A Study of African American Student Trust and Engagement in High School

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents (continued)

Table of Contents (continued)

List of Tables

Figure

SUMMARY

This study explored the significance of African American students' trust of teachers and its impact on student engagement in school. It also focused on the potential impact of teachers' race on student-teacher trust relationships. Research for this study used a cross-sectional approach. Interviews were conducted with 22 students of various engagement levels in the 9th and 11th grades and with 9 administrators, all from 3 predominately African American high schools. The study also drew on documents on community characteristics, discipline, and student achievement.

Students' reports about trust relationships varied in terms of the quality of the relationships they shared with teachers. Those students with high quality trust relationships spoke of how their trust relationships with their teachers were supportive and important to their life at schools. Some saw a connection between trust and paying attention in class and becoming more involved in sports and activities. Most of these students were high-engaged. Most low-engaged students, on the other hand, did not report high-quality trust relationships with their teachers. Most of these students did not experience trust relationships with their teachers in the same way as their high-engaged counterparts. Teachers' race was not found to play a significant role in these relationships for either high- or low-engaged African American students.

Chapter I: Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Much has been learned about myriad factors that affect student achievement. For example, society, community, families, social networks, school organizations, teachers, and student engagement influence student success in school (Klem & Connell, 2004; Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). The last factor, student engagement, refers to students' "psychological investment" and effort directed toward learning, understanding, and mastery (Klem & Connell; Newmann, 1992). Not surprisingly, research reveals that when students make the necessary psychological investments through engagement in school activity, their academic achievement is likely to increase (Chapman, 2003; Newmann; Whitfield, 2001).

Students who are engaged in school tend to learn more and find the experiences of school rewarding, leading to graduation and the pursuit of higher education (Marks, 2000). They pay attention in class, become involved in sports and activities, and take leadership roles in school governance (Newmann, 1992). Strong participation in these activities may lead to greater and closer connection to the school community. Furthermore, students who are engaged in school improve their outcomes in the form of academic success, intrinsic motivation, and retention (Hudley, Daoud, Hershberg, Wright-Castro, & Polanco, 2003). In contrast, when they are disengaged, students are at risk of experiencing lower academic achievement, becoming discipline problems, and/or dropping out of school.

Research suggests that the more students are involved in activities before and after school, the more academic success they tend to achieve (High School Survey of

Student Engagement, 2006; National Center of Educational Statistics, 1994, 2006). Research also suggests that student engagement may vary across racial and ethnic groups (Chapman, 2003; Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Klem & Connell, 2004). For example, minority students who live in concentrated urban areas with low socioeconomic status tend to participate less than students from higher socioeconomic areas (HSSSE, 2009; Miller-Cribs, Cronen, Davis, & Johnson, 2002; NCES, 2006). In addition, disengagement for minority students at times manifests itself through lack of homework completion, limited exposure to high-level courses, such as advanced placement, and poor attendance (HSSSE, 2009; Miller-Cribs et al., 2002).

Finn and Voelkl (1993) present evidence that students who do not participate actively in school from the earliest years and who do not develop a sense of identification with school are at risk of a number of long-term adverse consequences, including disruptive behavior in class, absenteeism, truancy, juvenile delinquency, and dropping out of school. The literature suggests that African American students often do not participate in school at levels needed to produce the most significant academic and social outcomes, such as placement in higher level courses, increased graduation rate, and greater college acceptance. In contrast, African American students tend to have higher disengagement with schools, which results in discipline problems and an increased potential to drop out (Laird, Bridges, Holmes, Morelon, & Williams 2004).

Lack of engagement in elementary and secondary schools may partially explain why African American students tend to have lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates and suspension rates, and lower rates of postsecondary attendance compared to other students. For example, the overall national high school graduation rate for the class of 2002 was 71% but only 56% for African Americans (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). In 2005, the national dropout rate was 10% compared to 12% for African Americans (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2007). According to Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002), African American students are suspended and expelled at rates disproportionate to their population in the schools. For example, African American students represent 17% of public school enrollment, but account for 33% of the suspensions (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2002).

While these findings indicate different school and academic outcomes for African American students compared to their White peers, they also suggest that African American students may experience schooling differently from other students. In other words, their interactions and relationships with the school organization, peers, instruction, curriculum, and teachers may be qualitatively different from those of other racial groups, which might explain some differences in their engagement and outcomes. In order to better understand African American students' engagement, it is therefore important to examine their relationship with various aspects of the school environment.

Factors Influencing Student Engagement

Engagement is a behavioral and psychological concept that encompasses students' relationships with school. As noted earlier, the more students are engaged in study and practice in a subject, the more they tend to learn. While student engagement reflects a student's psychological and behavioral state, external factors may play a significant role. There are organizational and relational influences to be considered. The environment and social supports created by schools to promote student engagement are vitally important.

Studies show that school structure can support or inhibit student engagement (Fullerton, 2002; Lee & Smith, 1994). For example, large comprehensive high schools were built to offer students greater educational options and save money on salaries and other operational costs.

However, large schools also tend to be insensitive to the needs of some students (Marks, 1995; Newmann, 1992).This type of structure has not been conducive to engagement of all students (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Hudley et al., 2002). Compared to smaller schools, large schools also show lower student achievement, high dropout rates, poorer instructional continuity, and lower teacher-student ratio (Fry, 2005). In addition, the organization of the school day can affect the level of student engagement. When the school day is structured to allow teacher-student interaction and time for students to interact, engagement may increase (Lee & Smith).

Furthermore, student engagement may be promoted or hindered by instructional strategies (Finn, 1993; Garcia-Reid et al., 2005; Marks, 1995, 2000). Teachers, who employ instructional strategies that are transmittal in nature, depending largely on lecture, note taking, reciting, and filling out worksheets, may not foster or support student engagement (Marks, 1995; Weiss & Pasley, 2004). This type of "pitch and catch" approach and similar instructional strategies are weak, ritualistic, and bureaucratic, often alienating the learner from the teacher (Marks, 1995, 2000; Newmann, 1992).

Teachers are in an influential position with respect to students and can communicate significant messages about expectations, evaluations of student performance, and concerns for student well-being (Simpson & Erickson, 1983). For example, students with caring, supportive, and trusting interpersonal relationships in school report more positive academic attitudes and values, more satisfaction with school, and greater engagement (Finn, 1993; Marks, 1995). With this in mind, student-teacher relationships could be one of the most important factors that promote student engagement in schools (Goddard, 2003; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

As schools face the challenge of engaging students from various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds, the messages they send to different students become critical to student experiences, attitudes, and relationships with teachers (Newmann, 1992). Studies show that teachers tend to have different expectations for students of color compared to White students and that these expectations are communicated to students in various ways (Garibaldi, 1992; Guerra, Attar, and Weissberg, 1997). Tucker and her colleagues (2005) observe that "teachers exert a potent influence over the engagement of all students, and low-income culturally diverse students in particular" (p. 29). It may seem obvious that teachers have a major role; however, it is important to understand the nature of the relationship if we want to influence it.

Trust and Race as Factors in Student Engagement

Research suggests that relational factors are very important to student engagement (Fredricks, Blummenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004). One relational factor that may be of particular importance is trust. Trust is a vital component of strong teacher-student relationships, and is also viewed as the foundation of building other productive relationships (Baier, 1986). Organization members experience trust when they feel a sense of belonging to the organization. Trust in schools can help support the behavioral and emotional relationship between the truster and the trusted, and trust relationships are important to student development. These relationships are developed at every level of school organization but of particular interest are the relationships that students, specifically African American students, have with their teachers. Casteel (1997) suggests that African American students are strongly influenced by their relationships with their teachers.

Trust is an element of social capital that results from one's experiences with others and one's willingness to participate in relationships and to be vulnerable to another person (Crow, 2002; Daly, 2004; Rotter, 1967). Within the learning environment, trust is perceived as underlying all significant learning and is the "affective glue" that binds students with teachers (Sham Choy & Arenz, 2006, p. 1). Non-white racial and ethnic groups, particularly African Americans, may have had unstable experiences in schools that cause them to question school policies, procedures, and teachers and to mistrust the entire educational process. The source of this mistrust is partly rooted in African American experience throughout America's history. For example, prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954, Jim Crow laws excluded African Americans and other non-white groups from fully experiencing a quality education. Since the education of persons of color was "forced" on educational systems throughout the United States, African Americans as a group have continued to lag behind White students in terms of achievement. Furthermore, mistrust of the educational system by minorities may be in part a result of their overrepresentation in the number of students expelled, suspended, placed in remedial classes, or dropped from schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the problem of African American student engagement in school. Specifically, I propose to examine the trust relationships between African American students and their teachers and how these relationships may influence student engagement. The student-teacher interaction can be one of the most influential relationships in a child's life (Klem & Cornell, 2004). Society places high expectations on teachers, granting them a high level of trust, holding them to high moral codes and standards and expecting that they will do their best on behalf of "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995). Yet, minority students,

African American students in particular, may be more skeptical of schools and teachers due largely to pre and post *Brown v. Board of Education* treatment of continuing gaps in achievement and discipline, and disproportionate placement in special education and gifted or honor classes. Similarly, because a large number of students of color attend schools in urban areas and some of the most recent demographic data from the National Center for Educational Statistics tell us that 71% of the teachers in these schools are White, it is reasonable to suggest that race may be a factor in the teacher-student trust relationship, and may affect student engagement with schools (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2006). A central premise of this study is that if students trust teachers, they will be more engaged in school.

Several scholars suggest that students show four types or framing elements of engagement: behavioral (time students spend on work and how they participate in the learning environment), emotional, cognitive, and affective (this term often refers to the ways students feel about school, and the ways their perceived relationships within schools can have a profound impact on their behavior) (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Studies show that when students are engaged in any of these ways, they tend to follow school rules, participate in the learning process in their class, and participate in school-related activities. In addition, engaged students feel that school is important and experience relationships that are supportive and caring (Fredrick, Blummenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Leithwood, 1994; Marks, 2000). Furthermore, several works in the literature support the notion that engagement is related positively to student academic performance (Chapman, 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004; Marks, 1995).

Research suggests many possible reasons for students' engagement or lack of engagement in school. This research has often focused on one or more of the following: student

motivation (Chapman, 2003; Hudley et al., 2002; Newmann, 1992), teacher influence (Finn, 1993; Klem & Connell, 2004; Marks, 1995; Newmann, 1992), parent involvement (McLain, 2002), and school structure (Finn & Voelkl 1993; Leithwood, 1994; Marks, 2000). Students who are motivated in the classroom may feel willing, welcome, and open to exhibit and establish their sense of belonging. They may feel comfortable to ask questions and participate in discussion, which can reflect their level of motivation. Their motivation may also be reflected in their ability and willingness to persist with difficult tasks (Chapman, 2003). When students ask questions and participate in discussion, they tend to be more engaged in school. Teachers' influence on engagement is very important. Teachers who employ transmittal teaching strategies fail to engage students in the authentic work of learning that requires students to think critically and practice using real life experience (Carini, Klein, & Kuk, 2006; Marks, 2000). Similarly, school structure and culture of expectation are also important to student engagement and may provide a supportive environment for both parents and students. School structure that encourages parents to become actively involved in school policy and development can contribute to greater student engagement and enhance their ability to find ownership and accountability in their educational system. In addition, classroom conditions that allow students to be active participants in the learning process tend to support student engagement. However, few studies look at students' views of their relationships with teachers and how they affect engagement.

Because of the growing dropout rate, increased discipline problems, and deteriorating relationships minority students tend to have with school at the high school level, I proposed to explore the student-teacher relationship and its impact on African American high school student engagement. Specifically, my research focused on the following questions: *Is there a relationship between African American student trust of teachers and student engagement? In*

what ways does trust promote African American student engagement? What role does teachers' race play in developing these relationships? This study considered the ways in which African American high school students view their interactions with teachers, their belief in their teachers, and their understanding of their teachers' beliefs about their academic abilities and future. Taken together, this information will develop understanding of the trust that African American students place in their teachers, and how their trust is seen to affect student engagement. This study contributed to understanding not only the relationship between trust and engagement but also the role that race may play in that relationship.

In summary, student trust and engagement can be vital to student success in school. Student-teacher relationships, particularly those built on trust, seem to have a strong to influence on student engagement. The relationships that African Americans experience in schools may explain in part their disconnection or disengagement from the educational system. The degree of trust exhibited in school may influence these relationships. It is imperative, then, to deepen our understanding of the relationship between trust and engagement and how it relates to African American students in schools. This understanding will help increase their engagement and help schools better serve the needs of these students.

The next chapter reviews the literature on trust and engagement, providing a historical perspective on their importance for the development of relationships in schools. As I discuss the literature on trust and engagement, I will focus on the relationships between teachers and students. In addition, I will discuss the literature on race with particular attention to how race is related to students' views on trust and engagement.

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Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The underachievement of African American students continues to be an albatross around the necks of educators. Researchers and educators have attempted to explain this lack of achievement in a variety of ways, including natural differences in intelligence (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), socioeconomic background, lack of student motivation, lack of family support, and poor preparation (Chapman, 2003; Hudley et al., 1998). Some research points to lack of parent and family involvement in the educational process (Eilers, Fox, Welvert, & Wood, 1998; Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Johnson et al., 2001; Marks, 1995; Singham, 1998), low student engagement, and lack of cultural connection between teachers and students (Hudley et al; Klem & Connell, 2004; Marks, 1995, 2000; Newmann, 1992). Regarding student engagement, research suggests that students' academic achievement may not be affected solely by parental and family influences, but may be influenced a great deal by relationships and trust between students and teachers (Bryk & Schneider, 1994, 2002; Kochanek, 2005). These relationships can help to support or develop students' mental investment and involvement in schools and learning.

The focus of this study was on student engagement, specifically with regard to African American students. According to several indicators, including dropout rates, attendance rates, academic achievement, and discipline records, African American students seem to be less engaged in school than their White, Latino, and Asian peers. Given the apparent significance of student-teacher relationships for student engagement, the quality of the relationships that African American students have with their teachers could be vitally important to students' focus and commitment to academic endeavors. In addition, the fact that students and teachers may have conflicting perceptions of their relationship could call into question the quality of these

11

relationships and influence the way students interact with teachers and the school. This study suggest to examine whether African American student trust of teachers matters to student engagement, which may ultimately influence learning outcomes for students of color. A critical feature of this study was whether racial differences between students and teachers affect trust relationships. My research focused on the following questions: Is there a relationship between African American student trust of teachers and student engagement? In what ways does trust promote African American student engagement? What role does teachers' race play in developing these relationships?

In this chapter I will examine the literature concerning student engagement, student-teacher relationships and trust, the intersection of these factors, and the relationship between trust and race as it may influence the student-teacher relationship and student engagement. Within each of these areas I will discuss theories and examples of how these matters have been studied, along with topics in need of additional research. My goal is to demonstrate that in order to better understand the relationship between student trust and engagement among African American students we need to examine the role that race plays in schools. I begin this discussion with some literature about social relationships and engagement. Then I discuss literature that defines and examines trust as a factor in student-teacher relationships. In particular, I link trust to student engagement. I conclude with a discussion of two important areas: (1) race and relationships between students and teachers, and (2) the role of race in student trust and engagement. The literature in the last section is particularly important to my study, since my emphasis was on race as a variable that may influence trust and engagement. The literature on the role of race in trust and engagement is meager, and further inquiry into this topic is needed.

Student Engagement

Student engagement in school is considered one of the better predictors of student learning, development, and academic achievement (Carini et al., 2006; Guthrie, 2000; Klem & Connell, 2004). The more students are engaged in study and practice in a subject, the more they tend to learn. In addition, they tend to participate more in class discussion, activities, and athletics, increasing their social connection to schools (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Marks, 2000). Furthermore, students who are academically engaged are more likely to hold a positive attitude toward school and individuals in school (Hudley et al., 2002). Student relationships with teachers and other school personnel that are cemented and grounded in these characteristics are likely to be supportive and likely, in turn, to build social bonds of trust that may enhance student strengths and engagement (Goddard, 2003; Goddard et al., 2001; Montecel, Cortez, & Cortez, 2004).

Engagement is a strong predictor of retention and achievement in school, particularly for vulnerable student populations such as minority students (Hudley et al., 2003). Student engagement has multiple dimensions and characteristics. For the purposes of this study, student engagement is defined as students' active involvement in the educational process that can be indicated by students' behaviors, thinking, and feelings about their school, teachers, or surroundings. Finn (1989, 1993) describes engagement as a psychological and behavioral quality exhibited by students. Finn's discussion relates student engagement to the type of involvement and participation students have in school and in classroom activities. Finn (1989) suggests that the more students participate in any given school activity, the more they identify with the school, ultimately increasing their engagement and their overall sense of belonging to school. Marks (1995) developed a model of student engagement in academic work that focuses on

psychological and behavioral aspects of student engagement. She proposes that student engagement in academic work is contingent upon the type and quality of instruction, as well as the teacher's ability to motivate and engage students in the learning process. The next section discusses some other definitions and explains how engagement is related to student success.

The concept of student engagement has been studied in several ways. However, two dimensions of engagement are particularly germane to my study: psychological and behavioral engagement. I will examine each of these concepts in detail, explaining how they are relevant.

Psychological Engagement

Several studies have identified one aspect of student engagement in school as "psychological investment in nature and having a direct impact on students' learning abilities" (Newmann, 1992, p. 12) and capacity for understanding (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004; Newmann, 1992). The implication is that schools can stimulate the inner qualities that motivate student involvement. According to Finn (1989), Finn and Voelkl (1993), and Fredricks et al. (2004), the ways students feel about school and their perceived relationships within schools can have a profound impact on their behavior. For example, if students are confident that their teachers treat them fairly and care about them, they are more likely to show fairness and caring with their teachers and to become more engaged in the educational process by participating in class and other activities.

Students' ability to deal with difficult situations and their ability to look beyond the requirements and demands of the teachers reflect students' basic cognitive and emotional engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Other cognitive components of engagement include students' understanding of why they are doing what they are doing and its importance (Klem & Connell,

2004). In other words, an engaged student comes to value and understand the significance of his or her own learning and takes responsibility and action in ways that support learning.

Psychological engagement is related to students' heightened positive feelings when they complete an activity, and to their sense or feelings about relationships within schools, which is demonstrated through enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest (Fredricks et al., 2004 ; Klem & Connell, 2004). Psychological engagement emphasizes students' feelings of connection to (or disconnection from) their school, how they feel about where they are in school, and the people in school (High School Survey of Student Engagement, 2009).

Behavioral Engagement

Once students believe that they are cared for and that their environment is supportive, their behaviors may begin to change. Behavioral engagement includes the time students spend on work, intensity of concentration and effort, tendency to stay on task, and propensity to initiate action when given the opportunity (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Finn (1989) describes four types of behavioral engagement:

1. Participation in classroom and school activities that includes acceptance of class and school rules, reflected in students' homework and class work completion
2. Taking initiatives in school
3. Student involvement in social and extracurricular activities
4. Student involvement in school governance

Behavioral engagement ties how students think to how students act. Behavioral engagement can be related to the increased positive or negative feelings students have when they complete an activity and to their heightened awareness of relationships in school. It may be demonstrated through enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest or lack of interest in activities (Fredricks et al., 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004). Finn (1989) and Voelkl (1997) elaborate on the concept of engagement as a student's sense of belonging and being a part of the school's success. Students begin to act and

behave, and to exhibit greater enthusiasm and optimism when completing assignments (Klem & Connell, 2004). Both of these components of engagement—psychological and behavioral—are important to students' overall experience in school and are connected in one way or another with the people in the school.

Factors That Promote Engagement

The previous descriptions of psychological and behavioral engagement may provide insights into the ways students are engaged in school. However, it is not enough to focus solely on the feelings and behaviors of students in the engagement process. The degree to which a student experiences one or all forms of engagement depends not only on the student, but also on the school and on the interaction between the student and the school (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Fredricks et al., 2004). For example, psychological engagement (how students think about their school as indicated by their attitudes and beliefs in school) is often shaped by their relationships with teachers (Klem & Connell, 2004). In addition, schools can create and develop the psychological support of student engagement by setting high academic expectations for all students and implementing discipline policies that are fair and consistent (Marks, 2000; Newmann, 1992).

Similarly, the school's atmosphere and culture can affect the psychological dimension of student engagement. High academic expectations and fair, consistent discipline policies support students' psychological engagement in school (Marks, 2000; Newmann, 1992). In addition, the idea that students' "psychological investment is an effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" suggests that there is a need for students to be involved in work that is meaningful and supportive of their needs (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992, p. 12). This in turn suggests that learning and engagement are at the root of a student's drive, regardless of outside influences.

Another aspect of psychological engagement is how students experience and perceive their schools based on relationships within the school and on their own cognitive and emotional view about their school (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). These aspects of psychological engagement are related to the student's belief system and investment in the learning experience. Similarly, emotional engagement relates to the increased positive feelings students have when they complete an activity and heighten their sense of relationships within schools, as demonstrated in their enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity and interest (Fredricks et al., 2003; Klem & Connell, 2004). When students think that their school values them and that they have supportive relationships, their behavior and attitudes toward school and their teachers may begin to change in a positive direction. However, if students are to behave in ways that value and reinforce rules, schools must have structures in place that support the psychological aspect of learning and participation (Chapman, 2003; Finn, 1993). Among other strategies, schools can accomplish this by providing student leadership teams, allowing students to be involved in school level governance, and developing discipline programs that are fair and equitable to all students.

In a similar way, behavioral engagement (how students interact within schools, such as their conduct in class and compliance with school rules) can be directly influenced by school structure, school climate, and classroom environment. Emotional engagement (a form of psychological engagement)—how students feel about their school and themselves in relation to their school community—can be evidenced by students' sense of belonging when they are inspired by teachers and school support systems. If the psychological and behavioral engagement that support student success are influenced not only by students' own resources but also by teachers

and schools, then it is important to examine the relationships between students and their schools and between students and their teachers.

Hudley and his colleagues (2002) found that students' perceptions of the school environment and teacher expectations can influence their engagement. Similarly, Marks (1995) supports the idea that school environment influences engagement and suggests that teachers' classroom instructional practices have an impact on student engagement in school. For example, when teachers use instructional strategies that are inconsistent and rely heavily on transmission as opposed to involvement, student engagement decreases (Marks, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Marks (1995) and Newmann and Wehlege also suggest that poor instructional practices may undermine efficiency, order, and predictability of students' abilities and may slow students' academic growth as well as undermine their trust in their teachers (Marks, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Such practices may reflect teachers' distrust of their students and/or their abilities and may result in student distrust of their teachers and a sense of alienation toward them**.**

Trust in Schools

The school community is a social construct that recognizes many interpersonal relationships and the collaborative abilities of members of the community (Osterman, 2000). Teachers, students, and administrators are continuously looking at trust factors that influence their relationships within the organization. Members of an organization who experience trust in others feel a sense of belonging to that organization. Trust relationships in schools can help support the behavioral and emotional connection between people. These relationships are developed at every level of a school organization: district office personnel with school level personnel, a school administrator's relationship with teachers, a school administrator's relationship with parents, a teacher's relationship with parents, and a teacher's relationship with students. For this study I

focused on the concept of relational trust as the mediating factor in determining how trust functions between students and teachers. I submit that relational trust between students and teachers can be dynamic and important to student and school success. Ultimately, trust is pivotal to improving educators' perspectives and relationships in schools, more importantly, the student-teacher relationship (Tschannan-Moran & Hoy, 2000). However, there are other conceptual constructs of trust that may help further clarify the importance of trust in schools and organizations. Some of these constructs are discussed in the next section.

The Concept of Trust

During the past four decades, a variety of definitions of trust have been put forth with little clarity about the word's meaning (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Rotter (1967) describes the concept of trust as the social capital that builds relationships resulting from one's experiences with others. Daly (2004) and others conceptualize trust as one's willingness to participate in a relationship that involves being vulnerable to another person. Daly uses eight concepts to define trust:

1. Risk—the degree of confidence one has in a situation of vulnerability;
2. Communication—an interaction between individuals or groups in which a message is being transmitted;
3. Benevolence—the confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected and not harmed by a trusted party;
4. Reliability—the degree to which a person can be counted on in a situation of interdependence and when something is required from that person;
5. Competence—possession and use of a level of skills;
6. Integrity—acceptance of responsibility for one's actions and a consistency between what we say and what we do;
7. Openness—the extent to which relevant information is or is not held back;
8. Respect—genuinely listening to what each person has to say.

Trust implication as a potential influence on individuals and groups has been studied and associated with organizational productivity and success (Tyler & Degoey, 1996). Organizational trust may influence and motivate individuals within the organization to believe in and support the organization's purpose and goals. Similarly, organizational trust in schools between faculty and school leaders can help support and develop the school's overall belief system. Through complex and reccurring behaviors and interactions organizational trust may be supported through displays of vulnerability and caring between various members of the organization (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) state that organizational trust is built on the following: (a) the belief that the other person has nothing to gain from untrustworthy behavior; (b) the perception that one is able to exert some control over the other person's outcome; and (c) the degree of confidence in the altruism of the trusted person (p. 336). Elsewhere they observe: "Trust does not take place in a vacuum; it's embedded in social context that imposes constraints, values, and sanctions that affect trust relationships" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 570).

Trust is a complicated phenomenon and takes a number of different forms. Two forms that were important to this study are (a) institutional trust, which reflects the behaviors and interaction of individuals within the organization and how individuals view trust throughout the organization, and (b) relational trust, the interaction among and between individuals in an organization (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Louis, 2006; Raider-Roth, 2005). Within the framework of my study, an understanding of the relational trust between students and their teachers and the impact of trust on student engagement within schools is vitally important.

From the various definitions of social trust (institutional and relational), I have chosen to use Bryk and Schneider's (2002) conceptualization of relational trust for this study. They define

relational trust as the social exchange attached to key role relationships found in schools. This social exchange is characterized by "oneness" with respect to each group member's understanding of the individual role and the other group members' expectations and obligations.

Relational trust develops from the interaction among individuals within an organization. The concept of relational trust is anchored in the social exchanges attached to key role relationships found in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It implies common views and perspective with respect to each group's understanding of its own and the other group's expectations and obligations. For example, when parents' views about their own responsibilities and the responsibilities of teachers are consistent with the views of teachers, this signifies that each group member may trust another and share similar thoughts and opinions about education. For relational trust to grow and strengthen, both parent and teacher groups must observe the behavior of the other group as consistent with these mutually held expectations. Bryk and Schneider argue that relational trust is an organizational property of a school because "its constitutive elements are socially defined in the reciprocal exchanges among participants in a school community, and its presence (or absence) has important consequences for the functioning of the school" (p. 22).

Forsyth, Barnes, and Adams (2006) explain that "relational trust emerges in the discernment of intentions, beliefs, and actions of others within a set of role relations" (p. 122). In focusing on relational trust as an organizational property, Bryk and Schneider (2002) see trust as a social phenomenon that manifests itself as perceptions and beliefs (norms) shared by the group members. Furthermore, Bryk and Schneider explain that unlike organic and contractual trust, the framework of relational trust appears to accommodate the analysis of trust formation in organizations where both beliefs and expectations about the actions of others are diverse.

Individual discernments about the trustworthiness of others are based on social exchanges and emerging shared perceptions about the trustworthiness of group members. Controlling for other factors such as race and socioeconomic status, Bryk and Schneider found a significant relationship between student achievement and schools' overall level of trust.

In addition, Bryk and Schneider's (2002) study on trust in schools illustrates the significance of the specific roles that people play in this setting. Each actor has an understanding about his or her own obligations in playing a role, as well as expectations about the role obligations of the other adults in the school. In choosing to trust another individual, each party evaluates past benefits in the relationships, assuming some history of prior exchanges exists. In the absence of such a history, an individual may rely on personal reputations or more general social similarities (Bryk & Schneider, p 14). As I will discuss later, I see this interaction in schools as highly likely to be influenced by the race of students and teachers.

The Importance of Trust

According to Rotter (1967), trust is an important component of interpersonal relationships that influences the survivability of group members who depend on each other. When people trust one another, the openness and authenticity of interpersonal relations are enhanced (Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, & Hoy, 1994). This promotes a climate where members will likely treat one another with respect, honesty, and altruism. All are aspects of a just and caring workplace. This climate enhances the individual's ability to establish a sense of self-worth and enables people to enjoy healthy social relations and respectful relationships with their colleagues that are anchored in trust (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). In other words, each relational trust dynamic is important to the welfare of schools, and more importantly students. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) contend that relational trust is a complex concept that is difficult to pin down because it is

based on many factors, varies with the expectations held in relationships, and changes over the course of a relationship. In view of the complex interactions in schools, particularly between students and teachers, a better understanding of trust may provide insight into the relationship building in schools that can support student engagement.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) maintain that trust is necessary for effective cooperation and communication and is the basis for productive relationships. Powell (1990) suggests that trust is "a remarkably efficient lubricant" (p. 297) that reduces the complexities of organizational life and facilitates transactions far more quickly and economically than other means of management. Crow (2002) identifies trust as one of the most important components of relationship building that influences behavior. This suggests that the existence of trust within schools is vital to the development of relationships.

Schools consist of a web of complex relationships that can influence behavior in a variety of ways (Raider-Roth, 2005). Embedded in that complex web is trust. In this case, teachers see trust relationships with their school leaders when they are willing to be vulnerable and open to taking risks (Whittaker et al., 1998). Teachers also formulate trust relationships with school leaders who they feel have the teachers' best interests in mind and who are willing to communicate openly (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Just as teachers seek to develop and foster trust relationships, students can benefit from similar relationships with teachers who exhibit behaviors that are benevolent, competent, reliable and honest (Forsyth et al., 2006).

Relationships of trust between students and teachers are critically important. Just as teachers tend to trust students who exhibit certain behaviors, students are more likely to trust teachers who treat them fairly and who they perceive as having their best interests in mind (Klem & Connell, 2004). When students experience a trusting school culture with supportive teacher

relationships, student learning may improve (Raider-Roth, 2005). When trust emerges from these beliefs and actions between teachers and students, students may feel more psychologically embedded in their school; they are more likely to establish relationships, participate in classroom activities, and excel academically (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001).

The Relationship between Trust and Engagement

Student-teacher trust relationships can be a key to student engagement. As suggested earlier, studies have revealed that the caring and supportive relationships that students have with teachers can have a positive impact on student learning (Klem & Connell, 2004). Teachers are in an influential position with respect to students and can communicate significant messages concerning expectations, evaluations, and performance (Simpson & Erickson, 1983). In order to become engaged in the ways outlined above, students must experience trust relationships that support their learning. As discussed earlier, trust is considered one of the most important variables in relationship building (Cook & Wall, 1980; Goddard et al., 2001). According to Rotter (1967), trust is an important component of interpersonal relationships in any group or organizational setting such as family, friends, work, and school. When members trust one another, there is more openness and authenticity of interpersonal relations (Hoffman et al., 1994). Openness provides a climate where members are more likely to treat one another with respect and honesty. It helps individuals establish a sense of self-worth and furthers the social relationships that are the anchors of trust (Hoy & Tater, 2004). Similarly, when students trust teachers they are more likely to respond positively to instruction, school rules, and expectations (Osterman, 2000; Sham Choy & Arenz, 2006).

Studies suggest that as these trust relationships are developed students with supportive teachers who care about their success are more likely to be engaged in the classroom and

perform well academically (Akey, 2006). When students perceive that their teachers have a genuine interest in their well-being, their social bonds with their teachers have a greater impact on their participation in the educational process (Goddard, 2003; Goddard et al., 2001; Marks, 2000). These social bonds created by student experiences influence the relationship that students have with their school (Finn, 1993; Klem & Connell, 1992). In developing relationships, studies show that some schools do a better job of engaging students than others. They have better "holding power" (Jerald, 2006, p. 3), the ability to keep students in school until they have obtained their high school diplomas (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Purslow & Belcastro, 2006). These schools value teacher and student relationships, employ teachers who are committed to the learning of all students, develop programs that are results oriented, and develop solutions that build on students' strengths (Montecel et al., 2004). Teachers in these schools understand the importance of building trust relationships that support student engagement.

Teachers can exercise their influence in a variety of ways, such as ensuring that students complete homework assignments, making their assignments relevant and consistent, creating a positive classroom environment with clear rules and expectations, and involving students in discussions on classroom procedures (Fredricks et al., 2004). These strong associations between students and teachers can increase the overall presence of engagement trust (Newmann, 1992).

The Role of Race in Trust Relationships

Teaching is widely regarded as one of the most important factors affecting student achievement and is a primary avenue for relationship building with students. Every day, teachers have the ability to help students feel validated in their classrooms. The relationships that teachers foster with students can have a strong bearing on how much and how well students learn (Noguera, 2003). From this standpoint, teachers can convey to students that their differences are

irrelevant or determinative. In a study by MetLife (2006), less than 30% of teachers reported having good relationships with their students. The MetLife study also suggests that perceptions of race and relationship building in school may have a significant impact on student engagement and achievement. Students' ability to meet the academic expectations of their classroom teachers may be influenced by trust and engagement. I submit that teachers' race also has an impact on students' success.

This contention implies that students' and teachers' race should be considered as a factor in the behavior of White and minority teachers towards African American students (Simpson & Erickson, 1983). African American students make up 70% of the U.S. urban school population and a growing percentage of suburban school students as well (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2006). The racial distribution of urban and suburban teachers is quite the opposite. For example, the vast majority (83%) of teachers across the United States are White. In urban schools 71% of teachers are White (NCES, 2008). This racial and cultural disconnection between students of color and their teachers in urban and suburban schools may explain some of the issues of lack of engagement by students of color.

Kochanek (2005) contends that people have a predisposition to trust those socially similar to them. If students develop their views through social companions, then teacher and student culture, religion, and ethnic background may play a role in how they relate and respond to the development of trust relationships (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Osterman, 2000). Mickelson (2003) adds that race identification is a product of how one perceives and constructs the meaning of others. Mickelson goes on to explain that race and class contribute to the student's own social identity, including the student's perception of himself or herself as a learner. The absence of trust may be traced to issues of race, class, or culture. Consider Ogbu's (2003) assertion that the

absence of trust exists in schools because students of color feel that teachers, most of whom are White, do not understand their students' culture or their community. This absence of trust may directly impede teachers' ability to engage students in classroom activities and weaken teachers' relationships with students.

Understanding trust in school and its relationship to student engagement and achievement depends partly on the structure of the educational system and the relationships formed in schools. For students of color this structure and these relationships have not always been viewed as beneficial and supportive (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Carr & Klassen, 1997). These structures can have, and have had, a profound impact on students' sense of belonging, student achievement, and student relationships. In school, students can learn the role of race through their observations, through informal exposure to curriculum, and through their relationships (Noguera, 2003). Furthermore, student relationships in a school setting can be the glue that bonds and supports student success in schools (Sham Choy & Arenz, 2006). This concept may be more significant for students of color in view of their relatively poor showing in several educational categories (attendance, college acceptance, and discipline referrals). For example, in their study of trust between teachers and African American students, Sham Choy and Arenz (2006) found that African American students tend to place greater importance on race than White students. The authors found that some teachers perceived African American students as troublemakers and not intelligent (p. 2). Examining the teacher perspective, Simpson and Erickson (1983) cite several studies that suggest that White teachers consider African American students to be more deviant, praise African American students less, and give African American students less attention in class. Evidently, race, racial identity, and how others perceive or interpret race are ever-present in students' minds. In the case of schools, how teachers identify students racially, and how

students perceive their identification reflected in teachers' actions, may influence the level of trust (Mickelson, 2003).

Student engagement with school is the product of interaction among various views and forces, some in the immediate context, and some outside. In some cases, outside forces such as race and culture can play a significant role in relationship building. In other cases, the forces inside the organization, such as organizational structure, discipline procedures, and the relationships between teachers and students, can be just as important. For example, if the disciplinary procedures of the school are seen as unfair and biased, students' sense of being treated fairly by adults comes into question. This example is significant and relevant to how students perceive race and culture; one need only look at the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rate of students of color in urban and suburban schools (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

Similarly, if the school structure does not allow and support active student involvement in governance and decision making, students may feel alienated and unappreciated. Conversely, if students trust teachers to have their best interests in mind, and if students feel involved and connected to these teachers, their engagement may increase. According to Chhuon et al. (2006), Kochanek (2005), and Paulu (1989), repeated social exchanges could help build trust between students, teachers, and other school personnel that could make engaging members easier.

One product of this social exchange could be a higher perceived level of expectations that teachers have for students in the classroom. Relationships between students and teachers are often seen as the conduit to student achievement. Teachers' roles in developing these relationships can have a significant role in the process of trust development (Goddard et al., 2001). For example, if students perceive that their teachers do not have their best interests in mind, or do not believe in their academic ability, their level of trust may be influenced. Trust is

considered a psychological phenomenon that is influenced by interactions between two or more people. Teachers' expectations can work psychologically to promote or hinder student success. Although it has seldom been the focus of studies of trust and engagement, teacher expectations are a significant issue that may influence student and teacher trust.

Research on teacher expectations related to race and school reveals some troublesome points. Although this specific question lies outside the scope of my study, I anticipated a direct and significant link between teachers' expectations of students and engagement of students based on the level of trust between students and teachers. Kunjufu (1984), quoted by Graybill (1997), asserts that the most important factor in student performance "is not socioeconomic standing, not the home environment, not the school per pupil expenditure, but… teacher and parent expectations" (p. 9). These expectations can directly influence student engagement and student outcomes. Graybill (1997) asserts that not only can teachers' academic expectations influence student achievement; teachers' cultural and social background can influence their perception of what is appropriate behavior.

Students and teachers bring their own culture, values, and norms with them into the classroom. When teachers face a conflict in cultural values, they often react by rigidly adhering to their own set of values, ultimately interfering with the learning of students and undermining trust (Beady & Hansell 1981; Graybill, 1997). Considering the disproportionate racial makeup of faculties and student bodies in urban schools, and their cultural differences, existing relationships between teachers and students warrant systematic investigation and discussion. Murrell (2002) summarizes the significance of race, class, and culture when he observes that the representation of race, gender, social class, and role in social contexts of schooling deeply affects how children and adults think and act. This suggests that in cultural, racial, and class similarities individuals

may find a deeper, more significant bond, one that supports a trusting environment. The culture of teachers and schools, therefore, may be critical to the perception that students have of themselves and the attitude projected by their teachers. Ultimately, this can influence engagement.

A common interpretation of research findings in the area of teacher expectations is that teachers hold race- and ethnicity-based expectations for their students (Randolph & Spillane, 2004; Tenenbaun & Ruck, 2007). This is significant in view of the ratio of White teachers to students of color. As noted earlier, nearly 83% of all classroom teachers across the United States are White, and 71% of the teachers in urban schools are White. By contrast, 70% of students enrolled in urban schools are students of color (NCES, 2007).

One example of how teacher expectations affect students of color can be seen in Ogbu's (2003) ethnographic study of Shaker Heights High School near Cleveland. After observing the relationships and belief systems of teachers in Shaker Heights, Ogbu concluded that teachers did not believe that African American students could perform as well as White students academically. The teachers expected African American students to behave differently, not to pay attention in class, and not to do their homework. In addition, some White teachers have been found to rate African American male children as more deviant and White male children as less deviant (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Dee, 2005; Eaves, 1975). When teachers expect African American students to fail regardless of their academic potential, the students adjust their own behavior in ways that serve to realize these expectations (Graybill, 1997). Cooper, Baron, and Lowe (1975) suggest that the identification of Pygmalion-prone teachers—those who are most likely to perpetuate pre-existing low or high student achievement levels—is becoming more important as more is learned about the communication and operation of teacher expectations

(Beady & Hansell, 1981). If teachers represent the front line in education and are generally held accountable for student success, the kind of expectations they hold for students can have a significant influence on the overall engagement and trust developed in schools (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Dee, 2005). If their expectations are based on race and culture, we need to understand how race and culture may contribute to student success and trust experiences in school.

Historians have argued that American society is built on the backs of hardworking minorities who have to overcome challenges and obstacles to make their way to become productive members of society (Clark, C., Rosenzweig, R., Hewitt, N., Lichtenstein, N., Brown, J., & Jaffee, D., 2007). However, accomplishing the goal of productive membership has been impeded by a number of factors beyond one's ability to work hard and engage in the educational process. Some of the barriers of financial and educational accessibility have centered on race and cultural differences. Similarly, racial matters are important in the educational field and may have a significant influence in the trust, engagement, and achievement of minority groups (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Carr & Klassen, 1997). Beady and Hensell suggest that race matters in the classroom setting; they track two highly generalizable samples of students from their first school experiences and throughout school.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) contends that race matters in society and in school. CRT suggests that racism and racial bias are endemic and apparent throughout American culture (Delgada, 1995; Tate, 1997). CRT offers a perspective on how society responds to race. Its basic tenet is that racism and race relations should be questioned or examined. Further, CRT challenges the notions of meritocracy, neutrality, and color blindness in American society (Delgada; Morris, 2004; Tate). CRT points out that racism, in the form of discriminatory

attitudes and practices, pervades the structures of society. As these practices are evident, they in turn can erode and diminish trust throughout our society, regardless of whether the actions are part of society as a whole or the actions of individuals. These acts give rise to racism and racist attitudes that have ultimately had severe effects on people of color (Beady & Hansell, 1981; McDonald, 2003).

As Critical Race Theory has developed, more attention has been paid to race and its impact on the education of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998, Tate, 1997), exposing racism in educational policies and procedure (Johnson, 2002; McDonald, 2003). CRT challenges the assumption that schools are race-neutral spaces where information is simply transmitted from one person to the next. Working from this perspective, I suggest that the impact of race transcends policies and procedures and may influence how students trust teachers and how teachers interact with students, ultimately influencing student engagement. If teachers assert that they do not see race and that they respond to students according to their ability but continue to hold lower expectations based on race, students' engagement and success are likely to be affected. In some cases, not only can race influence teachers' perceptions but racial and cultural differences between students and teachers may influence student engagement and trust.

Another theory of how race can influence trust and engagement in school is that of cultural discontinuity. Graybill (1997) describes an example of cultural discontinuity when White middle class teachers, frequently female, view African American male and female behavior as disruptive or acting out. Their views and assumptions about appropriate and acceptable behavior are shaped by their cultural norms, which in turn are based on experiences that often contrast to those of urban African American youth. The stark difference between the perceived behavior of African American students and their teachers' expectations also reflects

the socioeconomic status of teachers and students. Differences can surface in the form of students' dialect, language, and perceptions of teachers. Most teachers, whether White or minority, are middle class and represent middle class values and expectations, while students in urban schools are often from poor communities. Behavior based on different perceptions can lead teachers to believe that students of color lack discipline and are less cooperative than White students (Graybill, 1997) When teachers view student behavior as contrary to their own cultural norms and outside their expectations of acceptability, their ability to effectively and compassionately communicate with students may be diminished and may affect the student engagement and trust relationships that are built on these interactions and behaviors. Students may sense that teachers treat White students favorably and hold African American students to a different standard, creating a perception of racial bias and undermining trust relationships.

Summary

In studying African American student engagement through the lens of trust, race emerges as an important variable to be considered. Educational data on student achievement continue to reveal an achievement gap between students of color and their White counterparts. In efforts to understand this problem, countless variables have been examined, such as social and economic background, student aptitude, and school setting. As the problem of student achievement persists, some researchers are directing their efforts toward student engagement (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Patterson, 2005; Marks, 2000). Students' lack of engagement has been attributed to factors such as difficult socioeconomic background and meager family support. Some studies have looked at the level of engagement as a function of students' trust, revealing that trust can have an impact on student engagement and their overall achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001). Great disparity in student achievement continues to be a problem for educators today. I

have examined student engagement in its relationship to trust, with an understanding that students' race vis-à-vis teachers' race may be an important factor in that engagement.

There is ample evidence to suggest that differences in race and culture between students and teachers affect the relationships particularly between White teachers and African American students. This is understandable, given historical race relations in the U.S. In light of the continuing low levels of African American student achievement, it would be safe to suggest that engagement of students of color is affected by the relationships they share with teachers. Yet, many teachers may not fully understand the significance and role of race and culture in their classrooms. Ongoing disparities in graduation and dropout rates, suspension and expulsion rates, and academic placement of students demand that we consider aspects of teacher-student relationships as critical features of the education of students of color. In response, this study has sought to understand the relationship between student trust and engagement, and the role students' and teachers' race plays in that relationship.

Students of color continue to struggle in schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas. In this literature review, I have presented evidence supporting three basic propositions. First, engagement is very important to student success in school (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi 1999). Therefore, it is incumbent upon school leaders to recognize the importance of student engagement and develop ways to increase it. Second, trust, as part of student-teacher relations, matters to student engagement. The existence of trust between individuals within the school environment, especially between teachers and students, is essential to overall student engagement in school (Rotter, 1967; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Finally, race as a social identifier may play an important role in the relationships students have within their school (Finn, 1993).

Relationships between teachers and students are the cornerstone of trust and engagement. As teachers attempt to foster these relationships, students' and teachers' race and their cultural and social orientation may make a difference in student engagement (Newmann, 1992, p.120). Unfortunately, there are gaps in the literature when it comes to tying the three concepts of trust, engagement, and race to the experiences of teachers and students. My study presents new evidence from students based on their experiences, analyzes that evidence, and traces the linkages among trust, engagement, and race.

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

In this chapter, I describe and discuss the design of the study, along with the sampling plan, the data collection procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis process used in this study. First, I review the theoretical framework.

In this study I examined the relationship between African American student engagement and trust relationships with teachers and the role race may play in these relationships. As an African American male educator with more than twenty years of experience in the field, eighteen years in majority-minority schools, I have found the impact of race in schools critically important to my quest to understand how relationships are formed in schools and how these relationships affect student engagement. Student-teacher relationships are one of the most influential factors in a high school student's life. This should be a matter of national concern, as the success of high school students continues to be adversely affected by minority student graduation and dropout rates. Of particular concern is the status of African American students, whose chances of graduating from high school have decreased in recent years. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, while 71% of all students graduate from high school, barely half of African American and Hispanic students earn diplomas with their peers (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008).

My research focused on the following questions: *Is there a relationship between African American student trust of teachers and student engagement? In what ways does trust function or work to promote African American student engagement? What role does a teacher's race play in developing these relationships?* The goal of this study was to examine an important

interpersonal dynamic, within the complicated context of race, that likely influences the ways in which African American students relate to and interact with school.

Theoretical Framework

There is something to learn about the relationship between students and teachers and its impact on engagement. School culture, climate, and structure can be instrumental to how student-teacher relationships are developed and sustained within schools. Other factors, such as teacher and student race, are also important to understand. For this study, I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model for systems and Bryk and Schneider's (2002) work on relational trust to form the conceptual framework. I used this framework to examine the relationships among trust, engagement, and race in schools.

Bronfenbrenner's (1976, 1979) conceptual framework embodies the notion that we all exist within various systems constituting a nested arrangement of structures that influence our actions. These systems take on different forms depending on the type and level of the environment. However, the effect or influence of each system is similar. From an educational standpoint, Bronfenbrenner's conceptual model serves as a perfect reflection of what I hypothesized occurs within schools: that there are relationships in schools, for example, between students and teachers, and these relationships may be influenced by factors such as trust and race, affecting student engagement and ultimately academic outcomes. I see Bronfenbrenner's model as important because it relates to various systems—micro-systems, meso-systems, eco-systems, and macro-systems—that represent these interactions at different levels.

Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1979) suggests that individual actions and behaviors are a result of the interaction between individuals and their environments. He contends that the environment is composed of nested systems. The lowest level, the micro-system, is the immediate setting

containing the learner or is a place where people are engaged. In my study the micro-system represents the interaction between students and teachers. It is at this level that student-teacher relationships take place. Here is where the influence level of trust may affect student engagement. In my study, it is where African American students interact with mostly White teachers, which may affect the perceptions of both groups and the relationships students have with teachers.

The next higher system, the meso-system, involves several micro-systems and the interrelationships within the major settings containing the learners and other actors. In this study, the meso-system is relevant because it represents the interaction between two or more micro-systems, such as schools and the various micro-systems within them. This system may influence the interaction between students' and teachers' perceptions of each other and their level of assumed trust (disproportionate discipline and dropout rate of African American students).

The third system, the eco-system, is an "extension of the meso-system embracing the concrete social structures, both formal and informal, that impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings containing the learner and, thereby, influence and even determine what goes on within a system" (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, p. 6). In my study the eco-system level is where students are part of the institution of education, where there are expectations and rules about what students should do (e.g., compulsory education laws, standardized curriculum and tests).

Finally, the macro-systems are the large societal, political, and cultural norms that influence the other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). In my study the macro-system level is where one could make the historical argument that there is a hierarchical societal system of expectations based on race and class that may affect students at the eco-system level (e.g., producing disparities in achievement based on race, class).

These systems represent the levels of relationships that students and teachers experience; they may influence the ways students respond to their educational environments and the ways their educational environments respond to them. When systems are supportive and connected, students tend to be more engaged (Marks, 1995). These systems are at work within schools and are an integral part of student development and interaction with teachers, at times functioning to build and support their relationships.

If trust relationships between students and teachers are influenced by micro-systems within school, e.g., perceptions, norms, and expectations of students, then these systems may affect how teacher, school, and other individuals function to support engagement and learning. These relationships may be influenced by trust between students and teachers. Bryk and Schneider's (2002) work conceptualizes trust in schools as being formed around the specific roles that people play in this setting and the expectations for these roles. Each actor (teacher, student, parent, or school official) has an understanding about his or her own obligations and expectations about roles vis-à-vis other actors in the school. In choosing to trust another individual, each actor evaluates past benefits in the relationship, assuming some history of prior exchanges exists. In the absence of personal history, individuals may rely on personal reputations or general social similarities to determine trustworthiness (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p 14). I propose that trust relationships between students and teachers may be influenced by the teachers' race.

Teachers have the ability and power to help students feel validated in their classroom daily, and to help those students recognize that their differences are irrelevant or relevant in the classroom (Beady & Hansell, 1981). The ability of students to match the academic expectations of their classroom teachers may be influenced by trust and engagement. Finally, I suggest that

race also has an impact on a student's success. Race as a factor needs to be considered in trust relationships between White teachers and African American students (Simpson & Erickson, 1983). In this study race is considered to be a social construct of interactions between student and teacher relationships (Omi & Winant, 1994). Race is also defined as a social construct assigned to groups of people that implies hierarchies among those groups. In these personal interactions one may discern the impact of race.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided my study is displayed in Figure I. This framework has three major elements. The first element relates to students and their relationships with teachers, and the influence of different contexts or systems on those relationships. The next element relates to students' response in the form of engagement indicators. The third element is the overall outcome—student achievement, which was not a focus of this study but is nevertheless important in the overall framework (see Figure I).

In the first element, I propose that the interaction between students and teachers is nested in a micro-system. This micro-system may be influenced by a meso-system that can shape student and teacher interaction. Finally, these interactions are influenced by an eso-system of race that may shape and influence the level of trust and engagement in schools. The variables that relate to students' characteristics are hypothesized to influence engagement: students' race, followed by their response to teachers (trust response), and closing with interaction with teachers in the form of the level of expectations teachers have for African American students. The second element consists of indicators of engagement as manifested in students' behavior and psychological engagement. The final element is student achievement. While student achievement is vitally important theoretically, this study focuses on engagement as the primary dependent

variable. This conceptual framework is intended to bring multiple variables into place for a better understanding of engagement. The basic descriptor in this model relates to students' interactions with teachers and their response to trust relationships.

Trust Factors

In this study I have taken relational trust between students and teachers as the primary independent variable. I hypothesized that the level and quality of trust between students and teachers can vary and may influence student engagement. Trust is defined as a component of interpersonal relationships between students and teachers that builds on and influences those relationships and related behaviors. In my case, I looked for students to identify trusting relationships with their teachers, as characterized by individual willingness to be vulnerable and open to risk. In addition, the following aspects of trust were considered:

- Risk. The degree of confidence one has in a situation of vulnerability.
- Communication. Interaction between individuals or groups in which a message is being transmitted.
- Benevolence. The confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected and not harmed by a trusted party.
- Reliability. The degree to which a person can be counted on in a situation of interdependence and when something is required from that person.
- Competence. The possession and use of a level of skills.
- Integrity. The acceptance of responsibility for one's actions and a consistency between what one says and what one does.
- Openness. The extent to which relevant information is or is not held.
- Respect. Genuine concern for another person.

In addition to these aspects of trust, teachers' expectations were an important variable in my conceptual model. Teacher expectations relate to the concept that teachers tend to get what they expect out of the students they teach. Expectancy theory contends that teachers tend to get

what they expect of students in accordance with how they feel about the students' ability. This factor was important to the overall existence of interpersonal trust. I suggest that in the presence of trust relationships between students and teachers, teachers' expectations can either support or impede student engagement.

Another important factor in my model is race. In this study, I suggest that trust between students and teachers may be blanketed in race through students' and teachers' personal interaction. This interaction may place students in a hierarchy of race, as a mediating variable, and may influence the level of student engagement. Engagement, as a psychological and behavioral quality exhibited by students, is my dependent variable. Engagement is considered along two dimensions, behavioral and psychological. Behavioral engagement refers to students' active involvement in the educational process, which can be seen in their behaviors in school, with teachers, or within their surroundings. Instances of behavioral engagement were synthesized and evaluated on the basis of student involvement in activities and athletics, attendance, discipline referrals, and grade point average. Psychological engagement refers to students' cognitive investment in—and efforts directed toward—learning, understanding, and mastery of skills. The ways students think and feel about school, and their perceived relationships within schools, may have a profound impact on student behavioral engagement. Examples of this component focused on students' sense of belonging and their engagement in classroom instruction. These definitions were relevant to my study; working from them I formed codes that will be discussed later in this description of my methodology. These definitions and codes helped me develop metrics of engagement that I was able to apply to identify students as high or low engaged based on their number of indicators.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

(Institution)
Race

(School)
Student-Teachers Interaction

(Classroom)

Student

Teacher

Micro-system

Meso-system

Macro-system

Student Engagement

Behavioral

- Participation
  Classroom
  Activities
  Athletics
- Completion of
  homework
- Attendance
- Conduct measures

Psychological/Affective

- Sense of belonging
- Level of
  commitment

Student Achievement
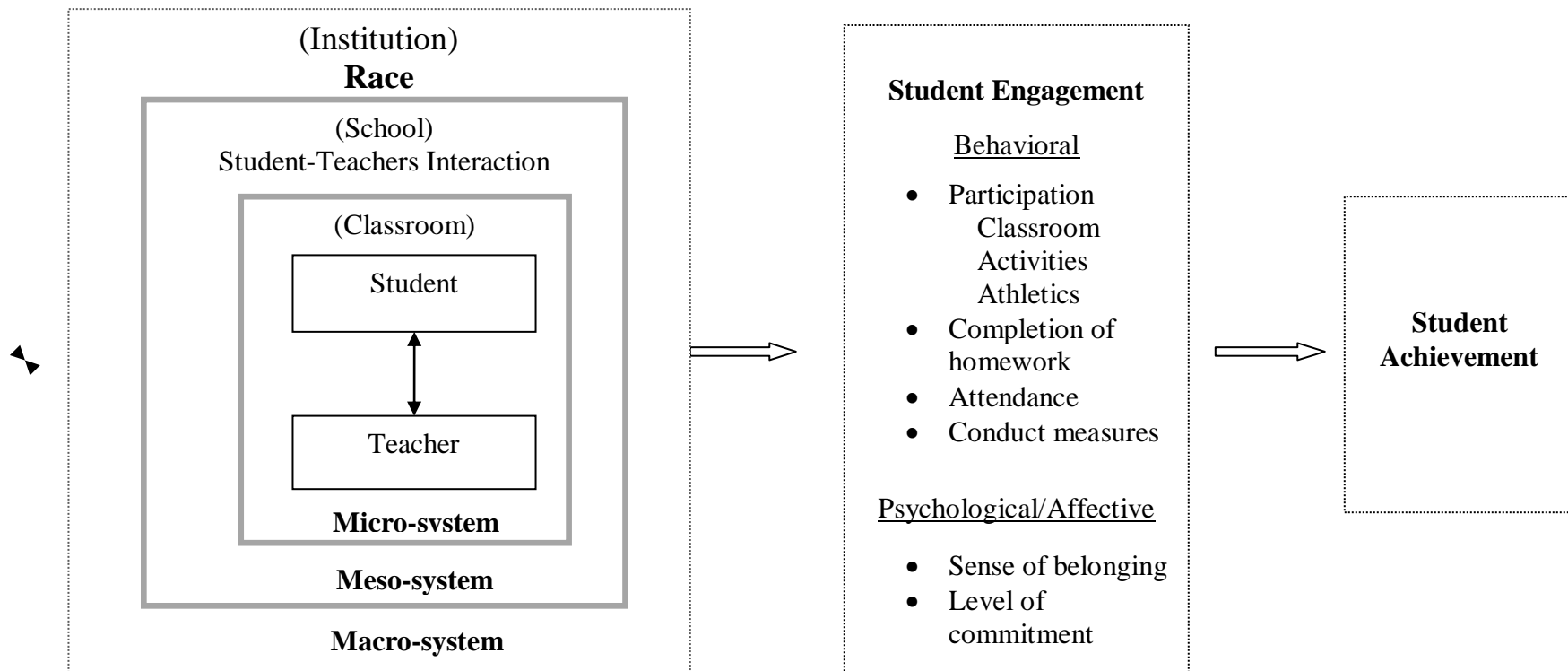
Research Sites

This study called for the use of a pragmatic strategy that uses qualitative data to understand how trust, race, and engagement are related. I examined the engagement experiences of students in three predominately African American urban high schools in metropolitan Chicago. My data came from three sources: (1) school documents, (2) interviews of school administrators, and (3) interviews of students. This approach placed value on the views of individuals in their own situations. I hypothesized that students experience trust and engagement in different ways depending on their relationships and interactions with teachers, which may be related to teacher race. In addition, school culture, climate, and structure may be instrumental to how these relationships develop within the schools and are therefore important to understand. The reason for examining these relationships in African American schools was the traditional underachievement of African American students in predominately African American high schools, as opposed to their experiences in mixed race schools or integrated schools. Their experience in African American schools provided a special window on the problem of trust and engagement.

I selected schools as research sites using three criteria: (1) a predominately African American student population, (2) at least a 60% White teaching staff, and (3) three to five years of underachievement based on state learning standards and achievement tests. I selected these criteria for a number of reasons. First, predominately African American schools consistently underachieve academically compared to their White counterparts. Second, the teaching force of majority African American schools tends not to reflect the ethnic, social, and economic background of their student bodies. Finally, in the process of choosing low achieving schools, I realized that not all students in these schools are low achieving students. The rationale for

choosing these types of schools went deeper. High schools serving African American students have struggled to achieve at academic levels equal to or better than those of majority-White or mixed high schools.

Among the causes of this disparity are lack of parental support, inadequate and unequal funding, and lack of student motivation. However, many of these barriers to success have been overcome in successful elementary schools, referred to as 90/90/90 schools (Reeves, 2000). In these schools 90% of students are minority, 90% are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 90% achieve high academic standards. Considering the success potential at the elementary level, I suggested that something other than the aforementioned factors may have something to do with student success, particularly at the high school level. I proposed that one crucial factor is trust, and that trust may be developed and maintained through relationships with teachers that ultimately support engagement and influence student achievement.

It was my expectation that through the document analysis and the interview process this study would add to our understanding of African American student trust and engagement. As students of color attending public schools continue to fall short of national achievement norms, greater attention needs to be focused on the quality of their teachers and the relationships between those teachers and their students.

As a practicing principal, I had the opportunity to network with a number of principals throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. Through these network relationships, I was able to identify three schools that fit my research site criteria. I contacted the three schools, and all three agreed to participate in this project. These three high schools reflected four characteristics that are essential to my study: a predominantly African American student body, 60% or higher free and reduced lunch status, 60% or higher White teaching staff, and low or moderate academic

achievement. The demographic characteristics of these schools are shown in Table 1. Pseudonyms are used in place of the schools' actual names.

Stages of the Research Project

In order to answer each of my research questions, I interviewed key school administrative personnel and students as my primary method of data collection. Data collection and analysis took place in three stages. During the first stage, I mapped the general context of school as a setting for student-teacher relationships and student engagement. This involved the collection and review of public documents related to trust and engagement. The second stage involved interviews of principals, assistant principals, and deans at these schools. The interviews were used to develop an understanding of each school's community as it relates to trust and engagement. The final stage of data collection consisted of interviews of students about trust, engagement, and race. This next section will describe how each research stage of the project was conducted.

Stage 1: Mapping School Context

For the purposes of this study I wanted to learn about each school, its students, its teachers, and the general context in which students experience trust and engagement. In order to get a better understanding of these schools as contexts for trust and engagement, I began the research project with document analysis and administrative interviews. The document analysis involved gathering, examining, and synthesizing data from each research site (Yin, 1994, p. 102). In this process, researchers often pick through and analyze a wide variety of data from informants to help gain greater understanding of their subject (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 1

Demographic Data on Schools in the Study

School	Enrollment	% AA	% Latino	% Low Income	Test Reading Quartile Regions, AA/LT	Test Math Quartile Regions, AA/LT	Dropout Rate	Average Daily Attendance	Grad Rate, AA/LT	% White Teachers
Harris	2500	91%	6%	53%	3rd /2nd	3rd / 3rd	2%	92%	83/85%	68%
Shannon	1500	92%	3%	44%	3rd /N/A	4th /N/A	4.3%	90%	90/80%	68%
Woods	1500	92%	3%	44%	3rd /N/A	4th /N/A	4.3%	90%	90/80%	68%

Note. AA = African American, LT = Latino, SES = Percentage of low income students, Test = Prairie State Achievement Exam.
Quartile Regions based on students who met or exceeded State Standards.
Quartile range: 1st 100-74; 2nd 75-50; 3rd 49-25; 4th 24-0.

This phase was broken down into two parts: (a) mapping the context of each school, and (b) collecting administrative data on student engagement. I examined multiple documents for each school, including—but not limited to—school report cards, discipline data, and attendance data (see Appendix A). Some of the data were found on the Illinois State Board of Education website. Other documents were obtained from school officials as part of their public records. These documents were very useful in helping me understand the overall engagement trends in each school. The data presented here are altered slightly to preserve the anonymity of the research sites.

Stage 2: Administrator Interviews

In the second stage, I conducted interviews with school administrators to get an understanding of each school, its culture and climate, and overall levels of student engagement (see Appendix B). In total, I interviewed the three principals, five assistant principals, and one dean. I used these interviews to gain some insight into their perceptions of student engagement and trust between students and teachers. I used a standard protocol to interview the administrative personnel. This information enabled me to develop a more detailed understanding of each school context. Contextual analysis provided a basis for understanding student trust, engagement, and race.

The administrative interview consisted of a variety of questions that gauged administrative views and opinions on trust, engagement and the potential impact, if any, of teachers' race on student engagement and trust (Appendix B). I used a psychological perspective of engagement (students' sense of belonging and involvement in instruction, cognitive and emotional experiences), and behavioral measures to access the levels of student engagement (student involvement in athletics and activities, discipline incidents, attendance, and grade point

average) as perceived by the administrators. The third variable in my study was the race of students and teachers. As a mediating variable, I suggested that race may influence the level of engagement that students experience. Understanding just how race and trust interactions were viewed from the administrative perspective was highly enlightening.

Stage 3: Student Interviews

In addition to documentary data and administrator interviews, data were collected from student interviews. Selection of the pool of students was done with the assistance of the school leadership's team. I described and discussed with each school leadership team the various levels of engagement, both behavioral and psychological, and how engagement may look in their schools. Administrative team members used behavioral indicators such as involvement in athletics and activities, grade point average, discipline incidents, and attendance as the criteria for nominating high and low engaged students to interview. For psychological engagement, team members used students' perceived sense of belonging and students' perceived involvement in instruction as their selection criteria. Each team selected a pool of potential student respondents who met the engagement criteria. The rationale for choosing this process relates directly to my first two research questions—Is there a relationship between African American student trust of teachers and student engagement? In what ways does trust function or work to promote African American student engagement? Determining students' levels of engagement was critical for distinguishing between engagement levels and thus determining whether there was a potential difference in trust level. As principal investigator I randomly selected from the pool of 22 high and low engaged students for in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview method offered insight into the complexities of relationships among trust, engagement, and race (see Table 2).

Table 2

Students in Study Sample by Grade Level and Engagement Indicators

Name	Grade Level	GPA ≥ 3.0 (Yes/No)	Involvement in Co-Curricular Activities (Yes/No)	Involvement in Athletics (Yes/No)	Attendance Level > 90% (Yes/No)	Major Disciplinary Infraction (Yes/No)	Engaged in Instruction (Yes/No)	Sense of Belonging (Yes/No)	Total Engagement Indicators (of 7)	Assigned Engagement Level
Kevin	9	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	5	H
Megan	9	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	5	H
Simon	9	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	5	H
Tim	9	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	7	H
Tom	9	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	6	H
John	9	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	1	L
Jon	9	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	1	L
Kurt	9	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	3	L
Sam	9	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	3	L
Zack	9	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	2	L
Abigail	11	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	6	H
Fred	11	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	7	H
Nancy	11	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	7	H
Paula	11	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	5	H
Sarah	11	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	5	H
Artie	11	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	3	L
Bill	11	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1	L
Ron	11	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	3	L
Shelia	11	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	3	L
Spencer	11	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	3	L
Stan	11	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	3	L
Tammy	11	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	2	L

As a qualitative research technique, the in-depth interviews involved conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. I chose this method for two reasons. First, according to Yin (1994) a qualitative research project is a comprehensive research strategy designed to explore, explain, or describe the links in a real life situation that may be too complex for statistical analysis. This strategy is particularly important because trust and engagement are two phenomena that cannot be easily studied within an educational setting. In addition, the social construct of race is malleable and embedded within our society. Therefore, understanding how students perceive trust, engagement, and race calls for a greater understanding of relationships among variables. Second, this approach provides for an insider's perspective on what is actually taking place within the environment under study. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between trust and engagement, and to explore how race may influence this relationship in different schools. Therefore, understanding the perception and meaning of trust and engagement from the perspective of students could be helpful in understanding engagement.

Student interview process. From the analysis of documents and with recommendations from school leadership, ten 9th-grade and twelve 11th-grade students were selected for in-depth interviews. Five 11th graders and five 9th graders were high-engaged. Seven 11th graders and five 9th graders were low-engaged (see Table 3). The interviews served as the primary source of data to examine how individuals student understand trust and its relationship to engagement in their schools and to examine how individual students think about race in this relationship. All of the data collected from the interviews were interpreted from the perspective of the participants. It was important for this study, as for all qualitative research studies, to search for meaning and

understanding of the situation from the participant's perspective (Cohen & Manion, 1989). When

considering the interpretive nature of this part of the study, it was important not to impose my

own biases regarding trust, engagement, and race. This would have influenced the design and

results of the study and could have affected how I interpreted the data, potentially shaping the

data to fit what I had anticipated to find by doing the research project.

Table 3

High- and Low-Engaged Students in the Study

	High-Engaged	Low-Engaged
11th graders	5	7
9th graders	5	5

I used a face-to-face interview protocol with open-ended and prestructured questions. The

open-ended questions were followed up with prestructured questions that helped qualify the

student' responses (Cohen & Manion, 1989). My interviews explored students' views on trust

and engagement. A copy of my interview protocol is contained in Appendix C. Through the

questioning process, I maintained an openness that allowed for elaboration and interpretation. As

mentioned earlier, I made sure that when I asked follow-up questions I did not impose my own

preconceived notions and biases on the data. I made every attempt to ensure that I was

considerate of time and the environment of the interview sessions. I allowed the participants to

feel comfortable during the interview, encouraging them to speak freely.

Student interview data analysis. The concepts underlying my research questions were

central to analyzing the interview data. The purpose of my study was to determine the

relationship between engagement and trust in schools and to understand the role of race in these

relationships. Data coding evolved from the interview process. In reflecting on my factors, involving both independent and dependent variables, I projected that the codes shown in Table 4 would be used in the analysis.

Once the data were collected at each site, I developed a brief description of each school with some of the general demographic and achievement data from stages 1 and 2. Included in this description were school-level engagement data as outlined earlier. Using the literature on trust, engagement, and race, I interpreted the data collected from administrators and students and identified common patterns, themes, and concepts within and across groups at each school site. I used the data from the administrator interviews to create a portrait of each school's context. I fleshed out some of the common themes and characteristics that existed across the three school sites. These patterns led to understanding how trust related to engagement and how the role of race may influence that relationship. While I drew on the data from each stage, I relied primarily on the interviews of students to answer my research questions. I wrote a summary on engagement, trust, and race based on the data collected. The summary represents the story of trust, race, and engagement across all three schools. It also explains the way all student respondents experience student trust, engagement, and race across all three schools.

It was reasonable to expect that the relationships between trust and engagement at the three schools might differ. However, after analyzing and interpreting the findings I did not find distinct differences among schools, for reasons that I will discuss in Chapter V. Therefore, distinguishing the patterns, similarities and the differences across students and schools proved to be less important.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance validity and reliability in this study, I used multiple sources and forms of data to provide more accurate interpretation, trustworthiness, and neutrality in the data (Golafshani, 2003). I used a common prestructured interview protocol and a common set of codes and interpretative constructs across sites. I also used data triangulation. Triangulation is a process used by qualitative researchers to validate and ensure accuracy of evidence. Data triangulation uses protocols to collect data on the same phenomena from different sources (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1998). I triangulated school descriptive data, interviews of key administrative staff, and student interview data. My triangulation approach involved applying multiple data collection approaches to learn more about trust, engagement, and race. Where possible, I checked my findings from one data source against those from a different source.

Generalizability and Limitations

Despite the increasing popularity of qualitative methodological approaches, this form of research has not been fully accepted and recognized by certain members of the research community (Heck & Hallinger, 1999). One criticism in particular is that qualitative research findings lack generalizability. This research project has limited to no generalizability across populations of African American students, as well as students of other ethnicities. However, one potential generalizable concept could be based on other theoretical research. In this study I aimed to determine whether my findings support (or refute) some of the theoretical claims from other recent research on trust, engagement, and the role of race. Specifically, this study examined the relationship among these three variables, and I will be able to offer some propositions based on my findings. These propositions may contribute new knowledge to the field and provide a foundation for additional research.

Table 4

Patterns and Codes

Patterns	Codes
Trust Measurement Patterns	
Student Trust	ST
Student Race	SR
Socioeconomic Status	SES
Student Gender	SG1 (male)
Student Gender	SG2 (female)
Interaction with Teachers	IT
Student-teacher Trust	STT
Teachers Expectation	TE
Engagement Measurement Patterns	
Participation in Class	PC
Participation in Activities	PA
Participation in Athletics	PaTH
Completion of Homework	CHW
Attendance	ADT
Sense of Belonging	SB
Teacher Support	TS
Academic Achievement	AA
High Engagement	HE
Low Engagement	LE

Because qualitative research seeks to examine or explore a phenomenon in its natural

setting while the researcher uses an interpretative lens, there are limitations to this research

approach. All studies have limitations that are inherent in the design of the research. One general

limitation of my study is that it is psychological and perceptual in nature. Therefore, it is difficult to discern common meaning and interpretations among the research participants. Another limitation of my study is the relatively narrow range of research sites. My three research sites were similar in demographic and academic makeup, and student respondents were similar in age, socioeconomic status, and race.

This research captures the experiences of students at one point in time and uses its findings to develop themes and patterns. Despite the limitations, several of my research findings can be generalized; in this way my research may contribute to what we know about student-teacher trust relationships, student engagement, and the role of teachers' race in student trust relationships.

Data Presentation and Findings

The findings are presented according to the three stages of the study. First, I provide a summary of each school's demographic information and school context. The summary includes a brief overview of the administrators' perceptions of trust, engagement, and race in their schools. The summary is based on collected pieces of information common at each site. I describe several key themes that emerge from interviews of school administrators. I follow this with findings from student interviews on trust, engagement, and race. Finally, I organize the student findings into three significant areas of student perspectives: the importance of trust and engagement, characterization of student trust relationships, and the importance of race.

Conclusion

Educational data on student achievement show a continuing gap between achievement of students of color and their White counterparts. In efforts to understand this problem countless variables have been suggested as possible explanations, such as social and economic

background, student aptitude, and school setting. Some studies have directed their efforts toward student engagement (Garcia-Reid et al., 2005; Marks, 2000). Students' lack of engagement has been attributed to factors such as socioeconomic background and lack of family support. Some studies have looked at the level of engagement as a function of student trust, revealing that trust can have an impact on student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001). As the problem of African American student achievement continues to plague educators today, I have studied the issue of engagement in relation to trust, with the understanding that students' and teachers' race may be an important factor.

Chapter IV: Research Findings

The findings from this study offer insight into the relationships among student engagement, trust, and race through the perspectives of African American high school students. I chose three demographically similar high schools with different students, reasoning that trust, engagement, and race interactions may be different at each school. I noted distinctions between high- and low-engaged students, as well as between 9th- and 11th-grade students, when appropriate. While students attended three schools—Shannon, Woods, and Harris High Schools—I do not use the high schools as a basis of comparison because after reviewing and analyzing the data I found no significant differences in student experience among schools. I begin with a general description of the three schools in the study, as they provide a context for understanding student-teacher relationships. I also include information obtained from interviews with school administrators who helped convey student engagement and student-teacher relationships in these schools. In the process of recording and reporting my findings, I took great care to mask the identities of each school and community; pseudonyms for school administrators, and students are used throughout this chapter. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to my findings regarding student perceptions about trust, engagement, and race.

School and Community Characteristics

This study focused on three metropolitan area high schools and communities, which I have named Harris, Shannon, and Woods. Each is located in a different suburb of Chicago. The communities' racial demographics, income levels, and characteristics are part of the context that might influence what students and teachers experience in their schools. In the following section I provide a description of each school and its surrounding community, altering the details in a way

that preserves the anonymity of the schools and communities but does not obscure their important features.

Harris High School

The community that Harris High School serves was once a vast farmland area that has been developed into a residential housing community and industrial parks. According to local papers, the community served as an escape for families seeking to get away from the urban landscape of the major city that borders the Harris High community. Over time, the Harris community became known for the conservative "down-home" values of its White religious residents, which prohibited liquor sales and apartment buildings in the township.

The Harris community is middle class, with stable home values and above average median income. For a household in 2000 that income was more than $50,000 ; the figure grew to over $70,000 in 2010. Similar growth was seen in housing values. The value of the average home has increased by more than $135,000 in the last ten years. At the time of the 1990 census over 20,000 people lived in the Harris community. However, the population has declined over the last ten years. With the decline in the total population, the demographic makeup of the community has changed as the number of African Americans living in the Harris community has quadrupled over the same period. Harris High School had about150 certified teachers employed at the time of this study. Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of White teachers ranged from a high over 70% in 2000 to a low under 60% in 2010. The number of African American teachers increased 5 percentage points, from 24% in 2000 to 31% in 2010. In addition, the number of Latino teachers increased from less than 1% in 2000 to 5% in 2010.

Harris High School opened in the early 1970s and is one of several high schools in the district. It opened as a college preparatory high school and immediately had winning athletic

programs. Since 2000, Harris's enrollment declined from a high over 2,900 students in 2002 to its current low under 2,300 in 2010. Harris High underwent a 180-degree racial change since its opening. In the early seventies the student population was over 90% White; in 2010 it was over 90% African American. In 2000 the school's percentage of White students was 16%, and the African American population was 78%. By 2010 the White population was less than 1%, while the African American population was 96%.

During the demographic shift since 2000, Harris High School improved its graduation rate by 5 percentage points. The school's dropout rate declined to less than 1% in 2010 compared to 5% in 2000. However, the percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch has increased steadily since 2000, moving from less than 25% in 2000 to over 50% in 2010. Harris High is an African American school with students who have struggled academically over the last eight years. As indicated in Table 5, the percentage of students who met state standards dropped from the third quartile (25%–59%) in 2002 to fourth quartile (0%–24%) in 2010.

Table 5

Harris High School Achievement, Attendance Rate, and Truancy Data

Achievement Data—Quartile Range of Students Who Met or Exceeded State Standards		Attendance Rate		Truancy	
2002	2010	2002	2010	2002	2010
3rd	4th	92%	90%	3%	7%

Source—Illinois State School Report Card Data

I interviewed three school-level administrators at Harris High: Dr. Smith, Mrs. Miner, and Mr. Easley. These administrators thought that students' relationships with their teachers could and should be formed in various ways, such as through classroom interactions, on the

sports fields, and through involvement in school leadership and activities. Principal Smith and Assistant Principal Miner both suggested that trust was a "big deal" because students want nurturing and guidance. Specifically, these administrators thought that students wanted to know their teachers and trust them.

According to Mrs. Miner, "Trust is huge. Trust means that you care about me. You know that I have deficiencies, that I'm not putting forth my best, but I trust you enough that I know that you will still hold me to high expectations." Furthermore, she said, "Some teachers are not as committed to the kids, and the kids know that." She suggested that students know when teachers truly care and are sincere. She acknowledged that while student demographics have changed, the demographics of the staff have not. She characterized the level of overall trust in the Harris community as "low" to nonexistent because of the difference in the racial makeup of students and teachers. Assistant Principal Miner recognized that the school had some hurdles and planned to put together some professional development activities to address the matter of student trust.

With regard to student engagement, Dr. Smith and Mrs. Miner thought that student involvement in activities was moderate and "okay." Both leaders thought that almost half of the student body was involved in some type of sport or activity, although they could produce no data to support this contention. These administrators had a common view of academic engagement at Harris High. For example, Principal Smith thought some teachers worked hard to engage students and were willing to find ways to improve that engagement. However, she thought some teachers were "just imparting information, lecturing and not even looking at the students." Assistant Principal Miner said the level of student engagement with instruction was "somewhere in the middle going toward low." She thought the "majority of them (teachers) were just doing

their own thing," meaning teachers were focused on curriculum or on student expectations. She added that based on "grade distribution and conversations with students, you can tell something was going on." Both Dr. Smith and Mrs. Miner appeared to be very frustrated with the current level of student engagement at Harris High. However, it was not clear that there was a plan of action to address the needs of student engagement from the teacher standpoint.

Furthermore, these administrators felt that a number of students were not engaged or committed to Harris. Dr. Smith observed, "Students at this point don't have a real sense of commitment." He could not explain why, but he recognized that there was not the student connection with Harris that he would like. He said that he saw students trying to show a strong sense of belonging in competitions. Yet other connections to the school had not been as strong. With a somewhat different view, Mrs. Miner thought that students' sense of belonging from a "social standpoint" was the highest and most vital to students at Harris. She said, "Student sense of belonging is the biggest thing for them; education is not. The value of education has decreased." She felt students came to school to "socialize, to gain their identity, to look for friends," but not to learn.

Mrs. Miner found girls to be more engaged than boys at Harris. She thought the boys "are so concerned about their image that they will not commit to being smart." When asked what the school had done to address this matter, Mrs. Miner talked about a "fear factor"—teachers are afraid of black boys and so "they don't push them." She characterized it as "the angry black boy syndrome." She thought that if boys showed some initiative, some force, some strength, they would be singled out as aggressive. Mrs. Miner also suggested that students just do not have the focus they once did. She reflected and made the following observation:

> The last 7 years, things have changed… You [school and teachers] are competing against a lot of mental baggage. The students literally make

you have to make what is going on in the classroom more interesting than what is going on in their minds. You are competing for their attention, their buy-in. With video games, their minds are used to constant movement. Constant interaction, that is what they need. For someone to come in and have a boring lecture, that is not going to do it for them. To see that someone cares, you have to have the relationship piece first, then an absolute engaging experience for him or her. Students ask why this is relevant to me.

Assistant Principal Easley, with two years of administrative experience, agreed somewhat with the perspective of Mrs. Miner. He said there needed to be "more hands-on, more engagement from the teacher's standpoint." He believed that the psychological and behavioral engagement of students required teachers "to grab the minds" of students. Mr. Easley stated that when he was a teacher at a time when the school had a majority of White students, he (or teachers) did not have to do as much "grabbing." Mr. Easley stated, "...when I taught White students, I didn't have to do as much of the pulling for engagement." He thought that this might be attributed to "some cultural differences" between students and teachers.

These three administrators observed that recent demographic change affected the students and teachers. Mrs. Miner thought that some Harris faculty members believed "that these black people are bringing us (school and city) down." Assistant Principal Easley agreed, "With migration from the city, I feel like it's making a difference in what is going on with our students right now." Dr. Smith echoed their sentiment:

I have to say this, I believe that with the changes made by the major city, which included the breaking down of the housing projects, and the moving of some of the lower income students to the south suburbs now, [there has been] a change in our population. I can see the difference in our black children and their parents, how they were then and now. There is more of a lower class mentality. When I talk to them, they do not understand why I am expecting so much.

Dr. Smith explained that race plays "a major role" in the development of student-teacher relationships at Harris High. She noted, "If the kids sense that they are going to be treated [poorly] because of their race, they act out." She explained that if some students do not feel that they are a part of the class, and the teacher does not establish a culture upfront that race is not a factor, kids will notice that, especially if they feel they are treated differently because of their race.

Although Dr. Smith thought race was important, she did not think it should matter to student-teacher trust relationships. She felt that teachers should not treat students any differently because of their race, or deny them opportunity. She stressed that the role of the school's administration was to bridge that gap, serve as a liaison between the two groups, and find ways to erase the lines of race between students and teachers.

Mr. Easley shared a similar perspective on the impact of race on student-teacher trust relationships. He spoke more reflectively of the possibility of a color-blind society within schools where teachers operate in a system of acceptance and care: "I feel that if a teacher is operating in a system of care and trust, it does not make a difference. No matter what their race, if they care and trust students it doesn't matter." He felt that 60% to 70% of the teachers operated on that level at Harris High.

It appeared that these administrators saw a difference in students' level of engagement based on those students' neighborhood or social status and the importance of race to student trust relationships. Dr. Smith often referred to his students' inability to "code-switch" from school to community as one problem with building trust and engagement. Students lived in two worlds, one inside school that required them to produce academically, and one outside of school that caused them to struggle with peer pressure. These competing worlds and students' inability to

"code-switch" resulted in greater emphasis on nonacademic activities and, at times, in a "fear factor that hard work will get them ahead, which could have an impact on student trust," Smith said. The question of race is one that appears to concern Harris's leadership team and warrants additional discussion.

Shannon High School

Shannon High School is located in a community that covers about 2.8 square miles, approximately 2,000 households, and over 1,000 families. In 2010 the total population of the community was just under 6,000, with a racial makeup that was approximately 40% White, 45% African American. This community was originally considered a farm town. In the early 1960s the population began to grow with mostly White residents, and the area became a residential community with little industry. Some time after, a population shift took place and minority home ownership grew due to a surge in minority buying power. Over a 20-year period the number of African Americans living in the area grew more than 200%. The Shannon community was solidly middle- and upper-income, with average home values more than twice the state average. The median household income was just over $100,000 and more than half of Shannon's community residents possessed a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census 1990, 2000, http://www.city-data.com/city, 2009).

Shannon High School opened in the late 1950s and has a rich history. The school was established because of population growth and development in the community. After its opening, Shannon had been considered the "best" school in the school district, in part because it was located in the most affluent area. Different from the other two high schools in the district, Shannon opened as a college preparation campus that would offer honors, advanced, and AP courses.

In 2010 Shannon High School's enrollment was just under 1,600 students, a 600-student increase from 2000. During that same period, the percentage of African American students increased by more than 10 percentage points, from 78% in 2000 to 94% in 2010. The percentage of White students decreased from 17% in 2000 to less than 2% in 2010. The proportion of low-income students, based on the number receiving free or reduced lunch, increased from around 15% in 2000 to 50% in 2010. Shannon's graduation rate during the same period increased from around 80% in 2000 to around 90% in 2010. The dropout rate decreased from 3% in 2000 to 2% in 2010.

In 2010 Shannon High School had 90 certified teachers, of whom around 60% were White. From 1998 to 2009, Shannon High showed an increase in the number of African American teachers from 15% to 32% of the total teaching population. In addition, from 2000 to 2010 the teaching staff at Shannon became younger. In 2000 the average length of teaching experience was just under 25 years, while in 2010, the average length of experience was 11 years. Finally, in 2010 about 55 % of the teaching corps had a master's degree.

Between 2002 and 2010 Shannon's students struggled to increase their academic performance on the state achievement exam, moving from the higher 3rd quartile (49%-25%) to the lower 3rd quartile (see Table 6).

Table 6

Shannon High School Achievement, Attendance Rate, and Truancy Data

Achievement Data—Quartile Range of Students Who Met or Exceeded State Standards		Attendance Rate		Truancy	
2002	2010	2002	2010	2002	2010
3rd	Low 3rd	90%	87%	1%	2%

Source—Illinois State School Report Card Data

The three administrators I interviewed at Shannon discussed changes in student achievement and overall engagement. When questioned about engagement indicators such as attendance, tardiness, discipline referrals, and participation in various activities, these administrators agreed that all of these factors were influencing student trust and engagement. They believed that teachers were essential in the process of promoting and creating an environment that supports all student engagement. The administrators stated that the challenges to improve trust and engagement centered on developing consistent, compassionate, and visible staff members who would support all students. Some thought that student trust and engagement varied depending on the teacher and class.

Administrators at Shannon agreed that the racial demographic shift had a significant impact on the community and the school. The principal, Dr. Phillips, spoke of the moral dilemma Shannon High faced as its demographics changed. From her perspective, the school had a "moral obligation" to do its best to provide African American students with the best education it could provide. She felt that the way in which the school addressed these matters seemed to affect how students responded to the educational process, which might have influenced their engagement.

Furthermore, she felt that teachers had a moral obligation to serve all students regardless of student racial background. According to Dr. Phillips, "This really impacts how kids learn."

When questioned about student engagement indicators, Dr. Phillips suggested that the two major school-wide problem areas were tardiness and absences. Dr. Phillips did not perceive Shannon's students as very engaged and indicated that this lack of engagement was symptomatic of where "African American students are as a culture." She stated that students seem to have a lackluster psychological approach to education in general. Furthermore, she suggested that this lack of engagement with academics and activities might be partly rooted in the relationships among students, teachers, and parents. Dr. Phillips emphasized that it was imperative for teachers to develop and maintain relationships with their students and that the administrators needed to find ways to develop teachers' sensitivity to race and differences of cultures in order to increase student engagement and trust. Dr. Phillips noted, "It's not just about whether or not the students trust the teacher; teachers have to feel safe to trust, and students must feel safe around teachers."

In contrast to Dr. Phillips, Assistant Principal Hill suggested that a "large part of the student body is engaged; however, there is a population of students that are not engaged because of internal and external factors." She mentioned parent income, community involvement, and student behavior as key factors that influenced student engagement at Shannon. Mrs. Hill stated, "Trust is a big factor in student engagement... If [students] cannot trust what you are saying as genuine, then it doesn't matter…. Teachers have to understand that just because you are an adult does not make you always right.

There was a sense from these administrators that students want to see how teachers react to them so that they can determine how they themselves should act. The administrators thought

that this created a sort of "feeling out" period for students that placed a hold or restraint on student trust and interaction. To combat this, the administrators talked about trying to find ways to bring students and teachers together and make everyone more sensitive to each other's needs.

Overall, the administrators thought that there were some trust issues between students and teachers. They stated that student-teacher relationships were limited and underdeveloped, partly because of the relational, community, and ethnicity gap between students and teachers, which may have contributed to the low levels of educational indicators such as attendance and involvement in school. For example, Mrs. Hill stated:

> Some of our teachers live outside of the community in areas that do not have the diversity that we have here at Shannon High. These factors contribute to a worldview of both teachers and students. It is very important that the classroom teacher form relationships with their students to balance their world views.

This "world view" comment leads to the question of teacher race and its impact on student trust relationships. Assistant Principal Bell was asked whether race made a difference to the students at Shannon High. He thought that for many students race might make it a little harder for them to trust. He suggested that some students would have a little more difficulty immediately trusting teachers who do not look like them, depending on the community they come from, or on their background. This point of reference was consistent with the viewpoint of Mrs. Hill, who said although it should not make a difference to students or teachers, "It could make it more difficult with that initial trust. But once that is kneaded out, they really don't think it matters."

It appeared that both Dr. Bell and Mrs. Hill had some reservation about race and its importance in developing relationships. They both recognized that it could be a barrier, but both had experienced instances where it was not a barrier. They felt that teachers who were engaging

their students through relationships transcended race. However, Shannon High's principal, Dr. Phillips, thought race was a major concern to both students and teachers. She thought that both teachers and students were unique and that they came with their own "world view." This "world view" may influence the way students and teachers interact with each other. She stated, "We construct meaning through our environment and in this environment race, class, and gender matter."

Dr. Bell stated, "The best teachers with the most engaged [students] look at what they are doing all of the time, and this is important to our school." Dr. Bell was very concerned with whether race made a difference in his experience yet expressed his views on the question in these terms:

> You hear the black masses saying something, and you want to agree with them. I just cannot believe that… . I know too many teachers that I grew up with who poured into my life who was black and White, and too many here that have amazing relationships with students.

It was clear that these three school leaders viewed teacher relationships as essential to student engagement. They thought positive relationships were significant for enhancing student involvement and promoting students' feelings of being cared for and supported. Mrs. Hill stated that the need for trust between students and teachers goes "hand and hand" with student engagement. Mrs. Hill lamented that in some cases the whole dynamic of trust relationships had failed at Shannon High. Nevertheless, when trust was present and consistent, it became easier for students and teachers to build relationships to support psychological engagement. Dr. Phillips suggested that the most successful teachers at Shannon High were those who were able to build psychological engagement in their students. "They are good with intrinsic motivation of students."

Dr. Phillips went on to state:

> When a student really cares about you and feels that you really care about them, they really do trust you. When they find an adult that they can connect with, then trust becomes a part of their relationship, and that relationship can rotate back around to success.

Woods High School

The Woods community population grew from just under 5,000 in 1950 to more than 30,000 in 2010. When incorporated, the community consisted mostly of working class immigrants, predominately of Italian, Polish, and Irish descent. The racial makeup of the community changed significantly in the early 1970s, as African Americans and Hispanic residents began to move into the Woods community. The 2010 racial makeup of the Woods community was approximately 40% White, 35% African American, and 25% Hispanic. The median household income has remained consistently over $40,000. However, the median home value has more than doubled in recent years.

The economic foundation of the community once consisted of steel mills, auto plants, and train depots. It was a good place, one that people who could not afford to live in the city could call home. Parents worked in the local factories. The high school trained students to work on machines, which they would help them get jobs in local industry. Changes in the manufacturing industry hit this community hard. Most of the steel mills are now closed. The auto plant is considerably smaller, and the once-bustling train commerce is gone.

Woods is one of the oldest high schools in the state. Woods's rich tradition had been rooted in academic success in the classroom and on the fields of athletic play. When Woods opened, its primary focus was building vocational skills to prepare students to work in the local

industry (steel mills, auto plant, etc.). With the decline of these industries over the years, Woods adopted a college prep curriculum.

Enrollment at Woods grew from just over 1,000 students in 2000 to just over 1,700 students in 2010. During the same period, Woods High School experienced a drastic decline in the number of White students enrolled. White students made up over 25% of the population in 2000 compared to 7% of the population in 2010. The African American and Latino populations grew strongly from 2000 to 2010: The African American student population rose 6 percentage points from 48% to 54%, and the Latino rose 8 percentage points from 27% to 35%.

From 2000 to 2010 Woods improved its graduation rate from just over 50% to over 90%. In the same period, Woods's dropout rate decreased from 13% in 2000 to less than 8% in 2010. In 2010 the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch was just over 75%, a very significant increase over the 45% rate in 2000. Part of that increase has been associated with the community's declining industry, which created a significant loss of employment opportunities. In addition, the gentrification of the bordering large city, which demolished all of its low-income housing units, caused a migration of low-income families to the collar suburbs.

Currently, more than 100 faculty and staff members work at Woods High School. The racial makeup of the staff remained consistent between 2003 and 2010, with about 82% White faculty and about 18% minority faculty. Generally, the teaching corps at Woods is younger than in recent years. In 2000 the average teaching experience was 18 years; by 2010 it had decreased to 11 years. The percentage of teachers with a master's degree grew from 52% in 2000 to 67% in 2010. Recent retirement incentives made it possible for Woods's administration to hire younger teachers, many of whom have backgrounds in constructivist teaching methods. Woods is a majority African American school with students who have struggled academically during the

past eight years (see Table 7). This has led administrators to seek to identify causes and search

for remedies.

Table 7

Woods High School Achievement, Attendance Rate, and Truancy Data

Achievement Data—Quartile of Students Who Met or Exceeded State Standards		Attendance Rate		Truancy	
2002	2010	2002	2010	2002	2010
High 4th	High 4th	87%	88%	17%	12%

Source—Illinois State Report Card Data

Administrators I interviewed at Woods understood the role that student trust of teachers

could have in student engagement. Many administrators felt that the students' relationships with

their teachers were formed in a variety of ways, through classroom interactions, on the sports

fields, and as part of their involvement in school leadership and activities. The discussion with

the three administrators who were interviewed focused on issues of student attendance,

participation, tardiness, and indicators of trust. The administrators offered examples of how

students and teachers interacted in positive ways that likely supported student trust and learning.

But they also pointed to several areas of concern regarding students' ability to build trust and

sustain engagement. For example, Assistant Principal Lee, a second year administrator, noted

that most of the students who attend Woods High come from a number of different feeder

schools in different communities; this causes them to have "trust issues" with other students and

teachers when they come to Woods. She thought this made it difficult for teachers to build

relationships at first, because students were so worried about their social position within the school and were constantly "feeling each other out."

Furthermore, while these administrators agreed that trust may matter to student engagement, their differing perspectives on *how* it matters were reflected in their explanations of how student were engaged and built trust relationships at Woods. For example, the Principal (Dr. Mills) and Mrs. Lee declared that 50% of currently enrolled students were involved in various school activities, but they did not feel as confident of the extent to which students were engaged in classroom instruction. Dr. Mills stated that the school needed to focus more on achievement, instruction, test scores, and meeting state standards. She was convinced that students' relationships with teachers and teachers' commitment to and investment in learning were essential to student engagement. Dr. Mills explained:

> For me, engagement… is major. It is bridging that gap with how relationships interface with student achievement, test scores, behavior, attendance, tardiness, classroom instruction, and all those things. Every day we see that kids know what class they can be late to and what classes they cannot… because it is that relationship, that engagement, that interaction with the classroom teacher. It may be positive or not, but nonetheless it is still a significant relationship that has engaged that student to know the expectation of knowing to get there, and getting there on time.

Dr. Mills saw technology as a possible reason for the lack of connection between teachers and students: "Kids are exposed to texting, Facebook, and their learning styles are different than ours." She thought that teachers' inability to bridge the technology gap had a direct impact on student behavioral and psychological engagement. Echoing Dr. Mills, Mrs. Lee stated, "Students' attention spans are short. Once they are lost, it is so hard to get them back… Kids can tell you what's going on while they are texting on their phones. They can multitask, listen to an iPod and text on their phones at the same time."

Mr. White, a Division Chair, shared the viewpoints of his administrative colleagues about trust and student engagement. He thought that students have to trust in the teachers, and that when they do, they are more likely to do what teachers say, and more likely to do their homework. He has witnessed student-teacher relationships that were strong and confident, even if students perceived the teachers to be "mean or strict." Mr. White said, "We've had teachers that have very healthy relationships, but you have to be careful." When asked to clarify "you have to be careful," Mr. White stated his belief that some teachers were very careful about how they interacted with students for fear of being perceived as too close to their student. However, he felt that regardless of these teachers' concerns, teacher relationships were critical and insufficiently widespread at Woods High.

Mr. White felt that trust was essential to student success, and he was able to identify examples in which trust relationships had been beneficial to student engagement. However, he thought teachers cared more about student success than the students did. This would seem to interfere with teachers' ability to develop trust relationships because it suggests they lack confidence in students' desire and commitment to learn.

Like Dr. Mills and Mr. White, Mrs. Lee thought that trust was essential to student engagement and identified examples of trust where relationships had been beneficial. Mrs. Lee also expressed her belief that teachers seemed to care more about students' engagement than students cared about their own engagement. Like Mr. White, Mrs. Lee felt that students' ability to develop trusting relationships with their teachers had much to do with their confidence and belief in their own commitment to education. She explained further that Woods had experienced teachers who seemed interested in students but who had not been able to "win their trust." She thought that students could "sense or tell" when you are being "real," and when they do not sense

comfort or "realness" in their teachers, "they close down." In addition, Mrs. Lee expressed concern that some teachers apparently did not understand how to relate to or interact with students because those students were low-income, or because "their clothes don't look right," (i.e., they are baggy, tight, or small). These comments appeared to have cultural and racial overtones that led me to ask Mrs. Lee about the significance of race in regard to student trust. Mrs. Lee replied, "I think race plays a big role in what we do."

I raised the issue of race as a point of interest in a discussion of how students may engage in student-teacher trust relationships. One part of this discussion centered on the fact that many high schools in the suburbs had experienced a substantial demographic change in student enrollment. At Woods the student enrollment was over 90% African American and Latino, while the teaching population was 80% White. According to Dr. Mills, "This has had an impact on other faculty and community members at various districts and schools and is no different here at Woods." Dr. Mills spoke about how the school had changed significantly over time and had had to deal with race riots and harassment in the 1960s and 1970s, when the first students of color enrolled at Woods High. However, she thought that now race made less of a difference for students. "The school has come a long way from those times," said Dr. Mills. She complimented her student body for its ability to interact without conflict. However, she expressed some concern for the racial minority population at Woods High. She thought that race and ethnicity of students and teachers had less to do with trust relationships and student engagement and more to do with African American students' ability to take ownership of their own educational experience and do what was required of them by their teachers. Dr. Mills went on to say that students' identification with race from a historical standpoint seemed to be the primary challenge facing Woods and its student-teacher relationships. She stated:

…Kids are so far removed from their ancestors' struggles. I do not think that families are doing so good right now talking about some of the historical aspects that got all ethnic groups to this place. Caucasian Americans and other ethnic groups do a better job.

The Woods administrators had differing views on whether race mattered to student-teacher relationships. Dr. Mills initially spoke of the strides made by her students but later said the following about race:

Race can vary from not making a difference to making all of the difference in the world. I have seen relationships where you have a student and teacher from different races that have formed a relationship beyond imagination, and have transcended expectations and have been great in motivating and nurturing that child.

Dr. Mills further explained that some minority students need a "sense of identification." She went on to state how this may influence the relationships students maintain in school: "Sometimes they (students) feel that people who are not from their race or ethnic background can't relate to what they're going through because they have not walked in their path."

Similar statements about the impact of race on student teacher relationships came from Mr. White. Mr. White initially stated, "Race makes no difference at all!" He gave a couple of examples in which "White teachers" were establishing relationship with students of all races. He suggested, "As teachers, we are to look beyond race and not notice student race." But in that same discussion, he admitted that sometimes it was "hard for kids" to see beyond race:

If you are Black, living in a Black neighborhood, sometimes they have a prejudice of something that has happened to their family. However, when you see a great relationship, they are looking at him as an adult, and not a White guy who is "telling me to do it."—someone who is helping and telling me and guiding me. I do not really see an exception to that. There are exceptions to the rule though, but not here.

At first glance, it appeared that administrators did not feel race mattered to student trust relationships. Their responses varied from "Yes, race does make a difference to student trust relationships" to "No, race does not make a difference." With these responses in mind I believe that discussion of race was in fact a sensitive topic for the administrative leader. As that discussion proceeded, the administrators often replaced the question of race with that of individual accountability. It is also worth noting that in further discussion the administrators raised the issue of a socioeconomic divide. The collective response of the administrators was that in light of the difference between student and teacher demographics, and the substandard academic progress of students at Woods High, the question of race was of less interest from the standpoint of student engagement and of more interest from the standpoint of the socioeconomic divide between students and teachers.

Student Perceptions of Trust Relationships, Engagement, and Race

In this section I examine students' perceptions of the student-teacher trust relationship, engagement, and the role of race. These data came from interviews of 22 African American students, 10 high-engaged and 12 low-engaged, from the three suburban high schools. I identified students as either high- or low-engaged based on a combination of indicators of psychological and behavioral engagement. These indicators included the student's sense of belonging in school, involvement with instruction, academic standing (grade point average, GPA), involvement in co-curricular activities, involvement in athletics, attendance level, and discipline incidents. Students who fell positively in four of more of these categories were identified as high-engaged, whereas those with three or fewer indicators were identified as low-engaged. From these criteria, I identified 10 high-engaged students and 12 low-engaged students across the three schools.

Key themes emerged in the ways in which student-teacher trust relationships affected engagement and the role race played in developing these relationships. These themes included respect, communication, bonding and caring, and students' perception of the teachers' willingness to teach/teacher expectations. The themes helped define the quality of trust relationships in terms of scope, complexity, and depth. In the following section, I describe trust relationships from the perspectives of high- and low-engaged students and identify the emerging themes that may help describe the quality of these relationships and their significance. Later, I examine the role of race in student-teacher trust relationships on student engagement.

This study sought to learn from students' perceptions how student trust of teachers and teachers' race may affect students' engagement in school. In interviews I asked students to discuss their thoughts and perspectives on teacher trust, engagement, and race. From their responses, I identified three general findings. First, most high- and low-engaged students reported having trust relationships with one or more of their teachers. Second, most students spoke about the various dimensions and functions of these relationships. Here, I found that it was the quality of these relationships that distinguished high-engaged students from low-engaged students. Finally, race, while important for some students, did not seem to matter overall to student-teacher trust relationships or engagement.

One important part of my research was to gauge the relationship of trust to student engagement by students' grade level. I hypothesized that older, more experienced students (11th graders) would likely differ from their younger, less experienced counterparts (9th graders) in their perception of trust relationships with teachers. This assumption was based on the relative experiences of 9th- and 11th-grade students as they get to know their schools and teachers. The assumption is that students entering high school begin with a level of excitement and an open

mind about what the high school experience could hold. Compared to the younger students, 11th-graders have experienced the honeymoon period, have become attuned to the high school experience, and have formulated the views of the school culture. However, I did not find significant grade level differences in student views of trust and student relationships with teachers. Most 11th-grade students (11 of 12) experienced some sort of trust relationships, regardless of their engagement level. Most 9th graders (7 of 10) also experienced relational trust. Beginning high school students perceived and articulated a sense that these relationships were of value to their well-being, much as older students did. This suggests that students likely develop perceptions about their student-teacher relationships early in their high school experience and perhaps bring perspectives they developed in elementary and middle school.

Although the students I interviewed attended three different high schools, I did not find any noticeable differences among students by school. Therefore, I did not use the school as a basis of comparison. This finding might appear to refute my initial hypothesis that the qualities and nature of student/teacher relationships would prove to be related to school context. However, the fact that the schools were similar in terms of demographics and location may account for their similar social and academic cultures and school environments, making schooling experiences (and thus student-teacher relationships) similar for students from the different schools.

Student Perceptions of Trust Relationships

Most of the students in this study (16 of 22 respondents) reported that they experienced some positive trust relationships with teachers at their schools. Both high- and low-engaged students discussed their trust relationships in terms of three main characteristics: communication, respect, and bonding and caring. Also important, some students indicated that trust could be

evident in teachers' perceived willingness to teach and their expectations for student learning. In this section, I present students' descriptions of relational trust. I will also compare and contrast the ways in which high- and low-engaged students characterized their trust relationships and note the similarities and differences among them. The themes mentioned here represent those most commonly and consistently mentioned by students.

Communication

While there were a few differences in responses among high- and low-engaged students, high-engaged students spoke more consistently of the importance of communication to the development of trust relationships with their teachers. One way to improve student-teacher trust relationships can be through creating and establishing an effective and supportive communication system that provides opportunities to discuss, share, and confide in teachers. High-quality and authentic communication between students and teachers may have a long-lasting effect on students' image of their school and can be important to students' overall success and their ability to build trust relationship with their teachers. Students may feel a connection to their teachers through communication (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Of the 10 high-engaged students in this study, 8 felt that they had trust relationships with teachers and that part of that trust came from their communication with their teachers. One high-engaged student, Sarah, clearly recognized that the level of communication with her teachers influenced their trust relationship: "I get closer now with my teachers, and they will stay [after school]… and just [talk] to us about anything, whether it's personal or academics… I think that is really good." Another high-engaged student, Simon, spoke of how communication and trust relationships helped him become the student he perceived himself to be: "Teachers' trust helps me to understand what I want to do… I need somebody to talk to inside and outside of school. I

think it's important to have trust relationships here." Paula, a high-engaged 11th grader, characterized her relationship with teachers this way: "I have a good relationship with doesn't come to teach." Both Simon and Paula suggested that when teachers go beyond their normal duties of just teaching and find ways to communicate with students, students seem to trust teachers more.

Similarly, Stan, a low-engaged 11th grader stated that "trust plays a big part" in why he goes to school. He thought that the level of communication he had with some of his teachers "made a difference" to his trust of teachers. Stan felt very comfortable in his relationships with teachers. Two other low-engaged students, Artie and Shelia, spoke of how their trust relationships helped them "to communicate better and get along with other people" and gave them a sense of belonging. Specifically, Shelia noted, "communication is really strong with some of my teachers, and I really just want to talk to them about stuff."

The idea of teachers as open and willing to talk came up several times with both high- and low-engaged students. Paula, a high-engaged student, spoke about how her trust in teachers emerged from her sense of whether they were "open," that is, being available to talk to, approachable, and willing to talk about more things than just schoolwork. For Paula and others, teachers' openness allowed students to communicate freely. Artie, a low-engaged student, spoke fondly of his relationships with his teachers. Artie said he had a good "bond" with his teachers because they were "open and willing" to help him with his work. He thought it was better if students have trust relationships with their teachers, stating, "It was important and made a difference." Finally, while Kurt, a low-engaged 9th grader, felt that trust relationships made a "little" difference in his engagement, he suggested that if teachers talked to their students, it would help these relationships and could help student engagement.

Respect

In addition to communication, students in this study described "respect" as important to their trust of teachers. In the process of building trust relationships, establishing an environment of respect for minority and at-risk students is important. Respect involves recognizing who students are and understanding their background. Respect can be seen as acceptance of the other person's values, culture, and views. In this study several students, both high-engaged and low-engaged, spoke about trust relationships with teachers that centered on respect. For example, Shelia, a low-engaged student who recognized the presence of trust relationships in her experience at her school, suggested, "Teachers earn my respect and I can trust them once that happens."

Other low-engaged students, like Stan and Ron, looked at respect as critical to their relationships with teachers, as well as with their coaches. According to Stan, "When you are close to teachers and have a good relationship with your teachers, and you respect your teachers and do all of your work, they will help you anytime." Ron stated, "The respect thing, we just have to respect people (teachers) and they have to respect you." He went on to suggest that when there is mutual respect, good things happen in the classroom. For example, teachers seem to communicate better with students, and the classroom atmosphere seems to be more conducive to learning. Finally, Sarah, a high-engaged 11th grader, attributed her engagement in and out of the classroom to the trust relationships she shared in school. However, she felt that prior to developing these relationships "You have to earn our respect first before you can become my friend. I do not like teachers who do not have the self-respect to do what they are supposed to be doing... . If you don't respect yourself, how am I supposed to respect you?"

Bonding and Caring

Students described both bonding and caring as important elements in students' trust of teachers. For example, Ron, a low-engaged student, expressed his belief that having a trusting

and caring relationship with his teachers "makes a big difference" to how he feels about the class. Similarly, Sarah, a high-engaged student, spoke of her bond with her teachers as important to her engagement. She said, "I really bonded with my teachers over my whole life as a student." She believed that a connection between them really made a difference to her overall attachment to school and her sense of belonging. One low-engaged student, Spencer, stated:

> Teachers should not be a teacher here if they do not care about how much you're learning in your class. They should care, and you should be able to tell that they care… . You can look at the other teachers and can tell that they are just here for the paychecks. I probably would be more interested in coming to school if they showed me they care, but when you have a teacher who does not care about your education, why should you care about your education?

Another student, Artie, a low-engaged student, identified with this idea of caring: "My freshman year is when I thought about it most. When a teacher didn't care, I just wanted to get out and move on."

The concept of caring appeared to have a significant impact on how high- and low-engaged students developed and maintained trust relationships with teachers. Megan, a high-engaged student, thought that a teacher's ability to work with students made a difference to her. Megan's use of the term "works with" implied teachers' willingness to meet students "where they are" and begin to develop relationships that eventually benefit both students and teachers. Similarly, Paula reflected on the concept of care, "I trust teachers that talk to me and show me that they care. If something happens in school, I know that I can go to them and trust them with any type of situation."

Finally, when it came to caring relationships, Nancy, a high-engaged student, spoke of teachers she could trust who helped her to be "more involved." She said, "They made me feel like I was going to be something in life and do something." She ended by saying, "These

teachers push me…, instead of the negative ones that act like they don't care." Nancy suggested that teachers can push or motivate students in a positive manner if they try to create trust relationships with them.

It is clear from these students responses that teachers who find ways to connect and communicate with students are more likely to promote trust relationships. Building trust relationships can be important to students' sense of support and their experiences in schools. In this study, both high- and low-engaged students consistently reflected and commented upon the themes of communication, respect, and caring as indicators of the presence or absence of trust relationships with their teachers. In addition, students discussed teachers' "willingness to teach" as an important component of student-teacher trust relationships.

Willingness to Teach and High Teacher Expectations

When students referred to teachers' willingness to teach, they seemed to imply that they trusted teachers who held high expectations for their learning. For students, high expectations meant that teachers demonstrated active teaching and preparedness. Teachers who students perceived as always giving their best seemed to provide students with a sense of stability, which, in turn may have supported and enhanced the social exchange and trust between those teachers and students and the connection to their school. For example, although limited in his experience, Kevin, a high-engaged 9th grader, spoke of the importance of his trust relationships with his teachers, and noted that they "actually want him to learn" and held him to high expectations. Abigail, a high-engaged 11th grader, experienced different relationships throughout her school career but clearly identified with teachers who held her to high expectations:

> I feel like the students should trust their teacher. If students and teachers have a relationship, it makes the student want to learn more, want to do a little bit better so they don't disappoint their teacher who is somewhat of a friend… . If they trust them, they will be able to talk to them more than as a friend.

Summary

In summary, most students interviewed for this study, both high- and low-engaged, reported having some type of trust relationships with teachers at their schools. Students identified openness, communication, willingness to teach, respect, and care as important indicators of trust relationships with their teachers. However, the fact that there was no clear distinction between high- and low-engaged students in terms of the presence of trust relationships suggests that there may be some differences in qualities of these relationships that contribute to engagement in school. In other words, the presence of trust relationships does not appear to be the primary factor in student engagement. Rather, it may be the qualities of these relationships that make the difference to student engagement. In the next section, I will explore students' perceptions of different qualities of their trust relationships; this may provide some insight into the influence of those qualities on student engagement.

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Differences in the Quality of Student-Teacher Trust Relationships

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Trust can be one of the most important building blocks in developing and sustaining student-teacher relationships, as well as a vehicle for promoting student engagement. High- and low-engaged students in this study spoke of the importance of their trust relationships. However, their engagement was related not to the presence of trust relationships but rather to the qualities of those trust relationships. It is therefore important to understand how both high- and low-engaged students talked about the qualities of these relationships. As described earlier, students discussed their trust relationships with teachers as a function of communication, respect, caring, and willingness to teach. However, students also offered information about the scope, substantive depth, and complexity of their trust relationships with teachers. For the purposes of this study, scope refers to the size of the network or the number of teachers students identify as sharing trust relationships. Substantive depth refers to the intensity or shallowness of students'

trust relationships with their teachers. Complexity of student-teacher relationship refers to the multiple dimensions of a student's relationship with teachers.

Data from student interviews revealed perceptions of varying degrees of scope, depth, and complexity of trust between students and teachers. For example, of the 10 high-engaged students, 8 students (80%) noted multiple trust relationships (3 or more teachers), substantive depth, and complex relationships with their teachers that functioned as vehicles of support and engagement. On the other hand, of the 12 students who were low-engaged, 11 students (92%) viewed their trust relationships as limited in scope, depth, and complexity. In the following section, I will further examine the issues of scope, depth, and complexity as characteristics of student-teachers relationships and as they may relate to students' engagement in school.

Scope, Depth, and Complexity of Trust Relationships

First, it is important to understand why scope, depth, and complexity are key qualities of student-teachers trust relationships. Prior to my evaluation of the student trust data, I supposed that trust relationships were important to how students were in engaged in school. I suggested that simple trust relationships were enough to make a difference to how students were engaged in school. However, after deep analysis of student interviews I found that it was not simply a trusting relationship that was important to student-teacher trust relationships; it was more involved than that. This was evident as it became clear that both high- and-low engaged students shared trust relationships. The differences were more complex and significant, as I learned when analyzing how these relationships worked in schools. This led me to qualify these trusting relationships based on their scope, depth, and complexity.

I characterized scope, depth, and complexity as the qualities of student-teacher trust relationships that separate high- and low-engaged students. For the purposes of this study, *scope* refers to the number of trust relationships a student shared with teachers, and the length of time

these relationships were maintained. Since most students had some sort of trust relationship with their teachers, I had to discern the point of demarcation between high and low engagement. After reviewing the data, I chose the minimal number of relationships as three, because this seemed to be the tipping point between high- and low-engaged students. Students whose relationships were characterized as low-scope shared trusting relationships with no more than two teachers over short periods of time. *Depth* represents the degree to which trust relationships work to support a student's sense of belonging and respect, among other trust indicators. Finally, *complexity* describes whether these trust relationships were viewed as simple or multidimensional, with higher complexity denoting that the trust relationships were more intricate.

In this study, high- and low-engaged students articulated a wide range of perceptions about their trust relationships with teachers and what those relationships meant to their behavioral and psychological engagement. Most (80%) of the high-engaged students in this study experienced multiple trust relationships (3 or more) with relatively greater substantive depth and complex interactions with their teachers. Only 8% of the low-engaged students expressed having multiple trust relationships, depth, and complex interactions with their teachers (see Table 8).

Table 8

Qualities of Trust Relationships of High- and Low-Engaged Groups of Students

Trust Relationship Qualities	High-Engaged Students	Low-Engaged Students
High Scope, Depth, and Complexity of Relationship	Abigail Fred Kevin Nancy Paula Sarah Simon Tim	Bill
Low Scope, Depth, and Complexity of Relationship	Megan Tom	Artie Kurt John Jon Ron Sam Shelia Spencer Stan Tammy Zack

The data show that more high-engaged students experienced multidimensional trust relationships with their teachers than did low-engaged students. These trust relationships were characterized by deep levels of communication that, in some cases, allowed students to develop a closer bond with their teachers. Some students used these trust relationships to support their sense of belonging and trust in their school. On the other hand, 92% of low-engaged students had limited, one-dimensional, or nonexistent trust relationships with their teachers, as compared to 20% of high-engaged students who experienced similar low-trust relationships. The communications between students and teachers in these relationships were limited and centered on school or survival strategies for students. Although limited in scope, the essence of trust

relationships for low-engaged students was similar to that for high-engaged students. Some low-engaged students' trust relationships provided a sense of belonging. In fact, a key finding of this study was that most students, regardless of their engagement level, shared or valued trust relationships with their teachers. In the following sections, I will discuss the differences in quality of trust relationships of high- and low-engaged students using scope, depth, and complexity as criteria for differentiating between high- and low-quality relationships.

High Quality Trust Relationships

Students in this category experienced and described what I call high quality student-teacher trust relationships as defined by their scope, depth, and complexity. Eight of the 10 high-engaged students (Abigail, Fred, Kevin, Tim, Paula, Simon, Nancy, and Sarah) had multiple trust relationships with current and past teachers, and those relationships showed considerable depth and relatively high levels of complexity. It is also important to know that most of these students recognized how trust relationships could support their learning.

Abigail, for example, stated that she had trust relationships with many of her current teachers and mentioned positive trust relationships with former teachers. Abigail's trust relationships can be described as complex and important to her own sense of well-being and belonging to her school. She felt that these relationships helped her grow as a person and a student. She considered herself a competitive student and wanted to be valued for her intelligence. She felt that her trust relationships were deep and supportive of her success:

> Some teachers give me words of encouragement. I trust the teachers that I am close with. Some teachers I see as more than teachers—I see them as an actual person and that is what makes me open up to them because they are just not lecturing. They are actually talking to me as more than a student but as a person and that is what makes me trust them. As for trust, I think it helps you see them (teachers) as actual caring people, the more compassionate the better… .

Abigail thought both earlier and at the current stage of her school career that the relationships she had formed as a freshman really made a difference to her as a junior. She continued, "Teachers this year, I know them, but I kept a relationship with my teachers whom I had in the past [freshman year]." She still talks to them because they really liked her and encouraged her to do better.

Tim, an 11th grader, also reported trust relationships with many of his teachers and spoke affectionately about one relationship he had with his African American history teacher. He thought his closeness with this teacher made him feel comfortable and confident with his ability to talk and communicate, which he said helped his overall engagement. Tim stated, "I have good relationships with most of my teachers and some of them I can really talk to." He spoke of supportive relationships that helped him mature as a young man. He thought that teachers should do what they are supposed to do, which is to help students be who they can be. Tim felt a sense of belonging that developed through his trust relationships with his teachers. However, he thought there should be more trust relationships within his school. He believed that trust relationships helped him and others in many ways. He concluded, "These relationships help me in school and sometimes in my personal life."

Fred, an 11th grader, shared similar views about the scope and depth of his relationships with his teachers: "My relationships are pretty good overall. My teachers are nice, and I trust them because they give me a sense of security." Fred reported multiple trust relationships with teachers that had been maintained throughout his high school career. He said that some of those teachers still check on him and monitor his progress. He stated, "Teachers that I trust, you see them in the hallways. They would say like 'what's up' and stuff, and you speak back to them and say 'hey'." Fred thought that this sense of security was important for all students in order to feel "comfortable" and safe at his school and that more teachers should make students feel this way.

Fred thought students should listen to their teachers in order to develop the trust relationships that could ultimately help them:

> Since I been here I trust all my English teachers and my science teacher. They gave me a sense of security, you see them in the hallways, and they always speak and talk. I had Mr. B as a teacher sophomore year. He still asks me if I need help or something. He is my chemistry teacher. It has been different teachers, but English and science teachers are good. All three of my English classes have been close to each other, so I see all of my old teachers. They helped me through my first year. If you do not like your teachers, you're not going to be engaged, but if you have a relationship with them, they will give you more. Teachers really make me feel good about myself. You just have to listen.

Simon, a 9th grader, described the complexity in his trust relationships as supportive and as making a big difference to how he related to school and coursework. Simon felt strongly that his trust relationships translated into higher academic expectations, a greater sense of self-confidence, and greater involvement in the community. In fact, Simon suggested a direct link between his academic engagement and his trust relationships. Simon viewed these relationships as important to how he felt about school and, even more significantly, to how they made him feel personally:

> Trust relationships help me relate to my school. They help me relate to myself and what I want to do. All students should have trust relationships with their teachers, and it would be better if we trusted them more. Relationships are important and make a difference to me.

He spoke of his teachers' thoughtfulness and their ability to talk about world issues that were important in his life. At times, some of Simon's teachers would be so involved in discussions and sharing with their classes, they forgot to teach the lesson. Simon felt teachers could give good advice and make students feel good about who they are as people. Simon's teachers were nice to him and clearly explained various concepts that helped build his confidence

in the classroom. Teachers helped Simon make sense of the world. They helped him know what

he was supposed to do and what he could do. He said:

> When I am feeling down, I talk to my reading teacher. When something needs to be explained, he gives me good advice. I trust my English teacher the most. He talks about things that are going on in the world, what we are supposed to do, and what we can do. Sometimes he cannot teach the lesson because he is talking to us from day one. He gives good advice. That makes me feel good about who I am as a person.

In the same way Simon looked at his trust relationships as important to his overall

development, Nancy, an 11th grader, noted:

> Teachers that I trust keep me more involved, and I want to be more involved. They make me feel like I am going to be something in life and do something with my life. They push me in the right way. Teachers who I can trust do things to make me want to do your work and want to stay in class and get involved.

Nancy began to develop long-lasting trust relationships with most of her teachers when she

began to "learn their ways" (how they conducted their classrooms). This helped her keep focused

on her work and forced her to think about her future. Nancy felt her trust relationships went

beyond the classroom to help keep her involved and made her feel like she was going to be

something in life and do something with herself. These trust relationships allowed her to focus

on her work and made learning fun. She said that her physics teacher really pushed her, even

when the work was hard. She felt that these relationships were supportive and meant the most to

her because she was able to talk to these teachers and make up missing work.

Nancy also spoke of her relationship with her gym teacher, who pushed her to do better.

"I trust my gym teacher because a lot of people are lazy and she makes things fun and makes up

games that we will like." She concluded, "These teachers push me in the right way, instead of the

negative [teachers] that act like they don't care."

Similarly, Paula, an 11th grader, had good relationships with her algebra, world history, and French teachers because they came to do more than just teach. She felt as though they came to learn from students and to get to know students. She described deep and complex relationships with teachers as supportive and trusting. Paula characterized her relationships with her teachers this way: "The teachers that I trust make me feel comfortable in class." She associated her sense of comfort with her engagement in school. She said, "Teachers here, I just trust them to talk to while I am here." Paula thought that trust relationships "made a difference" to her and she looked for "good teachers who were trusting." She noted, "I talked more to teachers who I trusted because it makes me feel more involved and supported in class." She talked to her teachers about school and personal issues because her teachers showed her they cared about her as a student. She characterized these teachers as "cool" and making a difference to her.

For Kevin and Sarah, 9th and 11th graders respectively, the scope of their relationships was important and supported their trust. Kevin trusted his first- and fourth-period teachers the most. He thought they were "real good teachers that anyone could trust." Sarah trusted all her teachers: "I normally bond with all my teachers, I think over my whole educational life."

Kevin expressed deep feelings about the importance of trust relationships. He thought his trust relationships made a difference in his confidence. He spoke of having good relationships with "all his teachers" and said that they made a difference in helping him do what he was "supposed" to do. Sarah described her trust for all the teachers with whom she could "bond, relate, communicate, and hang out." This translated into relationships that went beyond the classroom. She maintained relationships with teachers she had had in 7th and 8th grade and her first two years of high school. She would often communicate with these teachers outside of class, or they would call her to "check up" on her.

Sarah found her relationships to be deep, supportive, and essential to her academic and personal success:

> I have a strong bond with certain teachers—my freshman English teacher, and math teacher, I have a bond with them. I am still close with my math and English teacher. I have a tight bond with both of them to this day. I still talk to my freshman social studies teacher. We still hang out in the hallway and say hi and bye in the hallways and all that jazz. I think I still talk to all of my teachers. Junior year I was the closest because this is the year that I lost the formality. Freshman and sophomore year I was still stuck in my elementary ways, calling my teachers Mister and Miss… They said that you don't need to talk to them that way. They are not your friends, so it's hard to get really close to them. This year is more as if I bonded with my teachers on more than academics—more of a friendship. I still respected them but it was more of a deeper bond.

Eight of the 10 high-engaged students (Abigail, Fred, Kevin, Tim, Paula, Simon, Nancy, and Sarah) shared feelings of deep and/or complex trust relationships with the teachers who made some difference to their engagement. Only one low-engaged student, Bill, shared similar high quality trust relationships with his teachers. Although Bill had limited trust relationships with his teachers, he characterized the few that he had as important and involving more than just what happens in his classroom. He said:

> I trust the two teachers, English and Dean of Discipline, because they actually took the time out to listen, and they understood what I was going through when I took the time to open up to talk to them. It was more them taking the time and giving me advice when I needed it, when I could not talk to my parents or any other teachers, like the counselors or a social worker. I see them outside of school. We have a relationship outside of school, and sometimes they will just come and get me and we just spend the day together just talking about everything that is going on as far as school, home, and anything else.

Although the number of teachers for whom Bill felt trust was limited, the ones he did trust had an effect on his well-being and the level of comfort he felt in school, although this was not enough to increase his academic engagement. Bill had a teacher whom he characterized as

the "best teacher I ever had" because she could relate to everything he was going through since he was a freshman. This teacher took care of Bill and understood what he was going through. He trusted her and respected her because of their relationship.

In summary, most high-engaged students shared multidimensional relationships with their teachers. In some cases these relationships led to greater communication and support of students' sense of belonging and sense of engagement. The quality of these trust relationships made a difference to students. In the next section, I will discuss students whose trust relationships showed less scope, depth, and complexity.

Low Quality Trust Relationships

Eleven low-engaged students (Artie, Kurt, Jon, John, Ron, Sam, Shelia, Spencer, Stan, Tammy, and Zack) and 2 high-engaged (Megan and Tim) described what I characterize as low quality trust relationships based on their limited scope, depth, and complexity. According to some low-engaged students, these relationships developed throughout their educational career and made a difference to each student in different ways. Some of the low-engaged students expressed how the trust relationships with their teachers produced limited feelings of support, understanding, and belonging. However, in the categories of scope, depth, and complexity, most low-engaged students did not have the same kinds of experiences, or as many, as their high-engaged counterparts. Still, they were able to speak to how these relationships worked for them.

Zack and Sam, for example, described trust relationships that were limited and centered on having fun in class. Zack, a 9th grader, trusted only two teachers, his reading and history teachers. He said that some of his teachers were fun, helped him in class, and helped him get his grades up. These teachers gave Zack extra chances to complete their homework assignments and supported in his efforts to improve his grades. Similarly, Sam, also a 9th grader, had few deep and complex relationships with his teachers. He spoke of trusting only two teachers, but affirmed

that the teacher he trusted made class fun. He said, "My reading teacher is fun and helps me understand things in class." Sam explained that at times this teacher would explain things to him and let him eat in class. He thought his English teacher was great as well. They had fun together and he could talk to her "about some things."

Shelia trusted a couple of her teachers and described some of them as being really "cool." She stated that they made her feel comfortable and were at time easy to talk to, enabling her to trust them. However, most of her teachers did not make her feel as comfortable. She said, "Some teachers I just could not stand." These relationships affected her sense of belonging at her school. Shelia spoke of having a trust relationship in her first year with one teacher to whom she felt really close. During her first year she would occasionally share lunch with this teacher. Although those lunch meetings turned out to be little more than casual talks about her grades, Shelia commented, "Nobody else did anything like that before for me." She said, "Most of my teachers just give me assignments and talk to me about what was going on in class."

Kurt, a 9th-grade student, had good relationships with a few of his teachers. These teachers talked to him and made him feel good about himself. He said, "I trust my health teacher because she talked to me and told me what's going on in the class." He trusted some teachers more than others because they talked to him as if he was a person. At times, teachers talked to him about more than just school; they talked about what was going on in his life outside of school.

Spencer, an 11th grader, identified his Algebra II teacher as the teacher with whom he had the best relationship. Spencer thought that this relationship was "okay," and that his teacher knew him. He went on to talk about the English teacher with whom he shared a trust relationship; however, this relationship had less to do with him and more to do with the fact that the teacher knew Spencer's girlfriend. Spencer characterized the few trust relationships he had as

important to him as a student only. Spencer said, "If I don't understanding something, some of my teachers will take the time and make an effort to make sure that I understand it in a way that I can understand, not just in a way that everyone else should understand it." He went on to say that teachers "who take time to listen and talk to you really made a difference to me." What is important to Spencer's characterizations of student trust relationships is that they were limited in scope and depth and focused entirely on their relationships in school. Spencer suggested that those relationships made him feel good about himself and about being a student. He said, "You can look at the other teachers and can tell that they are just here for the paycheck. I do not see that with my algebra and English teachers. They help you when you need help." Although Spencer these two trust relationships with his teachers, the relationships did not seem to translate into higher academic engagement.

Several other low-engaged students spoke of trust relationships centered on surviving and doing well in school. This was the case for Stan and Ron, both 11th graders. Stan and Ron valued their relationships with their teachers and trusted a few of them for different reasons. Both Stan and Ron stated that their relationships with teachers were important to them only in so far as they helped them pass their classes. They viewed their trust relationships as supports in their efforts to achieve better grades, not as a vehicle to support their psychological and behavioral engagement in school. They considered their relationships a means of to preventing failure rather than a way to boost confidence or trust per se.

Stan thought that his teachers were nice and would give him help when needed and extra credit. Stan stated that his relationships with his teachers encouraged him when things got hard and helped him get his work done:

> If you come to the room and are disrespectful, technically you are
> on your own. Relationships with teachers help a lot because
> teachers encourage you to get good grades and like to help you out.

Teachers do not get like real hard on you if you are quiet. As long as you get your work done and that is what you are known for, you can talk for the first ten minutes of class. You have to know if a teacher does not like you. Just do their work, so just do what you got to do because you are not going to be able to build a relationship with everybody.

Stan thought his relationships with teachers helped: "They encouraged and helped when I needed it." Stan concluded by saying, "You don't have to be friends with your teachers, you just have to have a relationship so you can get your grades." Ron stated, "As long as you have good relationships with your teachers, they will help you pass." Ron went on to say, "I really trust two teachers, and others I trust very little. Ron said, "A couple of teachers understand what I been through and give good advice."

Another low-engaged student, Artie, an 11th grader, reported that his relationships with teachers were okay and strictly one-dimensional. Artie said, "Teachers encourage you to do stuff, and that's a big part of what we should be listening to." Artie said he trusted only his physics teacher, and only for educational reasons: "It is my goal to finish [school] and get the grades that I need to be successful." He felt strongly about his responsibility to be successful. He said that "teachers are here to teach and when they did their job, students had to do their job—learn." He recognized the importance of trust relationships but not as a contributor to his modest overall engagement or academic success. He viewed these relationships in terms of how teachers related to students, and their ability to ask questions of students and help them.

For Tammy, an 11th grader, and John and Jon, both 9th graders, the scope of their trust relationships was limited to only one teacher, or none, over their entire their school careers. Tammy said her relationships with her teachers were important but limited. She said, "Sometimes teachers can encourage you to get good grades and help you when things get hard." She said, "I only trust one teacher and he is not my classroom teacher. He is the only teacher

who actually helped me with my work." Tammy thought it was good to have teachers to talk to about school.

Thus, some low-engaged students had some measure of trust relationships with their teachers that allowed them to discuss their academic progress. In contrast, Jon and John did not think they had any trust relationships with their teachers, nor did they feel that trust was important to their engagement in school. Jon said, "I don't really trust nobody here. I do not trust people like that. They [the teachers] just be confusing me, and [they] do not know how to talk to students. They make the students want to snap on them." Jon concluded, "I don't know these teachers like that, and relationships don't make a difference to me." Jon seemed to struggle with all his trust experiences at his school but he trusted members of his family. He talked about the trust he had for his mother and his uncle, whom he viewed as his role model.

John's response was very similar. John's trust relationships were nonexistent. He said, "I got no relationships with any of them (teachers). I do not get into all of that. They are just cool… My brother told me this: Love all but trust none, and I listen to what he said." Both students seemed to focus on members of their family or on friends for support. When I asked John whom he trusted he said, "My family and friends. I trust them more than I trust teachers."

For Tom and Megan, high-engaged 9th graders, the level of complexity in trust relationships with teachers was not as important as for other high-engaged students. Although Tom had trust relationships with some of his teachers, those relationships were limited in scope, depth, and complexity. In fact, they seemed to be one-dimensional. Tom observed:

> Whether I can or cannot get along with [teachers], I am still going to succeed in life and do what I have to do to get an education. No one is going to stop me from doing what I have to do to get my life situated. I will still be engaged in class even if I do not get along with a teacher.

Tom trusted only one teacher, his math teacher. Tom said, "He knows what I am going through and has experience." Yet, he characterized this trust relationship as being limited, because teachers did not affect his connection to school.

> You still have to get your grades. It does not matter. If you do not like the teacher, I understand that but do not sit there and fail just because you do not like the teacher. Do not participate [sic] because you do not see eye-to-eye with the teacher. You are just hurting yourself more than you are hurting them. [Teachers] are still going to get paid, whether you do it or not.

Megan, a 9th grader with a strong sense of self-confidence and determination to succeed, had only one trust relationship. She said, "Teachers really didn't have anything to do with my engagement or trust. They just help me understand my classwork." However, Megan did talk to one of her teachers about her work. Although the scope of her trust relationships was limited to this one teacher, she found the interaction beneficial. She felt that this relationship got her thinking about her future and her career choice. She characterized this teacher as willing to support her when she needed her and someone she liked at times. She concluded by stating, "I really have to start thinking about my future and what I want to become—a lawyer—and get my head on right. This school and teachers really didn't have anything to do with what I want to do."

Summary of the Quality of Student-Teacher Trust Relationships

In this section I discussed some of the major themes that characterized student perceptions of their trust relationships with their teachers. Part of this discussion focused on the nature and quality of student relationships within schools, especially on the scope, substantive depth, and complexity of student trust relationships with teachers. In some cases these trust relationships supported student engagement, while in other cases these relationships were simply part of students' school experience. There was no discernible relationship between students' perception of trust relationships and their overall level of engagement. However, there does

appear to be a connection between certain qualities or aspects of trust relationships and engagement. High-engaged students generally seemed to perceive more intense and sustained relationships with their teachers. They spoke of ways their trust relationships supported their sense of belonging and academic engagement. Most low-engaged students did not perceive as many relationships, or attached less value to their trust relationships with their teachers; some of these relationships were not as intense, but contributed to their sense of belonging to their school. The perceived quality of relationships with teachers seemed to mark a significant difference between high- and low-engaged students.

The Role of Teachers' Race in Student-Teacher Trust Relationships and Student

Engagement

One aspect of this study was examination of the importance of teachers' race in African American student trust and engagement. According to Omi and Winant (1994):

> The work of pioneering cultural anthropologist Franz Boas was crucial in refuting the scientific racism of the early twentieth century by rejecting the connection between race and culture, and the assumption of a continuum of 'higher' and 'lower' cultural groups. Within the contemporary social science literature, race is assumed to be a variable which is shaped by broader societal forces." (p. 2)

This concept may have greater significance for African American students considering their lack of success in several educational categories. As an African American male with more than 25 years of experience working in majority-minority schools, it has become important for me to investigate how student-teacher relationships are formed in schools, and what impact or influence students' and teachers' race may have on these interactions. I asked students at each school about the role of teachers' race in the development of their trust relationships. Examples

of some of the students' comments regarding race and trust are presented throughout this section

and in Table 9.

Table 9

Examples of Student Statements about Trust, Engagement, and Teachers' Race

	Low Engagement (N = 12 students)	High Engagement (N = 10 students)
Race Does Not Matter	N = 10 students "[Race] does not make a difference in the level of trust to engagement that I have." "Trust plays a big part because most of us go here because we trust our school but race does not matter to my trust." "[Students] don't talk about nothing like that up in here." "I am not concerned about their color; I am just concerned about how they treat me and how they work with me."	N = 8 students "Race does not matter, but Black kids must fight against the odds and prove White people wrong." "Race doesn't matter." But this respondent thought that some students used it as an excuse for their failure. He did not "see it that way." "Race doesn't affect the trust I have; I look at the person as an individual."
Race Matters	N = 2 students At times "[race] did matter." "Some teachers make it seem like that…" "It does make a difference to my existence here… Maybe that is why I like my African American teachers."	N = 2 students "At times with certain teachers, if you feel that they are racist toward you and just picking on you then that kind of affects you." Students live in "dueling worlds" between students who are on the right track and students who "pretty much do nothing just existing in school." "But race did make a difference. I think it makes a difference to other [students] who are Black."

Note: Comments listed are not from every student but represent a sample of representative points for selected student respondents.

It was apparent that the majority of students did not feel that teacher race made a

difference to their level of trust or engagement. In fact, only 4 of all 22 students in the study

thought race mattered to their engagement or trust. The remaining students (18) did not see teachers' race as significant to their trust or engagement.

Students for Whom Race Does Not Matter to Trust and Engagement

Throughout this study, I examined trust relationships between students and teachers and their relationship to student engagement. The last question of this study looked at the role of teachers' race in students' trust and engagement. Most student respondents (18) did not feel that teacher race made a difference to their trust or engagement. Among these respondents 8 were high-engaged and 10 were low-engaged students.

For the purpose of this discussion, I will not present the views and opinions of all the students I interviewed, as their responses were largely consistent. Instead, I will focus on several "typical" student respondents. Artie and Kevin, for example, did not think race mattered to their trust relationships or engagement but thought other students played the "race card" as an excuse for their lack of engagement. Similarly, Tom, a high-engaged 9th grader, was asked about the role of race in his or other students' trust or engagement. He felt strongly that race did not matter, nor should it ever matter to students' or teachers' relationships. Tom thought that some students used race as an excuse for their failure, but he did not view it that way. Tom was very self-confident for a 9th-grade student; he believed that his trust relationships with teachers did not make a difference to his engagement but did make a difference to how he felt about himself. He observed, "Race doesn't affect the trust I have. I look at the person as an individual." When Fred, a high-engaged 11th grader, was asked whether race made a difference, he replied emphatically, "Not to me. I don't think race is a big thing." In his thinking about engagement Fred was confident race did not matter, but he shared Tom's view that some students try to use it as an excuse for failure. Fred thought that "a lot" of students in this school called their teachers "racist," but he thought they were mistaking legitimate criticism of students' bad attitudes for

racism. Fred concluded, "They put it on the teacher's race when they are not doing well." He felt strongly that this really hurt trust between the students and teachers.

In another example, Kurt, a low-engaged 9th grader, stated, "It doesn't make a difference in the level of trust that I have for teachers." Ron, a low-engaged 11th grader, thought that trust played a big part in school but did not think teachers' race made any difference in developing that trust. Stan, another low-engaged 11th grader, shared Ron's view. Spencer thought race really did not make a difference to his engagement: "It doesn't to me, but I feel like the teachers make it seem that way… . But race doesn't really make a difference if they teach me what I need to know."

These perspectives matched the views of several 9th-grade students. Zack, a low-engaged student, thought race did not matter to his ability to trust his teachers. Zack just wanted to have fun in school. Similarly, Jon, also low-engaged, did not believe race made a difference. Jon did not care how teachers felt about him or whether they were "Black or White." Their trust relationships did not mean anything to him. Sam, also low-engaged, did not see race as a factor. His view of race was less influenced by teachers' race since "most of [his] teachers are Black." He said, "[Race] doesn't matter to me and no one here at my school**."** He went on, "I'm not concerned about their color. I'm just concerned about how they treat me and how they work with me."

Similarly, when asked whether race matters, Sarah, a high-engaged 11th grader, responded, "The race card should not be an excuse." She thought that neither students nor teachers should use race to create a barrier to education. She stated that teachers' or students' race does not matter, but "Black kids must fight against the odds and prove White people wrong." Sarah recognized that most of the teachers at her school were White and commented, "The idea that White teachers can't teach Black students make no sense." She was convinced

that race had nothing to do with student engagement, but she did know some students who thought it made a difference in their education**.**

Abigail, a high-engaged 11th grader, felt ever since her first year that race never really made a difference to her education or relationships with her teachers. However, she stated, "I have a lot of Caucasian teachers whom I really like and some of my friends say, "Oh, she's White, why do you like her?" Abigail was very emphatic that race does not matter to her but concedes that it does to others at her school.

Tim, a high-engaged 9th grader, did not think race mattered at all. He said, "I don't care what race you are. I'm still going to be okay, and my mother didn't raise me like that." Tim said, "We are all equal in the world and I hope the teachers feel the same way." Paula and Sarah, also highly engaged, shared the same feelings as Tim. They indicated that they "never thought about race" and that it did not play a part in their trust. Finally, John, a 9th grader, summed up his experience with race and relationships: "[Students] don't talk about nothing like that up in here." He later qualified his response by adding, "I don't know what teachers do, but for some students it might make a difference—but not with me."

Students for Whom Race Matters to Trust and Engagement

While only 4 of the 22 respondents felt strongly that teachers' race mattered in trust relationships, comments from the few with opinions on race—2 high- and 2 low-engaged students—were very reflective and revealing. Artie, a low-engaged 11th grader, clearly articulated his views of race and trust. He said, "I really noticed how race made a difference this year because of my experience at school." He recently had an African American History teacher who made him notice that all of his other teachers were White or Latino. He began to think that race really made a difference because he seemed to identify with and like his African American History teacher more. He said, "Maybe that is why I like the African American teacher better—

because he kind of understands us better than some of the other teachers." Artie went on, "My teachers have been in some of the same problems that we have been through, and it really makes a difference in my trust and engagement."

Nancy's comments about the influence of race on trust and engagement echoed Artie's. Nancy, a high-engaged 11th grader, viewed race as a polarizing factor in relationships at her school. "At times with certain teachers, you feel that they are racist toward you and just picking on you." She continued, "That kind of affects you, and you just don't want to go to that class period when that happens." When asked what indicator signaled to Nancy that a teacher's race mattered, she replied:

> It is like every day that you come into that class, that teacher has to say something to you. Even if you are just sitting there, they will find something to be wrong even if it is not. If you feel singled out you have some issues and [it makes] you feel like the teacher has issues with race.

Nancy appeared to use race to explain her relationship with teachers. She felt that if the teachers were not "racial or racist" toward her, then she could trust them and, as she put it, "everything would be good between us." However, some teachers showed signs of racism toward her, which prevented her from trusting them or having a relationship with them. Nancy viewed race as an influence on her relationships as a junior but she also experienced some incidents in her first two years. She described a situation in her math class when a group of White students and a group of Black students were doing the same problem incorrectly and the teacher only said something to the Black students. Nancy concluded, "When we [students] asked her about it, she got mad and said, 'I'm only talking to you right now. Don't worry about everybody else.'"

Similarly, Shelia, a low-engaged 11th grader, spoke of "dueling worlds" between students who are on the right track and students who "pretty much just exist in school, which ends up

affecting their ability to trust, regardless of the teacher's race." She thought that for those students race did make a difference. Shelia experienced instances of comments in classrooms where race had subtly presented itself. She felt that some teachers did favors for White and Latino students and would not always afford the same opportunities to the African American students. She concluded, "The whole concept of race has made a difference in [my] whole experience at… school, and it was not positive." Simon, the lone 9th grader who thought race made a difference, seemed to share Sheila's views on race and trust. He reflected on hearing examples of White teachers yelling at Black students who were not really misbehaving but not yelling at White or Latino students who were acting out. Simon concluded, "Sometimes a [student] says it does matter. Those are people who are not doing well. But I think it makes a difference to other [students] who are Black."

Conclusion

My research focused on African American students' relationships with teachers and how those students' perceptions of trust and race may be related to student engagement in school. Through student interviews, I was able to gain some critical insight into how perceptions of trust relationships and race may influence student engagement. I explored this topic using three research questions: Is there a relationship between African American student trust of teachers and student engagement? In what ways does trust function or work to promote and sustain African American student engagement? Finally, what role does teachers' race play in developing these relationships?

In exploring the first question, I found no direct relationship between African American students' trust of teachers and their level of engagement in school. As for the second question, I found that when trust exists between students and teachers, some aspects or qualities of trust relationships helped to support and sustain student engagement. With regard to the third

question, teachers' race showed little or no relationship to the level of trust students felt for the teachers. Students spoke about the qualities of their relationships that really made a difference to their overall engagement.

There were no meaningful or recognizable differences among schools, or between 9th- and 11th-grade students. Most students recognized trust relationships and the characteristics that some teachers exhibited to support their trust relationships. High-engaged students throughout this study exhibited some very positive interaction with their teachers that at times supported their behavioral and psychological engagement. Overall, when it came to developing and valuing trust relationships between students and teachers, most students, regardless of their engagement level, valued their trust relationships with teachers. What was clear was the significance of the qualities of trust relationships between students and teachers.

Trust relationships between students and teachers seemed to promote and sustain student connections to schools. It appeared that most students in this study wanted to have trusting relationships with their teachers, but some found these relationships difficult to attain. Low-engaged students recognized the importance of doing well in school, but the qualities of their relationships with teachers did not do much to support their engagement. It is also clear that the quality level of trust involved in the relationships between student and teachers can make a difference to students regardless of their engagement level.

The importance of race in developing these relationships appeared to be a factor for school leaders but not for most students, who understood the role of race in their lives but did not find it a barrier to their trust relationships. Eighteen of the 22 students interviewed felt that race did not make a difference to their teacher trust relationships. However, those who did feel race made a difference to their trust relationships were divided between high- and low-engaged students and between 9th-and 11th-grade students.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusion

In this study I examined African American students' perceptions of their relationships with teachers and the way trust and teachers' race may be related to student engagement. Specifically, the research addressed the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between African American student trust of teachers and student engagement?

2. In what ways does trust function or work to promote and sustain African American student engagement?

3. What role does teachers' race play in developing these relationships?

The purpose of this study was to learn from students how trust and race affected their relationships with teachers and their overall engagement in school. To achieve this goal, and to explore the complexity of relationships in schools, I used a cross-sectional qualitative method of inquiry that involved administrator and student interviews. I interviewed nine administrators from three schools, and 22 ninth- and eleventh-grade students from their schools with both low and high engagement profiles. All student respondents came from one of three predominately African American high schools with similar student racial, socioeconomic, and achievement characteristics and similar teacher demographics.

The student responses revealed patterns that were helpful in understanding trust and engagement. There were a number of rich perspectives from students that helped shape the key findings discussed in this section. I used Bronfenbrenner's (1976) discussion of nested organization to help clarify how relationships work in school. Using this perspective and other related literature I discussed how student trust of teachers may affect their overall engagement.

Summary of Findings

The premise of this study was that there were important things to be learned about students' perceptions of their trust relationships with teachers, and how those relationships may have affected students' level of engagement in school. In both subtle and more obvious ways students saw teachers helping to shape trust relationships and saw how they are sustained in schools. It follows that these relationships influence students' connection, involvement, and commitment to academic and social activities in school. For African American students who tend to be less engaged, these relationships may be particularly important to understand.

First, I found no direct relationship between African American students' trust of teachers and their level of engagement. Trust seemed to be important to both high- and low-engaged students regardless of their engagement level or grade level, and most students, both high- and low-engaged, reported some type of trust relationship with teachers. Second, trust functioned in a number of ways to support student engagement, affecting students' sense of belonging, sense of caring, and teacher expectations. In addition, the quality of trust relationships appeared to be the major difference between high- and low-engaged students. Finally, it did not appear that race played a significant role in trust relationships between African American students and their teachers, many of whom are White. In this chapter, I will discuss these findings, how they relate to previous research on trust and engagement, and implications for practice and future research.

Discussion and Interpretation

Student engagement varies across racial and social groups (Chapman, 2003; Johnson et al., 2001; Klem & Connell, 2004). Low-income minority students who live in urban areas tend to perform below the national norm on standardized tests and tend to participate less in activities than students from higher socioeconomic levels (HSSSE, 2006; Miller-Cribs et al., 2002; NCES,

2006). The issue of lower African American student engagement in schools calls for more investigation into teaching methods and strategies, but also the relational and social aspects of schools that may affect African American student engagement. Specifically, it would be helpful to know more about the dynamics of engagement, how students think about it, and factors that might promote student engagement or contribute to disengagement.

Extensive research suggests that student trust may be important to student engagement and success in school (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Barnes, & Adams, 2006; Louis, 2006; Raider-Roth, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Bryk and Schneider (2002) introduced a theory of relational trust anchored in the social exchanges attached to key role relationships found in schools. Forsyth, Barnes, and Adams (2005) described relational trust as the extent to which there is synchrony between members of social exchange, as well as an understanding of expectations and obligations within a particular setting. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) held that school trust is vital for school success and that trust between two individuals is significantly influenced by the social context in which the relationship is embedded, such as schools.

Most students in this study appeared to understand the concept of trust relationships with their teachers as they articulated characteristics of some teachers that influenced how students perceived these relationships. Students in this study expressed the importance of caring, support, and belonging in their interactions with teachers. At times, it was difficult to pin down how these interactions influenced academic engagement, but these aspects of trust seemed to help develop the social capacities and expectations held in relationships with teachers.

The Relationship between African American Student Trust and Engagement

To begin this discussion on the relationship between African American student trust of their teachers and engagement, it is appropriate to revisit Bronfenbrenner's (1979) conceptual framework of how various systems work together to shape and form our lives, and especially for the purposes of this study, students' lives. This framework is particularly relevant to my research findings, as most student respondents felt that trust was important to them. Through the development of various "micro-systems"—in this case, the classroom and school—student relationships with teachers can support student trust perspectives.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) speaks of how interactions within various systems are a nested arrangement of structures that influences individual actions. These systems take on different forms depending on the type of environment. From an educational standpoint, the part of Bronfenbrenner's conceptual model that relates to micro-system analysis is a good reflection of what I hypothesized about student and teacher trust. From this study, it was evident that there were various levels of communication between students and teachers within each school. However, through the interview phase of this study, it also became evident that there was a difference in perceptions of trust, engagement, and race between the students and administrators.

Both high- and low-engaged students viewed trust of their teachers as important, even if it did not translate into higher engagement. These trust relationships took place within and outside the classrooms, and outside the school setting. In some cases, trust relationships supported students' overall engagement; in other cases, trust relationships helped students to "work harder" in class. However, as I mentioned earlier, considering that most high- and low-engaged students spoke of having some sort of trust relationships, the apparent difference had less to do with the existence of such relationships than with their quality.

With respect to the first research question, this study contributes to the research on nested systems within organizations that can ultimately influence within those organizations in different ways. In this case, the relationships are those between students and teachers in schools. At the micro-system level of school, the relationships between teachers and students, there were no documentable connections between African American students' trust of teachers generally and those students' engagement. Both high- and low-engaged students valued their trust relationships and reported having more forms of trust relationships with teachers.

The Function of Student Trust in Engagement

Students spend a third of their day in schools surrounded by adults who send signals via relational interactions that can influence student engagement in school. Studies have found that the caring, trusting, and supportive relationships that students have with teachers can have a positive impact on engagement and student learning (Akey, 2006; Cook & Wall, 1980; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoffman et al., 1994; Klem & Connell, 2004; Newmann, 1992; Simpson & Erickson, 1983). In this study, I found that trust functioned in several ways to support engagement, specifically, as a factor in students' sense of belonging and sense of caring, and in teacher expectations.

Although it was not a focus of my research data collection and analysis, research shows that when teachers create an environment that supports students' sense of belonging, students tend to reach higher achievement levels (Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Anderman, 1989; Finn, 1989; Goodenow, 1993; Wehlage et al., 1989). Goodenow (1993) defined students' sense of belonging as the sense of "psychological membership in the school or classroom, that is, the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school environment" (p. 80). According to Anderman (2003), sense of belonging is a

subjective measure that can be best understood through student reports, and that supports a variety of positive academic variables. In addition, Anderman suggests that African American students tend to feel less sense of belonging to their schools than White students, especially when they are in schools with a predominately White teaching staff.

The African American students in this study often spoke of experiencing a sense of belonging to their school because their teachers seemed to care about students' well-being, and because they were able to communicate with their teachers. In some cases, this sense of belonging translated into greater engagement; in others, it supported student confidence. However, this seemed to be the case only with most of the high-engaged students in this study.

Students talked in similar terms about the importance of feeling cared for. According to Nodding (1999), when teachers show students they care, they are often communicating, listening, and helping develop students' social skills. Unfortunately, the sense of being cared for, arguably a basic human need, seems to escape attention in some schools for some students. Schussler and Collins (2006) suggest that students tend to disconnect with schools because of their lack of interactions with teachers, which furthers reduces teachers' ability to understand, to care, and to support students' needs. Conversely, "Teachers who act as care givers can help students develop a capacity for learning and connect to their school which provides students with opportunities to excel academically and socially" (Schussler & Collins, 2006, p.1471). These social supports in schools can help students become more secure in their trust and lead to enhanced school engagement (Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009).

Finally, studies on teacher expectations, and specifically on their impact on students of color, span several decades (Brady & Hansell, 1981; Carini et al., 2006). Cooper and Good (1983) referred to teacher expectations as the mental assumptions that teachers make about their

students' academic ability. In this study, some students felt teachers who communicated high expectations through their language and actions supported their trust and engagement. Beady and Hansel also suggested that teachers' expectations of students are an important influence on classroom interaction that can have a significant impact on student achievement. Along similar lines, Diamond, Randolph, and Spillane (2004) contend that teachers' expectations of student academic success, especially for low-income and African American students, could have a profound effect on student achievement. Diamond and his colleagues suggested that some teachers hold low expectations of students that are based on their experiences with poor performance by African American students.

Students spoke of how teacher expectations made a difference to how they perceived their relationships with teachers. For some low-engaged students in this study, it may well have been the self-fulfilling prophecies of low expectations that led to poor student engagement and perhaps a sense of lack of teacher concern. In this study it appeared that when teachers held students to high expectations, students seemed more willing to "buy in" to instruction and participate actively. Research suggests that students' views of teacher expectations of them in the classroom can help support their engagement (Beady & Hansell, 1980; Graybill, 1997; Sham Choy & Arenz, 2006).

Sham Choy and Arenz (2006) found that students use various sources of information from teachers to make decisions regarding trust and/or involvement within the classroom. They explained that students use verbal and nonverbal information to gauge whether or not to trust and/or interact with teachers. Students' expectations of their teachers as well as teachers' expectations of their students may help students form patterns of behavior that support a sense of

trust and engagement, a sense of belonging, and student achievement. Some students in this study clearly identified with teachers who held high expectations of them.

Engaging students in school has challenged educators for decades. Studies show that students become more disengaged from school as they progress from elementary through high school (Klem & Connell, 2004). Bryk and Schneider's (2002) work on trust conceptualizes trust in schools as being formed around the specific roles that people play in this setting. The growth of trust can depend in part on the degree to which these actors understand their roles and obligations.

In this study most high-engaged students had some sort of trust relationship with one or more of their teachers in the school. Most low-engaged students did not have the same experience. It is safe to say that some low-engaged students recognized the importance of doing well in school, however their trust relationships did not result in greater engagement. It is also safe to say that the quality of students' trust relationships seemed to make a difference to them regardless of their engagement level. For example, although it was not a significant finding in the data, a few students wanted to see more trust and wanted more teachers to trust them. In addition, student motivation seemed to be an important indicator of how some students viewed their relationships with teachers. Some students appeared to have a more altruistic view of teaching and possess a sense of self-efficacy for learning. Some students did not have good relationships with their teachers, but viewed those relationships in terms of their teachers' function or role. These students suggested that students in general should take "responsibility" for their actions, and in fact for their education, regardless of their relationships with teachers. By the same token, teachers should not take for granted how much the quality of trust relationships can help support student learning.

The Function of Race in Student Relationships

As I considered the student and teacher demographic makeup of the three schools used in this study, I was interested to know whether teachers' race made a difference in student trust and engagement. It became clear from the study that the majority of students did not perceive race as a major factor in their trust relationships with teachers. In the absence of overt race-related teacher attitudes and behaviors, it may be difficult for students to discern the subtle ways in which racial differences can affect relationships. Furthermore, since the study interviews involved only students and administrators, I did not determine how teachers viewed their relationships with African American students, which could have influenced student-teacher trust and student engagement.

It was clear that students at either end of the engagement scale recognized the implications of teachers' and students' race, but teachers' race did not matter to most students. Comments by most students ranged from "race doesn't matter" to the observation that race could at times be used as an excuse for failure. Yet, some students did find teacher race to be an important factor in their trust and engagement. Shelia's view summed up several students' experience: "Students live in 'dueling worlds' between students who are on the right track and students who pretty much do nothing just existing in school." She thought that for some students "race did make a difference," but just how it did was not clear. The paucity of comments about these "dueling worlds" may be the result of a lack of awareness or understanding about how race and race relationships affect students' everyday interaction in school. Noguera (2003) suggests that schools are places where students learn about race through their observations or through the informal or hidden curriculum taught by a predominately White female staff. Perhaps students in

this study were less aware of the hidden curriculum or the hidden messages in the classroom, or maybe the students were beginning to see individual teachers as people.

There is a great deal of research on the role that race plays in teaching, learning, and schooling (Lewis, 200; Ogbu, 2003; Omi &Winant, 1994). With specific relevance to this study, Sham Choy and Arenz (2006) suggested that race plays a major part in students' meanings of trustworthiness with teachers. Although the students in my study suggest that race was less of a factor in their trust relationships with teachers, teachers' race should not be dismissed as a potential factor, given the conditions currently affecting majority African American high schools and African American students in general. Given the theoretical perspective of Bronfrenbenner's nested systems, one would expect that if school-level administrators felt strongly that students' and teachers' race does make a difference in the level of trust between students and teachers, students would share the same or similar views. However, this was not the case. I posit that the differing views of administrators and students can be explained by the disparate worlds of students and teachers. Teachers and students might "exist" in different parts of the "system" and experience the same system differently, in part because of their vantage points (as experienced educators, administrators; as youthful students), but also perhaps generationally (experienced adults; new millennium children in "postracial" society). These two points might explain how and why they see race and agency differently (but perhaps both correctly) within the same organizational and institutional system.

Through this viewpoint we might further understand the importance of student agency. We could learn more about the potential of student agency in African American students and the opportunities for educators to help further develop and support student agency in ways that enhance productive trust relationships, student engagement and academic achievement in the

African American high school. As African American students continue to perform below their White counterparts on standardized tests and in high school graduation rates, with higher rates of suspension, expulsion from school, and dropping out, we should not take for granted the power of individual teachers, today an even more important consideration given the racial makeup of the teaching corps. In the absence of any overt racial comments by teachers, it may have been difficult for students in this study to explain the significance of race in the school environment. However, we cannot and should not overlook the influence that race may have on African American student trust and engagement.

Finally, the impact of teachers' race has been an important topic of many research studies (Graybill, 1997; Miller-Cribbs, Crowin, Davis, Johnson 2002; Ogbu, 1994; Kuajufu, 1982). Based on literature on race and system development, I suggested that teachers' race would make a difference to student trust relationships. Also, as an African American administrator with varied experiences of trust relationships, inside and outside the classroom, that were influenced by race, I anticipated a similar, if not even greater impact of race on student trust. However, it was clear in this study that teachers' race had a limited impact on students' perception of trust relationships and was not a significant influence on student engagement. Most of the students in this study understood the importance and potential impact of race and how it could affect their trust and engagement; however, most students did not feel it made a difference to their individual relationships with their teachers, in part because they did not view teachers' race as important. In addition, some students spoke of having had White teachers throughout their educational career. This may have led to lower sensitivity to race and culture in their schools or an acceptance of their teachers regardless of their race (Louis et al., 1996; Wehlage et al., 1989). Furthermore, the very concept of race in schools may be more complex, and its role in relationship building more

dependent on individuals and their experiences than we imagine. Or, as suggested earlier, students' agency and resiliency may have a greater impact on trust relationships.

Whatever the reason students downplayed the role of race in this study, I believe that the impact of teachers' race on student engagement should not be glossed over. Graybill (1997) and Murrell (2002) suggest that teachers are the transmitters of cultural and racial constructs that can ultimately affect students' instruction and engagement outcomes; the way teachers think and act in their classrooms matters. When considering and making sense of the implications of race in the classroom, it is important for school leaders to continue to educate teachers on the potential impact of race.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study highlight several areas relevant to student trust in education. The purpose of this study was to examine the importance of students' trust relationships with teachers and the impact on their overall engagement. This research also looked at the significance of teachers' race in how students perceived their trust relationships. In this regard, the research sought to provide insight into how students' relationships with their teachers can potentially affect student engagement in school. This study makes the case that African American students' perception of trust relationships with teachers is important, and that the quality of these trust relationships may affect student engagement in school. It was clear from interviewing students for this project that students' relationships with their teachers might be having an impact on student engagement, and in some cases on student achievement. After the completion of the research project it is reasonable to suggest that relational practices of students and teachers may have an impact on how students perceive and evaluate their trust relationships with their teachers.

The responses from students indicate that the quality of trust relationships in schools appears to affect students' levels of engagement. Bearing this in mind, teachers should understand that their role in relationships with students is significant. They should trust that with support students can and will involve themselves in the educational process (Goddard et al., 2001). In choosing whether or not to trust teachers, some students look for open and honest relationships with their teachers that enable them to build trust. Therefore, teachers should seek ways to promote open and honest exchanges that will support the development of trust relationships with their students.

Another important subject of this study was the way trust worked to support or promote student engagement. Studies of trust relationships in school have addressed the relationships developed through a social construct that recognizes many student-teacher interactions as attempts to meet differing needs for support and belonging in schools (Osterman, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Through these interactions members of the school community can develop and support the behavioral and emotional connection of students by building trust relationships that are substantive and effective. Consistent with previous research, most student respondents in this study recognized these relationships with teachers as dynamic and important to student success in school. In some cases this did not lead to high academic achievement. But the quality of student trust relationships with teachers appeared to be important. Therefore, when considering the findings of this project and of other research on teacher trust relationships, school leaders should continue to explore the benefits of developing trust relationships in schools.

Another implication is that practice should focus on things that principals and teachers should and could do to enhance the impact of engagement and trust relationships with students.

For example, teachers could find ways to connect or bond with students through regular communication. This could be accomplished through school-supported mentoring programs that create an environment of openness. School leaders and boards could establish an extracurricular requirement for all students. This would ensure that all students are in contact with a teacher outside of the classroom setting, which in turn could support greater communication between teachers and students. Schools should also formalize teachers' professional development to include strategies and methods aimed at building trust relationships with students. Finally, school leaders could continuously educate teachers as to why teacher expectations are important, how high expectations are perceived by students, and how such expectations enhance student trust. This is particularly important for those who teach in majority African American school districts. Teachers should know, understand, and accept the learning capacity of all students, as well as their own capacity to nurture students' potential or stifle that potential through their negative demeanor and attitudes towards students.

<p align="center">*Directions for Future Research*</p>

The findings of this study have important implications for understanding how African American high school students perceive trust in their relationships with teachers and its impact on their engagement. Engagement in school can be critical to student success. Research suggests that students remember their past experiences of prejudice and racism and compare them with their current or previous school experiences, which continue to influence student decisions to trust or distrust (Graybill, 1997). When students in this study felt they could trust teachers, they tended to believe in their teachers, were open and willing to share information, and had a greater sense of belonging to their schools. These students reported high levels of respect, confidence, and ability to communicate with their teachers. As the students who were interviewed considered

the impact of race on their ability to trust teachers, most of them expressed the view that teachers' race did not influence how they related to or trusted their teachers. However, several students did recognize the psychological and organizational effects of race in their school. In a review of these research findings, several areas of future research might be considered.

However, before discussing possible areas for future research, it is important to review some limitations of this study. First, the findings from this study come from three schools similar in demographic and socioeconomic background and are not necessarily generalizable to other schools. This study also has several limitations associated with the sample size of students, methodology, characteristics of each high school research site, grade of students, analysis and the triangulation of the findings with school leadership perspectives. As for sample size, the sample of student respondents was limited to 22 students from a pool of high- and low-engaged students; the sample of administrative respondents was limited to 9 administrators selected by the administrative leaders (principals, assistant principals, and department chairs). Although the sample size is small, the data gathered from the limited sample was rich and informative to the research project. Due to the size limitation my ability to make the findings generalizable to a larger sample is also limited. In addition, since I used a cross-sectional qualitative research approach to investigation, I am not able to apply my findings beyond a specific point of time within the parameters of this study. Emerging from a cross-sectional study, my data did not address the development of trust relationships, or how the strengthening or weakening of trust might have been related to increases or declines in engagement. In addition, qualitative research is not precise and is generally limited to how people think and feel about a problem or situation.

Another limitation associated with this project is selection of the research sites. I deliberately selected African American students from majority African American high schools

where the majority of the teaching staff was White. I also limited my choice of schools to African American high schools, bearing in mind the idea that there could be something distinctive to learn about African American student trust and engagement in these schools, as opposed to urban high schools or even suburban majority White high schools. My sampling of 9th- and 11th-grade students also sets limitations on the study. I deliberately chose these two levels, thinking that there was more to learn about African American student trust and engagement from new students (9th graders) and older students (11th graders). Finally, throughout this study students were interviewed to discuss their relationships with their teachers and how those relationships influenced or might influence their trust or engagement. One perspective missing from this discussion was the voice of teachers and how they felt this interaction with students influenced or might influence students' ability to trust their teachers or excel in their classrooms. The absence of teachers' perspectives leaves a gap in the data.

As for future research possibilities, the concept of quality of trust described in this study can inform theory and guide future research on trust between student and teachers. The findings suggest that the quality of student trust relationships with teachers could be important to students' trust and engagement in schools. The quality of student trust relationships and the various dimensions of this quality that may influence engagement call for further exploration.

This study helps illuminate the concept of trust in schools. Although this concept has been studied at various levels in schools, for example, teachers–teachers, teachers–parents, and teachers– school leaders, further research on "students–teacher" trust in school can help future teachers, students, parents, and school leaders understand something that may be affecting the level of student success in schools. Another area for further research is the relationships between

students and teachers, particularly students' views on how trust affects their relationships with their teachers.

Second, while this is a cross-sectional study focusing on relationships, findings from the perspectives of both high- and low-engaged students revealed varying degrees of scope, depth, and complexity in students' relationships with their teachers. In the case of most high-engaged students, trust of their teachers helped support student engagement. However, it is not clear whether these trust relationships were the main cause of their engagement. Therefore, when considering future research possibilities, one might look at whether and how changes in trust relationships translate into higher or lower engagement, how trust relationships between students and teachers are initiated and sustained (whom do students choose to trust—teacher, students, or others), and how might trust between students and teachers grow, or become compromised or lost.

There are two other areas of future research that merit consideration: the relationships between school climate and trust relationships as viewed by administrators, and the impact of student agency. In this study, administrators suggested that race and race relations had an impact on student-teacher trust relationships. In student interviews, however, race did not appear to play a significant role in students' trust relationships with teachers. Future research might consider how adult and student perceptions of school climate develop independently and work to support student engagement. This could lead to further research on student agency and students' ability to relate to teachers as individuals regardless of teachers' perceived racial perspectives. Additional research on how this may influence student engagement could lead to greater understanding and support of teachers, students, and school leaders.

This study sought to understand the trust relationships and engagement of African American students, but it did not explore the levels of trust relationships or the extent of changes in overall academic achievement. African American student engagement and achievement in school are critical to overall success and are often attributed to social and environmental factors such as socioeconomic status, family structure, and student self-efficacy. Further research on change in trust relationships, and the impact of that change, could help educators understand the importance of trust in schools.

This study investigated student trust relationships with regard to engagement. In discussing their relationships, most students, regardless of their engagement level, valued and recognized those relationships as important to their sense of belonging at their school. Prior research on engagement suggests that students who experience positive relationships with their teachers tend to achieve at a higher level. In this investigation low-engaged students who identified positively with some of their teachers felt that their relationships with their teachers were important. But these relationships lacked the quality, depth, and complexity of teacher relationships enjoyed by high-engaged students. New research in the area of student-teacher relationships might explore more thoroughly the significance of teachers' trust relationships, their overall impact on students' sense of belonging, and how this could translate into greater student academic success.

Finally, in a few cases in this study students indicated that teachers' race made a difference in their engagement and trust in schools. Although the findings in this area were not overwhelming, almost all students seemed to acknowledge the existence of race as a potential issue but not its impact on their trust relationships. In interviews with several school officials on the issue of race, there appeared to be attempts to marginalize students' and teachers' race as a

construct that requires greater understanding. The perceptions of both administrators and students could benefit from deeper understanding of the nature of race in schools and its impact on trust relationships.

Conclusion

Both high- and low-engaged students reported some sort of trust relationships with their teachers and expressed a feeling of support, confidence, determination, and understanding as a product of their trust relationships. Yet very few students trusted all their teachers. In some cases, especially for high-engaged students, this trust seemed to translate into greater student psychological and behavioral engagement. Furthermore, some high-engaged students felt their trust relationships mattered, while others with self-reliance and initiative did not see it as the most important factor in their success. While some low-engaged students had a similar view of their trust relationships, these relationships had not translated into success in the classroom or seemed important to students' sense of well-being. It appears that the quality of trust can be an important aspect of student-teacher relationships regardless of the effect on student achievement. Several students, both low- and high-engaged, identified trust relationships with their teachers and valued them as significant for their success and in their daily lives.

Existing research (e.g., Sham Choy and Arenz, 2006) suggests that schools should develop ways to improve experiences of African American students. Research by Bryk and Schneider (1996), Forsyth et al. (2006), Goddard et al. (2002) and others discusses how student/teacher relationships are important in building trust. Throughout this study, students perceived the quality of their relationships with their teachers as making a difference to their trust relationships. These relationships with teachers can be particularly important to sustaining positive student behavior and involvement in schools.

Furthermore, the high school students in this study seemed to be aware of the significance of their relationships with their teachers in terms of fairness, openness, and the ability to communicate. As students and teachers develop trust relationships, teachers, too, should be aware of the importance and potential impact of these relationships and how their quality may affect students' engagement and achievement.

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Appendix A

Documents Used in the Study

- Attendance/Truancy Reports

- Student Discipline Records

- Achievement Documents

    o School Report Cards

    o Student Report Cards

- School Publications

    o Newsletters

    o Brochures

- School Mission Statements

- School Improvement Plans

- School Calendars

- School Websites

- Master Schedules

- Curriculum Guides

- Current Census Data

- Activities and Athletic Participation Data

Appendix B

African American Student Trust and Engagement in High School

School Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is Dwayne Evans. I am a doctoral student in education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. This study is my thesis research. It focuses on the relationship between students' trust relationships and their engagement in high school. It examines how students' relationships with teachers and other adults in the school may be related to the extent to which they are engaged or disengaged in school generally and in classroom activity and academic work specifically. The study focuses on African American students and seeks to understand whether the race of the student and the race of adults in the school play a role in student relationships and student engagement. The study also seeks to understand whether the amount of time that students spend in the school matters to relationships and to engagement. To examine this possibility, both 9th- and 11th-grade students will participate in the study. My study is being conducted in three high schools in the Chicago metropolitan area. Thank you for your permission to let this school be one of my research sites.

This school administrator interview focuses on general information about the school and its history, levels of student engagement schoolwide, variations in engagement among groups of students, and administrators' thinking about factors that may explain student engagement, including relationships between students and adults in the school and whether race of students and adults may play a role in trust relationships

Appendix B (continued)

and in student engagement. Your participation will involve sitting for one face-to-face interview with me lasting approximately 60 minutes. If additional questions need to be asked or additional information is required for the study, you may be asked to sit for a short follow-up interview.

The risks to you and to this school related to your participation in this study are minimal. There may be some sensitivity involved in talking about relationships with adults and race. However, what you say in the interview will be kept confidential. Neither student name nor the school's name will be used in reporting the study's findings. No other information will be used that might identify you or this school. I would like to tape-record this interview to ensure accuracy. All notes and audiotapes of this interview will be kept in a safe and secure location in my home. Once the study is completed, all data from this interview will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You may choose not to participate without fear of consequence. If you choose to participate, you may decline to answer particular questions and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. You may also decline to have your interview audiotaped. Do you understand the purpose of this study, the risks involved with participating, and the measures I will take to minimize these risks? Do you understand that your participation is voluntary? Based on these understandings do you agree to participate in this interview? Do you agree to have this interview tape-recorded? Thank you very much. Let us begin.

Appendix B (continued)

1.   Describe your work experience at this school. How long have you served here? In what roles? Where did you work before you came here?

2.   Give me a brief description and a short history of this school and its community. What are the school's most important features? What do you consider the most important events in the school's recent history that help explain what the school is today?

3.   Let's talk about student engagement at this school. To what extent are students engaged in the school in the following ways?

   a)   In classroom instruction

   b)   Daily attendance

   c)   Tardiness

   d)   In extracurricular activities

   e)   In various events for the student body and the school community (e.g., athletic events, plays, exhibitions, etc.)

   f)   Psychological engagement, such as commitment to learning, a sense of belonging and commitment to the school, academic success

4.   Are patterns of engagement different for different groups of students who attend this school? Which groups and how are the patterns different? Why do you think there are such differences?

Appendix B (continued)

5. Have patterns of engagement changed during the past few years? In what types of
    engagement have they changed? How have they changed? Why do you think they
    have changed?

6. What evidence could you point to that would tell the story of engagement at this
    school as you have told it to me?

7. What factors do you think best explain levels of behavioral engagement at this
    school (e.g., attendance, classroom, extracurricular, etc.)? For what groups of
    students? Why do you think these factors best explain this type of engagement?

8. What factors to you think best explain levels of psychological engagement at this
    school (e.g., commitment, sense of belonging, etc.)? For what groups of students?
    Why do you think these factors best explain this type of engagement?

9. Specifically, what role do you think relationships between teachers and students
    play in student behavioral and psychological engagement at this school? With
    what groups of students? What role do you think that the trust students have in
    their teachers plays in their engagement? Please explain your thinking.

10. Finally, what role do you think that student and teacher race plays in student
    engagement at this school? How might it relate to relationships between teachers
    and students, to trust, and to the role that relationships and trust might play in
    student engagement? Please explain your thinking.

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix C

African American Student Trust and Engagement in High School

Student Interview Protocol

1. Tell me something about yourself. What grade are you in? What classes are you taking?

2. Let's talk a little bit about your classes. What types of classes do you have? Regular, Honors, AP? How are you doing in your classes? When you think about your classes, what do like most about them? What do you least like about them?

3. What else do you do at this school besides go to your classes? Do you participate in any extracurricular activities? If so, which ones? Why do you participant in these activities rather than others? Has your participation in these activities changed this year? [For 11th graders, over the past three years?] If so, why?

4. Do you participate in or attend any events at this school that are held for the whole student body or the broader school community (e.g., athletic events, plays, exhibitions, etc.)? Which ones do you like? Why? Has your attendance changed to these events? If so, why?

5. How do you feel about going to school here? Do you feel a sense of belonging being a student here? Do you feel a sense of commitment to the school? How do you feel about getting a good high school education? Have your feelings changed since you've been here? (11th or 9th graders). If so, why?

Appendix C (continued)

6.   What factors best explain your engagement or lack of engagement in school? Is there something inside the school that may affect your engagement? Teachers? Friends? Others? Is there something outside the school that may influence your engagement?

7.   Describe your relationships with teachers at this school. Which teachers do you trust the most? Why? Which teachers do you trust the least? Why? Do these relationships make a difference in your engagement? How? Why?

8.   What role do your relationships with teachers and your trust in them play in the extent to which you are engaged in classroom activity? In extracurricular activities? Participating in events? In how you feel about going to school here?

9.   In this school the students are mostly African American and the teachers are mostly White. What role do you think race plays in your engagement in school? In your trust in teachers in this school?

10.   Name three things that this school might do to increase your engagement academically, in activities, etc? Why did you pick these things?

11.   Name three things you feel this school might do to increase the way you feel better about your engagement in school, etc.? Why did you pick these things?

12.   Name three things that this school might do that would reduce your engagement academically, in activities, etc.? Why did you pick these things? \\

Thank you for participating in this interview.

DWAYNE E. EVANS

Vitae

Education

Ed.D. (Candidate), Urban Educational Leadership, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL. Expected date of completion 2012. *Dissertation: Student Trust and Engagement in School.* Chair: Dr. Mark Smylie.

M.A., Education, Chicago State University, Chicago, IL, 1996
Course of Study: Curriculum and Instruction/Type 75 Endorsement

B.S., Computer Information Systems, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Florida, 1985

Administrative and Teaching Experience

Principal, T.F. North High School, Calumet City, IL	2003–present
Principal, Proviso East High School, Maywood, IL	2000–2003
Hales Franciscan High School, Chicago, IL	1994–2000
Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs and Chief Operating Officer (Principal)	1998–2000
Vice President of Student Services	1996–1998
Athletic Director/Faculty	1994–1996
De La Salle High School, Chicago, IL	1989–1994
Business Education Teacher/Chairperson	
Assistant Athletic Director	1990–1999
Holy Angels Grammar School, Chicago, IL	1986–1989
Sixth grade teacher/Athletic director	

Dwayne E. Evans—Vitae (Continued)

Professional Affiliations

Midwest Principal Association, Board Member, 2006–2008
National Association of Secondary School Principals (2000–present)
Regional Director of African American High School Consortium (1997–present)
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1994–present)
North Central Accreditation, Committee Member (1993–1995)
Archdiocese of Chicago High School Leadership Council (2000)
Catholic Metropolitan Conference, Co-Chair (2000)
Knights of Columbus Council, Madonna De la Strada Chapter (1989–present)
Masonic Order, Richard E. Moore Lodge #109, 32nd degree (1990–present)
National Business Educators Association (1989–1994)
Standing Member, National Catholic Educators Association (1994–2000)
National Catholic Educator Association Secondary School Chairperson (2000)

Community Service

Maywood Rotary Club Member (2000–2003)
Proviso/Leyden Council for Community Action Board Member (2000–2005)
Knights of Columbus Member (1989–present)
R. E. Moore, Masonic Lodge #109 (1990–present)

Awards

Principal Leadership Award Recipient, IADA, 2006
Leadership Greater Chicago 2001–2002 Fellow
Person of the Year, Proviso Chambers of Commerce, 2003
Proviso Township Black Men Mentoring Organization Achievement Award, 2001
Fred Hampton Recognition Award, 2001
Archbishop Lyke African American Male Image Award Recipient, 1997
Chicago Bear Coach of the Week, 1997
The Southtown Economist Coach of the Year Team, 1993
Junior Achievement Teacher of the Year, 1991