African American Teachers’ Perceptions and Attitudes of their Latino Students: A Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT
Racial and ethnically incongruent teacher student pairings (i.e., African American teachers and Latino students) are common in U.S. urban schools, but most studies focus on White teachers' who teach students of color. In this mixed methods research study, 9 African American teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward their Latino students (n = 897) were examined using individual and focus group interviews, 2 teacher attitude scales, and analysis of Latino students’ test scores. Content analysis revealed 7 cross-case themes related to African American teachers' perceptions of their Latino students: level of parental support; gender differences and biases; language barriers; nativity (country of origin); racially congruent student cultural processes; impact of the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; and cultural stereotypes and biases. These results then were compared to the teachers’ attitude scale results and Latino student test scores. Implications for African American teacher and Latino student incongruence are discussed based on the Teacher Racial Consciousness Duality Model that emerged from this research.

Few mixed methods research studies have focused on examining teacher and student diversity (e.g., Warren, Pacino, & Lawrence, 2011). Moreover, research on teacher-student racial incongruence, or when the teacher is racially, ethnically, or culturally different from the students in a classroom setting, primarily has focused on White teachers who teach students of color (Boucher, 2016; Den Brok, Wubbels, Veldman, & Van Tartwijk, 2009). Few researchers have examined the experiences of African American teachers who work in urban schools where most students are Latino. Although more than 85% of U.S. teachers are White, African American teachers comprise the largest percentage of non-White teachers working in U.S. urban schools (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Meanwhile, between 2000 and 2013, the enrollment of students who identify as Latino or Hispanic increased from 16% to 24%, and most of these children are concentrated in urban schools (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Snyder & Dillow, 2015).

Over the past few decades, significant shifts in U.S. school demographics has led to increased urban school segregation and greater concentrations of African American teachers who teach students who are Latino (Jacobsen, Frankenberg, & Lenhoff, 2012). Demographic realities of increased U.S. school segregation, particularly in urban school districts, increase the likelihood that African American teachers will have numerous students who are Latino in their classrooms. Therefore, more research is needed to explore the experiences of African American teachers who teach predominately Latino students to uncover nuances in teacher-racial incongruence that might inform teaching practices. A mixed methods research approach allowed for multiple data collection measures and analysis of data from attitude scales, interviews, focus group interviews, and test scores practices that support student achievement.

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Specifically, the purpose of this study was to apply a partially mixed concurrent transformative design to examine select African American teachers’ social group identities, their perceptions of and attitudes toward their Latino students, and what relationship, if any, these perceptions and attitudes might have had on their Latino students’ academic performance. Student academic performance was measured by state-mandated examinations commonly used to promote school accountability. Additionally, in conducting this study, the researchers hoped to explore socio-, cultural, and historical commonalities and differences in the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of African American teachers who teach Latino students. By doing this, we hoped to contribute to literature informing the contemporary realities of segregation and teacher-student incongruences in urban public schools.

Three research questions were addressed in this mixed methods research study that comprised qualitative (QUAL), quantitative (QUAN), and mixed methods (MIXED) research questions—yielding what Plano Clark and Badee (2010) referred to as combination mixed methods research questions. These questions were as follows: (a) What were selected African American teachers’ perceptions of their Latino students? (QUAL); (b) What was the relationship between the African American teachers’ attitudes, as measured by language and racial identity attitude scales, and Latino student performance in mathematics and reading as measured by a state-mandated test? (QUAN); and (c) To what extent do the perceptions of selected African American teachers regarding the Latino students in their classrooms reflect the academic performance of those students in mathematics and reading as measured by state-mandated test scores? (MIXED).

Review of Related Literature

In considering shifting demographics around the world, some scholars stress that studies comparing student achievement gaps among racial and ethnic groups should extend beyond the Black-White racial dichotomy that dominates much educational research (Charles, 2000; Jacobsen et al., 2012). Instead, these researchers emphasize the importance of examining multiple complexities of student identity, culture, diversity, and immigration with added attention to the realities of contemporary public school segregation patterns that tend to isolate students of color in urban schools. Moreover, researchers call for more attention to examining minority-to-minority intergroup dynamics such as those between African American teachers and students who identify as Latino (Orfield & Lee, 2006).

Teacher-Student Racial/Ethnic Incongruence and Teachers’ Perceptions

Several scholars have investigated how race and ethnicity might influence teachers’ perceptions of students and, ultimately, impact overall academic performance in teacher-student racially/ethnically incongruent educational settings (Jacoby-Senghor, Sinclair, & Shelton, 2015). Scholars have noted links between teachers’ perceptions of their students and their interactions with students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Moreover, teachers’ expectations of and interactions with students, as reflected in the quality of lessons and course content, and the type and amount of attention, recognition, discipline, and reinforcement strategies that a teacher employs, influences students’ self-perceptions (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2015). Teacher attitudes also influence decisions regarding student placement in specialized instructional programs, such as gifted and talented or special education programs (Gresham, MacMillan, & Bocian, 1997). Researchers of race- and ethnic-based teachers’ perceptions of students’ abilities have suggested that even subtle teacher communication can influence student performance and that teachers hold statistically significantly more positive perceptions of their White students than of their African American and Latino students (Ferguson, 2003).

Some researchers have demonstrated that African American and Latino children indeed do perceive race-based differential treatment by their respective teachers (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). When teachers consciously or subconsciously lower their expectations of students, this promulgates exclusive classroom climates that thwart student learning, especially for minority students (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Yet, few studies exist that compare the perceptions and attitudes of non-White racial or ethnic minority teachers who teach other non-White racial or ethnic minority students and the potential impact of this racial-ethnic incongruence on student performance (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004).

Teachers and Social Group Identity

Some researchers examining teachers in racially incongruent settings have utilized social group identity as a core concept (Farnsworth, 2010). Social group identity manifests in teachers’ behaviors in multicultural settings
(Farnsworth, 2010). Overall, the notion of racial identity has remained nebulous in the academic literature (Helms, 1996) and often is used interchangeably with ethnic and cultural identity. Racial identity might best be defined as, "... the psychological consequences of individuals being socialized in a society in which a person is either privileged (i.e., White) or disadvantaged (e.g., African Americans) because of her or his racial classification" (Helms, 1996, pp. 153). Helms (1996) contended that although People of Color might have some overlapping racial identities, this did not predicate that these groups shared the same world view. In this study, the researchers acknowledge that Latinos can represent various races, skin colors, and racial combinations (e.g., Black, White, Mestizo, Asian); however, for the purposes of this study, Latino students are assumed to be immigrant students themselves or recent descendants of Latin American immigrants. Latinos and African Americans as referred to in this research are assumed to have histories that are distinct in the U.S. social context.

Phinney (1992) contended that group identification first must be predicated on an individual’s own acknowledgment of group affiliation such as ethnicity. This allows the individual to develop evaluative positions that are relative to in-group and out-group recognition. Second, ethnic identification typically drives both individual and collective behaviors that are often the results of desires to perpetuate cultural and ethnic traditions. Third, ethnic identity usually occurs at the individual level along a continuum and is generally associated with the degree to which one feels bound to her/his particular ethnic group. Finally, ethnic identity is considered a fluid process that tends to evolve over the maturation of the individual.

One stage of social identity theory (SIT) originally proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), social comparison, refers to members of an established group’s inclination to compare their traits and attributes to members of another group. In order to maintain self-esteem, these comparisons must be undertaken to remain aligned more favorably with the group that has been identified as the in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the United States, Whites are considered to be the dominant, privileged group and, historically, assimilation into U.S. society has been assumed to be gained by adopting a Eurocentric framework (Massey & Denton, 1993). This adoption of a Eurocentric framework relates to the notion of White racial framing in which socially construed characteristics such as negative racial images, stereotypes, and interpretations of “the other” create and sustain both formal and informal racial hierarchies (Feagin & Cobas, 2008).

Distinguishing Social Group Identity Characteristics of African Americans and Latinos

Throughout this study, the overwhelming distinguishing social group identity theory characteristic reflected by the African American participants in distinguishing themselves from their Latino students was the theme of language (Levine, Irizarry, & Bunch, 2008; Lowery & Wout, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Sattin-Bajaj, 2010). Here, these native English-speaking teachers employed language as a measure of assimilation into the Eurocentric framework (Kaufman, 2003; Massey & Denton, 1993; Sears, Citrin, & Van Laar, 1995). As such, these African American teachers experienced a sense of superiority as native English language speakers while working in the setting of a predominantly Spanish-speaking school community. Language, in addition to race, has been implicated as an underlying cause of U.S. school resegregation and was evident in this case (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Additionally, the teachers’ English language abilities might have maintained the African Americans’ in-group/out-group status in relation to Latinos and the concept of White racial framing (Feagin & Cobas, 2008).

Still, systemic inequalities and discrimination, including lack of educational access and opportunities, have contributed to negative educational experiences and academic performance for both African American and Latino students alike in the United States (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). Because, studies on teacher-student racial and ethnic incongruence often focus on achievement gaps between White students and other racial or ethnic minority groups, minority students tend to be clustered into a monolithic subgroup referred to as students of color; yet, caution must be used in clustering people in this way (Kohl, 2009). In fact, several authors have proposed that any scholarly attempts to illuminate the African American experience must do so based on the uniqueness of African Americans and Latinos as distinct groups (Massey & Denton, 1993). The historical reality of slave ancestry alone position African American people as a distinct group from other ethnic minority groups who arrived in the United States through voluntary immigration (Kaufman, 2003). Kaufman (2003) further purported that African American people, more than other racial or ethnic groups, are more likely to experience a heightened sense of group consciousness related to in-group empowerment than are groups with less internal cohesiveness and homogeneity.

Latino people, unlike their African American counterparts, represent a socially constructed group of individuals who share similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Kaufman, 2003). Like African Americans, Latinos typically live in ethnically segregated neighborhoods and also are prone to discrimination and economic disparities in relation to White Americans (Kaufman, 2003). Politically, Latino people tend to express more heterogeneous
viewpoints than do African Americans (Kaufman, 2003). Although some Latino experiences mirror those of early U.S. European immigrants, Latinos have experienced more hindrance with language and legal immigration status than have many other immigrant groups (Sanchez, 2008). Nevertheless, as groups, African Americans and Latinos both share commonalities in discrimination including lower-than-average home ownership, higher unemployment, and education and income levels well below the national average (Sanchez, 2008). Despite these commonalities, both groups report a sense of distrust and tension in interacting with each other (Sanchez, 2008).

Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

Three theoretical frameworks and two methodological conceptual frameworks were applied in this study to explore racial/ethnic incongruence of African American teachers and their Latino students. The three theoretical lenses were: (a) critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Vaught & Castagno, 2008), including the notion of White racial framing (Feagin & Cobas, 2008); (b) social identity theory (Kohli, 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 1985); and (c) intergroup contact theory (Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

Critical race theory. Critical race theory has been used to suggest that the concept of racism is deeply systemic, invasive, and not necessarily indicative of an individual level effort (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). Moreover, critical race theory assumes that racism is pervasive, enduring, and must be confronted to uncover the myriad ways that race and ethnicity are used to marginalize and to oppress people of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Central to critical race theory is that researchers must reject the postpositivist position of color neutrality and acknowledge social injustices (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Social identity theory. Social identity theory can be used to describe how people assign themselves to social categories and to explain individual responses to intergroup social-status differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Individuals have a need to identify with groups and are motivated to distinguish characteristics of their group membership from those of other groups (Jones, Manstead, & Livingstone, 2009). In-group and out-group identifiers are socially conceived markers that function to demonstrate how the in-group is better and the out-group perceived as worse (Jones et al., 2009). Group members tend to conform to group-sanctioned attitudes and behaviors that differentiate them from other groups (Jones et al., 2009). Social identity theorists also recognize that groups’ evaluative relationships are prefigured on power and status inequalities and that group responses are based on the perceived legitimacies and stability of the intergroup relationships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group identification leads individuals to behave consistently with group norms (Grant, 2008). Individuals who strongly identify with a group are more prone to support group actions as an outward symbol of loyalty (Sturmer & Simon, 2004).

Intergroup contact theory. Intergroup contact theory was most famously introduced by Allport (1954) who proposed that contact (interaction) between individuals representing different groups had the capacity to reduce prejudices and ethnic bias. However, results from empirical studies suggest that exposure alone is insufficient in changing prejudice attitudes and behaviors toward outside groups (Allport, 1954; Novak & Rogan, 2010). In fact, researchers (e.g., Brewer & Brown, 1998) have concluded that four accompanying conditions must be satisfied if favorable outcomes toward out-group members are to be obtained: (a) interactions between two groups that are of sufficient quality and quantity to sustain a burgeoning friendship and understanding, (b) perception of equal status between two groups, (c) common goals and interests that facilitate bonding, and (d) support of authority that facilitates intergroup cohesiveness. Group contact theory has been widely used to study racial, ethnic, and cultural group interactions (Novak & Rogan, 2010), as well as applied to studies of desegregated classrooms (Brewer & Brown, 1998).

Method

Through a transformative-emancipatory lens (Mertens, 2003), a 13-step mixed methods research framework (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006) was used to guide the research process. Mixed methods research is considered to be an appropriate methodological approach for examining issues of race, ethnicity, and the confluence of multiple social identities that individuals possess (Griffin & Museus, 2011). In inter-method mixing, the overlapping strengths of each method are maximized while subsequently decreasing non-overlapping weaknesses (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). In applying a transformative-emancipatory lens, it is prudent to note that the principal researcher in this study is an African American teacher who works in a predominately Latino school setting. Throughout the research process, he participated in numerous interpretive interviews (i.e., debriefing interviews; Collins, Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Frels, 2013; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008) as a means to monitor his own researcher interpretations and potential researcher bias.
Context and Participants

The sample subset was selected from a large intermediate school in an urban school district in the Southwestern United States. This school was considered a typical case (Miles & Huberman, 1994) because it reflected the shifting demographic realities typical of U.S. urban school settings in metropolitan areas with African American and Latino populations (Aud et al., 2010)—changing from a predominately White student enrollment to a more than 90% enrollment of Latino students, while still retaining a large percentage of African American teachers. Within this typical case (the middle school), a multi-level, critical-case sampling approach was utilized to select African American teachers and the Latino students whom they taught in their daily content-area classrooms (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Figure 1 illustrates the multilevel sampling scheme employed in this study.

![Figure 1](image_url)

Figure 1. Sampling schemes and sizes. African American teachers and Latino student populations from the district to the class level.

The sample for this phase of the study comprised nine teachers who were selected from a total population of 30 native English-speaking African American teachers to participate in the qualitative phase and the Latino students that they served (n = 897 boys and girls aged between 10 and 13 years of age). All students in the sample were either in Grade 5 or Grade 6. A review of the teachers’ rosters suggested that each teacher within the school had a mean class size of 22.5 and depending on the content area served, reading or mathematics, each teacher had approximately 60 to 110 Latino students during the instructional day. At the time of the research, based on the Home Language Survey (i.e., a self-reporting instrument wherein parents convey what language they speak at home), 3% of the students were non-English speaking (bilingual) and approximately 51% of the families were non-English speaking, with the remaining English Language Learning (ELL) students (i.e., approximately 46%) being considered as English speaking but at various levels of proficiency.

Instrumentation

Individual and focus group interview protocols. Individual and focus group protocols were developed to conduct interviews with the participating African American teachers. Protocol questions were grounded in the theories framing this study (e.g., critical race theory) and a matrix was utilized to list interview questions as they related to results from relevant previous studies in the academic literature (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, McAlister-Shields, Dickerson, & Denham, in press). An example of the individual interview question was “in what ways do the language abilities of any of your students impact their overall...
performance in your classroom?” Six open-ended questions (e.g., “As African American teachers, what are your views regarding the increasing number of Latino students that you serve in your classrooms each day?“) for the three sets of focus group (N = 9; n = 3 per group), whose group members were selected partially based on an analysis of the individual interview responses subsequently were selected that most addressed the central qualitative research question as well as some topical sub-questions. To triangulate data sources and to reach data saturation, both individual and focus group interview protocols were similar in content and format.

The People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (PRIAS). The People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (PRIAS) is a 50-item self-report instrument, with a 5-point Likert-format scale, used to assess People of Color with respect to their membership within their own racial groups in contrast to how they react to White people (non-Hispanic; Helms & Carter, 1990). The PRIAS was chosen due to its ability to measure the construct of social group identity or how one group comes to view themselves (in-group) in relation to power and status inequalities (Fielding, Terry, Masser, & Hogg, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The instrument comprises four scales: (a) conformity, which indicates relative racial awareness in comparison to the White dominant culture; (b) dissonance, which is internal conflict that individuals begin to feel as they confront various forms of racism; (c) immersion/resistance, which indicates level of awareness and identification of one’s own ethnic or racial identity; and (d) internalization, which is used to describe individuals who accepted positive aspects of the dominant culture as well as their own native cultures. High scores, considered dominant, are associated with how individuals interpret racial stimuli in their environments. Score reliability coefficients as measured by Cronbach’s alpha, were .89 for the conformity subscale, .87 for the dissonance subscale, .78 for the immersion/resistance subscale, and .91 for the internalization subscale.

Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS). The LATS is a 13-item, 5-point Likert-format scale designed to measure teachers’ tolerance for language diversity. Items on the scale were designed to elicit teachers’ tolerance toward people who speak other languages. Scores can range from 13 to 65. The higher the reported scaled score results, the less tolerant a teacher is of language diversity. The score reliability coefficient for the LATS, using Cronbach’s alpha, was .62.

The inclusion of the results from the administration of the LATS also represented an appropriate choice for data selection based on a number of factors. First, several scholars have previously noted that a teacher’s attitude toward a students’ language ability often influenced the teacher’s instructional practices (e.g., Hansen-Thomas & Cavagnetto, 2010). Second, decisions related to instructional concerns, the creation and maintenance of various learning groups, or the influence of teaching styles have all been influenced to some degree by teacher judgments (Sharpley & Edgar, 1986). Such decisions might have long-term educational implications including decisions that are related to specialized instructional programs, such as entitlements to gifted and talented or special education programs (Gresham et al., 1997). Third, most research related to this area has been focused primarily on comparisons between teachers’ judgments and students’ performances on standardized and norm-referenced tests (Begeny, Eckert, Montarello, & Storie, 2008). In contrast, using the LATS provided a comparison between the teachers’ tolerance level and attitude toward students who might have different language abilities and skills and the students’ actual performance.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Over the last decade, testing and accountability have become the primary basis for measuring educational success (Arbuthnot, 2009). Proponents of such measures continue to argue that holding such standards in place increases the school’s accountability level for ensuring that all students meet the same standards (Arbuthnot, 2009). Thus, the TAKS test was used as a third quantitative measure in the present investigation to determine the effect of teacher attitudes on overall student performance. The TAKS test is a criterion-referenced state mandated high-stakes assessment that was designed to measure students’ mastery of state curriculum standards. For reading, TAKS was developed to measure four learning standards: (a) basic understanding, (b) knowledge of literacy elements, (c) analysis using a variety of strategies, and (d) analysis using critical thinking skills. In mathematics, the examination was created to assess six knowledge areas: (a) numbers, operations, and quantitative reasoning; (b) patterns, relationships, and algebraic reasoning; (c) geometry and spatial relations; (d) measurements; (e) probability and statistics; and (f) mathematical tools and process. The overall score reliability for the fifth- and sixth-grade TAKS scores were as follows: fifth-grade reading TAKS, alpha = .85; fifth-grade mathematics TAKS, alpha = .90; sixth-grade reading TAKS, alpha = .87; and sixth-grade mathematics TAKS, alpha = .91.

Procedures

This partially mixed concurrent transformative design involved conducting both the quantitative and the qualitative phases concurrently (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). That is, both individual interviews and focus group
interviews with African American teachers were conducted within the same time frame that the teachers were administered the LATS and PRIAS attitude instruments.

Each individual interview was conducted in the naturalistic settings of the school where the participants were employed. All sessions were audio-recorded and ranged in duration from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Following the transcription of individual interviews, member checking was conducted in an effort to ensure that the teacher participants believed that data collected were documented accurately and adequately, and captured each respondent’s point-of-view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). Focus group interviews then were conducted and audio-recorded with the same teachers and lasted approximately 60 minutes. An assistant moderator was used to observe and to take additional notes.

For the quantitative portion of this study, the African American teacher participants were asked to complete the PRIAS and the LATS after completing their individual interviews. Because both scales are self-administered instruments, participants were allowed to take the instrument home to complete and to mail the completed scales back to the researcher in prepaid postage envelopes within three weeks.

Then, based on student rosters created using each African American teacher’s existing class lists, their Latino students’ previous year’s TAKS mathematics and reading test scores were downloaded from a state database, as measured by the state’s established criterion met or did not meet minimal expectations.

Data Analysis

Phase 1: Qualitative analysis. Because a collective case study design characterized the qualitative phase of this study, both within-case and cross-case analyses were deemed to be necessary. First, data for each individual case (e.g., African American teacher) were analyzed. Then, to conduct the cross-case analysis, individual case data indicating frequencies of responses related to emergent themes and sub-themes were placed in meta-matrices to make comparisons across cases to identify patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Individual interview data first were transcribed, coded, and interpreted. Next, classical content analysis (Bergelson, 1952) was used to quantitize emergent themes from the qualitative data collected from the individual and focus group interviews with African American teachers. In this mixed methods research study, interview data were quantitized by counting the occurrences of emergent themes in order to analyze these data statistically. This way, the researchers could examine correlations between the quantitized emergent themes from the qualitative data and the teachers’ PRIAS and LATS attitude scale results and Latino student test scores, ultimately to address the mixed methods research questions posed in this study.

Phase 2: Quantitative analysis. Scores from the PRIAS were subdivided into four subscales that were then computed by adding the values assigned to the corresponding items and then computing the mean. The subscale with the highest mean represented an attempt by the instrument’s authors to describe how people of color managed race-relations encounters and how people of color attempted to overcome negative stereotypes that had been imposed by the dominant culture.

When originally developed and analyzed, the LATS had a reported scale mean of 33.07 (SD = 7.6) and a range of 13 to 65, with 13 representing a highly tolerant attitude toward language diversity and 65 representing a low tolerance toward language diversity (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994). Scores for the teacher participants in this study were compared to Byrnes and Kiger’s (1994) normative group.

Additionally, the state-standardized test scores were used to examine student academic performance. Relationships between the quantitative variables were statistically analyzed using the Spearman-rho correlation. Effect sizes also were interpreted.

Phase 3: Mixed analysis. The mixed analysis involved combining both the qualitative and the quantitative results into coherent meta-matrices for final interpretation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2006). A Mixed Analysis Grid, a two-dimensional, four-quadrant model displaying the combination of case-oriented and variable-oriented mixed analysis was employed. By placing all data in the grid, a visual representation of both the interactive and integrative nature of the mixed analysis process became apparent (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Particular to this study, this qualitative-dominant quadrant was focused on the qualitative phase via a variable-oriented analysis, while simultaneously focusing on the qualitative phase via a case-oriented analysis. Figure 2 represents the configuration of the case-oriented and variable-oriented analyses that were used to provide the interpretive consistency that characterized this study (i.e., research objective, mixed research question(s), sampling, and research design). The use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques resulted in significance enhancement and, more specifically, methodological triangulation of the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). According to Denzin (1978), this type of between or across method of triangulation is more beneficial in that it allows the
researcher to accentuate the benefits of each approach while simultaneously compensating for the inherent weaknesses of each approach.

Figure 2. Mixed analysis grid.

Results

Phase 1: Qualitative Findings: African American Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Latino Students

Through the qualitative analysis of interview and focus group data, seven themes emerged related to the selected African American teachers’ perceptions of their Latino students: (a) level of parental support; (b) gender differences and biases; (c) language barriers; (d) nativity (country of birth); (e) racially congruent student cultural processes; (f) impact of the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; and (g) cultural stereotypes and biases. In Table 1, these themes are listed, along with examples of significant statements and constructed definitions for each theme.
In several instances, teachers in this study reported often observing both female and male Latino students performing historically gendered prescribed roles. Furthermore, this same group of respondents suggested that when primarily dealing with Latino males, they often felt the need to be more aggressive than with other groups of students in order to maintain a certain level of classroom management. Many of these teachers also substantiated that, in their opinions, male Latino students tended to be more compliant for other male staff members than generally for many female staff members. As an example, one of the teachers, who often referred to herself during the course of this interview “as a strong African American woman,” insisted that she was going to maintain control and discipline of her classroom and that her Latino male students were going to respect her regardless of her gender:

Male Latino students tend to work harder than female Latino students, but they initially had little respect for me as a teacher because I was a woman. Being a strong Black woman, I had to make them realize that this was my classroom and it was going to happen regardless of what they were used to happening at home. This was my classroom and we were going to do it my way. If we had to go toe-to-toe, I mean back and forth, that was okay because I really did not believe in sending kids to the office for they needed to be in class to learn. But if we did have to go back and forth or I had to call them outside or if we had a verbal war, I had to do what I had to do.

In general, the African American teachers in this study believed that their Latino students spent most of their out-of-school time isolated in culturally homogenous Latino environments that prevented assimilation into a mainstream U.S. value system that included the belief that formal education is beneficial. The teachers also expressed that they felt a lack of a common cultural background upon which to build relationships with Latino parents. As in studies of White teachers’ perceptions of students of color, these African American teachers expressed a perception that Latino parents did not value education as much as did other groups and perceived the role of the teacher as being distant, for example: “If a student can learn a trade, that is good enough for them”; “Many parents do not have a good education, so whatever the teachers says, you should do”; “Black parents see my aggressive nature as simply helping”; and “White students seem more focused [than did the Latino students] and come with more skills … they seem to have more parental support and involvement.” Moreover, the African American teachers in this study described how Latino students’ academic success appeared to depend on whether they were born in Latin America or the United States (nativity)—“Students who have been in the United States for only one or two years seem to make for a more chaotic class”—and the extent to which Latino males subscribed to male-dominant gender roles, as in the quotation, “They won’t do one thing for me, but will do it for any man including a janitor,” as well as a family’s socioeconomic status. Moreover, the teachers described how those Latino families who supported their children’s education also appeared to be assimilated to U.S. customs and exhibited Eurocentric behaviors and, in some cases, these “more supportive” families had limited or no Spanish-speaking abilities, demonstrating teachers’ biases related to English language proficiency.

In addition to a cultural mismatch that the African American teachers described between themselves and their Latino students’ parents, language proficiency was a commonly identified theme. To varying degrees, teachers

**Table 1. Description of Individual and Focus Groups Emergent Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Constructed Meaning</th>
<th>Examples of Significant Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of parental support</td>
<td>Commitment and active participation on the part of the parent(s) in the overall educational process</td>
<td>“I don’t think that school is a top priority for many Hispanic families.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender differences and biases</td>
<td>Behavioral characteristics distinguishing males and females and masculine and feminine related roles</td>
<td>“As a female teacher, I must demand respect because I’ve noticed that male students tend to not show the same level of respect for males and females.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>Used to describe difficulties encountered when individuals cannot communicate in a common language</td>
<td>“My intelligence is based on my command of the English language.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nativity</td>
<td>Geographical place of birth</td>
<td>“I now realize that there are different types of Latino families: those that are born here and those that are born someplace else.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of the intersection of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic level</td>
<td>Socio, political, and cultural context combining income level and environmental factors</td>
<td>“Low socioeconomic status, regardless of race, makes a huge difference in student achievement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racially congruent student cultural processes and behaviors</td>
<td>African American teachers’ perceptions of other African Americans</td>
<td>“I do not see movement going on with us just as a race in general.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural stereotypes and biases</td>
<td>African American teachers’ perceptions of other races and ethnicities</td>
<td>“I always believe that whatever country you are in, that is the language you should learn.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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in this study expressed that a student’s level of English language fluency seemed to determine teachers’ perceptions of that student’s academic ability. Perceived English fluency also affected the extent to which the teachers were willing to reach out to Latino parents and family members, regardless of whether an academic need existed. This theme is evident in the following quotations: “If you can read and understand English, I can get you to where you need to go”; and “I can’t stand calling if they don’t speak English.” Most compellingly, one teacher declared the following:

Latino students have the same rights as other students, but are quite different to teach. I cannot teach a student who has limited English skills at a regular rate. Teachers must often overwork themselves in order to help the Latino student.

However, one teacher, who was an English-as-a-Second-Language instructor did express the value of bilingualism in stating, “Having the ability to be bilingual is an advantage and suggests that students have academic potential.”

Phase 2: Quantitative Findings: Relationships between African American Teachers’ PRIAS and LATS Scores and Their Latino Students’ Test Scores

An analysis of the PRIAS subscale scores revealed that eight of the nine (88.9%) African American teachers scored by far the highest on the internalization subscale of this instrument, with the remaining teacher scoring highest on the immersion/resistance subscale. According to the author of this instrument, individuals whose mean scores were the highest on the internalization subscale typically viewed both their own group, as well as the dominant group, in a more objective way (Helms, 1995). Individuals scoring highest on this subscale also might collaborate with other marginalized groups to help eliminate oppression (Helms, 1995). With respect to the LATS, scores for the teacher participants in this study ranged between 28 and 48, with a mean of 37.67. Of the total study’s participants, seven (77.8%) out of the nine African American teachers scored higher than the normative mean score of 33.07. In fact, the nine teacher participants, on average, scored statistically significantly higher on the LATS than did the normative group, t(198) = 1.78, p = .039, with a moderate effect size (Cohen’s [1988] d = 0.50). This finding suggested that these teachers had low tolerance of the language diversity of their students. Yet, the majority of the teachers’ classes consisted of Spanish-speaking Latino students.

Further, a correlation analysis was undertaken to determine whether any relationships existed between the selected African American teachers’ attitudes as measured by the LATS and PRIAS and Latino student academic performance in mathematics and reading as measured by the TAKS test. After controlling for Type I error (i.e., Bonferroni adjustment), no statistically significant relationships were revealed between teachers’ attitude scores and the students’ test scores in mathematics and reading. Although not statistically significant, the effect size associated with the relationship between LATS scores and Latino students’ mathematics performance was very large, r(617) = .64, p = .06.

Phase 3: Mixed Analysis Findings: African American Teachers’ Perceptions and Attitudes of Their Latino Students and Academic Performance

A comprehensive review of all qualitative and quantitative data revealed that selected African American reading and mathematics teachers in this study held stereotypic perceptions of the Latino students that they served. For example, one of the teachers confirmed that her aggressive nature when dealing with Latino males was undertaken more from a position born out of a cultural stereotype about Latino males and was based primarily on her personal necessity to retain order and control within her classroom. She elaborated on her position by stating that:

Latino male students think that female teachers are inferior to males. It takes us [female teachers] a while to establish control in the classroom because new male Latino students are always questioning the female’s authority. They [Latino males] feel as though they do not have to listen to a female teacher; however, they will generally respond to any male regardless of their position.

Many of these teachers reported a general belief that students’ academic abilities were directly related to their English language abilities (M = 5.28) and students’ socioeconomic status (M = 4.39). The quantitative results supported these findings by demonstrating that every teacher in the mathematics group’s LATS score (i.e., Teacher 1, M = 40.00; Teacher 2, M = 40.00; Teacher 5, M = 38.00; Teacher 8, M = 41.00; and, Teacher 9, M = 48.00) was above the mean for all of the study participants (M = 37.67). High scores such as these normally are
associated with individuals who have little tolerance for language diversity. Although causation cannot be inferred, qualitative findings from the within-case and cross-case analyses supported the negative correlations between teacher attitudes toward Latino students and actual students’ performances on TAKS mathematics and reading tests. A review of these teacher participants’ passing rates for TAKS revealed that for both the mathematics and reading portions of the TAKS tests, Latino students overall performed slightly lower than did the class with respect to passing totals (i.e., -0.60 and -0.25, respectively).

Discussion

The African American teachers in this study tended to score high on the measure of racial group identity (PRIAS), suggesting that they had a higher affinity for their own racial group. Perceptions of racism and discrimination are impacted by culture and affect the behaviors of both individuals and groups (Sanchez, 2008). These group culture-based perceptions can affect the shaping and strengthening of social identities among racial and ethnic minorities (Jones et al., 2009). Therefore, the African American teachers in this study were motivated to highlight features that would distinguish themselves from the Latino group (Jones et al., 2009).

Although the difference in socioeconomic status between the teachers and students might be considered a spurious factor influencing study results, the findings suggest influences more closely related to culture, language, and social group identity. In general, the African American teachers in this study expressed their assumptions that when their Latino students exhibited poor academic performance, it was because the students and their Latino parents had not adequately assimilated normative U.S. culture behaviors and, therefore, the teachers assumed that Latino parents did not value the education or understand the U.S. educational system. Ironically, these assumptions reflect educators’ assumptions and stereotypes of children of color in general (Kohli, 2009; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). These educator assumptions also mirror the dominant perspective of Whiteness that is traditionally used as a measure of societal normalcy (Frankenberg, 2009). The African American teachers in this study, consciously or subconsciously, appeared to apply a dominant perspective of White racial framing in stereotyping their Latino students based on their English language fluency, nativity (country of birth), socioeconomic level, and parental involvement. Using these socially constructed characteristics in order to maintain some semblance of a power structure, the African American teachers impressed the same dominant cultural norms on another traditionally marginalized ethnic-cultural group (Latinos) that similarly has been exhibited toward African American students as a group.

The African American teachers’ perceptions of their Latino students and the students’ families appeared to reflect deficit thinking as discussed by critical race theory scholars (García & Guerra, 2004). Moreover, García and Guerra (2004) contended that educators tend to stereotype culturally different students, possess a limited understanding of other cultures, and then negatively interpret students’ potential for educational success. Deficit thinking as reflected from the results of this study were evident in the African American teachers’ beliefs that Latino students’ English language skills were indicators of their academic potential or intelligence. This thinking is similar to what researchers have observed in examining the lack of cultural responsiveness of teachers who were White toward their African American students (Gu, 2010).

Implications for Practice

Teaching is a culture-laden profession (Gu, 2010). As such, teacher education must consistently integrate conscious development of culturally responsive teaching strategies. Although the U.S. teaching force continues to be predominately White and women (Morrell, 2010), results from this study suggest that some, if not many, teachers might benefit from increased awareness of how social identities, perceptions, and attitudes might influence their teaching practices. Understanding this awareness of how these constructs impact individuals’ views of themselves and their environments is important for all ethnic and racial groups. However, it is especially important for those working in racially and ethnically diverse settings where racially incongruent teacher-student pairing is common. School leaders also need to address systemic inequities and to respond appropriately to shifts in demographics and resegregation by ensuring culturally responsive programs, policies, and practices. Additionally, as the U.S. Latino population increases, some scholars predict that although African Americans and Latinos united could unleash untapped political power, perpetuating negative perceptions and attitudes between the two groups could thwart these efforts without conscious intervention (Sanchez, 2008). Therefore, efforts must be made to initiate potentially difficult conversations among traditionally marginalized groups, particularly within educational settings. By virtue of being African Americans and choosing the teaching profession, the teacher participants in this study occupied a unique, paradoxical position, that of being both victims and, in
some cases, perpetrators of racism. Interestingly, the African American teachers appeared to display double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903) in their tendency to shift between Afro-centric and Euro-centric frameworks in describing their Latino students in stereotypical ways often indicative of White racial framing.

The results of this study led to the development of an emergent theoretical model, the Teacher Racial Consciousness Duality Model (see Figure 3), which we believe reflects how the teachers in this study displayed double consciousness and White racial framing in their perceptions and attitudes toward their Latino students. Overall, the model illustrates the duality that the African American teachers experience with their Latino students. The three theoretical frameworks (i.e., critical race theory, social identity theory, and intergroup contact theory) informed how the study participants interpreted their teaching environments, while sustaining their worldviews. In the Teacher Racial Consciousness Duality Model (Figure 3), the three theoretical frameworks interconnect to represent overlapping and fluid characteristics. Because few researchers have focused on the interactions of African American teachers and Latino students utilizing the frameworks proposed in this study, our hope is that this model will provide a basis for further research on how commonly held beliefs among members of traditionally marginalized racial/ethnic identity groups might influence perceptions and interactions in school settings.

As seen in Figure 3, the African American teachers tended to interact with other individuals and groups using one of three frameworks: (a) a Eurocentric framework, (b) an Afrocentric framework, or (c) a combination of a Eurocentric and Afrocentric framework. The African American teacher participants appeared to move among the three frameworks (i.e., Eurocentric, Afrocentric, and Euro/Afrocentric) in attempting to negotiate their own identities and roles within the existing White dominant culture and their own ethnic cultures. This continuous shifting represents what Du Bois (1903) called “double consciousness” (p. 3). This term generally is used to describe the persistent push and pull experienced by many ethnic and racial minorities as they attempt to assimilate into the dominant White culture, while simultaneously attempting to maintain their own indigenous racial/ethnic identities.

The notion of hegemony, or the predominant influence exercised by one ethnic or racial group over another (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), also is represented in the model. Initially used by European Americans in their dominance over African Americans, the African American teacher participants in this study appeared to take a hegemonic approach in their perceptions and interactions with Latino students and their families. Sanchez (2008) suggested that hegemonic behavior can be reciprocal.

Based on previous works of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), we assumed that these negative perceptions and attitudes likely influenced the behaviors of the teacher participants. However, attempting to identify and to measure the African American teacher participants’ behaviors as they related to their Latino students was beyond the scope of this study. Also, based on the extant literature, Ferguson (2003) concluded that teacher behaviors likely influence student performance. Our hope is that this model might form a basis for further research on teacher-incongruent pairing and, in particular, the dynamics of intergroup contact of African Americans and Latinos in educational settings.

**Conclusion**

Korkmaz (2007) argued that too little information existed on how teacher perceptions influenced student achievement. The information that does exist demonstrates that even though educational demographics around the world has shifted, U.S. schools continue to reflect the effects of *triple segregation*—race, poverty, and language—which consistently has been linked to poor educational outcomes (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). As a result, teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, must include teachers’ exploration of social identity, perceptions, and attitudes of culturally different others as well as awareness and development of culturally responsive educational practices. With changing notions of diversity, more research is needed to examine the effects of racial/ethnic teacher-student incongruence pairing in ways that extend beyond a sole focus on the attitudes and behaviors of White educators toward students of color. In a globally interconnected world, the changing and complex views of race, ethnicity, and intercultural relations dictate that conversations among educators and citizens in all nations address the complexity of racism within and across ethnic minority groups (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010).
Figure 3. Emergent model. Note that the solid lines represent actual relationships observed during the qualitative, quantitative, or mixed analysis phases. The dotted lines represent hypothesized relationships that were beyond the scope of the study but that actually reflect findings from the extant literature.
References


