CULTURALLY RELEVANT COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AMONG TEACHERS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IN A HIGH POVERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Abstract

There is a construct of collective responsibility which is evident when teachers believe that increased teacher efforts result in increased student learning. The group of teachers in a school that believe their efforts are crucial in the learning process, and are willing to take responsibility for all students, regardless of the students' aptitude or social characteristics, are engaging in collectively responsible efficacious behavior. What is missing from this literature however is how schools engage in critical cognitive evaluation of culture that guides the behavior of the organization.

The purpose of this study was to explore collective responsibility within a cultural framework, as an attribute of the work of teachers contributing to the academic success of African-American students in poverty. Information-rich, descriptive data gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis, informed this inquiry about the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and collective responsibility, what it looks like in school culture, and how it influences the academic success of African-American students in poverty. This case study provided meaningful and insightful details into better understanding what is happening in a school that has achieved academic success for African-American students in poverty.

In a culturally relevant collectively responsible setting, all students, including African-American children in poverty, have equitable access to knowledge. Teachers' influence over student success contributes powerfully to their attitude and behavior, impacting their level of dialogue, their willingness to engage in deprivatized practice and
collaboration, and their commitment to shared norms and values - all resulting in a school culture that supports success for all students. Culturally relevant reflective dialogue provides students with access to knowledge through the teachers’ awareness of self and others about their work, and how they define their work. Culturally relevant collaboration facilitates the shared understanding and social interactions between the teacher and students that supports academic success for all students. Culturally relevant shared norms and values ensure equitable access to knowledge for all students by means of a culturally congruent approach to teaching and learning.

Through this case study, I found that teachers who work within this culturally relevant collective responsibility framework:

- do whatever it takes to ensure academic success for all students based on their conception of self and others characterized by a sense of urgency, intensity, passion, and perseverance;
- engage in dialogue revealing their humanely equitable interconnectedness and interdependence based on their conception of social relations characterized by fluidity, connectedness, and collaborative responsibility; and
- focus their efforts on the goal of equitable distribution of knowledge to all students based on their conception of knowledge characterized by re-created knowledge, critical enthusiasm, and excellence in diversity.

The merge of collective responsibility and cultural relevance as my contribution to the literature in this introductory case study pushes towards emancipatory work which could result in a change in the way we approach educating poor and minority students.
Dedication

To my parents, the late Rev. O. Reginald Minor, and C. Elizabeth Minor

and special aunt, Adria Minor-Shivers,

my husband and son, Bertram and Terrell Gant,

and to those who have answered the call to engage in this critical work

of ensuring academic opportunities for the least among us...
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I am grateful to God for the opportunity to lead and serve, and the fortitude to remain faithful to the journey’s end...

I have learned from my father's wisdom, diligence, sincerity, and integrity, and my mother's tenacity, strength, courage, and spirituality that ALL things are possible, so with the sacrifices of my ancestors, and the unconditional love and support of my family and friends, I began this journey...

I acknowledge those who inspired me through words and deeds:

The school community that led me into this journey as well as the school community that saw me through to the end; the prodigious leadership of my superintendent and the support of my executive directors; my principal colleagues for engaging in dialogue with me about the incredible work they do each day, and their willingness to open their schools to me.
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I also acknowledge my incredible mentor and friend, Dr. Frances James-Brown who played a significant role in the completion of this work...

As I end this journey, I am eternally thankful for the unconditional love, support, encouragement, strength, humor, and gentle spirit of my husband and best friend - you inspire me!

Always and Forever...
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Field of Study

Major Field: Education
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There has never been a time in the life of the American public school when we have not known all we needed to in order to teach all those whom we chose to teach (Edmonds, 1979, p. 16).

As principal of an elementary school that has traditionally served a high percentage of African-American students experiencing economic difficulty, I am moved to question why race and poverty are linked to a child’s achievement level and academic success (Orfield & Lee, 2005). The Coleman report found that next to a student’s family, the socioeconomic status of his or her school is the single most important determinant of academic success (Coleman et al., 1966). High poverty schools, which typically have a large minority population of Black and Latino students, attain their poverty status based on the percent of economically disadvantaged students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under federal guidelines (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). My school, which meets the criteria of a high-poverty school, typically serves a student population that is 75% African-American and 15% Caucasian with a greater than 95% free/reduced lunch population on average each school year.

While these data suggests that most of the students in my school live in poverty, the achievement results at the outset did not explain the large achievement gaps that persisted between Caucasian students and African-American students on standardized assessments. In spite of their corresponding socioeconomic status, Caucasian children
consistently outperformed African-American children in all content areas of our school's high stakes assessments. On the national level, the achievement gap on standardized tests "between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (NCLB, 2001, Sec. 1001 [3]) is viewed as the most significant educational challenge facing American society in the 21st century (Kirn & Sunderman, 2005). Consequently, the outcry for social justice in response to variance in achievement scores of minority and impoverished students across the nation has given rise to efforts to improve the academic achievement of poor and minority students. Just three days after taking office, President George W. Bush announced his framework for bipartisan educational reform emphasizing his concern that “too many of our neediest children are being left behind.” Identifying education as his number one domestic priority, the President sent his comprehensive educational reform to Congress on January 23, 2001, and signed it into law on January 8, 2002. Section 101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) was amended to read as Title I – Improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged. Currently, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the only national policy that specifically addresses racial disparities in academic performance.

Once I shared with my teachers our school's disaggregated data illuminating the disparity in achievement by race for our students, I was struck by their reflective response. The teachers requested that I seek out professional development that would support their increased effectiveness with African-American males, who were our lowest
achieving group of students, and they collaborated to develop instructional strategies to make lessons relevant. During the rest of the school year, the teachers met regularly and reviewed assessment data, discussed implementation of strategies, and made adjustments to their instruction. As a result, our student achievement improved the following year. We significantly narrowed the performance gap between our African-American and Caucasian students, and our school met its adequate yearly progress (AYP) goal for expected school improvement.

Many questions surfaced as I tried to understand how we were able to make such significant gains with our African-American students in just one year. Did focused professional development initiated by the teachers’ acknowledgment of their limitations improve instruction, or had they not made the instructional effort to reach African-American students in the past? Did their efforts to collaborate and plan together support increased achievement? Did their inquiry into the culture of the students play a role in teachers’ understanding and/or efforts to support academic success for our African-American students? Did teachers’ beliefs and expectations about educating African-American students change? While I am not able to determine if their beliefs changed, a transformation in their collective behavior and their expectations of each other was evident. They enthusiastically engaged in professional development and collaboration for the purpose of increasing academic success for African-American students, and they clearly communicated their expectations of effective student interactions to all members of the organization.
In my own reflection which conceptually led me to this study, I could not help but ponder Edmonds' indictment of schools that fail to teach all students, citing "differences in student performance...seem to be attributed to factors under the schools' control" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 16). He vehemently denounces the notion that family background is the primary cause of student performance because "such a belief has the effect of absolving educators of their professional responsibility to be instructionally effective" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 21). By opening each chapter of this study with an assertion from Edmonds' "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," I highlight questions of responsibility and organizational culture through the lens of a report that holds schools responsible for the education and miseducation of the "least among us" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 15). Consequently, this inquiry into the transformation of my teachers' collective behavior has led me to review the literature of school culture, collective efficacy, professional community, and the dimensions of teachers' work lives of collective responsibility, and has guided me into my exploration of a culturally relevant framework to develop a school normative environment that supports academic success for my student population.

Statement of the Problem

Recognizing that “the purpose of schooling is learning, and the purpose of teaching is to foster the progress of students in their learning” (Schalock, 1998, p. 238), I consider it reasonable that schools be held accountable for their role in ensuring student achievement. Consequently, high-poverty schools, with a large minority population of Black and/or Latino students whose average test scores routinely fall below the minimum
proficiency level required to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP), have the most difficulty meeting its requirements given the strong negative correlation of race and poverty with achievement (Orfield & Lee, 2005). The intention of the provisions in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation governing schools during the period of this study (2005-2010) has been to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards, thus narrowing the achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). By imposing the same performance standards in reading and mathematics on all students, the AYP requirements were intended to create strong incentives for schools to improve the achievement of underperforming students.

As a researcher who is also principal of a school that overcame the intense negative impact of poverty and race on student achievement, by what appeared to be the sheer collective will of the staff, I believed it important to determine elements that exist within the culture of an organization that positively influenced academic success for African-American students in a high poverty school. Noting the “strong positive link between the construct of collective responsibility for student learning among school faculties and valued student outcomes” (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 110), I believe it is also essential to explore attributes that contribute to a transformation in the collective behavior and school culture of teachers within a school that consistently meets academic success goals in high-poverty, racially diverse schools. Since I believe the staff’s conversion was not linked to the external expectations of NCLB, this study’s interest lies in inquiry into
the internally motivated culture formation of teachers who collectively commit to academic success for marginalized African-American students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore collective responsibility within a cultural framework, as an attribute of the work of teachers contributing to the academic success of African-American students in poverty. Information-rich, descriptive data gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis, will inform this case study. These data will provide meaningful and insightful details into better understanding what is happening in a school that has achieved academic success for African-American students in poverty. This study will be limited to students in a low socio-economic status school with a two-year average free/reduced lunch population greater than 75%, and a two-year average African-American male and female student population greater than 75%. Academic success will be determined by the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 results of the state's Third Grade Reading Achievement tests, and will be characterized by achievement scores that meet the adequate yearly progress standard defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for both the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years.
Research Questions

This study explored collective responsibility, an organizational property of schools, emerging from the collaborative work of teachers to enable the academic success of African-American students in poverty. To begin the inquiry process, I asked the following research questions:

What is the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and collective responsibility?

What does this relationship look like in school culture, and how does it influence the academic success of African-American students in poverty?

Delimitations and Limitations

A qualitative case study seeks to describe in depth and in detail, in context and holistically. “The desire to evaluate individualized client outcomes is one major reason why case studies may be conducted” (Patton, 1981, p. 99). While cases are selected for study because they are of particular interest given the study’s purpose, their limited scope precludes confident generalizations (Patton, 1981). Therefore, as a single case, this study is delimited in scope and design, reducing the population of schools so that the in depth, dominant qualitative study can advance.

Limitations identify potential weaknesses in the design of the study. Though case studies yield rich, descriptive data, caution must be used when making recommendations based on a single case study. In the midst of locating a case of a school having indicators of collective responsibility and attaining success for its African-American students in
poverty, other significant cases that may have contributed to the depth of understanding may have been missed. Thus, a limitation is inherent in the research design when a case study is used to narrow the focus of the study.

It is important to note that this narrowing, which limits the gathering of data to one specific site, may lead to distortion in the findings. Though this qualitative study will not result in findings that can be generalized, information-rich, meaningful and insightful details about the relationship between collective responsibility and achievement of African-American students experiencing poverty can emerge. Distortion in the data can occur if the researcher's perspective that his/her own lived experiences brings to bear overshadows the research data.

The methodology of an interpretive paradigm often includes interactions with and observations of participants in the setting. Understanding how people live and interpret their lives requires that researchers move, often literally, out of their own worlds and into the setting of the participants. At the same time, adherents of an interpretive paradigm believe that they cannot totally leave behind their understanding of the world (Bailey, 2006, p. 54).

Consciousness of researcher bias and perspective that I as a school principal might bring to the study is crucial to avoid distortion of data findings.

A final limitation of the study is the impact that transfers, retirements, and newly hired staff members have on the stability of the school's organizational culture. Efforts to control for consistency in building leadership as a relevant, extraneous factor will be made. Thus, schools with a change in principal will not be selected to participate in the qualitative study.
Significance of the Study

In many urban public school districts across the nation, identifying factors that impact academic success for African-American students in poverty is a top priority. Basing their inquiry on disaggregated data which reveal that black students are achieving at lower levels than their white classmates, researchers suggest many reasons for achievement gaps between black and white students. From Ogbu’s (2003) “oppositional culture” theory which suggests that the achievement gap is black students’ intentional response to a perception of limited job opportunities, to Finn’s (1999) “gatekeeping” theory based on the conspiracy notion that the type of education children receive is based on their socioeconomic position, researchers have grappled with identifying factors that support high levels of academic success for ALL students. Exasperated by low socioeconomic status which robs students of the cultural capital to access information, opportunities, and experiences that enable affluent students to make meaning of knowledge gained in school, urban districts must determine the factors that contribute to the academic success of their largest population – impoverished minority students.

As an elementary school principal, I am passionate about advancing school practices that will support increased academic success for all of the students I serve. I am challenged to cultivate a school culture that excels at all levels of our core mission – educating our students. As I seek to implement school behaviors that support student success, the significance of this study is grounded in the equity of academic success for African-American students in poverty in an urban school. This study, which explores the relationship of collective responsibility and the academic success of African-American
students living in poverty has a potential impact on both scholarly discourse and practice. The analysis addresses scholarly discourse by exploring the implications of a school organizational characteristic on an underachieving population of students. The subsequent implication for practitioners considers how the formation of organizational culture that supports African-American students experiencing economic difficulty occurs within schools.

Plan for the Study

As the measure of academic success in effect while this study was being conducted, the No Child Left Behind Act expected that all students from all sub-groups (i.e. SES, race, special education) be literate by 2014. A key component of the statute requires that school districts and schools meet the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation’s highest poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance. Emphasis on the school’s exclusive responsibility for student achievement turns our attention away from the traditional external factors of SES, race, school readiness, and parent’s level of education. Extrapolating from the No Child Left Behind Act, which identifies disadvantaged by the aforementioned categories, this study will focus on African-American students in poverty. The students will be identified as African-American male and female students emanating from one-parent and/or two-parent homes, in, or residing in alternative living arrangements (i.e. foster care, extended family, residential care). In using the study’s
definition, this inquiry will explore collective responsibility and the academic success of African-American students experiencing poverty.

In the following chapters, I will inform my study of collective responsibility among teachers through the literature of school culture, organizational learning, and culturally relevant pedagogy. As I explore the work of teachers towards the academic success of African-American students in poverty, I will engage in a qualitative case study of a school through the cultural framework lens of collective responsibility. Using dimensions of teachers’ work lives (i.e. reflective dialogue, deprivatization, collaboration, and shared norms and values) as components of collective responsibility, I will investigate the research questions that I have posed to increase my depth of understanding of the relationship of collective responsibility, culture, and the academic success of African-American students living in poverty. I will analyze qualitative data including group interviews, observations, and school documents such as bulletins and newsletters to speak to the questions my study has posited. Through this study, I located the role of culture in collective responsibility as it supported the work of teachers towards the academic success of African-American students in poverty, and the organizational learning culture of schools. Ultimately, my goal is that my study will contribute to the research on the academic success of our nation’s underachieving African-American students in poverty.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; We already know more than we need to do that; and whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far (Edmonds, 1979, p. 23).

Introduction

"Schools have always had the responsibility of developing individuals (students) as part of the larger responsibility of shaping the community and society" (Collinson & Cook, p. 67). Racial and economic disparities in the academic success of children support the need to explore practices that increase success in school organizational culture for all students. The organizational literature will reveal that culture is shared norms and values which permeates collective efficacy, professional community, and collective responsibility. As an overarching construct, culture influences efficacious behavior (positively or negatively), and is infused in both professional community and collective responsibility. The literature makes no distinction between the dimensions of teachers' work lives that make up professional community therefore they are positioned horizontally, and collective responsibility extends the core practices of professional community providing a framework for organizational culture as pictured in Figure 2.1:
Figure 2.1: Relationship between Organizational Culture, Collective Efficacy, Professional Community, and Collective Responsibility

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
Shared Norms and Values

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY
Behavior based on belief in group’s ability

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY
Framework for organizational learning

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY
Organizational planning focused on student learning

Deprivatized Practice/Collaboration/Reflective Dialogue

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY
Framework for organizational learning
Organizational learning requires a community focus and assumes that “the sustained creation of knowledge ultimately rests on strong and supportive human relationships” (Kikoski & Kikoski, 2004, p. 104), and on interdependence (collectively thinking and working together) with the aim of organizational renewal. A more in depth discussion of school culture, collective efficacy, and the organizational arrangements of professional community extended to the collective responsibility framework literature, as well as their relationship to each other shape this study of culture and pedagogy with a focus on increased academic success for African-American students who are poor.

School Culture

Teachers provide students with more than information to be digested and procedures to be mastered. They also communicate their own attitudes toward particular students and toward the learning process. These attitudes constitute an important dimension of the culture of classrooms and ultimately of schools (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 108).

The concept that schools have distinct cultures is not new, as posited by Waller (1932) noting, "Schools have a culture that is definitely their own. There are in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them" (p. 96). Culture can be analyzed as "a phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others" (Schein, 1992, p.1), and a "stream of thought and activity beneath the conscious awareness of everyday life in school" (Chiang, 2003, p. 4). Yet, Huberman (1993) recognized that "cultures do not arise by a kind of spontaneous emotional combustion. They have to be created and sustained" (p. 37). Cultures have a
"reality-defining function... through culture people define reality and so make sense of themselves, their actions and their environment" (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 25). As such, studies suggest that cultures are "products of people within schools and significantly influence the classroom action of both teachers and children" (Angelides & Ainscow, 2000, p. 150).

Culture clearly defined is “a learned set of assumptions based on a group’s shared history that come to be common and unconscious” (Schein, 1992, p. 150). School culture contains "norms, beliefs, assumptions, and implicit expectations that weave together to shape the context in which teachers teach and students learn" (Emihovich & Battaglia, 2000, p. 235). It provides an efficient means of probing into the deeper working assumptions of stakeholders” (Angelides & Ainscow, 2000, p. 161). Deal and Peterson (1999) propose that culture evolves from the deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that form over the course of a school's history and consists of underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior. It includes the concept of sharing, structural stability, and patterning or integration (Schein, 1992, p. 9), and its assumptions are the product of past successes (Schein, 1992, p. 382). This "pattern of shared basic beliefs" has been adopted by the group as it "solved its problems, it worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1992, p. 12). Based on the accumulated shared learning of the group, "today's cultural form created to solve an emergent problem often becomes tomorrow's taken-for-granted recipe for dealing with matters" (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 25).
Although the definition of culture emphasizes that the critical assumptions deal with how we perceive, think about, and feel about things, the three culture levels range from "the very tangible overt manifestations that one can see and feel to the deeply embedded, unconscious...essence of culture" (Schein, 1992, p. 16). Artifacts are visible organizational structures and processes which are hard to decipher, espoused values are strategies, goals, and philosophies, and basic underlying assumptions are unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings which are the ultimate source of values and action (Schein, 1992, p. 17). Schein (1992) cautions that interpretation from artifacts alone is dangerous because one’s interpretations will inevitably be projections of one’s own feelings and reactions. A more complete understanding of the group's culture could be gained through an analysis of “espoused values, norms, and rules that provide the day-to-day operating principles by which the members of the group guide their behavior” (Schein, 1992, p. 18). Yet, to gain a comprehensive understanding of a group’s culture at "a deeper level, to decipher the pattern of behavior, and to predict future behavior correctly requires access to its underlying shared basic assumptions" (Schein, 1992, p. 21) and an understanding of the learning process by which such basic assumptions came to be – their lived situations, weight of memory, and weight of history.

Basic assumptions, also known as theories-in-use, are the implicit principles that actually guide behavior, telling group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (Argyris, 1976; Argyris and Schon, 1974). While an organization develops espoused theories through "a positive ideology and a set of myths about how it operates,
its theories-in-use indicate what is actually going on” (Schein, 1992, pp. 325-6). The aesthetic or moral values of a group will predict much of the behavior observed at the artifactual level, however they are confirmed only by the shared social experience of a group (Schein, 1992, p. 20). Without deciphering the pattern of basic assumptions that may be operating, it is difficult to know how to interpret the artifacts correctly or how much credibility to give to the articulated values. Since the essence of a culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, understanding the patterns will result in a more accurate interpretation of the other more surface level elements. Therefore, the pattern identifying what the members of a group perceive, think about, and feel about their situations and relationships based on their specific underlying assumptions must be determined before the group’s culture can be described or understood (Schein, 1992, p. 142).

Culture is deeply rooted in people, and primarily originates from the beliefs, values, and assumptions of founders of organizations; the learning experiences of group members as their organization evolves; and new beliefs, values, and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders (Schein, 1992, p. 211). Schein (1992) notes that the interaction and shared experience that occurs among the members when they take a common action in response to a problem provide an opportunity for the formation of common assumptions, defining for the group what is important, and serving as a stabilizer and a way of making things predictable. Until a group has taken some joint action and its members have together observed the outcome of that action, there is not yet a shared basis for determining what is factual and real (Schein, 1992, p. 19). Groups with
shared history form culture in the midst of common features that are deemed “critical aspects of culture” (Schein, 1992, p. 8), and arrive at shared understandings about how they will respond, specifying meaning, values, and purpose (Maeyhr & Fyans, 1990).

Early in its development stage, cultural assumptions define the group’s identity and distinctive competence, and are strongly embraced by the group (Schein, 1992, p. 312). "A school's culture is not static, but is a continual interaction in which attitudes, values, and skills continually reinforce each other" (Hipp et al., 2008, p. 176). At the outset, "many organizational behaviors and decisions are predetermined by the patterns of basic assumptions held by members of the organization" (Shafritz & Ott, 2001, pp. 361-362). All learners "construct knowledge from an inner scaffolding of their individual and social experiences, emotions, will, aptitudes, beliefs, values, self-awareness, purpose, and more" (Senge, 2000, p. 21). Though each member of a new group will bring his/her own cultural learning from prior groups, the group will develop its own shared history with modified or brand new assumptions (Schein, 1992, p. 26) and engage in double-loop learning, creating new organizational knowledge and norms that guide future actions and create new culture (Rait, 1995).

Cultural formation enables groups to "arrive at ways of organizing itself, regularizing the behavior of its members, coordinating their functions, minimizing conflicts... getting along among themselves" (Maeyhr & Fyans, 1990, p. 5). Accordingly, the cultural framework of a group references an interpretive grid, or meaning system, or schema (see Bruner, 1990; D’Andrade, 1987; Shweder, 1993) by which the group interprets, understands and learns. Also known as centricity, it consists of language and a
set of tacit social understandings as well as the social representations and practices that reflect and enact these understandings in daily life (D’Andrade, 1984; Giddens, 1984). Centricity involves location within the context of one's own cultural references to relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives (Asante, 1990, p. 171). Informed by a group’s worldview which is “the way that people perceive the fundamental questions of existence and organization of the universe” (Carruthers, 1999, p. 21), centricity of group members can impact the way in which the group forms its learning culture.

Markus & Kitayama (1991) note that the self in North America and much of Europe is tied to the ideology of individualism and is defined as an independent, self-contained entity (p. 224). An explicit social goal from this perspective is to separate ones’ self from others and to not allow undue influence by others or connection to them. The idea of self as an entity detached from social context is an independent view of self. The Eurocentric worldview which is analogous with the independent cultural framework places the history, cultural, and philosophical perspectives of people of European descent in a privileged, more valuable position than any other world culture.

In contrast, the interdependent view of self is one that is characteristic of Japan, China, Korea, Southeast Asia, and much of South America and Africa (Markus & Kitayama 1991, p. 225). According to this perspective, the interdependent self is not and cannot be separate from others and the surrounding social context. The cultural press in this centricity, corresponding with the Afrocentric worldview model of the self, is not to become separate and autonomous from others but to fit-in with others, to fulfill and
create obligation, and in general, to become part of various interpersonal relationships. It is a connection with rather than a separation from others and the surrounding context, therefore stressing the importance of interdependency, interconnectedness, spirituality, human centeredness, holism, and harmony based on location or centeredness as the key to understanding (Warfield-Coppock, 1995). The end product of location is “embodied knowledge” (Karenga, 1995, p.47) through this vital understanding which reduces the likelihood of learners not to be able to see themselves in the educational curriculum, discussion, and environment.

“We cannot truly be ourselves or know our potential since we exist in a borrowed space. Our relationship to the culture that we have borrowed defines what and who we are at any given moment. By regaining our own platforms, standing in our own cultural spaces and believing that our way of viewing the universe is just as valid as any, we will achieve the kind of transformation we need to (Asante, 1998, p. 8).

Consistent with the interdependent cultural framework, group work at the organizational level stresses that learning is not just tied to individual concerns but linked to the collective group of learners. Teachers in successful school organizations assume that “improvement in teaching is a collective rather than an individual enterprise, and that analysis, evaluation, and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve instructionally” (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 73). Culture within schools result from interpersonal interactions between teachers, groups of teachers, administrators and others detailing collective beliefs, attitudes and values of school personnel (Cavanaugh, 1997). Uncovering organizational assumptions or theories-in-use that govern how systems, schools, or classrooms function is a fundamental way to begin an organizational learning process (Collinson & Cook, p. 50).
At the school level, teachers are cultural workers who represent the perspectives, values, and biases of the middle and upper classes (English, 1999). Borko and Putnam (1996) describe teacher knowledge and beliefs as the cognitive filters through which teachers view information about teaching, learning, and students. While the organization's cognitive filters shape teachers' beliefs within the social organization of school, a culture that influences the actions and achievement of schools exists. This culture is “embodied in their [teachers] attitudes, values, and skills which in turn stem from their personal backgrounds, from their life experiences (including their professional experience), and from the communities they belong to” (Senge, 2000, pp. 325-326). In the next section, collective efficacy literature focused on teacher behaviors resulting in actions that support academic success for African-American students in high poverty schools will be reviewed.

Collective Efficacy

The study of collective efficacy in schools has emerged over the past ten to fifteen years as an extension of over thirty years of teacher efficacy research (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). The concept of teacher efficacy was based on a modification of Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning mechanism of self efficacy which operates as a cognitive representation of behavior. The premise is that behavior is a result of expectations created through psychological experiences. Thus "behavior is not controlled by its immediate consequences but rather by the expectations created that the behavior will have an expected effect" (Ashton, et al., 1983, p. 9). Adams & Forsythe (2006) note that
efficacy research documents positive relationships between teacher efficacy and academic achievement (Moore & Esselman, 1992; Ross, 1992), teaching effort and behaviors (Allinder, 1994; Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and attitudes towards teaching (Gilckman & Tamashiro, 1982; Ashton, 1985; Greenwood et al., 1990). Though individual teacher efficacy and collective efficacy are distinct constructs, their theoretical properties are the same (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

Efficacy beliefs are grounded in social cognitive theory, a behavioralist theory based on human action as a function of past social experiences, of which "...the cognitive interpretation or reflection...provides the best explanation for efficacy formation" (Adams & Forsythe, 2006, p. 627). Through the factors of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states which strengthen collective efficacy development, information is processed cognitively from past experiences and transformed into efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993, 1997). Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004, p. 205) cite examples of mastery experiences (i.e. when teachers who develop interventions witness an increase in student achievement), vicarious experiences (i.e. when teachers visit a school with high achievement and similar goals in the face of familiar opportunities and challenges and can see 'what works'), social persuasion (i.e. when teachers network with high achieving schools and interact in a way that supports the beliefs that achievement can be raised through strong instructional strategies), and affective states (i.e. when schools provide support with the stress of high-stakes testing). Cognitive processing described by Bandura (1986) is "cognition that mediates between knowledge and action" (p. 150).
Goddard and Skrla (2006) define collective efficacy as "a construct derived from social cognitive theory that refers to the beliefs that organizational members hold about their group's capability to attain desired goals" (p. 216). In a school setting, it is "the judgments of teachers that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action required to have a positive effect on students" (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 4). Perceived collective efficacy is the perception of the group's capabilities to promote student learning (Ciani, Summers, and Easter, 2008), and "it measures aggregate teachers' perceptions of the extent to which the faculty can accomplish its goals for students" (Goddard & Skrla, 2006, p. 220). It is significant that perceived collective efficacy is "not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members; rather, it is an emergent group-level property" (Bandura, 2000, p. 76). Collective teacher efficacy therefore represents the shared perceptions of group members concerning “the performance capability of a social system as a whole” (Bandura, 1997, p. 469).

The first study that expanded the construct of efficacy to include collective beliefs of individuals within organizations, and explored the impact of a school faculty's collective efficacy beliefs on student achievement was Bandura (1993). This study was important because it was more strongly correlated with pupil attainment than socioeconomic status. Research studies suggest that collective efficacy beliefs within a school organization can lead to greater levels of student and school achievement (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, 2001; Goddard et al., 2003; Hoy et al., 2003; Ross et al., 2003). Goddard (2002a; Goddard et al., 2000) confirmed the positive effects of collective efficacy, accounting for student gender, race, socioeconomic status, and prior
academic success. The "collective perception in a school is that teachers make an educational difference to their pupils over and above the impact of their social circumstances" (Parker, Hannah, & Topping, 2006, p. 111). Thus, schools in which teachers judge themselves as capable behave in a way that promotes a positive atmosphere necessary for the development of student learning and achievement (Bandura, 1993, 1997).

“One way to extend self-efficacy theory to the collective level is to apply the assumptions of social cognitive theory to the organizational level" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 483). As such, an underlying principle of the social cognitive theory is the exercise of agency which promotes "an intentional pursuit of a course of action" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 483) and is greatly influenced by the strength of efficacy beliefs. These beliefs influence the social norms in a school (Goddard and Goddard, 2001) through the attitudes, affective, motivational, and behavioral aspects of teacher functioning (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Individuals and groups that believe they are capable of reaching their goals are more likely to approach those goals with the creativity, effort, and persistence required to be successful. Ashton and Webb (1986) posit that pupil attainment is influenced by collective teacher efficacy because high efficacy encourages greater effort and persistence in teaching. Goddard et al. (2004) argued that greater effort and higher expectations create a normative pressure that encourages all teachers to increase their efforts to improve student achievement, and discourages them from giving up when facing challenges. Thus, schools with high collective teacher efficacy behave
with more persistence and resilience in working with students who experience academic difficulty.

"Teachers' sense of efficacy exerts significant influence on student achievement by promoting teaching that enhances learning" (Goddard & Skrla, 2006, p. 220). Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2007) note that "schools with a higher degree of perceived collective teacher efficacy set challenging goals and are persistent in their efforts to meet these goals" (p. 613). Consequently, better instruction given by other teachers at a school results in more challenging goals set by all teachers and more able and motivated students. Thus, "the effects of a given experience on a groups' collective efficacy beliefs are less a function of the actual events," i.e. better instruction, "and more of what the group makes of those events in the context of the social networks within which group members act," i.e. more challenging instructional goals set by all teachers (Goddard & Skrla, 2006, p. 218).

This sense of collective teacher efficacy however could have an inverse effect, especially when it is applied to organizations predisposed to conditions such as high poverty and high minority student populations. Collective teacher efficacy has been described as "the degree to which perceptions of efficacy, either high or low, are shared across teachers in a school building" (Tschannen-Moran, et.al., 1998, p. 221). As an indicator that both successful and unsuccessful experiences affect efficacy beliefs, the faculty's belief systems can either be strengthened or discouraged by the collective performance of their social system (e.g. Brookover et al., 1979). Though the collective group influences the organization, "individuals within the organization make judgments
based on past experiences and contextual circumstances about the collective ability of the organization to perform future tasks that affect attainment of the goal (Adams & Forsythe, 2006, p. 631). In the case of a high poverty school that has shown consistently negative student and school outcomes, the social cognitive theory literature notes that the formation of efficacy beliefs are shaped by cognitive interpretation or reflection of past experiences which could yield "embedded features that could potentially hinder efficacy perceptions" (Adams & Forsythe, 2006, p. 640). Contextual factors (i.e. high poverty) could create variability in the level of collective teacher efficacy resulting in conditions that impede collective efficacy development. Once a particular collective efficacy belief exists in a school, whether positive or negative, it influences student learning and can become a stable component of the school culture that is difficult to change (Bandura, 1997).

Efficacy formation can be developed within formal school organizational structures for the purpose of social network and interaction development through collective action and motivation (Coleman, 1987). Yet, given the strong negative correlation between race and poverty with achievement (Orfield & Lee, 2005), a perspective independent of past performance and experience, that brings people together, creates opportunities for collaboration, encourages problem solving by all stakeholders, fosters trust, and promotes collective ownership (Sinden et al. 2005) could be an essential component in the development of efficacious behavior within an organization. Professional community, which contains "both behavioral (personalized social relations) and normative (shared values and purposes) features " (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 753) provides
a way to think about the development of an organization that strengthens the collective performance of a social system responsible for the academic success of African-American students who are poor. In the next section, professional community literature that supports academic success in spite of racial and economic disparities will be reviewed.

Professional Community

Interest in school-based professional community evolved out of organizational efforts to restructure schools to promote more challenging intellectual work for all students (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Thus, a school-based professional community is conceptualized as “a set of organizational arrangements necessary to promote the staff development and instructional improvements required to advance such learning” (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 756). This organizational framework promotes teacher engagement in a particular set of shared norms and values focused on student learning, reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, and collaboration which are characterized as elements of professional community (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Teachers engaging in inquiry, and generating and sharing information with the purpose of improving teaching and learning are characteristic behaviors of professional communities which represent some of the fundamental practices at the core of organizational learning (Louis, et al., 1994; Senge, 1990). As such, the development and growth of professional community is linked to organizational culture (Louis & Marks, 1996; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996).
Organizational culture as a process supports learning that can lead to a change in behavior resulting from the critical cognitive evaluation of underlying values and assumptions that guide behavior (Rait, 1995). Defined as 1) detecting and correcting errors (Argyris & Schön, 1978), 2) generating new insights and knowledge (Hedberg, 1981), 3) using feedback from organizationally specific historical events in future decision making (Levitt & March, 1988), and 4) changing behavior through the process of information gathering and sense making (Huber, 1991), Senge (2000) suggests that the domain of action in any organization can be deliberately designed around learning. Therefore, organizational learning is "the deliberate use of individual, group, and system learning to embed new thinking and practices that continuously renew and transform the organization in ways that support shared aims" (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 8).

Shared learning among an organizations' members involves behavioral changes made through actual responses, structures, or actions, and cognitive changes which emerge from new shared understandings among organizational members (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Argyris and Schön (1978) suggest that organizational learning occurs at the single- and double-loop learning levels. Many organizations engage in single-loop learning behaviors consisting of actions limited by existing norms and embedded within existing ways of knowing (Garvin, 1993; Huber, 1991). "Single-loop learning involves improving our behavior or the norms of our organization by observing our previous action, reflecting on what we have done, using that observation to decide how to change our next action, and applying that decision to another action" (Senge, 2000, p. 93). Since it does not require a change in values, beliefs, or assumptions that "actually guide
behavior...and tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things" (Schein, 1992, p. 22), single-loop learning "generally involves becoming better at something that is already being done" (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 19).

In contrast, double-loop learning has the capacity to question the established norm, change its behavior, and learn to do its job more effectively by choosing solutions that address the core problem and not merely the symptoms. (Senge, 2000). "Double-loop learning requires thinking about the way that you think (metareflection), and then deliberately challenging your own norms, attitudes, and assumptions" (Senge, 2000, pp. 94-95). Since a key feature of double-loop learning is the examination of values, beliefs, or assumptions, organizations may adapt more effectively using double-loop learning by examining values that guide the actions they undertake (Rait, 1995). Inquiry related to double-loop learning tends to "re-formulate mistaken assumptions, specify incongruities, clarify ambiguity, bring together scattered information, and surface information that is withheld" (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 97). The self-questioning process of double-loop learning "enables organizations learn to learn" (Senge, 2000, p. 95), and promotes “organizational capacity to set and solve problems and to design and redesign policies, structures, and techniques in the face of constantly changing assumptions about self and the environment” (Schön, 1975, p. 8).

Although empirical evidence linking organizational learning with a school's capacity to deliver high quality instruction and strong student performance is limited, the correlation can be made logically (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Since schools should be places “where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3),
studies on organizational learning have identified characteristics common to schools that successfully enter the double-loop learning cycle of action and reflection which leads to school improvement (Louis & Kruse, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1998). Learning is "distinctly organizational when it relies on the combined experiences, perspectives, and capabilities of a variety of organization members" (Rait, 1995, p. 72). Consequently, through collective inquiry, organizational learning enhances the school’s ability for self-organization, enabling organization members to work together “to restructure, reculture, and otherwise reorient themselves to new challenges” (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998, p. 271). Taken together, these elements help counteract significant challenges (i.e. teacher isolation) to educational improvement (Bulkley and Hicks, 2005).

The core characteristic of a professional community is an undeviating concentration on student learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995), thus, teachers focus their work on choices that affect students’ opportunity to learn and provide substantial student benefit (Abbott, 1991; Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 1993; Little, 1990). Instead of simply focusing on activities or strategies that may maintain student attention, teachers discuss ways in which instruction promotes students’ intellectual growth and development (Newmann & Associates, 1996). Refining the vision over time through ongoing collaborative activity and reflective dialogue about their teaching and students’ learning, teachers learn to function as professional communities. Emphasis is placed on the process of teacher as learner and school organization as learning unit and the resulting actions taken by both as a means of increasing student achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).
Smylie and Hart (2000) note that teacher learning is also at the core of professional communities. The quality of teacher learning depends on the strength of the professional community within a school faculty. The core practices that characterize the interactions among teachers in professional communities include a) reflective dialogue among teachers about instructional practices and student learning; b) a deprivatization of practice where teachers observe each others’ practice and engage in joint problem solving; and c) peer collaboration where teachers engage in actual shared work (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 753). Supported by shared norms and collective focus on student learning, professional community "offers the more inclusive support of a whole school" (Louis, Kruse et al., 1996, p. 180), promoting collaboration among staff members, breaking down barriers that isolate teachers in their work, and supporting improved professional practices (Scribner et al., 1999).

Bulkley and Hicks (2005 p. 308) note "research on professional community has found that communal organization influences both teacher and student outcomes, including teacher morale and efficacy, student interest in academics and decisions to drop out of school (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993), and student achievement" (Lee & Loeb, 2000; Lee & Smith, 1993; Marks & Louis, 1997). Studies such as Bryk and Driscoll (1988) have shown that strong professional communities positively influence the learning environment and student learning outcomes, noting that teachers in schools with strong professional community held higher expectations for student achievement and behavior than schools with weak professional community. Furthermore, professional community is strongly associated with high-quality teaching, students’ sense of community and
inclusion in the school setting (Louis & Marks, 1998). Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) provided evidence that strong professional communities lessened educational inequities for students, and they were associated with changes in teacher practice toward authentic pedagogy and student achievement gains in the core content areas (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). In schools with professional communities, students achieve at high levels “...when teachers focus their efforts at establishing a learning environment in which intellectual quality is normative, and students clearly perceive attention to their learning as the central activity of their schools and classrooms” (Marks et al. 1996a, 1996b).

"Since the elements that define professional community and the principles of double-loop learning are inextricably intertwined, the professional learning community emerged as a learning organization that maintains focus on student learning, the fundamental purpose of schools." (Scribner et al., 1999, p. 157). In a professional learning community, "educators create an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii). Learning communities provide "a vision for a different way of conducting business in school - one that is collegial, professional, and results driven" (Wells and Feun, 2007, p. 142). Mitchell and Sackney (2000) propose that a learning community, "...is one that promotes the values and individual and collective learning for all members of the community, and people in the community are interested in improving the quality of learning and life for all" (p. 133). From an extensive review of the professional learning community literature related
to schools, businesses, and other organizations, Hord (1997, pp. 6-17) derived dimensions of a professional learning community - supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice - defining it as "the professional staff learning together to direct their efforts toward improved student learning" (p. 20).

Learning communities are "places in which teachers pursue clear, shared purposes for student learning, engage in collaborative activities to achieve their purposes and take collective responsibility for student learning" (Sparks, 1999, p. 1). As schools "transform into professional learning communities, a structure rooted within the school culture surfaces providing both a foundation and a guide for learning goals, strategies, and outcomes." (Hipp et al., 2008, p. 177). Though a set of norms focused on student learning underlies the core practices of reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, and collaboration, and brings coherence to a school-based professional community (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 755), the three core practices characterize adult behavior in this learning organization. Going beyond characterizing behavior, "shared beliefs about institutional purposes, practices, and desired behavior are thought to provide a normative structure that governs professional behavior and creates a distinctive workplace for teachers" (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 754). Thus, collective responsibility extends the core practices of professional community, and provides a framework for learning organizations that seek to actively engage in double-loop learning in the face of constantly changing assumptions, examining those "underlying assumptions that lead to the effective use and dissemination of professional knowledge" (Scribner et al., 1999, p. 155). Teachers as a
collective committed to a process that lessens educational inequities (Bryk et al., 1999) for African-American students in high poverty schools give purpose to reviewing the construct of collective responsibility.

Collective Responsibility

According to Gilbert (2000), social groups are plural subjects, jointly committed to something. A joint commitment is "a holistic concept that cannot be analyzed in terms of a sum or aggregate of personal commitments" (p. 3). Consequently, "when people speak of what we believe or accept, they typically refer to a situation involving a joint commitment to accept a certain proposition as a body" (Gilbert, 2000, p. 4). Recognizing that "individuals often act by virtue of membership in certain groups and that frequently, such membership bears a causal role in behavior" (Narveson, 2002, p. 179), "a joint commitment would involve each party expressing to others in the party his or her personal willingness to be jointly committed in the relevant way" (Gilbert, 2000, p. 5).

Collective responsibility focuses on "the extent of a shared commitment among the faculty to improve the school so that all students learn" (Lee & Loeb, 2000, p. 26). Since teachers’ collective attitudes define and impact schools, and "the position of teachers is pivotal in accomplishing the main work of schools: teaching and learning" (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 104), "the faculty’s willingness to take responsibility for the learning of their students serves as a property of schools, and an indicator of collective responsibility or a collective commitment to caring about students and their school
achievement" (Lee and Smith, 1996, p. 110). As a feature of the social organization of school, "organizational learning takes place among the individuals as a collective, therefore its definition emphasizes its sociocultural aspects rather than the simple intersection between the individual and the organization (Marks & Louis, 1999, p. 711). Thus, teachers' collective responsibility represents a valid organizational property of schools (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 109).

Lee and Smith (1996) define collective responsibility as school norms that reflect teachers’ attitudes about their students and influences students in two ways. First, when a school’s teachers as a group believe that their efforts are crucial in the learning process, increased efforts by the group could increase student learning, resulting in collective teacher efficacy. Subsequently, when the group assumes responsibility for all students, regardless of students’ academic aptitude or social characteristics, learning might be more equitably distributed among all students in the school (pp. 110-111). While studies linking collective responsibility for student learning to improved student achievement are rare in education, "the evidence points to a reasonable assumption that teachers' increased sense of mastery and control over student learning is likely to be either a cause or a consequence of improvements in student performance” (Louis et al., 1994, p. 32). Thus, the significance of this assertion "when responsibility is assumed for all students, regardless of academic qualifications or social characteristics" is that "learning might be more equitably distributed across the schools' student body” (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 111) in spite of social background.
The measure of collective responsibility for learning (Lee & Smith, 1996) expands the efficacious definition of collective focus on student learning. In collective focus on student learning, "teachers... assume that all students can learn at reasonably high levels, and that teachers can help them, despite many obstacles that students may face outside of school" (Kruse et al., 1994, p. 4). It includes several related ideas, such as "teachers' internalizing responsibility for the learning of their students rather than attributing learning difficulties to weak students or deficient home lives; a belief that teachers can teach all students; willingness to alter teaching methods in response to students' difficulties and success; and feelings of efficacy in teaching" (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 114). Though several components are also "standard measures of efficacy, responsibility reflects attitudes that focus on the teachers' willingness, interest, and care for how and what all their students learn" (Lee & Smith, 1996, pp. 114-115).

Teachers’ collective attitudes, seen as aggregate characteristics of schools, influence instruction and have a substantial effect on student achievement (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 132). The dimensions of teachers' work lives, defined by the normative culture of teachers' attitudes (shard norms and values) that identify values guiding individuals' decisions about instruction, also includes the level of reflective dialogue among faculty, the deprivatization of practice around roles of mentor, advisor, or specialist, and the amount of collaboration around instructional activities (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 105). These dimensions influence student learning based not only on "the degree to which teachers feel control over their work, and how they interact with their students, their colleagues, and their superiors, but also how they define their work" (Lee & Smith, 1996,
Louis, et al. (1996, pp. 760-761) use the attributes of professional community to define reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values within the construct of collective responsibility.

**Reflective dialogue:** Reflective practice implies self-awareness about one’s work as a teacher. By engaging in comprehensive conversations about teaching and learning, teachers can examine the assumptions basic to quality practice (Praeger, 1991). Public conversation concerning the school and practice within the school may focus on the academic, curricular, and instructional concerns of schooling as well as on issues of student development and progress (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991). Reflection on practice leads to deeper understandings of the process of instruction and of the products created within the teaching and learning process.

**Deprivatized practice:** Teachers move behind the classroom doors of their colleagues to share and trade off the roles of mentor, advisor, or specialist (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988; Little, 1990). Within these relationships, teachers work to define and develop their own practice and control their own work. Peer coaching, team teaching, and structured classroom observations are methods to improve both classroom practice and collegial relationships. Teachers come to know each others’ strengths and can therefore more easily obtain “expert advice” from colleagues.

**Collaboration:** Professional communities foster the sharing of expertise. Faculty members call on each other to discuss the development of skills related to the implementation of practice (Little, 1982, 1990). By collaborating, they create shared
understandings from complex and confusing data. Collaborative work increases their mutual support and responsibility for effective instruction.

*Shared norms and values:* Common values and expectations of and for each other are mutual. Professional communities have a basis in moral authority derived from the central social importance of teaching and socializing children. Members of a social community affirm through language and action common beliefs and values underlying assumptions about children, learning, teaching, and teachers’ roles; the nature of human needs, human activity, and human relationships; the organization’s extended societal role and its relationship with the surrounding environment (Giroux, 1988; Praeger, 1991; Schein, 1983).

Teachers cite collective responsibility for performance as "an important correlate of professional community" because of its association with "more effective job performance, improved communication and coordination between individuals and subgroups, improved job satisfaction and morale, improved satisfaction with parents, students and faculty with the organization, and improved organizational effectiveness" (Kruse & Louis, 1993, p. 7). The performance of schools consistently reveal "achievement gains which were significantly higher in schools where teachers took collective responsibility for students’ academic success or failure rather than blaming students for their own failure, achievement gains were higher in schools with more cooperation among the staff, and the distribution of achievement gains was more socially equitable in schools with high levels of collective responsibility for learning" (Lee and Smith, 1996, p. 103). As significant were the results that indicate "less internal
stratification by social class...in schools where most teachers take responsibility for learning” (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 130). For schools serving African-American students experiencing economic difficulty, "these results suggest that teachers’ expectations about their students, as well as their willingness to assume personal responsibility for the results of their teaching have important consequences for learners" (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 108).

Collective responsibility involves teachers who are "integrated within a collaborative group focused on the core technology of the organization (e.g. an instructional team focused on teaching and learning) forming a culture that reflects the values, beliefs, and norms of the group" (Marks & Louis, 1999, p. 712). In schools structured as professional communities, "teachers should be more likely to assume responsibility for improvement; a collectively held sense of responsibility for how the core functions of a school are carried out signals that shared norms about teaching and learning exist in a school and that those norms are enacted by a majority of the staff" (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 755). While the significance of culture is evident, the process of culture creation, formation, and development is not included in the collective responsibility literature. Noting that “effective school reform cannot happen until [we]…recognize the unseen values and attitudes about power, privilege, and knowledge that keep existing structures, regulations, and authority relationships in place in educational systems” (Senge, 2000, p. 20), a review of the development of culturally relevant pedagogy will be considered in the context of situating a school staff within an interdependent cultural framework that supports the academic success of African-American students in high poverty schools.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

...the way we teach [pedagogy] profoundly affects the way that students perceive the content of that curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13).

Asante (1991) proposes that education is "fundamentally a social phenomenon whose ultimate purpose is to prepare children to become part of a social group" (p. 170). Consequently, determining the basic underlying assumptions or respective cultural center for student learning is as significant as it is with teacher learning. Using the centricity framework to locate children in their own respective cultural center results in students who are less likely to fail in school settings where they feel positive about both their own culture and the majority culture and “are not alienated from their own cultural values” (Cummins, 1986). To support teacher engagement in an interdependent professional community framework with shared norms and values focused on student learning for African-American students, Ladson Billings posits cultural relevance.

In her work with successful teachers of African-American students, Ladson-Billings (1995b) sought out common beliefs and practices among these effective teachers. She found what she characterized as "culturally relevant pedagogy" - a humanizing pedagogy that uses centricity in a way "that respects and uses the reality, history, and perspective of students as an integral part of educational practice" (Bartolome, 1994, p. 173). Instead of focusing on individual teaching styles, the pedagogy includes aspects of students and school culture with the inquiry focused on teaching ideology and common behaviors. "It empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural
referents are not just a way of substantiating or explaining the dominant culture; they are actually aspects of the curriculum” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18).

Ladson-Billings (1994) used culturally relevant teaching to explore how instruction supports and encourages students to access their prior knowledge through their cultural center to make sense of the world and to work toward improving it. Culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain its cultural referents and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. Negative effects are brought about by not seeing one’s history, culture, or background represented in the textbook or curriculum, or by seeing that history, culture, or background distorted. Within the culturally relevant framework, social relations in the teacher-student relationship are humanely equitable, students are encouraged to learn collaboratively, and they are expected to teach each other and take responsibility for each other.

From the successful teachers, Ladson-Billings (2000) found that culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions. First, students must develop academic skills to attain academic success through literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political mastery. Within the classroom, students are expected to work hard, and teaching and learning is exciting through rigorous and challenging lessons (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Next, culturally relevant teachers maintain cultural integrity by supporting the development of cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). "Cultural competence refers to the ability to function effectively in one's culture of origin" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 210). Finally, academic success and cultural competence "must be supported by sociopolitical critique that helps students understand
the ways that social structures and practices help reproduce inequities (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 210). Students must engage in double-loop inquiry, allowing them to "critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 162).

Strongly influenced by Asante’s Afrocentricity and Collins’ Black Feminist epistemology, this Afrocentric feminist epistemology provides the framework for culturally relevant teaching and is characterized by 1) a basis of concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, 2) the use of dialogue, 3) an emphasis on caring, and 4) an emphasis on personal accountability. A basis of concrete experience “underscores the significance of two types of knowing – knowledge and wisdom” (Collins, 1991, p. 208). “Dialogue implies talk between two subjects, not the speech of subject and object” (hooks, 1989, p. 131) so that dialogue does not dominate; it leads to knowledge. “The ethic of caring suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge of the validation process” (Collins, 1991, p. 215). Finally, the Afrocentric ethic of personal accountability suggests that unlike the “dispassionate objective” of the Eurocentric worldview, “claims to knowledge must be grounded in the individual” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 156).

The lack of cultural congruence between the cultural frame of school and its students can cause African-American learners to feel discomfort about sharing ideas because of feelings of alienation in the classrooms (Patterson-Stewart, Ritchie, and Sanders, 1997). Culturally relevant teachers subscribe to the notion of cultural congruence as a way to create communication styles and participation structures that
more closely resemble those of the students' own culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 16). Instead of subscribing to the assimilationist style of teaching, "fitting students into society with minimal expectations and no regard to the students' particular cultural characteristics" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 22), culturally relevant teachers understand the specific and unique qualities of the African American cultural experience through "community access and involvement, trust between teachers and parents, and concern and caring for students" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 207). Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests that "seeing students with strengths as opposed to seeing them solely as having needs may inform the pedagogical practices of teachers in positive ways" (p. 209). Consequently, teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others, by the ways in which they structure their social interactions, and by their notions of knowledge as shown in the following tables:
Table 2.1: Conceptions of Self and Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culturally Relevant</th>
<th>Assimilationist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sees herself as an artist and teaching as an art.</td>
<td>Teacher sees herself as technician and teaching as a technical task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sees herself as part of the community and teaching as giving something back to the community; she encourages students to do the same.</td>
<td>Teacher sees herself as an individual who may or may not be a part of the community; she encourages achievement as a means to escape community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher believes all students can succeed.</td>
<td>Teacher believes failure is inevitable for some.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher helps students make connections between their community, national, and global identities.</td>
<td>Teacher homogenizes students into one “American” identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sees teaching as “pulling knowledge out”—like “mining.”</td>
<td>Teacher sees teaching as “putting knowledge into”—like “banking.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 34)

Table 2.2: Conceptions of Social Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culturally Relevant</th>
<th>Assimilationist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student relationship is fluid, humanely equitable, extends to interactions beyond the classroom and into the community.</td>
<td>Teacher-student relationship is fixed, tends to be hierarchical and limited to formal classroom roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher demonstrates a connectedness with all students.</td>
<td>Teacher demonstrates connections with individual students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher encourages a “community of learners.”</td>
<td>Teacher encourages competitive achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher encourages students to learn collaboratively. Students are expected to teach each other and be responsible for each other.</td>
<td>Teacher encourages students to learn individually, in isolation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 55)
Table 2.3: Conceptions of Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culturally Relevant</th>
<th>Assimilationist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is continuously recreated, recycled, and shared by teachers and students. It is not static or unchanging.</td>
<td>Knowledge is static and is posed in one direction, from teacher to student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is viewed critically.</td>
<td>Knowledge is viewed as infallible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher is passionate about content.</td>
<td>Teacher is detached, neutral about content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher helps students develop necessary skills.</td>
<td>Teacher expects students to demonstrate prerequisite skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher sees excellence as a complex standard that may involve some postulates but takes student diversity and individual differences into account.</td>
<td>Teacher sees excellence as a postulate that exists independently from student diversity or individual differences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 81)

A cultural climate that promotes professional inquiry, risk taking among teachers, and rethinking leadership provides a fertile environment for professional community" (Scribner et al., 1999, p. 136). Relative to African-American culture, culturally relevant pedagogy provides a cultural framework “consistent with the ways in which people of African descent see and experience the world” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 146). Rather than ignoring or minimizing cultural disparities, differences are seen as strengths to support academic success and facilitate student learning by capitalizing on the students’ own social and cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 10, 11). Thus, "a nurturing professional community seems to be the container that holds the culture in high performing schools, " (Senge et al., 2000, p. 326).
Conclusion

"Learning has always been a fundamental aim of education; it provides not only intellectual learning, but it also holds schools responsible for modeling social and moral principles that help students become productive citizens capable of working together to sustain democratic life and cope with inevitable change" (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 72). While organizational learning is significant if it prompts “…investigation with a view to improve practice at all levels in order to help students learn” (Collinson & Cook, p. 213), missing from the organizational learning literature is the discussion on culture's formation and development within the organizational construct of collective responsibility. Culture can be observed in the relationships among colleagues and the norms that govern school activities. Thus, "productive and positive school cultures can make a significant contribution to creating professional learning communities through norms, values, and relationships that sustain momentum for school improvement over time." (Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, Olivier, 2008, p. 176).

The review of literature prompted me to ponder the notion of the organization as "the container that holds the culture." An organizational container of professional community, patterned after collective responsibility possessing the essence of efficacy and culturally responsive substances at the organizational and teacher level, is filled to make schools "more accessible to culturally diverse learners" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 16). The organizational framework of collective responsibility has significant implications for the academic success of the children in this study because of its link to student learning "...for students who generally show lower levels of achievement in
school, namely minority students and students from lower socioeconomic status” (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 110). Paired with cultural relevance, the attributes of professional community within the construct of collective responsibility shaped by efficacious behavior are embedded in a transformed culture I identify as culturally relevant collective responsibility.

In the next chapter, I will outline the research design that I have selected to explore this integrated framework, and its potential impact on academic success of African-American students in high poverty schools.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

What is the origin of the climate of instructional responsibility? Some schools are effective because they have a self-generating teacher corps that has a critical mass of dedicated people who are committed to being effective for all children they teach (Edmonds, 1979, p. 22).

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the emergent research design leading to the interpretivist paradigm as the framework for this study. My study site presents the setting, demographics, and parameters of my inquiry as I seek to find meaning, explore, and understand the integrated framework of culturally relevant collective responsibility and the work of teachers towards the academic success of African-American students in high poverty schools. Throughout the chapter, I delineate the methodological components and expound on my experiences in the field as it relates to each component.

Historical Overview of the Qualitative Paradigm

The essential goal of this research inquiry was to explore “how schools differ in the attainment of their most important objective – the education of students” (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000, p. 483). Utilizing a methodological approach that enabled me to study the work of teachers towards the academic success of African-American students in high poverty schools and then refine the question “…at a deeper and more substantive and purposeful level…” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 186) was significant. The
ontological assumption of my research was based on a “social world that is not an entity in and of itself but is local, temporally and historically situated, fluid, context-specific, and shaped in conjunction with the researcher” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). Therefore, the school in the study embodies perspectives of the participants in the study thus supporting this inquiry into exploring the work of teachers as a collective through the traits of a culturally relevant collective responsibility framework as they impacted academic success for its schools’ student population.

Since the term qualitative implies "an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8), I chose the qualitative paradigm to engage in inquiry about the work of teachers in a supportive school setting. A study in the qualitative paradigm was defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem as a holistic picture formed with words from the detailed views of informants (Creswell, 2002). Qualitative research is typically inductive, exploratory and involves theory generation. Its query seeks to “…describe and interpret the experiences of other people and cultures,” and its researchers are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1048).

Of the utmost importance to the researcher is his/her fully understanding those premises undergirding the paradigm. Understanding of the paradigm will assist in the designing of all phases of the research study. There are five different approaches to qualitative inquiry which includes narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. Since qualitative evaluations often yield rich case study
data to provide a “…better basis for personal understanding of what is going on…” (Stake, 1995, p. 32), use of a case study to explore the research questions was a viable option.

*Case studies…become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information – rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question* (Patton, 1990, p. 54).

The primary purpose for using a case study is to maximize what we can learn. A case is defined, not as policies or processes, but as a bounded, integrated system (Stake, 1995). The unit of analysis can be "a person, an event, a program, an organization, a time period, a critical incident, or a community. Regardless, a qualitative case study seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, in context, and holistically" (Patton, 1990, p. 54). Since case study research is not sampling research, one does not study a case primarily to understand other cases. "Our first obligation is to understand this one case" (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

When researchers are puzzled by particular cases that produce unusual successes or failures, detailed case studies "of these unusual cases may generate particularly useful information" (Patton, 1990, p. 99). An instrumental case study can be used when there is "a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Thus, case study methods are often used because they "tell the program's story by capturing and communicating the participants' stories. They tell what happened, to whom, and with what consequence" (Patton, 1990, p. 8).
I chose to engage in a short yet intense case study to explore the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and collective responsibility, to determine what this relationship looks like in school culture, and how it influences the academic success of African-American students in poverty. My unit of analysis in this inquiry is the teacher participants as I seek to gain a greater understanding of the phenomena of what was happening among the staff of a school in which African-American students in poverty have success.

As I explored the social relationships, “as well as the mechanisms and processes through which members in a setting navigate and create their social worlds” my research adhered to the interpretive paradigm which “includes interactions with and observations of participants in the setting” (Bailey, 2006, p. 54). I entered the setting from a qualitative worldview seeking to discover emerging factors that served as characteristics of collective responsibility within a culturally relevant framework. I listened and observed for things that people did, how they did them, and how they interacted with each other utilizing the dimensions of teachers’ work lives framework - reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values (Lee & Smith, 1996). As researcher, I was "joined by the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue, properly conceptualized as a civic, participatory, and collaborative project” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1049). Working within the interpretative paradigm, I immersed myself in narrative data as I was “interested in the meanings, symbols, beliefs, ideas, and feelings given or attached to objects, events, activities, and others by participants in the setting” (Bailey, 2006, p. 53).
The core concepts of interpretivism considered *understanding* and the acquisition of one's internal connection that took place between the researcher and the participant to be an intellectual process whereby the researcher gained knowledge about those who were experiencing the situation (Sipe & Constable, 1999). The epistemology of interpretivism was based on how meaning was made and the role that human social action plays in this process. Meaning was based on the context and intent of those participants in the situation, and could only be understood within the system in which it belonged (naturalistic). Thus, the ontology of the interpretivist paradigm was that human action is intentional, and since one action can have many meanings, it is imperative that the “inquirer unearth the meaning” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 134) that constituted the action.

At the outset, my study of African-American children in high poverty schools within a Eurocentric cultural framework led me to ponder the use of emancipatory paradigms to structure my inquiry. Critical theory, which gave voice to society’s underclass in an attempt to transform our current society into a just, balanced, humane, and reconciled society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), offered an alternative lens through which to look at my research. The purpose of critical theory was “…to overturn oppression and achieve social justice through empowerment of the marginalized, the poor, the nameless, and the voiceless” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1056). While I acknowledged that my research was relational and fostered action and social justice, I ultimately decided not to conduct research within the emancipatory paradigm because my objective was not to critique, transform, and emancipate knowledge that had been distorted and promoted by the society, nor did I seek to overturn unjust practices and
radically transform entire societies within this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Instead, the scope of my inquiry was interpretivist, serving as a response to the experiences, desires, and needs of oppressed people (Lather, 1989), and focused on grasping the meanings that constituted their actions.

Since the purpose of my research study was to “…describe or discover, to find meaning, or to explore, then the theoretical drive was inductive” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 193) within the interpretivist paradigm. As a researcher, I recognized the interpretivist paradigm to be less dynamic and praxis-oriented than critical theory, however it focused on understanding how teachers’ behavior as an organizational attribute impacted the academic success of its students. As a principal, this knowledge supports my leadership work to build and maintain a school culture that improves student success. Thus, the essence of my research through a case study was the qualitative inquiry of dialogue and interaction within a school organization that developed culturally relevant collective responsibility to support the academic success of African-American students experiencing economic difficulty.

Site of the School in the Study

The context of this research is a large, urban school district with a two year average enrollment of 57,600 students during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic school years. There were eighty-seven (87) elementary schools in the school district in 2005-2006, and seventy-eight (78) elementary schools in 2006-2007 due to declining enrollment and consolidated school buildings. The two year average demographic
enrollment of the school district for this time period was 62% African-American, 29.2% Caucasian, and 8.8% other (i.e. not African-American or Caucasian). The poverty rate of the school district for the same time period was 70.8% as determined by the percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch. According to the federal achievement guidelines defined through the adequate yearly progress (AYP) standard of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), fifteen (15) elementary schools met their (AYP) goal for the 2005-2006 school year, and forty-eight (48) elementary schools met their (AYP) goal for the 2006-2007 school year based on the results of the state's Third Grade Reading Achievement Test.

As conveyed in this study’s introduction for the purpose of this inquiry, minority students are defined as African-American male and female students, and high poverty students are defined as students in high poverty schools who are experiencing economic difficulty. Based on indicators established by the National Center for Education Statistics (Planty, et. al., 2008), developed to report on the condition of education in the United States, high poverty schools are determined by their percentage of students eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program (75% or greater) as a way to account for the concentration of low-income students within a public school. Additionally, public schools with high minority enrollment are defined by greater than a 75% enrollment of students who are Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native. Using the race and poverty indicators established by the National Center for Education Statistics (Planty, et. al., 2008), my study defines a school with a two year average population greater than 75% free/reduced lunch during the 2005 and 2006 academic school years as a high poverty school of students experiencing economic
difficulty. A public school with a two year average student population greater than 75% African-American male and female enrollment during the 2005 and 2006 school years is defined as a public school with high minority enrollment.

This study also makes use of the guidelines established by the United States Department of Education to define achievement. Each state has developed and implemented measurements for determining whether its schools are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. AYP is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students achieving to state academic standards in at least reading/language arts and math. It sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, its school districts, and schools must achieve each year on annual tests and related academic indicators. Schools that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years are identified for school improvement. Thus the use of two year averages in this study is a pragmatic response to the AYP requirement, and the two year demographic average simply ensures that the student population from the selected schools remained consistent throughout the study.

In the state of this study, AYP is determined by subtracting the current pass rate from 100% to arrive at the percentage of students who have not achieved to state standards. According to the state’s formula, to achieve AYP requires a 10% improvement rate, thus a school with a 40% pass rate in 2005 would subtract their rate from 100% to arrive at a remaining percentage of 60%. Next, the school would multiply 60% by the 10% improvement rate to arrive at a percentage of 6%, and then add this expected improvement percentage to the 2005 pass rate of 40% resulting in a 2006 AYP
of 46% improvement goal. In this study, a school that has met the AYP standard on the 2005 and 2006 state's Grade Reading Achievement Tests is identified as high success.

Case selection

Possible elementary schools for the study were identified by demographic data, AYP success in 2005 and 2006, and a survey which has been annually administered in all schools within the large urban school district of this study since April 1991. The survey is given to all certificated (non-classified) staff members during the month of February each year (2006 and 2007 surveys in this study) to complete as fulfillment of the collective teacher bargaining agreement between the board of education and the education association. Classified employees are school staff members who do not possess a teaching certificate (i.e. instructional assistants, secretaries, custodians), are paid hourly, but are not members of the teacher bargaining unit that have access to the survey. The survey, which was created jointly by teachers and administrators, yields aggregate responses by school as agreed to by the teacher bargaining unit in the district to assure the confidentiality of individual teachers’ responses.

The questionnaire consisted of sixty-four items and grouped into nine themes of Vision, School Climate, Administrator-Teacher Relationship, Democratic Process, Instructional Program, Instructional Resources, Professional Environment, Student Behavior, and Family and Community. The six possible response options ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ (SA) to ‘Strongly Disagree’ (SD) with ‘Undecided’ (U) and ‘No Response’ (NR), and each selection’s average was given a numerical value of: \( SA = 5, A \)
The percentage in each category was also calculated based on the number of total responses against the number of responses in each category. The nine themes of the survey were designed to elicit certificated staffs’ personal assessment of the professional environment, teacher involvement, and co-curricular programs of each school. The building administrator or principal was not to be present for the administration of the anonymous survey. Once completed, each survey was returned to the building education association representative who sent them to the district data management center to be scored. When the results of the survey were tallied and compiled, they were shared with the principal and the school staff, the Superintendent, and the Association Office no later than June 2006 and June 2007.

Since dimensions of teachers’ work lives as a construct of collective responsibility - reflective dialogue, deprivatization, collaboration, and shared norms and values - were evident in this survey, I used items that appeared within this framework as indicators of collective responsibility for the pool of possible schools. In consultation with a statistical analysis resource located on the campus of this study’s origin, I extracted seven items from the original questionnaire of sixty-four items to indicate collective responsibility within a school organization as shown in the following table:
Table 3.1: Extracted Survey Questions And Dimensions of Teachers’ Work Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracted Survey Questions</th>
<th>Dimensions of Teachers’ Work Lives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This school has shared vision that guides instruction.</td>
<td>Shared norms and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The principal at this school leads the staff toward developing or implementing a shared vision.</td>
<td>Shared norms and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The principal’s leadership focuses this school on student learning.</td>
<td>Shared norms and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Staff members from diverse backgrounds work well together at this school.</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Staff members have input into the selection of inservice topics and formats.</td>
<td>Reflective dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Teachers at this school support each other in their efforts to improve student academic performance.</td>
<td>Deprivatized practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The degree of collective responsibility was then determined by averaging the total percent of items that highlight the dimensions of teachers’ work lives over the two year period. The indicators for the selected school are shown in the following table:

Table 3.2: Average of Items that Highlight Dimensions of Teachers' Work Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracted Survey Questions</th>
<th>2005-2006 (SA/A)</th>
<th>2006-2007 (SA/A)</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1 (Shared norms and values)</td>
<td>3.8 (86%)</td>
<td>3.7 (70%)</td>
<td>3.8 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2 (Shared norms and values)</td>
<td>3.4 (57%)</td>
<td>3.5 (70%)</td>
<td>3.5 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3 (Shared norms and values)</td>
<td>3.5 (57%)</td>
<td>3.3 (70%)</td>
<td>3.4 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 12 (Collaboration)</td>
<td>4.2 (93%)</td>
<td>3.9 (75%)</td>
<td>4.1 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 24 (Collaboration)</td>
<td>3.4 (64%)</td>
<td>3.1 (50%)</td>
<td>3.3 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 29 (Reflective dialogue)</td>
<td>3.4 (43%)</td>
<td>3.4 (55%)</td>
<td>3.4 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 41 (Deprivatized practice)</td>
<td>3.9 (78%)</td>
<td>3.9 (90%)</td>
<td>3.9 (84%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the student demographic data shows a context that many in the district would suggest might not yield high collective responsibility for teachers. I subsequently selected one (1) school with demographically and performance appropriate
students from the pool of elementary schools to participate in the qualitative portion of this study. The school-level student data for the selected school are shown below:

Table 3.3: School Level Student Data of the Selected School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
<th>2005-2006</th>
<th>2006-2007</th>
<th>Two Year Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of 3rd Grade Students Tested</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of African-American students</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Caucasian students</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Non Black or White students</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade OAT reading</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd AYP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I really wanted to know what was happening in this high poverty school achieving academic success with African-American students, and the role of collective responsibility in that success. I selected this successful school because it provided an opportunity for an information-rich case of in-depth study.

Establishing Entrée

As a building administrator currently employed in the school district of my study, my insider status made frequent contact with district personnel possible, and gave me relatively easy access to other building administrators within the same school district. Although all of the schools were accessible, I did experience difficulty gaining entrée into one of the schools during case selection. While the administrator of this school allowed me to convene my introductory meeting, (s)he did not attend the meeting. By not becoming involved, the principal communicated a lack of support for the study which
resulted in conditions that were not conducive to a wholesome welcome. I believe this perceived lack of principal support resulted in the staff's refusal to consider participation in the study. In contrast, the principal of the school that I successfully gained entrée to conduct my field study attended my introductory meeting and enthusiastically endorsed engagement in the study.

In preparation for the in-depth qualitative inquiry with the selected school, I arranged a meeting with the building administrator to review my proposal. Once the principal's cooperation was secured in writing, I used the consent as my script to recruit staff participants. Following my oral presentation, I responded to questions and concerns from the principal and teachers about qualitative data collection (interviews, observations, document analysis, and grounded survey). I created a schedule of subsequent interviews and observations for field study for the four (4) staff members who participated in my research case study, and I used pseudonyms to refer to participants to protect confidentiality throughout the study.

Throughout my fieldwork, I made every effort to appear as a researcher instead of as a principal doing research. Concerned that my insider status might work against me, I did not want to appear as though I were on a secret mission to catch the staff doing something wrong so that I could report back to the principal. I purposely did not dress like a principal (i.e. I wore slacks and a sweater instead of a business suit), and I took extra care not to engage in collegial dialogue with the principal to appear as though I had a hidden agenda (i.e. collecting information to catch teachers doing something wrong).
This required diplomacy since the principal played a key role in my gaining entrée to engage in research.

Sample Bias and Reflexivity

*Inclusion is a general methodological principle that serves to control bias by ensuring the representativeness of samples. It also ensures that all relevant voices are heard (Howe, 1988, p. 54).*

In this study, it is first important to acknowledge that voices were knowingly excluded (e.g. classified employees) from the survey used for case selection since respondents were limited, by the teacher bargaining unit agreement, to professional (certificated, non-classified) staff. As previously stated, classified employees are school staff members who do not possess a teaching certificate (i.e. instructional assistants, secretaries, custodians). Additionally, the unit of analysis was the work of teachers as a collective, and the dimensions of teachers’ work lives. Consequently, teachers were the source of all data gathered and analyzed throughout this study. By excluding portions of the school community, relevant voices may have been silenced and the findings may not fully reveal the comprehensive contribution of all members of the school organization who took collective responsibility for the academic success of African-American students in this high poverty school.

Even among the *included* voices, it was imperative that as a reflexive researcher, I was open to listening to and receiving all voices for it is possible for an insular researcher to obstruct relevant voices that need to be heard. The axiological assumption of qualitative research is that the inquiry is value laden, biased, and personally relative
(Creswell, 1994). As an African-American researcher familiar with the experiences of the participants in my study, I could have remained loyal to the voices that were familiar to me, and been unaware of those voices and experiences that were contrary and unfamiliar. Since the writing process positions the researcher at the center of the inquiry, knowledge of self and consciousness about how this self is inserted into a text that is rewritten is imperative (Jones, 2002). Because of this process, I submit from experience as a qualitative researcher:

*Scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious (Namenwirth, 1986, p. 29).*

Thus, the “(re)writing” process begins with self, not with an effort to describe that which has been “discovered” through the research process. Becoming a writer is about becoming conscious (Jones, 2002).

In an effort to become conscious as a researcher, a principal, and an African-American woman, I engaged in dialogue and reflective writing from multiple perspectives to process my duality of roles:

*I have written this book with three voices: that of an African American scholar and researcher; that of an African American teacher; and that of an African American woman, parent, and community member (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. x).*

As an African-American elementary school principal of a school with a greater than 90% free/reduced lunch population, and a greater than 90% African-American student enrollment, I acknowledge my biases based on my race, my personal childhood school experience of attending high poverty schools, and my experience as a building administrator. “Consequently, reflections are included …about the ways that values and
other characteristics might influence what was learned” (Bailey, 2006, p. 54). Each part of me – my black me – my poor me – my principal me – must not be limited to my own experiences, but remain focused on hearing all relevant voices and learning through my experiences.

I continuously engaged in the process of self-reflexivity to balance the epistemological assumptions that allow me to interact with my research study by the way I understand the world based on my experiences. Meanwhile, interpretive axiology permits me to be a research instrument immersed in the research setting, cloaked in my values and biases. The human me, who comes from an Afrocentric worldview with great personal academic success in spite of non-school factors, ensured reflexivity and an opportunity to learn from my inquiry by capturing reactions to experiences in my field work in writing, and engaging in extensive peer-debriefing. Such activities enabled me to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), balanced with my own personal experience.

Throughout my field study, I remained keenly aware of the impact that I could have as an educational leader through the insight that I gained into how organizations develop school culture to support positive outcomes for all students. More notably, the collective work of teachers who engage in efficacious practices which result in academic success for African-American students experiencing economic difficulty could significantly influence ways in which organizations structure school (i.e. instruction, learning, professional development, school day, etc.). At the macro-system level, I also appreciate the educational, social, and political implications of providing all children
access to academic opportunities, influencing national policy and funding. Hence, within my locus of control, this inquiry provides me with the opportunity to see and understand the world through the participants in the study, and gives me a chance to make immediate, strategic changes in my leadership practices that can have a profound effect on my organization. As research findings that change outcomes for the nation’s underachieving population of students emerge, implications for greater collective stakeholder participation are immensely significant and essential.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers are far more concerned with process and meaning than with outcomes or products; they serve as a primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and they are involved in fieldwork (Merriam, 1988). Sources of data collection include “…observations, conversations, formal interviews, autobiographies, public records, organizational reports, respondents’ diaries and journals, and our own tape-recorded reflections” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 514). The qualitative data collected for this study consisted of the obtrusive and non-obtrusive observations, an open-ended structured group interview, and document analysis. Some individual meetings were initially conducted as a part of the original research concept, however the emergent design evolving from group dialogue quickly replaced individual discourse as a means to observe the dimensions of teachers’ work lives among the collective voices. Thus, the methodological procedures gave me not only breadth, but also depth into my inquiry.

The following table represents the data collection for this study:
Table 3.4: Data collection timeline for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2007</td>
<td>Establish Entrée</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2007</td>
<td>Pilot interview questions administered to individuals</td>
<td>20 minutes per interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2007 - December 2007</td>
<td>Data collection of:</td>
<td>30-45 minutes, 15-30 minutes, 75 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtrusive classroom observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Unobtrusive observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Group interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2008 - June 2008</td>
<td>Data analysis of observations, interviews, and documents</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>Met with group of participants to explain member checking (participants chose to respond electronically)</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2008 - August 2008</td>
<td>Integrated member checking into data analysis</td>
<td>1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>Additional member checking following completion of data analysis</td>
<td>30 minutes each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008 - June 2009</td>
<td>Write up data analysis</td>
<td>8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>Conduct principal interview</td>
<td>75 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2010</td>
<td>Complete write up of study</td>
<td>2 years, 9 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Stake, 1995, "time and access for fieldwork in case studies are almost always limited" (p. 4):

_The time spent concentrating on the case may be a day or a year, but while we so concentrate we are engaged in case study (Stake, 1995, p. 2)._ As such, upon receiving the four (4) signed consent forms from the participants who agreed to engage in inquiry, I began my fieldwork. Data collection included one obtrusive 30-45 minute classroom observation for each participant, two to three unobtrusive 15-30 minute observations of each participant in settings outside of the classroom, a 75 minute group interview, various unobtrusive observations of the daily routines within the school, and document analysis. In earlier pilot projects carried out
during the first month of data collection, I began with individual interviews. However I quickly realized the richness of data I received as participant teacher interactions with each other also became critical sources of data. Thus, the group interview provided nuances of collective responsibility that I could not glean from individual interview data.

One might be tempted to ask why there was a lag in the data collection process. In addition to shifts in advisors and committee members taking positions at other universities, I transitioned to a new assignment at work which limited my time to engage in work towards completion of my study. Once engaged in data analysis, I sought in congruencies between the participants' verbal responses, becoming involved in member checking to triangulate the qualitative data that I collected, thus establishing credibility and trustworthiness of the data. I also used document analysis and posted work to further triangulate the interview and observation data. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I conducted a 90 minute principal interview which emerged from my months of data collection and analysis to support additional triangulation efforts. This interview gave me significant insight into how the school in the study nurtured collective responsibility practices.

According to Patton (1990), "the qualitative synthesis is a way to build theory through induction and interpretation for scholarly inquiry. For evaluators, the purpose of the qualitative synthesis is to identify and extrapolate lessons learned" (p. 425). As an instrument of the research process, I as researcher engaged in reflexive journaling throughout my field study to seek out learned lessons that could contribute to theory building. Since the qualitative researcher must interpret the beliefs and behaviors of
participants (Jones, 2002), I recorded on tape and computer the varied aspects of the school environment to provide context for the story told by this inquiry. Data collection techniques in this study were responsive to the schools' cultural framework, thus the group interview structure provided teachers with the opportunity to respond through storytelling and interactive dialogue. Daily routines and staff interactions with students, parents, and each other were also essential to data collection.

As previously noted, schools that met AYP (adequate yearly progress) for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years were identified. From this case, I selected schools with greater than three years of consistent building administrator leadership, and schools with greater than 75% free/reduced lunch rate, and a greater than 75% African-American student population. Though the district survey provided insight into varying degrees of collective responsibility, I purposely selected a school from which I could gather rich data from multiple sources for data collection.

**Qualitative Group Interviews.** The interview is a universal mode of systemic inquiry used by researchers as the basic method of data gathering (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). My interview questions were aligned with the four dimensions of teachers’ work lives within the collective responsibility framework - *reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values*. As I probed beyond the survey questions to explore the relationship between collective responsibility and the academic success of African-American students in poverty, I asked participants to respond to the following seven interview questions:
1) Who are your stakeholders?
As an introductory question, I was interested in the participants’ self-awareness about their work as conveyed in reflective dialogue. By establishing a participant worldview, this question provided a contextual framework for the remaining interview questions.

2) How do your stakeholders engage in conversation about teaching and learning with each other?
Reflective dialogue is portrayed through public conversations concerning the school and practice within the school. From the responses, I was able to gather data that revealed their perceptions about both stakeholders and dialogue. For example, the school in the study demonstrated a degree of high collective responsibility by recognizing students as one of their stakeholder groups.

3) How does your staff engage in conversation about teaching and learning with other staff members?
Also depicted in reflective dialogue are comprehensive conversations within the school about teaching and learning. Analysis of the quality of dialogue through interview responses revealed multiple levels of conversation (formal and informal) as well as frequency of dialogue, both daily and impromptu. Throughout my field study, the school focused their dialogue on the academic, curricular, and instructional concerns of schooling as well as on issues of student development and progress.

4) What do peer coaching, team teaching, and structured observations look like in your school?
By asking participants to discuss specific strategies they have in place to make use of their colleagues’ strengths, I hoped to increase my depth of understanding of deprivatized practices that contribute to increased collective responsibility. The school in the study used the existing system (i.e. open classroom school) to foster the sharing of expertise, illuminating methods to improve both classroom practice and collegial relationships.

5) How does your staff create shared understanding from complex or confusing data?

Collaboration calls for the interaction of faculty members to discuss skill development in implementation of practice. Mutual support enhancement, responsibility for effective instruction, and cooperation around creating shared understandings from complex and confusing data make inquiry into staff collaborative efforts significant. A school culture in which faculty members called on each other to discuss the development of skills related to the implementation of practice was apparent in both the interviews and observations.

6) What common values and expectations does your staff share about the academic success of African-American students experiencing economic difficulty?

Identifying shared norms and values of an organization reveals common assumptions about children, learning, and teachers’ roles. The degree to which staffs affirmed the schools’ extended societal role and relationship with its community correlated with their focus on the central social importance of teaching and socializing children.

7) What action does your staff take to support this common value or expectation?
Members of the social community affirm their mutual values and expectations through language and action. Action taken by the organization is linked to the organizations’ moral authority to teach and socialize children, and the needs of human nature and relationships. While it is important to identify shared norms and values, it is critical to ascertain the level of commitment to those norms and values through the action of support taken by the organization. The participants in the study were able to state commonly accepted values and expectations (i.e. We believe all children can learn), and define and describe specific, purposeful actions taken by the teachers to support their values and expectations.

As a novice researcher, a turning point for me occurred during my one-on-one interview sessions in a pilot study school. Those teachers were cordial and willing to participate in the study, even though I was an outsider intruding on what few minutes of precious time they had available. Due to my inexperience as a professional interviewer, I realize in hindsight that I did not structure the one-on-one interviews in a secure environment, and I was too open with my interview space. As a result, participants transitioned into the interview space and inadvertently began interweaving their responses to the interview questions resulting in the unintended outcome of the group interviews. Though the interview session in my pilot study did not go as originally planned, I was pleased with the unexpected emergence of group interviews as my technique to engage in dialogue in a comfortable manner.

So this group interview is a qualitative data gathering technique that relies on the systematic questioning of several individuals at the same time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).
While this process often produces elaborate rich data, the results cannot be generalized, the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, and one person could dominate the group and impose their idea on others. In my study, group interviews were the most efficient, effective and well-received technique of all that I made use of in my field study to collect rich, descriptive data. The teachers were enthusiastic when engaged in dialogue about their collective work as evidenced by their willingness to stay beyond the time period designated for the interviews. The group interviews appeared to put those who participated in the discussion at ease, supported reflective and thoughtful insight, and facilitated genuine discussion and interaction representing reflective dialogue and deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values.

It is also important to note that interview data are more than verbal records and should include nonverbal features of the interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Nonverbal behavior – from facial expressions to body posture – is an additional and rich source of information (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998). Since only 7% of communication is conveyed by actual words or content, 38% is transmitted by tone of voice and volume of speech, and 55% of communication is delivered via non-verbal information such as facial expressions, posture, and hand gestures (Mehrabian, 1971), unspoken indicators provide valuable, authentic layers of data that support focused attention on the collective voices as they interact with each other. Notably, the participants in the study had an extraordinary ability to complete each other’s sentences when responding to the interview questions which reinforced their shared norms and beliefs about their work as teachers.
**Observations.** “…not only is an observation one of the earliest and most basic forms of research, but it is the most likely to be used in conjunction with others” (Adler and Adler, 2003 p. 80). I conducted four obtrusive and numerous unobtrusive observations of teacher interaction with students, colleagues, and other members of the school community during classroom instruction, outside of instruction in the lunchroom, recess, and hallways, and during staff and team/grade level meetings over a period of a week. Although it was apparent that I was engaged in observation during obtrusive observations, the purpose of the observation was sometimes unclear for the participant. Since I am a principal, participants often thought I was observing for instructional delivery or curriculum pacing when in fact, my observations focused on the dimensions of teachers’ work lives.

I conducted unobtrusive observations throughout each day as teachers escorted students to the restroom, interacted with students at breakfast and at lunch, and implemented recess and arrival/dismissal procedures and expectations. Impromptu staff-staff interactions were also observed in staff and team meetings, as well as staff interactions with parent volunteers and parent visits to the school. In this study, questions generated in the field work prompted unobtrusive observations.

The observations also provided opportunities to extend access to stakeholders who were not given a voice during other parts of data collection. I tape recorded team meetings and took field notes to quickly store data significant at that moment to be analyzed within a three week period of collection time. I also observed the same phenomena in multiple settings (i.e. observe a teacher’s interaction with a class during
classroom instruction, in the lunchroom, and on the playground at recess) to support the validity and trustworthiness of my observations. I began transcribing my own work but I quickly realized that I was distracted by concurrent transcription and reflexivity. I could not type without being reflective about each word and phrase. The transcription process became tedious, and an impediment to my learning.

Practical applications of qualitative methods emerge from the power of observation, openness to what the world has to teach, and inductive analysis to make sense out of the world’s lessons... pay attention, listen and watch, be open, think about what you hear and see, document systematically (memory is selective and unreliable), and apply what you learn (Patton, 1990, p. 139).

In an effort to maintain openness to what my study had to teach, I solicited the assistance of an independent transcriptionist (a teaching colleague of twenty years working within the school district of the study) to systematically document what was in the recordings. I reviewed the transcriptions and I wrote reflective responses and reactions to the observations and taped transcriptions within the context of my own immersion and lived experiences. This practice served as a primary strategy to support my reflexivity.

Document Analysis. Documents provide additional insight into understanding the organization’s way of sharing culture with the members of the organization, and supports triangulation of the study’s findings (Patton, 2002). I collected documents such as meeting agendas, daily bulletins, and school handbooks which enabled me to compare data collected from my observations and interviews. These documents provided information about many things that could not be observed while conducting fieldwork,
but may have occurred before the research began, or would be implemented after the research ended (Patton, 2002).

Examination of the documents revealed information about the way in which the school shared information. For example, it was the staff’s responsibility to read the electronic bulletin emailed each day. Also, the informal kid-friendly font style in the parent handbook invited the parent and student to read and embrace the message in the opening letter in of the document in which the principal communicated partnership around academic achievement. All documents clearly conveyed high expectations focused on student achievement.

Data Analysis

The purpose of analysis is to organize the description so it is manageable. Description is balanced by analysis and leads into interpretation (Patton, 1990, p. 430).

The goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic, which is basic to the philosophic underpinning of the qualitative approach (Creswell, 1994). This qualitative inquiry employs the inductive mode of research that encourages the emergence of the design achieved when the researcher:

- Engages in theory building
- Crosses patterns
- Forms categories
- Seeks knowledge
• Disseminates findings

To reveal the emerging patterns, qualitative researchers accumulate data in the field that must be analyzed inductively (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Accordingly, I coded and categorized transcripts from the group interviews to identify attributes of collective responsibility.

Since data were compiled from interviews, observations, and documents, I used Patton’s (1990) proposed strategies for analyzing interviews and observations (as cited in James-Brown, 1995, p. 73). To analyze data from interviews, I grouped together answers “from different perspectives on central issues” (Patton, 1990, p. 376 as cited in James-Brown, 1995, p. 74). To examine data from observations, my analysis explored the extent to which teachers’ words from the interview were connected with their classroom practice.

Once I organized data within Patton’s framework, I further analyzed the data using the three major types of data coding designed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to develop grounded theory. Open coding is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 161), axial coding is a “set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between a category and its subcategories (pp. 96-97), and selective coding is the process in which researchers connect all major categories together “to form an overall theoretical formulation” (Strauss, Corbin, 1990, p. 97 as cited in James-Brown, 1995, p. 76). Since generating theory is outside of the scope of this study, I did not use selective coding. Data analysis concludes with the development of analytical questions that
challenged the collected data (Strauss, Corbin, 1990, p. 97 as cited in James-Brown, 1995, p. 77).

Issues of Credibility/Validity, Politics, and Ethics

Researchers strengthen validity (e.g., legitimacy, trustworthiness, applicability) when they can show the consistency among the research purposes, the questions, and the methods they use (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 167).

Credibility is “the extent to which data, data analysis, and conclusions are believable and trustworthy as based on a set of standard practices such as triangulation” (Lather, 2001). Since the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, to a great extent credibility lies with the researcher (Patton, 1990). All texts are socially, historically, politically, and culturally located, therefore, a concern for validity and authenticity exists. “HOW we know is intimately bound up with WHAT we know, WHERE we learned it, and WHAT we have experienced” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1059). The researcher must make judgments in qualitative analysis that provide clues for the reader as to the writer’s belief about variations in the credibility of different findings: When are patterns “clear”? When are they “strongly supported by the data”? When are the patterns “weak”? Readers will ultimately make their own decisions and judgments about these matters, but the evaluator’s opinions and speculations, after he or she has struggled with the data, deserve to be reported” (Patton, 1990, p. 431).

The story findings told by the researcher must be recognizable to those who told it and should emerge directly from their words, behaviors, and the contexts influencing the study AND should include the researcher’s “voice”; also, the story should hold together
(Jones, 2002). Guba (1981) states that the least we should expect in establishing trustworthy data in qualitative research is triangulation, reflexivity and member checks. Member checks, the most important method of establishing credibility, served as a means of triangulating data around collective responsibility, and yielded responses of affirmation as participants reviewed their group interview transcriptions. Additional procedures to establish trustworthiness in the inference quality of this study include, peer debriefing, transferability, and confirmability to ensure that all voices are heard.

**Triangulation.** “Triangulation involves the use of multiple perspectives to receive and analyze information” (James-Brown, 1995, p.82). It employs “…multiple measures to include multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes - all are critical in establishing data trustworthiness” (Lather, 1986, p. 67). Other sources of information were the school principal, observation data, and analysis of school documents.

Methodological triangulation does not verify, but supports “the practical mandate in evaluation to gather the most relevant possible information for evaluation users” (Patton, 1981). “The purpose of triangulation is to explore differing perceptions not to determine the ‘truth’ of the matter under investigation” (Woodbrooks, 1991, p. 121). Throughout data collection, I drew upon field notes, reflexive journaling, interview transcripts, document analysis, data analysis, and coding to explore incongruous views.
**Peer Debriefing.** Peer debriefing is defined as the “process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit with the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I engaged in intense peer debriefing sessions as a means of challenging my suppositions to support the credibility and trustworthiness of my study. I solicited support from an adjunct professor from a Midwestern university who has background in qualitative research. Our meetings occurred twice a month for ten months (January to October 2009), and focused both on reflexivity and refinement of my narrative. Peer debriefing supported my development of the research design, data collection within the framework of the design, and analysis to respond to the question posed by the research.

**Member Checking.** Member checking throughout the research process is “the most crucial technique to establish credibility and helps the researcher check their own subjectivity and ensure trustworthiness in their findings” from those whom the data was originally collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). It is essential to perform member checks, a technique in which the researcher shares with the subjects the emerging analysis of the study to assure that there are no surprises with the final reporting product, both “in process and terminal” of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility of the data collection process, I provided written feedback of interviews to the participants of the study, and I scheduled time to review data. This gave the participants an opportunity to check my interpretations of the data collected.
“All participants are allowed a role in negotiation of the final meanings of the research” (Lather, 1986, p. 264). Accordingly, I gave the four participants the opportunity to engage in a focus group to check for accuracy in collection and interpretation. While the four participants had the option to meet with me face-to-face, each member chose to review transcripts individually and respond with feedback electronically. Thus, member checks were used to provide the participants with an opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the data (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

As the researcher, I decided to develop the following procedural steps to conduct my final member checking process. The steps were: 1) I convened a meeting with the participants to explain the member checking process; 2) I had participants select how they would respond to data (email and face-to-face options) given to them from the study; 3) Upon completion of the discussion group, all four participants chose to respond electronically; 4) Following the meeting, I electronically sent what I heard from each participant to review their voices; 5) I collected each participant’s response and analyzed the data. (there were no discrepancies); 6) Upon completion of my analysis of each participant’s voice, I again contacted the participants for feedback.

**Transferability.** In a qualitative research inquiry, the use of thick description gives context to the collected data. The goal is not to generalize to larger populations as required in a quantitative study, but to elaborate, enhance, or illustrate the results from one method by using another method. In making judgments about transferability in qualitative research, the working propositions for the study must first be established,
followed by extensive and careful descriptions of the time, place, context, and culture in which those propositions are found to be significant (James-Brown, 1995, p. 89). Information-rich descriptions were obtained in my study through interviews, observations, and document analysis.

An underlying assumption of naturalistic inquiry is that the information gathered is highly influenced by the context, which includes the researcher’s interaction with the participants (James-Brown, 1995, p. 89). The researcher “…can only provide the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (Lincoln and Guba, 1989, p. 316). Within my study, I gathered a wide range of information from the participants for inclusion in the thick descriptions. Their situations are still context-specific and not necessarily transferable.

I examined those historical, cultural, and contextual issues (such as race, class, and centricity) that affect the lives of the participants in my study. While comparable experiences may exist that can then be transferable to others, each lived experience is unique therefore not generalizable. “Even though frozen ideological concepts and hegemonic forces may affect a group of individuals (i.e. Black students, poor students), each person in that group views, responds, and adapts to these forces differently” (James-Brown, 1995, p. 90).
Confirmability. To achieve confirmability, the qualitative researcher must make certain that data from his/her individual subjects, along with the interpretations and findings that came from the inquiry process are “grounded in events rather than the inquirer’s personal constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 324). Although researcher bias is present, interpretations and findings are based on inquiry. In this study, I engaged in field study at a school that, based on the inquiry of my study, increased my depth of understanding to explore the role of culture within the context of collective responsibility to have positive outcomes for African-American students experiencing economic difficulty.

Confirmability is achieved through triangulated data, interviews, observational notes (both obtrusive and unobtrusive), documents, and tape recordings. Files consisting of audiotapes and transcripts of all the interview sessions, notes taken during peer-debriefing and member-checking sessions, and survey results were organized and coded. These files served as the source of my data analysis and reconstruction categorizing patterns of emerging themes within and across selected data sources, and contributed to notes in my reflective journal. My journal is where I explored the role of my personal bias in the inquiry, and I recorded what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as essential aspects of naturalistic research – that is, “a variety of information about self and method” (p. 327). Persistent journaling gave me a means of engaging in reflexivity throughout my data collection and analysis.
Rapport, Empowerment, and Use of the Self

From an endarkened epistemological ground, all views expressed and actions taken related to educational inquiry arise from a personally and culturally defined set of beliefs that render the researcher responsible to the members and the well-being of the community from which their very definition arises: To know something is to have a living relationship with it, influencing and being influenced by it, responding to and being responsible for it (Dillard, 2006, pages 18 and 20).

There is a significant responsibility to tell the stories of those with whom the researcher comes into contact in the most respectful way possible in qualitative research (Jones, 2002). As schools with greater minority and poverty student populations are clearly not achieving at the same rate as schools with low minority and low poverty student populations, the basic assumptions that guide the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of these schools could be that inequities around access to knowledge are embedded in an educational system that “marginalizes African-American students through instructional planning and textbook design that fails to reflect authentic ethnic depictions in the curriculum” (Asante, 1990, p. 484). In a study that explores academic success for African-American students experiencing poverty, there is an ethical and moral dilemma of writing from the perspective of "people of color who no longer trust whites or academics to do them or their communities any good” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 33). Hence, a culture of power exists with the basic assumption that schooling is related to power:

The rules of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power. Therefore, success in institutions (i.e. schools, workplaces) is predicated on acquisition of the culture of those who are in power (Delpit, 1995, p. 25).

The outsider (me, the researcher) and the insider (the respondents) both play a critical role in the discovery and accurate depiction of the reality of the school.
organization and culture. Accurate description is fundamental with full recognition of the biases brought to the situation both by the insider and the outsider. Such accurate description requires me to espouse intersubjectivity when describing artifacts and espoused values, and engage in a very empathetic way when describing basic shared assumptions as they are experienced by insiders. Returning to the insiders to check the accuracy of the depiction became a vital element to ensure the accuracy of the description to the insiders who live in the culture, and the outsider who is trying to understand the phenomena.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the methodological procedures used to select a case study from which qualitative data was obtained and analyzed. Recordings and notes were utilized to obtain participant responses, and pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity and encourage candidness. In the chapter that follows, the participant responses will be presented and analyzed in the context of the themes that merge from this inquiry into the work of teachers within the cultural frame of collective responsibility.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

_The teachers and principals of the improving schools are much more likely to assume responsibility for teaching...and are committed to doing so” (Edmonds, 1979, p. 18)._

Introduction

I saw a local story on the weekend news about an incident involving a father who got into a fight and pulled out a knife at his child’s birthday party at a popular children’s restaurant. As the news reporter interviewed customers in the restaurant, I was intrigued by the way in which the story was told by two African-American eyewitnesses. The young ladies, approximately 16-18 years of age, began giving their account of what occurred, with intensity and expression by both simultaneously. The details of the story were skillfully interwoven as one did not wait until the other finished her sentence – they simply weaved in and out when one said a word that sparked a memory from the other about the shocking and unexpected experience. I became enthralled in their rendition as I listened to them unfold the events of the story; it felt as though they were having a conversation with me just like I had been in discussions with my girlfriends over dinner sharing the events of our day. The only role the reporter played in the interview was asking the initial question, “What happened?”

As I reflect on my data collection, I was much like the news reporter seeking to unearth and reveal what was occurring in the school. What happened that teachers
engaged so passionately around the achievement of students in their school? What happened that prompted a teaching staff to subscribe to the communitarian African philosophy of Kwanzaa's Ujima principle of collective work and responsibility which facilitated reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values for their students? What happened to create this fierce urgency of NOW to educate African-American children facing economic difficulty? What happened that empowered teachers to exemplify “Yes We Can!” as demonstrated through their “whatever it takes” approach to teaching America’s underachieving population of children? What happened can only be answered by exploring “What is happening?” It is to that which I now turn.

Case Study Narrative

To explore what was happening in a school that was achieving success with a population of students with which schools typically experience failure, I captured a series of events that revealed the impact a teaching staff has on the success of children who typically underachieve. The four teachers (identified by pseudonyms) who participated in the study were all teachers of intermediate students ranging from third to fifth grades. The span of their teaching experience was from six to eight years with multiple years of experience in the school being studied. Three of the four participating teachers were Caucasian, including Ms. Klein, a teacher with six (6) years of teaching experience. She had been teaching at the school for five (5) years. Mr. Perry, the only male teacher in the study also had five (5) years of tenure in the building and eight (8) years of teaching
experience in total. Like Mr. Perry, Ms. Oswald had eight (8) years of teaching experience, however she spent her entire teaching career in the school of study. Lastly, Ms. Miller, the only African-American participant, also spent her entire seven (7) year teaching career in the school of study.

My first observation of the four teachers was on my first day of field work in their school. I walked through the front doors, entered the foyer of the school, checked in at the office, and followed the principal to the intermediate team meeting which was set to begin in one of the classrooms. The open space facility provided a unique use of learning space. Open space schools contained classrooms without walls. Teaching spaces were separated by modular furniture and bookcases. With no clear demarcation, the tiled hallway space spilled over into the worn carpeted learning spaces in a random fashion. We continued through a maze of various teaching spaces for a few minutes until we reached our destination. The intermediate teaching staff (those who taught students in the third, fourth and fifth grades) began gathering in the room as the principal started the discussion with an overview of the purpose and goals of the meeting.

Although the principal led the meeting, the teachers were drawn into the dialogue about school data disaggregation, instructional strategies, planning, and problem-solving. Throughout the discussion, the teaching staff spoke freely with intensity and purpose, addressing areas of instructional concern, and actively engaging in the development of strategies to address both procedural and academic inquiries presented during the meeting. By the meeting’s end, each item on the agenda had been addressed, and next steps were determined.
Though the team meeting had a clear focus on instruction and data, there was a portion of the meeting set aside at the end for discussion about the whole school incentive party to be held the next day. Though it seemed odd that such a curriculum-focused meeting would have space for what appeared to be an inconsequential, non-instructional conversation, the teachers' response proved to be significant. Once the principal identified the subject matter, the teachers quickly shared their plans of implementing the details of the whole school incentive party, including assignment of all staff members, without principal direction or involvement. This way of interacting by the teachers became representative of their control over all aspects of their work lives.

After the meeting, I followed the principal back through the maze of spaces to the front foyer where I had entered the school. Opposite the office was the gymnasium used as a multipurpose room to serve student meals and to hold whole school programs. It was the first “traditional” room (with walls and a door) that I had seen in the building other than the office, enclosed by concrete walls and glass. I continued following the principal through the gym as she observed the end of the breakfast period and greeted students. The teacher responsible for the supervision of the breakfast room guided the large group of students through their daily routine, reminding students to use polite inside voices when talking to their friends during breakfast and to clean up their area before leaving their table. When addressing individual students, she did so privately, moving around the room and calling each child by name. Knowing each student's name was noteworthy since the entire student population had access to the free breakfast provided to all students of high poverty schools through the Universal Breakfast Program. As
illustrated in the following dialogue between the breakfast teacher and the students (pseudonyms used), the teacher knew every child in the school even though she was only responsible for one class of fourth grade students:

Good morning Robert [kindergarten student]. Would you like to sit next to your sister [second grade student]? Alexis [second grade student], do you need a spoon? Karen [first grade student], did you get enough to eat? You didn't select many items for breakfast. You are doing a great job of using your inside voice today Michael [third grade student]. Jalisa [fourth grade student], please stay seated until you have finished eating. There are only ten minutes left to eat before the late bell rings. Jerry and Maurice [fifth grade students], please make sure that you are finishing your breakfast so that you can be on time for class today.

Since the breakfast period was almost over, the principal went out to the playground where students stood in classroom lines waiting to be brought inside by their teacher. While most students came to their classroom line on the playground following breakfast in the gym, some students bypassed the gym and went directly to the playground when they arrived at school. The principal greeted staff members who were supervising the students, and interacted with students through greeting, questioning, and private redirection as follows:

Good morning Andrea. I didn't see you and your brother in the breakfast room this morning. Did you eat breakfast at home? Good morning Danny. I can tell that you are going to have a great day today.

Once the bell rang, the teachers came outside to walk their students into the building. Since many of the classrooms had outside access directly from their classroom space, teachers led students to the entrances closest to their classrooms in an orderly fashion. All students walked in their classroom lines following their teacher to their classroom. I followed Ms. Miller into the building to begin my observations.
Although the school population was made up of eighty-two percent (82%) African-American students, Ms. Miller was the only African-American teacher involved in the study. The teaching staff was made up of twenty-one (21) teaching staff members of which seven (7) were African-American and three (3) were male. While three (3) African-American teachers agreed to participate, by the study’s end several things happened: One (1) African-American female teacher was promoted, one (1) African-American female teacher transferred to a new position, and only one (1) remained. As Ms. Miller began the school day, she enthusiastically led her students into their classroom and eagerly delved into the morning routine.

As students hung their coats and book bags on the backs of their chairs, Ms. Miller greeted each student passing out paper so that students could begin their morning language arts assignment which she had already written on the board. The student desks were organized in groups of four and five with two facing each other, and one on the end. Without hesitation, students began working on their assignment independently. Once all students had received paper to begin their assignment, Ms. Miller began moving around the room, taking attendance while monitoring the students’ written responses. She moved from student to student, seemingly aware of which students needed her commentary, re-direction and encouragement. As students worked independently, Ms. Miller provided guidance, suggestions, and reminders:

*Remember to go back into the story to help you answer the questions. Please write in complete sentences, and don't forget your punctuation.*

Once the students completed their independent work, they began working together. As students began sharing their responses with each other, Ms. Miller guided each student
into dialogue that required them to explain their answers to each other using higher level questioning prompts and applying their responses to real life situations. The following is an example of this dialogue of prompts:

*What is another way that you could have solved the problem if you were the main character in this story? Have you had a similar experience? What ideas could you use from this story to solve problems that you have?*

In the midst of her questioning and prompting, Ms. Miller noticed a student who had not started his work. He had nothing written on his paper, and he was distracting other students by talking and laughing. As Ms. Miller approached the student, I anticipated that she would reprimand him for not doing his work. Instead, she brought him a newly sharpened pencil and just above a whisper, she told him that she was sure he hadn't started his work because he didn't have a pencil. "I can't wait to see what good answers you are going to write now that you have a pencil." She stood next to him until he began working and praised him for starting his work. She then remained at his desk until he had written a correct response that she could use as encouragement for him to begin productively working with his group. Ms. Miller connected with all students in some way during my observation, not once sitting at her desk during this morning routine.

Such instances of teachers connecting with the students were common across the participants in the study. In Ms. Klein's class were intermediate students with special needs. Her students in grades three, four, and five were mainstreamed in a homeroom with same grade students, and then sent to another teacher for reading, language arts, and mathematics. Her teaching space was set up much like Ms. Miller’s, with student desks
in groups of four and five. When I entered the space, the students sat in groups on the carpet engaging in verbal question/response exchanges. Students worked together to develop verbal responses to questions from a story they had just finished reading. Ms. Klein moved through the class monitoring student responses and encouraging students to improve their responses by providing key ideas from the story. As she moved around the room from student to student, she provided individual guidance to support students; standing near the students, engaging in verbal dialogue about the questions and answers, and repeating important information from the questions and the story which engaged her students in the learning process. Additionally, Ms. Klein monitored the interaction between the classified instructional assistant working with a group of students in the classroom. She occasionally provided specific instructional directions to the assistant and made adjustments to the lesson focus as noted below:

*John and Lisa do not know their sight words, and all of their effort is spent sounding out the letters in the words instead of using context clues from known, familiar words to understand the story. Please use these flashcards to practice the sight words, and use these one paragraph passages to orally model and practice summarizing what was read. Please send the other students in the group to me, and continue working with John and Lisa on these skills.*

When the teachers were asked to describe actions they take to support their common values or expectations about student learning during the group interviews, Ms. Klein and Ms. Oswald who are both special needs teachers, mentioned making adjustments to instruction *during* the lesson. Their response below represents the way in which they discussed intervening to provide immediate support for students:

*Stopping in the middle of your lesson and attending to a student who is having difficulty...we just can’t ignore it!*
My first observation of Ms. Oswald occurred as she gave final instructions to all of the fourth grade students as they prepared to go on a field trip. The students attentively listened to her directions as she made last minute adjustments due to a glitch that resulted in a missing field trip bus. The following quote demonstrates the respect that the students displayed in the midst of the unexpected complication that could have impeded their opportunity to attend the event:

*Good morning boys and girls. I appreciate your good listening as I give you information about our field trip today. As you know, we are going to the theatre today to hear the symphony orchestra. We asked for two buses for our trip but only one bus is here so we will have to share seats. Please remember to be respectful to the driver by using inside voices on the bus and staying seated in your bus seat. Once we arrive at the theater, please quietly exit the bus and follow adult directions. We expect our students to be courteous and polite. Our students always receive a good report from the ushers at the theater. Please be good representatives of our school by using polite words and being good listeners. We are now ready to board the buses. I would like this class of students to board first. Go all the way to the back of the bus and sit two students to a seat. If there is extra room once we all have a seat, we will adjust our seating.*

As the students turned to exit the building to board the bus at the teacher’s directive, the principal, who had not been present during Ms. Oswald's instructions, reinforced the same student expectations given by Ms. Oswald as noted below:

*Good morning boys and girls. I expect you to be good representatives of our school by respecting all adults and respecting the theatre. When our students go on field trips, I always receive a report that our students are very polite and well-behaved. I expect to receive the same report today.*

Not only did this event prove to be another example of teachers in control of their work lives, but it also corroborated the principal's reference to common expectations in the following Parent/Student handbook letter,

*Shared cooperation and expectations will ensure that each student reaches his/her potential.*
I had an opportunity to observe Ms. Oswald's classroom which was located in a temporary modular building next to the school. Once I entered the adjunct building, I was surprised that it did not have open space classrooms like the school building. Instead, its four self-contained classrooms had four walls and a door. As I entered Ms. Oswald's classroom, it was very student focused with desks arranged similar to the other classrooms that I had observed in groups of four. Lots of student work was posted on the walls, with no signs of teacher-made or store bought posters. Student hands-on learning centers were strategically placed around the perimeter of the room. As I sat down to observe however, I sensed a great deal of tension from the students that I had not perceived anywhere else in the building. I quickly realized that they were in the midst of completing an assessment and they were extremely frustrated about testing. The following is representative of the way in which Ms. Oswald, despite the tension, remained patient, positive and responsive throughout the class period giving positive feedback to a student about his written test response:

*John, I can tell that you are thinking by the answer that you wrote on your test. You really are doing a great job of showing what you know. You have written a good amount so keep writing!* 

In spite of her students’ anxiety, she remained calm and supportive. She appeared to be aware of the needs of specific individual students by standing next to her students and using private encouragement. When she had to correct a student who was misbehaving, she even found a way to infuse vocabulary instruction. For instance, when a student began swinging his necklace in the air, Ms. Oswald positioned herself close to him, and in a voice just above a whisper she asked him if his necklace would hinder him. "Do you..."
remember what hinder means?” The vocabulary question seemed to temporarily distract the student, and appeared to help reduce his anxiety about the test in front of him because he felt good about knowing the definition of hinder while accepting Ms. Oswald’s admonition about the necklace without conflict. Throughout the group interviews, Ms. Oswald clearly communicated her view that it was her responsibility to do whatever it took to ensure the success of her students. This stance was apparent in her following statement:

...you’re given what’s at hand, you have the tools, and you do what you have to do to reach the students...this is what I’m given so I’m going to work as hard as I can to do what I can to reach the students!

Located across the hall from Ms. Oswald was Mr. Perry’s intermediate classroom. When I entered his classroom, I was struck by the conventional layout of the class space. Unlike any of the other class spaces that I had seen in the building, his student desks were spaced individually in rows. The students’ book bags and coats were neatly hung on the coat hooks along a back wall of the classroom, and the walls were filled with student work posted and arranged by content area. Though Mr. Perry's approach to instruction was very methodical as he repeated information continually, he interspersed student praise for appropriate behavior. As a result, he engaged his class in the lesson, and all students were attentive with raised hands, eager to respond. Only one student spoke at a time, and the quality of verbal responses from the children was very advanced as shown below:

Mr. Perry: We are discussing ways in which people have affected the physical environment of our state; ways in which people have changed the land. We are thinking about how people in our state used the land. Why people changed the land at all. I can see that Stephanie is thinking about ways
people in our state affected the physical environment in our state. She has written down some great ideas and now she is ready to share her ideas with the class. I am so glad that everyone is quietly waiting for Stephanie to share her good ideas about ways in which people affected the physical environment in our state.

Stephanie: It was important for farmers in our state to increase the amount of crops that they grew so that they were able to harvest more food for sale and take care of their families. The bad part is that they changed the land and the water by using pesticides and herbicides to kill the bugs that damaged the plants.

Mr. Perry: Stephanie, this is an excellent response to the ways in which people have affected the physical environment in our state. Stephanie thought about how people have changed the land and how their action has changed the physical environment of our land. Sometimes we think that the effect on the physical environment is bad. Was the change that Stephanie identified good or bad, and was the change you identified good or bad? I am going to give you a few minutes to talk to your partner about whether the change in the physical environment that Stephanie identified was good or bad, and together decide why. I will then ask you to decide if the change you identified was good or bad.

As the lesson continued, students transitioned into independent read alouds. During this portion of the lesson, Mr. Perry anticipated which words individual students would have problems reading before they got to the word. As demonstrated below, Mr. Perry provided support before the student encountered the problem:

Eric is going to read the next paragraph about fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Everyone practice saying 'fertilizers,' 'herbicides,' and 'pesticides' after me. Okay Eric, please read the next paragraph which explains how fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides were used. Please begin with the word 'fertilizers'.

When I observed Mr. Perry during group interviews, he appeared to be less enthusiastic than his team, yet his responses were insightful and succinct. As I reflected on the team’s discussion, it was Mr. Perry as noted below who helped to identify the systematic approach to disaggregating confusing data resulting in improved instruction:
We do it (look at data) in team meetings...we try to strengthen those areas that are weak...We meet together, we do what we have to do, we work on ways in which we can motivate.

Mr. Perry’s classroom was a reflection of his approach to instruction, maintaining a balance between motivating students through praise and teaching students for achievement in his classroom.

As I engaged in data collection, I continued to be reflective about what was happening that facilitated this school's focus on "individual student performance" as stated in their Parent/Student Handbook. What was happening that the teaching staff felt both authorized and empowered to implement personal approaches to instruction in an effort to reach all students? Why were the teachers willing to not only deprivatize those approaches, but also accept feedback as useful and valid from their colleagues? Most importantly, what was happening at this school that was making an instructional difference for these economically disadvantaged African-American children? In an effort to gain a greater understanding of how this culture had developed, I gathered interview data from the school principal.

Throughout my research in the school, it was apparent that the teachers had a clear focus on instruction. The principal, who was an African American female with twenty eight (28) years experience in the field of education, thirteen (13) years as a principal of which nine (9) has been at this school, attributed this focus to the following way in which the teachers defined their work:

The teachers define their work as the most important work that they will do because they are working with other people's children. They are committed to an outcome that they can be proud of - student learning. I encourage the teachers to be child advocates - what they request must relate to the children. I always let it
be known that our job is to educate children. As a result of this insight, the teachers associate the achievement of their students with their own personal effectiveness. The teachers have pride in the work that they do, they want their students to be productive and successful, and they expect them to go to college because they realize that education is their ticket out of poverty. They recognize that is why they are here.

The principal also encouraged the teachers to develop relationships with the children and get to know the children so that when they are planning, they know best how to meet the needs of the children. They are with the children all day every day, so they know them best. Accordingly, those relationships yielded the following outcomes:

The teachers tell the students that they can come to the teacher before making a decision, especially if they think they are about to make a bad choice. Also, the teachers connect with the students outside of school, going to their softball games and other outside activities.

The teachers monitored the progress of the students throughout the lessons, and attempted to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of their children as much as possible through individualized support, encouragement and praise. The principal views the teaching staff as empathetic - not sympathetic. She believes the source of this empathy comes from the fact that some of the teachers had their own challenges as students. Therefore, based on their own educational experiences, they believe that they can help children overcome obstacles. They believe that they can reach every child because they know the children well enough to know where they need to put the interventions. Their experience is also the basis for their belief that education is the only way to change the course of their lives. They have high expectations for themselves and for their children.
With high expectations at the core, the principal attributed the teachers' instructional effectiveness to their desire to learn and interact with other professionals and improve as teachers. She explains:

_They study and are continuously learning, and I encourage them to do so. There must be trust in the principal that they will not be chastised for not knowing. I always say that we all have a lot more learning to do. They often take coursework together, and they seek out their own professional development where they are weak. They have a need to know how to do their jobs better. They won’t keep doing the same thing over and over. If what they have done hasn’t been working, they give and receive feedback to build their capacity. They are effective teachers that constantly plan together, so the feedback that they give to each other is based on what they have already talked about to improve._

The teachers do long range planning, working together, and thinking "outside of the box" to figure out how to meet the needs of the whole child. They come to the principal prepared with research articles and speakers if needed, and they put in the effort and monitor the effectiveness of their initiatives without being asked by the principal. The effectiveness of the program is important to them. They don't want the principal to take responsibility for implementation. They take ownership, coming to the principal prepared with information and data only if they need additional support. Typically, the teachers don't ask for _money_ for their initiatives at the onset; they do strategic planning to meet the needs of the students and they ask for _time_.

Taking ownership in the school was not limited to instructional design and implementation. Without principal intervention or direction, the teaching staff planned and implemented the whole school incentive party as part of their efforts to sustain positive school climate. The teachers took responsibility for dividing the classes into groups and assignments to support both smooth transitions and orderly activities. Non-
classroom staff participated in supportive roles assigned by the intermediate teachers, and the staff secured parent volunteers and assigned them to activities. Treats were distributed, and materials and supplies for activities were in place. At the conclusion of the event, the staff took responsibility for student dismissal and supervision at the end of the day.

In summary, the principal recognized how important it was to the staff that they create a positive school culture and climate so they can develop positive relationships - with students, families, and each other. The principal noted that the importance of a cohesive building climate to student achievement became evident when the school climate changed, particularly with the influx of students who did not know or speak English. The teachers became passionate about helping the new students learn as quickly as possible so that they could move along with the rest of the students in the school. One strategy the teachers used to support the new students was through learning about their culture because it was so different from what they knew. It was important to the teachers to learn their students’ culture in order to make relevant connections to the curriculum and develop relationships with both students and families so that they could meet the needs of their newest students.

The questions asked during the interview prompted the principal to reflect on their work to support achievement for all students. She recognized their efforts to increase the effectiveness of teachers, their consultation with colleges and experts to prevent failure instead of mediating failure, and their work to create a building climate that is family and community-oriented. She was not sure, however which strategy or combination of
approaches had the greatest impact on positive school outcomes for the school's majority economically disadvantaged African-American children. She noted that everything she has read about effective schools correlated with effective leadership, but she was modest about the influence she had on her teachers' determination and tenacity. She characterized her teachers as young and eager, and very supportive of each other. In the following example, the teachers demonstrate their efforts to work together as a staff to listen to their students, and make adjustments to support the needs of children:

We had to change the structure of school (i.e. schedule) because the children told us that reading made them nervous first thing in the morning because of the emphasis on its importance. They could not move and they had to stay focused. It was too much pressure. Giving students an additional 30 minutes to ease into reading each morning seems to be working for them. I encourage student input and ask them what we need to do different at our school.

The final method for finding out what was happening at this school that was making an instructional difference for African-American children facing economic difficulty was to conduct interviews just as the reporter had done at the child's party following the incident. Since the most reliable source would be the teachers who were working with the children, I arranged to provide lunch and meet with participants for a group interview. As I prepared to order lunch for the participants and prepare for group interviews, I was called away for an emergency in my own school. Because I believed the group interviews to be a critical component to greater understanding, I made every effort to return in time to engage in this portion of my study. Although I was able to pick up the participants’ lunch, I could not make it back to the building during their lunch period. With the permission of the principal, I went from classroom to classroom carrying a "to-go" plate of pizza and salad with a request to conduct group interviews
after school. All participants were forgiving of my absence and appreciative for lunch, and they all agreed to remain after school on Halloween Friday to participate in the interviews.

Once the last student was dismissed, the participants in the study gathered in the library. After they greeted each other and asked about the day, I apologized again for the schedule change. Concerned about conducting group interviews at the end of the week at the end of the day, and sensitive to the fact that they were willing to stay after hours, I quickly began my group interview. I asked questions around reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and culture. The questions seemed to energize the teachers and generate greater enthusiasm, passion, and excitement around the work. As they looked for ways to convey their ideas, they began telling stories, talking at the same time, and completing each others’ sentences much like the African-American teenage eyewitnesses who were interviewed at the child's party did--, simultaneously, with intensity and expression. The stories were not as much about the children as they were about what the children needed from the school (and teachers) to be successful. The following are representative examples of the way in which the teachers talked about children and their work in this school. (Each sentence represents a change in speakers):

*I remember the family of children that moved here after Hurricane Katrina;*

*Michael, Yolanda, and Marcus; they were so far behind academically but very hard workers...*

*...although all three children struggled socially, Yolanda appeared to be the most outwardly impacted by the trauma of the Katrina experience;*
We did a house visit after school so that we could talk to the family and develop a plan for the children's success in school;

They were temporarily staying with a family member, so there was not a lot of space in the house;

We all worked together to develop a plan for the children, including adjusted homework expectations...

...and we took turns working with them during lunch and after school tutoring them and providing additional class work support. After spending time with them, we were able to identify strengths and areas of needed growth...

...and the counselor also paired them up with peer buddies to help develop and improve their social interactions. She also located free family counseling and transition services...

...so by the end of the year, all three children had made significant progress, and Yolanda received a most improved certificate for her achievement in school...

The teachers were eager to communicate their shared norms and perspectives and their belief that it was their responsibility as a school teaching staff to ensure that every student achieves. In response to a question about the action that their staff takes to support their common values or expectations, one can see the excitement in the following dialogue as they talk about their strategies for working with every child, including those who display challenging behaviors:

We meet together, we do what we have to do, we work on ways in which we can motivate;

We know what our goals are and that’s what we try...

...and if you have a certain student that is falling behind, you let all their teachers know so you know to keep an eye on that kid...

...working collaboratively, communicating; it’s that communication that we have, that we have to...
...you don’t even know - a student could just fall through; you don’t know what’s going on...

...and if there is a child that has extenuating circumstances, like a death in the family, you know things have changed at home, if it’s enough that it is affecting their work, we let each other know;

You just can’t send a kid to the office, because they’re going to miss out....they can’t learn in the office at all...

...and that’s one of the things, we decided years ago, that you don’t go to timeout, you’re going to stay here with us and deal with us, you know, and that’s what we would do. We would deal with it amongst ourselves;

It works – it’s escape behavior that they just cut up to get put out;

Timeout is not your first option. I will pick up my phone and call home before I’ll send you out of the room. If you are doing behavior that will stop you from getting the learning that you need, then we need to call someone else to help you right now so you can stay focused and learn and not get you out of the classroom!

My “what’s happening” questions facilitated spirited conversations about the role of the school in giving children the opportunity to be resilient through a close look at the relationships between those who are responsible for delivering instruction. The overall perspective of the group can be summarized by the following quote by Ms. Oswald:

But I can speak for all of us sitting here - we go over and beyond what we are required to do; ...it means giving up your planning time to sit down with them (students) and go over something that they missed. Giving up your lunch, recess, encouraging them (students) to stay late for tutoring...if that means coming in an hour early before school, sometimes some of us stay two hours after school, and that’s what we have to do because we can’t do what we need to do during our planning time. So we have to either do it at home or stay after school. We’re constantly going over and beyond because whoever they are (black, poor, special education), they have to achieve!
Revisiting Collective Responsibility from a Culturally Centered Perspective

As discussed in the literature, “schools are social organizations made up of teachers who collectively impact the achievement of students in their building” (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, p. 197). Teachers’ influence over students’ school experiences, their own work lives, and their overall empowerment contribute very powerfully to teachers’ taking responsibility for student learning. As a result, the collective responsibility framework posits that teachers’ collective attitudes are critical characteristics impacting schools through their willingness to take responsibility for the learning of their students, and their collective commitment to caring about students. Consequently, reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values, which have an influence on student learning, are based not only on the degree to which teachers feel control over their work, but how they define their work and how they interact with their students, their colleagues, and their supervisors.

Social organizations could choose to define their work within the context of single-loop learning, limiting themselves to strategies that only improve their behavior. For example, an organization can improve behavior through reflective dialogue by observing their previous action, reflecting on what they have done, using the observation to decide how to change their next action, and applying that decision to another action (Senge, 2000, p. 93). For example, the school in this study used single-loop learning to improve collaboration behaviors within their organization by sharing expertise to create mutual understandings of confusing data. The teachers reviewed test scores, thought about what they did to cause the outcome, and then adjusted their behavior to achieve
their desired outcome. Thus, the subsequent implications for improving their
instructional behavior became their focus, as Ms. Oswald and Mr. Perry shared the
process they used to make meaning of the data during group interviews:

...we look at our lowest areas that we scored on for each grade level. We sit
down, write them out and come up with ways we can change that (instruction). Then we look at the state indicators that they (students) are low in and then we go
back and re-teach and see what we need to do to... we try to strengthen those
areas that are weak...

Since deprivatized practice within a cultural framework goes beyond making
behaviors better, single-loop learning is not as practical for this dimension. Deprivatized
practice requires the change in teacher beliefs that come from the critical cognitive
evaluation of double-loop learning, as it compels teachers as a group to believe that their
efforts are crucial in the learning process. Frankly, the sheer nature of schools as social
organizations could increase the likelihood that teachers engage in single-loop learning
behavior within the dimension of deprivatized practice, limiting their visits to the
classrooms of friends when the conditions are mutually collegial. Likewise, single-loop
learning behavior in collaboration that is not situated in culture could improve
cooperative behavior, disguising itself as team planning and sharing, yet remaining at the
conversation and discussion level of dialogue without a cultural shift. As with the other
dimensions that apply single-loop learning behavior within the collective responsibility
framework, shared norms and values devoid of a cultural perspective might take on the
facade of conformity, agreement, and compliant friendship behavior.

Missing from the collective responsibility literature is how schools engage in
critical cognitive evaluation of underlying values and assumptions that guide behavior in
the organization. The transformation of a school culture that makes itself "accessible to culturally diverse learners" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 16) could be cultivated through engagement in double-loop learning as it "... requires thinking about the way that you think, and then deliberately challenging your own norms, attitudes, and assumptions" (Senge, 2000, p. 95). Consequently, the extent to which the dimensions of teachers' work lives are imbedded in the foundation of the schools' shared basic beliefs function as an integral part of the schools’ culture. Thus, double-loop learning has “the capacity to question the established norm, change its behavior, and learn to do its job more effectively” (Senge, 2000, p. 94), thereby playing an integral role in defining the teachers' work within school culture.

The degree to which reflective dialogue occurs as an integral part of a schools’ culture can be determined when teachers engage in comprehensive conversations about teaching and learning and examine the assumptions basic to quality practice resulting in double-loop learning. The way in which deprivatized practice contributes to the development of school culture through double-loop learning occurs by challenging how teachers define and control their own work and develop their own practice. The belief that increased efforts by the group could result in increased student learning compel the teachers to engage in deprivatized practice, moving beyond the classroom doors of their colleagues to share and trade off the roles of mentor, advisor, or specialist as captured in Mr. Perry's quote during group interviews:

...we do share a lot...we talk a lot about what’s working, what’s not working, and materials. Ms. Nolan is actually supposed to come into our rooms next week and show us a writing strategy that worked with her students on Thursday.
The occurrence of collaboration around implementation of practice in double-loop learning implies that staff is engaged in a dialogue about developing specific skills for the effective execution of the task, therefore increasing their mutual support and responsibility for effective instruction (Little, 1982, 1990). Finally, *shared norms and values* through double-loop learning occurs if the group assumes responsibility for educating all students in spite of non-school factors, and recognizes how teacher beliefs about the students’ ability and expectations of the students' ability to learn impact academic success as represented by Ms. Miller's statement during group interviews:

...we think that everyone can learn no matter what kind of background they have! Yeah, high expectations for everyone is what I think we have!

Hence, *shared norms and values* are cultivated in school cultures in which professional communities affirm through language and action common beliefs and values underlying assumptions about children, learning, teaching, and the teachers' roles with a focus on the central social importance of teaching and socializing children.

Towards a Culturally Relevant Collective Responsibility

*We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity.* (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967, emphasis mine).

As stated in the literature review, culture defined is a pattern of shared basic beliefs and a learned set of assumptions based on a group’s shared history (Schein, 1992). For impoverished African-American children to achieve centricity in schools that by design, are culturally incongruent, teachers must locate their students within the context
of their own cultural references (Asante, 1990). Hence, schools can be made more accessible to culturally diverse learners (Ladson-Billings, 1994) through the integration of a cultural and collective responsibility framework. Within this culturally relevant collective responsibility framework, teachers as a collective are willing to take responsibility for the learning of their students, and support and encourage students to use their prior knowledge through their cultural center to access new learning.

In this case study, I found that linking cultural relevance with collective responsibility resulted in three emerging themes. The first theme of culturally relevant reflective dialogue, expressed as the "fierce urgency of now," represents the sense of urgency with which teachers took action to provide African-American students in poverty access to knowledge through teachers' self awareness about their work, guided by how teachers define their work. The second theme, culturally relevant collaboration, highlights the significance and depth of dialogue between the teachers about students, creating shared understanding and social interactions within the school. "Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected..." embodies the spirit of those who do not have access to this culturally congruent collaboration. Finally, the culturally relevant theme of shared norms and values highlights "...lost opportunity" now found, and focuses on the use of cultural congruence as a means of achieving the primary goal of schooling: Equitable access to knowledge by the students that schools are responsible for educating.

Grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), each theme is discussed as a way of thinking about how dimensions of collective responsibility occur.
Theme 1 - Culturally Relevant Reflective Dialogue

A recurring and dominant theme in this case study was the "...fierce urgency of now," which creates the immediate need in teachers to do "whatever they have to do" to ensure academic success for all students. This is a cultural theme that comes out of the historical struggle of education for African-Americans and serves as a piece of that legacy. Characterized by its sense of urgency, intensity, passion, and perseverance, the concept of culturally relevant reflective dialogue engages in meaningful, purposeful, and strategic discussion about children to implement effective pedagogical approaches to meet student needs. Within the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 1994), it manifests itself in conceptions of self and others (see Table 2.1) as the teacher functions as an artist and views teaching as an art. The teacher is part of the community and gives back through teaching with the belief that all students can succeed. The teacher helps students to make connections between their community, national, and global identities, and considers students as resilient, drawing knowledge from them.

With the understanding that "tomorrow is today" and "procrastination is the thief of time," teachers embracing the "fierce urgency of now" to educate economically disadvantaged African-American children was evident in multiple ways. One way in which the teachers engage in culturally relevant reflective dialogue is grounded in the teachers' conception of self as an artist and teaching as art (see Table 2.1). As captured in the observation of team meetings and discussions, the teachers work to develop strategies that create the optimal instructional outcome for their students. The principal noted that the teaching staff defines their work by the results of student learning, and they
engage in long range planning to create the most positive and effective learning experiences for every child. Creating these experiences extends beyond the instructional design of the classroom, and into the climate and culture of the entire school building. The principal also acknowledged that teachers take responsibility for their development in their craft, taking coursework, seeking professional development, and engaging in reading and research. They take ownership for their own personal skill development, and engage in self-reflection with the goal of improving their effectiveness as teachers. Most importantly, they are committed to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of students.

*Teachers also see themselves as part of the community by giving back through teaching* (see Table 2.1). Through their conception of others grounded in their self-awareness of their own work, the teaching staff is able to engage in culturally relevant reflective dialogue. The principal attributed the teachers' empathetic disposition to their own personal challenges as students. Based on their own educational experiences, they believe that they can help children overcome similar obstacles they experienced. They believe that they can reach every child because they know the children well enough to know where to intervene. Since the teachers believe that education is the only way to change the course of their students' lives, they have high expectations for themselves and for their children.

As a result of their need to contribute to the community through teaching, *the teachers believe that all students can succeed* (see Table 2.1). Once again, they take responsibility for student success by doing house visits, and tutoring students before and after school and during their planning period. They also put procedures in place to keep
students in the classroom when they misbehave. As a team, the teachers committed to working through challenging behaviors among themselves instead of sending students to the office. The teachers have the expectation that all students can successfully work in their classroom with the support of the team of teachers and supportive phone calls home.

*Furthermore, the teacher helps students to make connections between their community, national, and global identities* (see Table 2.1). As stated in the parent student handbook, "our goal is to help each student become an effective citizen in our democracy, where they can accept the responsibilities and obligations to participate in their future" (Excerpts from 2007 Parent/Student Handbook Letter). In our discussion, the principal affirmed that the teachers have pride in the work that they do, they want their students to be productive and successful, and they expect them to go to college because they realize that education is their ticket out of poverty: "They [teachers] recognize that is why they are here," she says. Accordingly, the teaching staff works to integrate relevant pedagogy as observed in Ms. Miller's language arts class when students were asked to apply their solutions from the story to problems they had really experienced, or in Mr. Perry's social studies class when students were asked to determine ways in which people have affected the physical environment in our state.

Finally, the teacher engages in culturally relevant reflective dialogue by *drawing knowledge out of their resilient students* (see Table 2.1). The teaching staff consistently takes part in respectful dialogue with students, remaining patient, positive and responsive as Ms. Oswald did when working with a student experiencing test anxiety. Just as effective was Mr. Perry's methodical and repetitive approach to instruction used to
provide students with the information they needed to successfully respond to questions and skillfully interact and participate in the lesson. Thus, the teacher's conception of their own work with their students defined by them as "the most important work that they'll do" advances their resolve to engage in culturally relevant reflective dialogue to meet the needs of all students.

Theme 2 - Culturally Relevant Collaboration

Another recurring theme in this case study emerged through the interwoven language and expression of group dialogue which created shared understandings for improved academic outcomes. Since the beginning of time, storytelling has been an important event in the African and African-American communities. Through storytelling, shared understanding was created, questions were answered, history was conveyed, and lifelong lessons were taught and learned. At present, the interchange of history, triumphs, accomplishments, painful experiences, and lessons learned occurs as a continuous flow of information and exchange of communication within its community as our interdependence and interconnectedness with each other is the emphasis. Though "life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected...," those who are a part of the exchange go away from the experience with a sense of respect, dignity, and pride. Thus, inherent in dialogue within the culturally relevant framework (Ladson-Billings, 1994) are conceptions of social relations (see Table 2.2) which promotes a teacher-student relationship that is fluid, humanely equitable, and extends to interaction beyond the classroom and into the community. Hence, fluidity, connectedness, and collaborative
responsibility all serve as attributes of the concept of culturally relevant collaboration. The teachers in this study demonstrate a connectedness with each other which extends to the students as they encourage all students to work as a community of learners. As a result, students learn collaboratively and are expected to teach each other and be responsible for each other.

While cultural relevance focuses on students, culturally relevant collaboration extends the collective responsibility dimension of collaboration which focuses on the social relations between teachers to the teacher-student relationship in several ways. First, the teacher-student relationship is fluid, humanely equitable, and extends to interaction beyond the classroom and into the community (see Table 2.2). This teaching staff focuses a great deal of attention on engaging in respectful dialogue and verbal exchanges with students, private re-direction when needed, use of proximity to protect privacy, providing clear explanations and explicit instructions, and eliminating surprises. This social interaction is based on the principal's expectation that teachers get to know the children. As a result, all staff greets students by name, and all teachers are able to respectfully interact with all students. The breakfast teacher was able to call the names of students across various grade levels, and Ms. Oswald was able to communicate changes to an entire grade level of students to effectively transition on the field trip. In addition, teachers correct students in private to minimize embarrassment, and provide many verbal and visual cues to ensure that students successfully complete academic and behavioral tasks. Consequently, Ms. Miller was able to provide an off-task student with the support he needed without bringing attention to him. Relationships with students and their
families outside of school are even in place. The teachers go to their students' softball games and other outside activities as they build relationships to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of their students.

Culturally relevant collaboration is also apparent as the teachers in this study demonstrate a connectedness with all students, and a community of learners is encouraged (see Table 2.2). As teachers develop relationships with students, they are able to cultivate a learning community in the classroom as observed in Ms. Miller's class. Ms. Miller made sure that she connected with every student moving from student to student during her morning language arts lesson, monitoring progress and providing feedback. Ms. Klein and Ms. Oswald also moved around the room from student to student to monitor progress and encourage students to be persistent in their efforts to complete their assignments.

This connectedness is not limited to academics and class work. Students who have extenuating circumstances receive additional support from the teachers. For example, some students who were displaced by the hurricane were paired with peer buddies to help develop and improve their social interactions, and the counselor located free family counseling and transition services. The principal also connects with the students as evidenced by the schedule change she made after learning from the students that having reading as soon as they arrive to school is uncomfortable for them. By providing students with an additional 30 minutes to ease into reading each morning, they seem to feel less pressure about the reading period. The teachers worked to create a
building climate that is family and community-oriented that supports the needs of its students.

Lastly, in culturally relevant collaboration, *students learn collaboratively and are expected to teach each other and be responsible for each other* (see Table 2.2). As students began sharing their responses with each other in Ms. Miller's class, she required them to explain their answers to each other using higher level questioning prompts and applying their responses to real life situations. Mr. Perry's students had an opportunity to work in pairs to develop their responses. In each class, students were given the opportunity to work with their classmates to produce quality work through interwoven dialogue which creates shared understandings for improved academic outcomes. Thus, no students were left "...standing bare, naked, and dejected..."

Theme 3 - Culturally Relevant Shared Norms and Values

The final dominant theme in this case study centered around the notion of an equitable distribution of knowledge to all students. Years of oppression have proven to be no match for the resiliency of African-American people. Despite inhumane treatment of those experiencing abduction and enslavement, the people of African descent in the United States were able to maintain a culture built on the Africentric principles of interdependency, interconnectedness, spirituality, human centeredness, holism, and harmony (Carruthers, 1999; Colin & Guy, 1998; Flannery, 1994; Karenga, 1995; Schiele, 1994; Sheared, 1996; Warfield-Coppock, 1995). Because schools are culturally aligned with the Eurocentric political and social democracy that values controlling, materialistic,
individualistic, competitive, fragmented, conflictual, emotionally distant, rational, and linear ways of being, inequitable educational opportunities based on this cultural incongruence are common (Warfield-Coppock, 1995). This "lost opportunity" however can be recaptured within the third theme of culturally relevant shared norms and values. Re-created knowledge, critical enthusiasm, and excellence in diversity undergird this concept and fundamentally change teacher beliefs and expectations about their students' capacity to achieve in spite of non-school factors.

The school is the only institution in our society specifically charged with providing a disciplined encounter with all the subject matters of the human conversation (Goodlad, 1990). Unfortunately, some of the greatest inequities in schooling occur around access to knowledge, the primary goal of schooling (Goodlad, 1990). The lack of cultural synchronization between the cultural frame of school and the students it is responsible for educating could result in an "opportunity lost." Conceptions of knowledge (see Table 2.3) within the culturally relevant pedagogical framework (Ladson-Billings, 1994) as a staff’s shared norms and values, however, recreates knowledge as shared by teachers and students resulting in opportunities now found. Knowledge is viewed critically, and the teacher is passionate about content. The teachers help students develop necessary skills, and see excellence as a complex standard that respects student diversity and individual differences. With no excuses, the teachers create an environment that supports children and meets their academic needs through their cultural context.

Culturally relevant shared norms and values recreate knowledge that is shared by teachers and students (see Table 2.3). Initially, knowledge is broken down into pieces
accessible to the individual students, and presented in ways that are meaningful to students. For instance, Mr. Perry's classroom walls are filled with student work posted and arranged by content area for students to reference. Accordingly, the quality of verbal responses from the children in Mr. Perry's class was very advanced, and was shared between Mr. Perry and his students. Subsequently, knowledge is viewed critically in culturally relevant classrooms, and the teacher is passionate about content (see Table 2.3). Valued knowledge resides in the centricity of student culture and must be presented through the teacher's instructional fervor and enthusiasm. At the core of this level of instruction is the teacher's understanding of the content that is to be taught. A commitment to continuous learning and professional development exhibits the teaching staff's desire to increase their effectiveness.

*The teacher then helps students develop necessary skills, and sees excellence as a complex standard that respects student diversity and individual differences* (see Table 2.3). Teachers who know their student learners holistically can stop a lesson and make needed adjustments to increase individual student mastery of the content as Ms. Klein did during her lesson. Providing students with a structure that supports achievement is also critical. Ms. Miller helps students develop necessary skills by praising students that started work immediately, recognizing them as "self starters" and providing step by step guidance for completion of assignment. Mr. Perry provides a model for organization of student work spaces, materials, and supplies. An organizational structure is evident as students raise their hand if they are interested in responding, and all students remain attentive being respectful of the person who is speaking. Mr. Perry's repetitive
instructions interspersed with student praise also serves to support individual differences and offers another technique for reaching all students. Mr. Perry demonstrates this awareness for diversity and differences through individualized support for individual reading, and passion about content was conveyed through the insightful and comprehensive verbal responses from his students.

Finally, the teacher creates an environment that supports children and meets their needs based on their cultural and academic knowledge of what students need to be successful (see Table 2.3). Shared norms which are culturally relevant seeks to create cultural congruence for its students. For example, the influx of students who did not speak English had a profound effect on the teachers' notion of school culture. They found themselves hastily learning everything they could about the culture of the newest students in their building with the goal of situating the newest culture within the existing school culture. The principal noted that teachers find it important to have a positive school culture and climate so they can develop positive relationships with students, families, and each other. The teachers believe that they can meet all students' needs if they know the culture of their students.

The academic culture of a school is a significant component of school culture. Culture is a pattern of shared basic beliefs that teachers learned as they "solved its problems, which worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1992, p. 12). By identifying a systematic approach to disaggregating confusing data resulting in improvement in instruction, Mr. Perry positively influences
the school's academic culture. Also, when teachers communicate concerns about a student who may be falling behind and notify all of the teachers so they can keep an eye on that student, they collectively contribute to the educational culture of the school. As a result, the teachers took turns working with students of a displaced family during lunch and after school, tutoring them and providing additional class work. After spending time with the children, the teachers were able to identify strengths and areas of needed growth to support their academic, social, and emotional needs. Implementation of strategies that re-create knowledge and attend to diversity creates achievement opportunities for students who may not typically experience achievement in school because of cultural dissonance.

Conclusion

This qualitative inquiry sought to explore what was happening in a school that was making an instructional difference for African-American children experiencing economic hardship. Using the collective responsibility framework, I engaged in data collection informed by the dimensions of teachers’ work lives. Through reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration, and shared norms and values, I found a school of teachers who consistently supported the academic success of all of its learners in spite of non-school factors. Through the attitudes and behaviors of these teachers emerged recurring themes that extended the collective responsibility framework. Situated in cultural relevance, the role that conception of self and others, social interaction, and knowledge played in the implementation and advancement of
collective responsibility dimensions was revealed. Identified as culturally relevant reflective dialogue, culturally relevant collaboration, and culturally relevant shared norms and values, I was able to illuminate the attributes of urgency, intensity, passion, and perseverance; fluidity, connectedness, and collaborative responsibility; and re-created knowledge, critical enthusiasm, and excellence in diversity as the response to what is happening in a school that is making an instructional difference for African-American children facing economic difficulty.

Culturally relevant collective responsibility is the lens through which I interpret my research data, identifying how the dimensions of teachers' work lives can be made culturally relevant, and why it matters to the collective responsibility literature. In Chapter 5, I will specifically discuss the findings and implications of my research, and recommendations based on my analysis of culturally relevant collective responsibility.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

...all children are eminently educable and the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education (Edmonds, 1979, p. 19).

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore collective responsibility and the work of teachers towards the academic success of economically disadvantaged African-American students. The research questions that launched my study included an inquiry into the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and collective responsibility, with a focus on what the relationship looks like and how it influences the academic success of African-American students in poverty.

Recognizing that teachers’ collective attitudes impact schools, I used a framework that would support my inquiry by examining the ways in which a group’s willingness to take responsibility for the learning of their students serves as an organizational property of schools and an indicator of collective responsibility. The dimensions of teachers’ work lives influenced students’ learning based not only on the degree to which teachers felt control over their work, and how they interacted with their students, their colleagues, and their superiors, but also how they defined their work. Thus, collective responsibility within the cultural relevance framework served as a conceptual structure to explore the way in which an organization of teachers work towards positive academic outcomes for African-American students in poverty.
In an effort to identify indicators of collective responsibility, I extracted questions from a district survey given annually in every school that correlated with the four dimensions of teachers’ work lives - *reflective dialogue, deprivatized practice, collaboration and shared norms and values*. To gain insight about academic success through the cultural framework lens of collective responsibility, I engaged in the case study of a school that experienced academic success with impoverished African-American children. My fieldwork not only revealed indicators of collective responsibility among the teacher participants in the study, but also the basic underlying assumptions that contributed to the emergence of their culturally responsive framework.

Summary of Findings

Through this case study, I found that teachers who work within the culturally relevant collective responsibility framework possess the following attributes:

**Finding 1:** Through culturally relevant reflective dialogue, teachers do whatever it takes to ensure academic success for all students based on their conception of self and others characterized by a sense of urgency, intensity, passion, and perseverance.

Teachers engaged in meaningful, purposeful, and strategic discussions about children to implement effective pedagogical approaches to meet all students’ academic needs. In this case study, teacher behavior indicates that they clearly define their work by the results of student learning, have high expectations for themselves and for their children, and have
an unwavering and passionate commitment to meeting the needs of all students, "whatever it takes":

_The teachers define their work as the most important work that they will do; they are committed to student learning; they associate the achievement of their students with their own personal effectiveness; they want their students to be productive and successful, and they expect them to go to college because they realize that education is their ticket out of poverty; they recognize that is why they are here (Excerpts from principal interview)._

Open to where the dialogue led, teachers took responsibility for their professional and academic development and growth. Always looking inward, their reflective dialogue focused on changes they needed to make, not the children. Thus, their pedagogical practices were influenced by their seeing the students as resilient, "...with strengths as opposed to seeing them solely as having needs" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 209).

Teachers who engage in culturally relevant reflective dialogue recognize the value of their gift to teach effectively, and are confident that they can reach every child in relevant ways.

**Finding 2: Through culturally relevant collaboration, teachers' dialogue reveal their humanely equitable interconnectedness and interdependence based on their conception of social relations characterized by fluidity, connectedness, and collaborative responsibility.**

Culturally relevant collaboration actually emerged through the way in which teachers engaged in dialogue and social interaction. The hallmark of this communal dimension was teachers' interdependence and interconnectedness as they verbally engaged in a dynamic, continuous flow of information and exchange of communication within their
community. This connectedness transferred seamlessly to student interactions, both with teachers and other students. A humanely equitable and respectful relationship was evident in this community of learners as they partnered in learning across the organization. In addition to the consistency of clear explanations and explicit instructions, many verbal and visual cues were given to ensure that everyone had equitable access to the successful completion of academic and behavioral tasks. More notably, everyone had the opportunity to learn collaboratively.

**Finding 3: Through culturally relevant shared norms and values, teachers' efforts are focused on the goal of equitable distribution of knowledge to all students based on their conception of knowledge characterized by re-created knowledge, critical enthusiasm, and excellence in diversity.**

Culturally relevant shared norms and values were apparent in teachers' collective contribution to the educational culture of the school. Since knowledge is viewed critically, their underlying assumptions about knowledge and excellence shaped the organization's behavior resulting in an unyielding focus on learning. The teachers made knowledge accessible to the individual students by presenting it in ways that were meaningful to students through their cultural context. Through their passion and understanding about the content to be taught, the teachers created an environment that supported children holistically to meet their academic needs. The teachers were unwilling to allow distractions, such as inappropriate and off-task behaviors, language
barriers, displacement, or extenuating circumstances, take the attention away from student mastery of the content.

I also discovered distinctive nuances of culturally relevant collective responsibility observed through the dimensions of teachers’ work lives within the context of school. From my findings, culturally relevant collective responsibility emerged from the urgency, intensity, passion, and perseverance of *reflective dialogue* as the foundation that leads to the interconnectedness of *collaboration* to the re-created knowledge of *shared norms and values*. Unlike the organizational culture model that positions the dimensions of teachers' work lives horizontally with no distinction among them (Figure 2.1, page 13), positioning the dimensions vertically shows how culturally relevant collective responsibility is developed (see Figure 5.1).
Within the culturally relevant collective responsibility framework, *reflective dialogue* functions as the foundation of the dimensions of teachers’ work lives requiring teachers to be self-aware about their work and engage in thoughtful verbal exchanges with other teachers. In theory, a school could engage in *reflective dialogue* without participating in the other three dimensions. On the other hand, without the comprehensive conversations about teaching and learning and the examining of assumptions basic to quality practice through *reflective dialogue*, members of a social community could not affirm *shared norms and values* - the common beliefs and values underlying their assumptions about children, learning, teaching, and teachers’ roles.
Based on these shared attributes, I found that teachers called on each other to discuss the development of skills related to the implementation of practice through collaboration. Since “organizational learning is dependent on individual learning and the sharing of that learning with others in the organization” (Collinson & Cook, p. 7), shared norms and values are developed in organizations through the remaining dimensions of teachers' work lives.

Missing from the integration of collective responsibility and cultural relevance within this case study is culturally relevant deprivatized practice. Though each dimension within the collective responsibility framework emerged between the school and its learners through the culturally relevant conceptions of self and others, social relations, and knowledge, culturally relevant deprivatized practice was not as apparent in this study. A loose connection to the conceptions of social relations existed as teacher interactions extended beyond the classroom and into the community, however the focus of deprivatized practice is teacher interactions with each other, and methods that improve both classroom practice and collegial relationships. Although not as prevalent in this case study, indicators of deprivatized practice also surfaced in teachers' dialogue with each other detailing how they engage in their collaborative efforts. Cultural relevance in all other dimensions emerged directly from the relationships between teachers and students which were influenced by the teachers' relationships with each other.
Implications and Recommendations

My inquiry of collective responsibility as a way of providing access to knowledge for all students prompted me to engage in this case study of a high poverty, high minority school achieving academic success. The premise of this research was to gain depth of understanding about the role of collective responsibility within the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, their relationship, and its influence on the academic success of African-American students in poverty.

Implications of the culturally relevant collective responsibility framework on policies, practices, and future research was shaped by the teachers' interactions with each other and with their students. Indicators of their reflective practice and shared norms and values, as well as the remarkable way in which dialogue occurred among the teachers clearly communicated the culture of their organization. What provided the greatest understanding, and spoke the loudest and clearest were the collective voices from the study. Though I did not ask teachers for verbal recommendations, I was able to hear their suggestions by experiencing their way of being through metacommunication - "the way in which the relational dimension of a message shapes or informs the content of that message" (Sandine, 1996, p. 16). Thus, their behavioral recommendations emanate from the following implications of teachers' work within the culturally relevant collective responsibility framework:
Implications for principal education and preparation

Teachers in this case study were able to engage in culturally relevant reflective dialogue focused on meaningful, purposeful, and strategic pedagogical approaches to meet all students' academic needs because they had the support of a principal who saw herself as a transformational leader in sustaining a school environment that facilitates culturally relevant collective responsibility. The transformational leader monitors and assesses the culture within the school, diagnoses disorders and areas of vulnerability that can impede student academic success, and supports modifications and adjustments for student success (Schein, 1992). Since a strong relationship between the leadership style of the principal and school culture exists, it is imperative that the principal leads the school staff in developing and maintaining a respective cultural center for its students within the larger cultural context of schooling. Since culture “surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others” (Schein, 1992), it is essential that there is leadership support in place to ensure a student-centered school culture. As a result, reflective leadership sustains a reflective school culture.

Implications for professional development

Teachers in this case study were able to engage in culturally relevant collaboration focused on the implementation of effective pedagogical approaches because they participated in continuing education and professional development opportunities through the fostering of reflective dialogue in their school. “Opportunities for individuals to work with and learn from others on an ongoing basis” promotes learning in the
workplace (Smylie, 1995, p. 103). Thus, the progressive aspect of collective responsibility provides the perfect model for ongoing embedded professional development in the organizational learning framework. Senge (2000) suggests that organizational learning is a cycle of continuous learning rather than a one-time exercise. As a learning organization, schools can become immersed in the dimensions of teachers’ work lives in phases, developing the mental models of organizational learning through *reflective dialogue*, progressing to team learning through *deprivatized practice* and *collaboration*, and advancing to shared vision through *shared norms and values*. Mastery of *shared norms and values* assures that a school will affirm through *language* and *action* common beliefs and values underlying assumptions about children, learning, teaching, and teachers’ roles in student academic success. Consequently, comprehensive high-quality culturally relevant collectively responsible professional development that infuses double loop learning and culturally relevant pedagogy will alleviate the inconsistency between the language and action of schools and the students it serves.

**Implications for teacher selection**

Teachers in this case study shared culturally relevant norms and values focused on the implementation of effective pedagogical approaches cultivated from their reflective dialogue and collaboration efforts. School culture is “a continual process in which attitudes, values, and skills continually reinforce each other.” (Senge, 2000, p. 326). Consequently, the attitudes, values, and skills of teachers are vital since "education revolves around the work done by teachers" (Lee & Smith, 1996, p. 104). This study
suggests that the integration of cultural relevance within an organizational learning framework supports cultivating attitudes and beliefs of teachers about the academic success of African-American children in poverty. As such, culturally relevant reflective shared norms and values have implications for teacher selection, including screening and recruitment.

Integration of culturally relevant collective responsibility could support teacher selection in two ways. A teacher education program entrenched in a culturally responsive organizational learning framework could support better alignment of individuals' interest in the field of teaching through a stronger foundation and better understanding of the art of teaching. Furthermore, a culturally responsive curriculum could also support teachers as they prepare to provide more access to education to culturally diverse learners.

Recommendations to districts and colleges of education

Based on my findings in this case study of teachers who work within the culturally relevant collective responsibility framework, I recommend the following:

**Recommendation 1: Restructure principal education and preparation programs with an emphasis on transformational leadership to empower teachers.**

A transformational leader that leads the school staff in positively impacting academic outcomes for all students influences how teachers define their work and the cultivation of shared norms and values within the school. Schein (1992) notes that the presence of
transformational leadership is not only evident by intellectual leadership (university) and supportive leadership (principal/teacher), but also facilitative leadership (shared power). In the absence of transformational leadership, I believe that the school culture will fail to support success for all students. Teacher will not be empowered to share the task of ensuring academic success of all students, lack of teacher accountability will result in lost opportunities for students to experience cultural congruence within the curriculum, and teachers will fail to assume responsibility for meeting the needs of all students as the focus shifts from student resiliency to student deficits. How teachers' define their work will be obscure resulting in lowered expectations for both teachers and their students. Thus academic success for poor, African-American students will be practically impossible in a school culture that lacks transformational leadership.

**Recommendation 2: Revise teacher professional development opportunities to include all elements of culturally relevant collective responsibility.**

Culturally relevant collectively responsible professional development provides teachers with the opportunity to engage in collaborative, double-loop learning which enables them to learn to learn by examining the values, beliefs, and assumptions about implementation of effective pedagogical strategies to meet the academic needs of all students. If culturally relevant continuing education and professional development through the formation of professional community does not occur, a school culture that fails to value or respect student contributions to learning will emerge based on the unilateral exchange of information and communication from the teachers' expert position to the students'
lower status. The teacher will be dominant with greater significance placed on the teacher perspective, and limited access for students to attain success. Sharing among teachers, and between teachers and students will not be valued, and teachers' unwillingness to share in learning will result in limited learning opportunities. Disjointed relationships will result in a school culture of mistrust from an assimilationist perspective, devoid of opportunities to engage in double-loop learning.

**Recommendation 3: Analyze teacher selection protocols in college of education programs and school districts, scrutinizing capacity for candidates to develop attributes of the culturally relevant collective responsibility.**

Educators must share culturally relevant norms and values focused on the implementation of effective pedagogical and instructional approaches that provide equitable access to knowledge. Unfortunately, teaching has been a "those who can't do, teach" field. With less than competitive compensation and flawed preparation and readiness programs, teaching has been a "learn as you go" business attracting a wide range of individuals from those who believe that teaching is their calling to those who simply need income. Additionally, incentives for teaching in high poverty areas (i.e. forgiveness of student loans) can have an adverse effect, attracting those who are further motivated by compensation. Consequently, locating those who are dedicated to the art of teaching and committed to teaching in schools with high percentages of marginalized children can be problematic.
Recommendations for future research

The merge of collective responsibility and cultural relevance as my contribution to the literature in this introductory case study pushes towards emancipatory work which could result in a change in the way we approach educating poor and minority students. As a researcher, I recommend additional inquiry in the form of longitudinal studies that seek to expand the context of culturally relevant collective responsibility as a means to provide equitable access to academic success by:

- exploring leadership's role in the development of culturally relevant collectively responsible schools.
- broadening inquiry to include child's perspectives, non-teaching staff's perspective, and parent's perspective.
- extending case studies to determine if there are common threads across elementary and secondary schools, suburban and urban districts, and among other students of color.

Conclusion

Collective responsibility is evident when teachers believe that increased teacher efforts result in increased student learning. The group of teachers in a school that believe their efforts are crucial in the learning process, and they are willing to take responsibility for all students, regardless of the students' aptitude or social characteristics are engaging in collectively responsible efficacious behavior. In this setting, all students, including economically deprived African-American children, have equitable access to knowledge.
Teachers' influence over student success contributes powerfully to their attitude and behavior, impacting their level of dialogue, their willingness to engage in deprivatized practice and collaboration, and their commitment to shared norms and values - all resulting in a school culture that supports success for all students.

Through positive culture, schools can make relevant connections so that knowledge and opportunity are accessible to all of its learners. Culturally relevant reflective dialogue provides students access to knowledge through the teachers' awareness of self and others about their work, and how they define their work. Culturally relevant collaboration facilitates the shared understanding and social interactions between the teacher and students that supports academic success for all students. Culturally relevant shared norms and values ensures equitable access to knowledge for all students by means of a culturally congruent approach to teaching and learning. Implications of each emergent theme has a significant impact on future research.

Final Reflections

As a principal practitioner and novice researcher, I experienced an entire range of emotions as I conducted this study. I felt empowered as I gained knowledge and engaged in the learning process, and I felt powerless when it was outside of my role to enact change. I acknowledge my experienced principal bias for the teachers in my study when analyzing data and reporting my findings because I enjoy working with teachers who are unwavering in their commitment to children. The teachers in the case study spoke and behaved with conviction about their work. Greater than loving the children and more
than teaching the children, they conveyed a true desire to reach the children by effectively educating children in their cultural center.

I also acknowledge my inexperienced researcher self that spent time with the data to seek meaning and gain understanding about what was really happening for these African-American students who endured economic hardship and deprivation. Triangulation of the data was essential to my understanding of the culture and patterns that emerged in the study. If I were limited to the survey, interviews, or observations, I would not have gained the depth of understanding about collective responsibility in the school setting or the role that a cultural framework plays. Analysis of a variety of data gave me insight into the established culture of the building.

In conclusion, I found culturally relevant collective responsibility to be a viable option for schools that seek to address low student academic success for African-American students in poverty based on my immersion in this study. Teachers as a group within the culture of school possess beliefs and expectations which reveal themselves in language and action resulting in outcomes for students. Through dimensions of teachers’ work lives and attention to culturally congruent pedagogy, a culturally relevant collective responsibility framework builds the schools’ capacity to effectively teach all students by becoming a culturally responsive learning organization.

[Yes] We Can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us (Edmonds, 1979, p. 23, emphasis mine).
APPENDIX A

EXTRACTED QUESTIONS AND TWO YEAR AVERAGE RESPONSES (2006 AND 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Shared norms and values</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>NR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This school has shared vision that guides instruction.</td>
<td>(Shared norms and values)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The principal at this school leads the staff toward developing or implementing a shared vision. (Shared norms and values)</td>
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<td>3. The principal’s leadership focuses this school on student learning. (Shared norms and values)</td>
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<td>12. Staff members from diverse backgrounds work well together at this school. (Collaboration)</td>
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<td>24. An atmosphere of collaboration exists in this building. (Collaboration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Staff members have input into the selection of inservice topics and formats. (Reflective dialogue)</td>
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<td>41. Teachers at this school support each other in their efforts to improve student academic performance. (Deprivatized practice)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
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