name:**

\* must provide value

2) **Teacher Signature:**

Add signature

\* must provide value

3) **Date:**



**Today**M-D-Y

4) **Teacher's Email:**

\* must provide value

5) **Teacher's Phone Number:**

\* must provide value

**Completed by BEST in CLASS team member:**

**6) Name of Person Conducting Consent**

**Discussion:**

**7) Signature of Person Conducting Consent**

[Add signature](#)

**Discussion:**

**8) Date:**



**TodayM-D-Y**

**9) Principal Investigator Signature (if  
different from above):**

[Add signature](#)

**10) Date:**



**TodayM-D-Y**

Submit

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## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol

Before we begin, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview! The next part of this interview will focus on exploring your views on cultural-responsiveness and experiences with certain behavior interventions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Q. How would you define challenging or problem behaviors in the classroom/school setting?

Q. What are some behavior interventions that you have implemented in your classroom? How did it work?

Here is a hand-out with short descriptions of some behavior intervention practices.

Q. Have you used any of these strategies or similar ones in your classroom? What was your experience? *[Question and follow-up questions based on Horner's (2005) recommended components of social validity within single-case design]*

- *(Usability)* Do you think it was easy to implement?
- *(Social importance)* In your opinion, after using the intervention, did the behavior improve? By how much? was the magnitude of change in behavior significant?
- *(Practical and cost-effectiveness)* Was this intervention(s) practical (easy to use, cheap) and feasible given the resources (classroom materials; other support) you possess?
- *(Longevity)* Would you use this intervention(s) with longevity? Would you choose to continue using this intervention in your classroom?

Q. Do you have any additional comments?

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Q. How would you describe the demographics of your school and specifically, your class? (race, ethnicity, sex, English language learners, children with disabilities)

Q. Bearing in mind the growing diversity among students in public schools, how would you define a racial minority?

Q. What has your experience been teaching students belonging to racial minorities? (*follow-up: with respect to behaviors, academic outcomes, achievement “gaps”*)

Q. How do you define culture?

Q. What do you think it means to be culturally-responsive?

Q. How would you differentiate between cultural-sensitivity and cultural-responsiveness?

Q. Could you speak about your experience in culturally-responsive teaching? (*follow-up: any active measures taken, why/why not?, what did these measures look like, nature of the outcomes?*)

Q. Do you think that culture and behaviors are/could be inter-related? How so?

Q. What are some instances where you have experienced/witnessed a behavior to be a by-product of culture? Could you give me an example?

Q. When you experience challenging/problem behaviors in your classroom, do you modify your behavior intervention strategies to individualize support according to the student’s racial/ethnic background? How so?

Q. How have you or could extend cultural-responsiveness outside your classroom? (developing relationships with families, community, school-ethos, mentoring)

Q. Do you have any closing thoughts/comments?

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## Appendix D

### Intervention Handout

With independent group contingencies, all children in the class or school receive the same consequence (e.g., privileges, rewards, punishment) for exhibiting pre-determined behaviors.

With interdependent group contingencies, no individual student receives the reward unless all students in a group or across the school contribute to meeting the specific reinforcement criterion.

**Tootles:** rewarding behaviors associated with monitoring and reporting prosocial behaviors exhibited by peers.

**Mystery Motivator:** randomly selecting the days or class periods during which students may earn an unknown reward for exhibiting previously agreed-upon behaviors.

**Consultation:** on-going consultation for identifying problem behaviors, and developing and implementing a classroom management plan

**Good Behavior Games:** teachers offer systematic responses (stickers or clipping down) to a pre-specified set of rules that result in some form of visual consequence for the team.