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Urban Middle School Teachers' Social Emotional Competence and Black Male Students' Perceptions of Supportive Teacher Student Relationships and Classroom Belonging

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Urban Middle School Teachers' Social Emotional Competence and Black Male Students'

Perceptions of Supportive Teacher Student Relationships and Classroom Belonging

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Erica Angle-Newman

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Urban Middle School Teachers' Social Emotional Competence and Black Male Students'

Perceptions of Supportive Teacher Student Relationships and Classroom Belonging

by

Erica Angle-Newman

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Jennie Katherine Grammer, Co-Chair

Professor Mark P. Hansen, Co-Chair

Thirty-two teachers and 71 students from urban middle schools were surveyed to examine the

extent to which dimensions of teacher social-emotional capacity (SEC) were associated with

teachers' perceptions of building supportive teacher-student relationships (TSRs) with students,

especially Black male students (BMSs), and the extent to which these students' perceptions of

TSRs were associated with classroom belonging. The study found that teachers high in SEC and

in the SEC dimensions Relationship/Social Skills and Responsible Decision Making were less

likely than their counterparts to report challenges in building supportive TSRs with all students

and that there was a positive association between students' perceptions of supportive TSRs and

their sense of classroom belonging. Study findings have potential for closing the opportunity

gap for BMSs. Recommendations for practice include targeting teacher professional

development to improve teacher SEC overall and in the SEC dimensions Relationship/Social

Skills and Responsible Decision Making.

The dissertation of Erica Angle-Newman is approved.

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CHAPTER ONE

STUDY OVERVIEW

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my study. First, I define *social emotional competence* (SEC). Then, I discuss how teacher SEC relates to building supportive TSRs and inspiring students' sense of classroom belonging. Next, I identify key gaps in existing research and identify the research questions that guided my study. I conclude by providing an overview of my research design and explain my study's significance to educational research.

Social Emotional Competence

In education research, the term *social emotional competence* (SEC) refers to teachers' and students' capacity to recognize and manage emotions, build relationships, solve interpersonal problems, and make effective, ethical decisions. Researchers are increasingly interested in the association among SEC, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being (Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, 2014). However, the quantity of research on teacher SEC and its association with these variables underwhelms in comparison to the research on student SEC. Moreover, most studies that do address teacher SEC focus on its associations with successful implementation of social emotional learning (SEL) interventions. Within this research, although supportive teacher-student relationships (TSRs) are seen as essential to the successful implementation of SEL interventions (The Aspen Institute, 2018; Yang & George, 2018), few studies focus on the requisite emotional capacity of teachers to build these relationships with students, especially Black male students[1] (BMSs). This gap in the research is both surprising and concerning given that urban schools, which are predominately composed of

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[1] By using *Black male students* instead of *African-American male students* I mean to include students who are not of African descent.

students of color (Garner et al., 2014; Hamilton et al., 2019), are more likely than suburban schools to implement SEL interventions (Grant et al., 2017).

Although Jennings and colleagues (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings, 2011; Jennings et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2017) don't focus exclusively on supportive TSRs as experienced by BMSs, they nevertheless make important contributions to the small body of research linking teacher SEC to TSRs. Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) seminal study offers a Prosocial Classroom Model establishing teacher SEC and well-being as an organizational framework that can be examined in relation to student outcomes. Using five dimensions of SEC—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, the authors assert that teachers higher in SEC are better able than their counterparts to develop supportive relationships with their students, demonstrate more effective classroom management, and more effectively implement SEL curriculum—all variables contributing to a "healthy classroom climate." A healthy classroom climate, the authors propose, is more conducive to students learning content and developing social-emotional skills. Recognizing the need to assess the value of their Prosocial Classroom Model, the authors call for more research establishing the relationship among these teacher SEC dimensions and the variables contributing to a healthy classroom climate: TSRs, classroom management, and SEL implementation. My study examined the relationships among the aforementioned teacher SEC dimensions and the TSR variable. In an effort to fill a gap in teacher SEC research, I focused on BMSs attending urban middle schools and explored the extent to which supportive TSRs foster a sense of classroom belonging among those students. I view classroom belonging as a component of Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) healthy classroom climate.

Statement of the Problem

School belonging can be defined as the extent to which students perceive themselves to be welcomed, valued, and respected members of their school community (Uwah et al., 2008). Therefore, we can think of *classroom belonging* as the extent to which students perceive themselves to be welcomed, valued, and respected members of their classroom community. A student's sense of classroom belonging can impact his or her opportunity for academic success and emotional well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). It stands to reason that a vital component of classroom belonging is the supportive relationships students have with their teachers (Boston & Warren, 2017; Kim et al., 1995). Classroom belonging may be particularly important for—but sometimes lacking in—urban schools, where students are likely to bring life experiences and cultural backgrounds to schools that may not align with those of the teachers working there (Hatchimonji et al., 2020). Students attending urban schools are more likely than their suburban counterparts to experience and witness violence, depression, aggression, and other externalizing behaviors, which increases their vulnerability to negative developmental, biological, psychiatric, psychological, and behavioral outcomes (Garner et al., 2014). Urban school teachers who are low in SEC may be unable to build the type of relationships with their students that help them feel included in the classroom and school community (Weddington & Rhine, 2006), potentially widening the opportunity gap and the discipline gap. Alternatively, urban school teachers who are high in SEC may be able to establish and maintain supportive TSRs despite experiential and cultural differences with their students, which may foster a sense of classroom belonging in students—which may, in turn, have a positive impact on their peer relationships, academic outcomes, attendance, and behavior (Kiefer et al., 2015; Kiefer &

Pennington, 2017). For this reason, teachers with high SEC may be critical to improving opportunities for BMSs at urban schools.

The importance of belonging cannot be overstated. BMSs often contend with negative stereotypes and racism that undermine their feelings of being valued at school (Boston & Warren, 2017). As a result, they may not feel a sense of belonging in their schools and classrooms. Subtle and overt discrepancies in school discipline may make BMSs feel unwelcome, untrusted by and distrustful of teachers and administrators (Bottiani et al., 2017). Supportive relationships with teachers can improve the sense of classroom belonging for BMSs but establishing and maintaining these relationships with BMSs may be more challenging than with other students. Teacher SEC may not be the only reason for this difficulty. In their study connecting BMSs' sense of belonging to academic self-efficacy in an urban high school, Uwah and colleagues (2008) explain that BMSs' sense of exclusion makes them, more so than other students, yearn to belong. Unfortunately, BMSs, keenly aware of negative stereotypes about Black males, may assume teachers perceive them negatively. This stereotype-threat effect makes BMSs less likely to seek out or take advantage of opportunities to experience belonging to the classroom community, perpetuating some teachers' belief that BMSs aren't invested in their education. For example, the authors found that a teacher's invitation to her class to participate in after-school tutoring had a significant relationship between school belonging and expectancies of school success among all ethnic groups except BMSs. The study suggested that BMSs need to be targeted for intervention—in this example, by being directly invited to tutoring—for the opportunity for community to be meaningful (Uwah et al., 2008). A teacher with low SEC may mistake a BMSs' not showing up for tutoring as "evidence" that he doesn't care about his grade, whereas a teacher with high SEC would try different strategies for making him feel included in

the classroom community. It seems that BMSs' sense of classroom belonging is dependent on teacher effort. The authors maintain that supportive TSRs are key to BMSs' sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy, but they don't associate these constructs with either teacher race or teacher SEC.

Existing Gaps in the Research

As I researched teacher SEC, supportive TSRs, and classroom belonging, I found no studies on which dimensions of teacher SEC were correlated with supportive TSRs for BMSs or the extent to which supportive TSRs inspired a sense of classroom belonging in these students. Supportive TSRs may be critical in narrowing—if not closing—the opportunity gap for BMSs. In his study of BMSs' experiences at Frederick Douglass Academy, an all-BMS urban charter high school designed to increase BMSs high school graduation rate and enrollment rate in college, Broom (2019) found that many of the BMSs interviewed began their freshman year with the attitude of "just trying to make it" through high school but, by their senior year, had adopted the attitude of "striv[ing] to be a college graduate." The students credited this change to their teachers, who kept pushing them with "tough love" and inspiring them to believe in their own potential. Their positive relationships with teachers played a vital role in making them feel valued and appreciated in the classroom and provided them with critical opportunities to remap their pathways to success. Of the many teachers mentioned in the study, Broom identifies only one as Black, indicating that a shared race wasn't a necessary trait for connecting with BMSs. What was necessary—and expected—at Douglass was that all teachers acknowledge the historical and current challenges for BMSs and work with staff, students, and the community to increase BMSs academic success. Thus, what Douglass teachers had in common was an equity mindset and the capacity to develop relationships with BMSs that fostered their sense of

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belonging to an academic community. My definition of *equity-mindset* is based on Gregory and Fergus's (2017) definition of *equity-oriented*—that is, being aware of how culture, power, and privilege affect schools and students and acknowledging the cultural and power dynamics inherent in teacher-student interactions. Perhaps having an equity mindset and high SEC are what set White teachers at Douglass apart from White teachers at other urban schools who are unable to develop supportive TSRs with BMSs. Broom ends his study with a sentiment common to research concerning TSRs and BMSs success: that teachers need not only care about BMSs but also demonstrate that care. Such admonishments presuppose that teachers are choosing either to demonstrate care or not. It seems to me that education researchers, similar to education practitioners, assume that teachers either have the requisite SEC for supportive TSRs or they don't—instead of treating SEC as a skillset that can be developed. No wonder studies on the benefits supportive TSRs have on BMSs outnumber studies on the requisite teacher SEC to build these relationships. The purpose of my study was to address this important gap.

The CASEL 5

Race is absent in much of the research on teacher SEC, most notably in Jennings and Greenberg's 2009 seminal study of teacher SEC as a mediator of student and classroom outcomes. The authors, associating supportive TSRs with a student's feeling of "connectedness" at school, call for research on which dimensions of teacher SEC are responsible for building these supportive TSRs. However, by not acknowledging the association between student race and school connectedness—that is, *school belonging*, they neglect to make an important point: BMSs, who may feel more disconnected from school than their peers, may benefit from this research more so than their peers. In other words, such research may help close the opportunity gap for BMSs. The authors also ignore teacher race in their important study. For example,

although they identify contextual factors such as administrative support, school climate, and

community culture as affecting teacher SEC, they don't mention a teacher's race as a potential

impacting factor. Yet, as I'll explain in more detail in my literature review, within the contextual

factor of an urban school, where most students of color attend and where most teachers are

White (Taie & Goldring, 2019; Warren, 2015), a teacher's race may be associated with her

ability to form the supportive TSRs that are so critical to her students' success. Finally, the

authors overlook race as a potential impacting factor in their SEC construct. Choosing from the

many dimensions of SEC, the authors adopted the five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective,

and behavioral competencies as described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and

Emotional Learning (CASEL) in its SEL Framework: self-awareness, self-management, social

awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are

commonly known as the CASEL 5. Using the SEL definition for teacher SEC is appropriate, the

authors contend, because it directly connects teachers' competencies to the competencies that

teachers are entrusted to teach to their students. But do these social-emotional skills directly

connect teacher competencies to *all* their students?

Jennings and Greenberg don't discuss either teachers' race or students' race; however,

educational researchers and CASEL itself have recently begun to question the extent to which

using the CASEL 5 as an SEC framework promotes an equitable learning environment for

students of color. In a recent Frameworks Brief (Jager et al., 2018), CASEL added "equity

elaborations" to the CASEL 5 as part of their transformative SEL initiative to support equitable

learning environments and optimal developmental outcomes for diverse students and adults. In

addition, in December 2020, CASEL began updating its SEL definition and framework.

Similarly, Gregory and Fergus (2017) integrated equity into the CASEL 5 to characterize the

SEC teachers need to be effective for students of color. For Gregory and Fergus, the ideal teacher is not only socially and emotionally competent but also equity-minded. Viewing the CASEL 5 through an equity lens is important for all teachers but especially those who teach diverse populations. Consequently, teachers working at urban middle schools may need to be high in SEC and equity-minded to build the supportive relationships that foster a sense of classroom belonging in BMSs. Further research is needed to identify which teacher SEC dimensions are associated with these supportive TSRs.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The research cited above tells us that a sense of belonging is essential for the success of BMSs and that supportive TSRs are vital in establishing that sense of belonging. Present practice to foster supportive TSRs for BMSs is to build SEC in BMSs—for example, through SEL interventions. Teachers' SEC to build these TSRs is assumed to be present; however, that isn't always the case. BMSs are more likely to be taught by White female teachers, who comprise the majority of the teaching force, but may not have the requisite SEC to help BMSs achieve academic success. Teacher SEC may be particularly important for English and math teachers, who provide foundational skills essential for academic success across the disciplines and whose teaching has more reach than other teachers in that English and math classes make up the highest number of requisite classes throughout a student's academic career. However, we have yet to identify which dimensions of teacher SEC are integral in building supportive TSRs and thus inspiring students' sense of classroom belonging. Equipped with this knowledge, education leaders would be poised to choose teacher professional development aimed and closing the opportunity gaps for BMSs. With these thoughts in mind, I conducted this study to answer the following questions:

1. How are the teacher SEC dimensions *social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management*, and *responsible decision making* interrelated? How are these dimensions associated with teacher characteristics?

2. To what extent do teachers perceive challenges in developing supportive TSRs with all students in general and with BMSs in particular? How are these perceptions associated with teacher SEC and the teacher characteristics?

3. How are student perceptions of TSRs related to student characteristics?

4. How are students' sense of classroom belonging related to student characteristics and student perceptions of TSRs?

Overview of Research Design

My study used a quantitative, correlational survey design to analyze the associations among multiple teacher SEC dimensions and supportive relationships between teachers and students attending urban middle schools. I selected Rancho Cucamonga Middle School (RCMS), where I worked as an assistant principal from 2017 to 2021, as the primary school site for data collection. The school's demographics are typical of a West Coast urban middle school. During the 2021-2022 school year, RCMS had an enrollment of approximately 800 students and employed approximately 46 teachers.

Study Significance

I surveyed teachers to examine which dimensions of teacher SEC were associated with teachers' perceptions of building supportive TSRs with all students in general and Black male students in particular. I surveyed students to examine to what extent students' perceptions of TSRs were associated with classroom belonging, especially as perceived by Black male students.

My study, inspired by Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) Prosocial Classroom Model, examined which dimensions of teacher SEC were associated with teachers' perceptions of building supportive TSRs with students attending an urban middle school—especially BMSs, and to what extent students' perceptions of TSRs were associated with classroom belonging, especially classroom belonging as perceived by BMSs. My study is significant for several reasons. First, to my knowledge, there is no research that examines which specific dimensions of teacher SEC are associated with supportive TSRs. As explained in Chapter Two, I learned that classroom belonging is studied less often than school belonging or school climate. Second, teacher SEC hasn't been studied in connection with TSRs as experienced by BMSs in urban middle schools. This is unfortunate, given the documented effects of BMSs being paired with teachers who lack the capacity to connect with them. These effects include BMSs feeling undervalued and misunderstood by their teachers (Mester et al., 2015) and experiencing increasing disengagement and exclusionary discipline (Cagle, 2017). Third, middle school is less often the focus in SEC and SEL research than are elementary school and high school, despite this being the time when BMSs become at-risk of falling into the opportunity gap and discipline gap (Cornell et al., 2016; Hirschfield, 2018). Finally, the results of my study underscore that SEC can be developed in teachers as well as students—that it is more like a skillset than a set of traits. With this in mind, education leaders will better understand the connection among teacher SEC, TSRs, and a sense of classroom belonging as experienced by BMSs, positioning education leaders to operationalize teacher SEC for closing the opportunity gap and the discipline gap. To that end, the results of my study add to existing research advocating for policy mandating developing SEC in pre-service teachers and for ongoing SEC support and training for in-service teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the current research literature concerning teacher SEC, teacher race, TSRs, and BMSs' sense of classroom belonging. First, I identify multiple teacher SEC competencies and explain how viewing them through an equity lens may help teachers build supportive relationships with BMSs. Next, I discuss the extent to which general and equity-minded SEC support and training are made available to pre-service and in-service teachers. I follow this information by explaining the association among teacher SEC, teacher stress, and teacher burnout. From here, I narrow my focus to the impact teacher SEC has on BMSs, beginning with TSRs and concluding with a sense of classroom belonging.

Teacher SEC

The experiences and culture of BMSs attending urban schools may not align with those of the teachers working there. For some BMSs, these differences may lead them to experience a sense of not belonging in their classes, which may lead to problem behavior and decreased learning outcomes. Teachers who lack the SEC to build supportive relationships with BMSs may exacerbate this sense of not belonging, thereby inciting more problem behavior and further decreasing learning outcomes. For this reason, teachers low in SEC may be a major contributing factor to the opportunity gap and the discipline gap. Prior research demonstrates that teacher SEC is associated with supportive TSRs, effective classroom management, and successful SEL implementation, all of which promote a healthy classroom climate conducive to learning and teacher and student well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Within this research, although supportive TSRs are seen as essential to a sense of classroom belonging, which I view as a component of a healthy classroom climate, few studies focus on the requisite SEC of teachers to

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build these relationships with students, especially BMSs attending urban middle schools. Even fewer studies focus on the associations between teachers' race and supportive TSRs with BMSs attending urban middle schools.

Defining Teacher SEC

In education research, the SEC of both teachers and students is broadly accepted to be the outcome of SEL, though it has also been connected to the narrower construct of emotional intelligence (EI). EI involves perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions and using emotions to facilitate thinking (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Although EI and SEC are both associated with TSRs and classroom climate (Arghode, 2013), researchers tend to follow the lead of Jennings and Greenberg, both prominent scholars of teacher SEC and well-being, who define teacher SEC using the broader construct SEL, which includes competencies related to adaptation and performance (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) view teacher SEC as an important contributor to supportive TSRs, effective classroom management, and successful SEL program implementation. Together, these three variables, the crux of their Prosocial Classroom Model, promote a healthy classroom climate conducive to learning and supportive of teacher and student well-being. The authors adopt the five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies as described by CASEL in its SEL Framework: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Jennings and Greenberg describe the ideal teacher as one who is socially and emotionally competent in each of the CASEL 5 competencies. A socially and emotionally competent teacher has high *self-awareness*, meaning she recognizes her own emotional strengths, weaknesses, and patterns and is able to use emotions such as joy and enthusiasm to inspire student learning and to

maintain her own passion for teaching. She is able to manage her emotions even when she is aroused by challenging situations. This *self-management* competency allows her to regulate her emotions in ways that benefit students' academic outcomes and emotional well-being, as well as maintain her own emotional well-being. The CASEL 5 competency *social awareness* involves knowledge of how emotional expressions affect interactions with others. Teachers high in social awareness can identify and understand their students' emotions. They are culturally sensitive and recognize that students may have different perspectives than they do. The ideal teacher is also high in *relationship skills*, meaning she can navigate through conflict with students and negotiate solutions to classroom challenges. She is able to build supportive relationships with her students based on mutual understanding and cooperation. Finally, a socially and emotionally competent teacher is high in *responsible decision-making skills*. She respects her students and takes responsibility for her decisions and actions, knowing the impact she can have on others and herself (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

School districts across the nation use the CASEL 5 competencies to teach students the social emotional skills needed for academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers (CASEL, 2020). For this reason, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) emphasize that using the SEL definition for teacher SEC is more appropriate than the EI definition because the SEL definition directly connects teacher competencies with those student competencies that teachers are entrusted to develop within their students. The authors don't address whether these social-emotional skills directly connect teacher competencies to all their students. Nor do they address whether these social-emotional skills are what all students need to achieve success, engagement, and well-being. Educational researchers and CASEL itself have recently begun to question whether CASEL 5's core competencies adequately reflect, cultivate,

and leverage cultural assets and promote the well-being of students of color and those from under-resourced backgrounds. In a 2018 Frameworks Brief, CASEL "explore[d] prospects for equity elaborations" (Jager et al., 2018, p. 2) to the CASEL SEL Framework as it relates to building SEC in students.

In their study of SEL-centered discipline reforms that hold limited promise for reducing discipline disparities for BMS, Gregory and Fergus (2017) integrate equity into the CASEL SEL Framework as it relates to building SEC in teachers. For Jennings and Greenberg, the ideal teacher is socially and emotionally competent. For Gregory and Fergus (2017), the ideal teacher is socially and emotionally competent and equity-minded. The purpose of the authors' amended CASEL 5 competencies is to build capacity in all teachers; however, White teachers whose students are from diverse populations may find it particularly edifying. Within this equity framework, teachers practice and develop their *self-awareness* by examining their own conscious and unconscious beliefs and considering whether they hold negative stereotypes about students' cultural and stylistic codes. With *social awareness*, teachers practice and develop this competency by adopting a sociocultural, historical orientation to help them see how their students experience social inequalities. The *self-management* competency entails developing skills and attitudes that regulate behaviors and emotions. Teachers can help students recognize the self-management demands they face as they move between cultures and support them in those efforts. Given that students of color tend to report feeling less connected with teachers than their counterparts, *relationship skills* may be the most important competency for White female teachers to build upon and develop, as they comprise the majority of the teaching force (Taie & Goldring, 2019; Warren, 2015). The authors suggest that discipline disparities between White students and BMSs may be due to the quality of relationships between teachers and their

BMSs. In other words, the racial discipline gap may have more to do with low teacher SEC than the often blamed "defiant" Black male. To that point, teachers practice and develop the *responsible decision-making* competency when they consider the effects of disciplinary policy and enforcement on diverse groups. Whether an equity lens is applied to the CASEL 5 Framework or not, from my reading, researchers seem to agree that the CASEL 5 is the most appropriate tool available to frame their studies on teacher and student SEC, though studies of students' SEC outnumber those of teacher SEC (Collie, 2017; Collie & Perry, 2019).

Support and Training to Develop Teacher SEC

Researchers also agree that little has been done to support the development of teacher SEC. Indeed, the perception may be that teachers don't need training. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) contend that the current education system assumes teachers already have the SEC required to create a warm and supportive classroom environment, be emotionally responsive to students, model exemplary emotion regulation, and effectively (yet respectfully) handle the challenging behaviors of disruptive students. Although some teachers may have naturally high levels of SEC, others may not (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Furthermore, because SEC is context-dependent (Collie & Perry, 2019; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jones et al., 2013), teacher SEC levels are in constant flux, even for those who are adept. For example, a teacher who has high levels of SEC when working with challenging colleagues may not have the SEC to function well in a classroom full of energetic students without additional training and support. Teachers may also need to adapt and receive new training if they change teaching assignments or move to a school composed primarily of students from an unfamiliar culture (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Given that our teaching force is primarily composed of White females, teachers at urban schools—where the students are primarily students of color (Taie & Goldring, 2019; Warren,

2015)—presumably stand in front of an "unfamiliar culture" every day. Teachers may lack the requisite SEC to be effective in such contexts. A failure to recognize and address this can be damaging to students—particularly BMSs.

Warren (2013), in his study of the role and relevance of empathy for helping teachers respond to the social and intellectual needs of BMSs, calls for teacher training that addresses the "perceptual difference" that affects the range of teaching and learning experiences offered by White teachers to Black males (Warren, 2013, p. 154). The same perceptual difference may impact a White teacher's ability to develop SEC in her students of color. In Garner and colleagues' (2014) review of 23 highly rated SEL programs to assess their efficacy for children from diverse backgrounds, the authors explain that teachers' pedagogy and relationships with students may improve as a result of their implementing SEL programs. However, only nine of the reviewed SEL programs required formal training for the teachers implementing the programs, leading the authors to promote formal teacher training for the successful implementation of culturally grounded SEL programs. Another way to interpret this improvement in pedagogy and TSRs is that formal training in SEL program implementation gives teachers an opportunity to develop their own SEC.

Other evidence indicates that the education system understands the need for supporting and developing teacher SEC and is responding—albeit slowly. A report prepared for CASEL by Schonert-Reichl and colleagues (2017) summarizes what may be the first-ever examination of the extent to which SEL is incorporated into teacher certification requirements and teacher preparation programs across the United States. This report reveals both progress and room for growth. For example, teacher education programs in 47 states were found to focus on developing one to three of the CASEL 5 competencies in pre-service teachers—most commonly

social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. However, the two competencies most commonly absent were the ones Jennings and Greenberg (2009) identify as most influencing a teacher's ability to cope with the emotional demands of teaching: self-awareness and self-management. This suggests that few states required that pre-service teachers learn how to identify their feelings, strengths, and weaknesses or how to control and appropriately express their feelings, manage stress, and monitor their progress towards achieving goals (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, opportunities to develop SEC don't seem to increase once teachers are hired at a school site. In Jones and Bouffard's (2012) social policy report on schools' role in supporting student SEL, common reasons that schools fail to implement SEL programs in meaningful ways include neglecting to train teachers and staff how to develop and effectively deploy their own SEL skills. This suggests that SEC development for in-service teachers is lacking nationwide. Not providing teachers with ongoing SEC support and training takes its toll on teachers and students alike. Collie and Perry (2019), in their study of cultivating teacher thriving through SEC development, see professional learning that supports teacher SEC development as essential for the thriving of teachers and students and for helping teachers model and teach SEC to students effectively. Without this professional learning, teachers are less apt to thrive at their school site and less capable of creating caring and supportive learning environments and promoting better learning outcomes for students. Similarly, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) associate teacher SEC development with teacher well-being and teacher well-being with student well-being and academic success. They write that, given the high demands placed on teachers, it's surprising that teachers rarely receive specific training to address the importance of social and emotional issues in the classroom or how to develop the SEC to

successfully handle them. Jones and colleagues (2013) identify a growing number of interventions specifically designed to improve teacher SEC, including emotion-focused training, relationship-building interventions, and mindfulness and stress reductions. However, what isn't clear is the extent to which these opportunities are made available to teachers.

Teacher SEC and its Association with Stress and Job Burnout

Compared with other professions, teachers report some of the highest level of occupational stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jones et al., 2013; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Workload and student behavior are among the most common reasons for teachers experiencing stress at their school site (Collie et al., 2012). However, the school site itself—especially if the school culture isn't perceived as supportive—and stress from teachers' personal lives, can also be triggers (Jones et al., 2013). Studies suggest that teachers today experience more stress than ever before and that more teachers are leaving the profession for the reason of stress (e.g., Jones et al., 2013). Unfortunately, the highest teacher turnover occurs at low-performing, high-poverty schools—that is, those schools most in need of a consistent, effective teaching force (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Perhaps the lack of supportive TSRs between White female teachers and BMSs at such schools contributes to and is contributed by a culture of stress. As Jones and colleagues (2013) point out, stress affects the ability to form and maintain relationships with others, as well as the ability to focus and problem solve. Because students, too, are increasingly reporting to experience more stress at school, it's easy to see how teacher and student stress can fuel each other, leading to high attrition rates for teachers in urban schools—and high suspension rates for students of color. The authors wisely suggest that any approach to building teacher SEC should also include building capacity in teachers to manage stress (Jones et al., 2013).

How a teacher responds to stress may depend on her SEC. Teachers with low SEC may have trouble coping with stress and struggle to model effective stress management for students. In their study of whether and how school climate and SEL influence teachers' sense of stress, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction, Collie and colleagues (2012) found that teachers' comfort in implementing SEL was associated with teacher stress, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction, which are related to important student outcomes including motivation and achievement. In explaining this association, they wrote that teachers who are more comfortable with implementing SEL have higher SEC. Teachers who have lower SEC are more prone to experience stress related to their teaching efficacy. The authors also found that while learning new skills for SEL may be stressful in the short-term, over the long-term, teachers are likely to experience less stress, greater teaching efficacy, and greater job satisfaction.

For Jennings and Greenberg (2009), implementing SEL programs is just one source of teacher stress. A greater challenge is that students are increasingly coming to school underprepared and with behavior problems. Teachers who lack the SEC to handle these challenges experience emotional stress, high levels of which can lead to poor job performance and burnout. Burnout has an adverse effect on TSRs, classroom management, and classroom climate. Conversely, teachers with high levels of SEC, particularly the CASEL 5 components self-awareness and self-management, are better able to handle the emotional demands of teaching without experience debilitating stress. They are better able to develop supportive relationships with students, maintain effective classroom management, and provide quality SEL implementation—all of which promote the healthy classroom climate essential for both student and teacher well-being. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) call for more research on how teachers' ability to regulate their emotions in the face of classroom stressors may contribute to or prevent

burnout. They also call for more research to establish the relationships among teacher SEC dimensions, TSRs, classroom management, and SEL program implementation. However, what's also needed is research to establish the relationships between teacher SEC and teachers' relationships with BMSs.

Teacher SEC and TSRs

Supportive TSRs are essential for students throughout their schooling, but especially during middle school. These years are filled with great physical, emotional, and intellectual growth but also rife with great emotional instability and vulnerability (Alder, 2002). At home, students need parents or parental figures to provide them with a sense of security as they navigate the vicissitudes of their tweens; at school, students need teachers to provide them with a sense of security as they navigate their new secondary school environment (Roorda et al., 2001). In this way, teachers act as a proxy for parents, the classroom as a proxy for home. Although qualitative TSR literature suggests that students turn away from their teachers during middle school and focus more on their peers (Gray et al., 2018; Kester, 1994; Kiefer et al., 2015), indicating supportive TSRs are more important to grade school students, quantitative studies suggest otherwise. Roorda and colleagues' (2011) meta-analysis of 99 studies focusing on the association between TSRs on school engagement and achievement revealed two unexpected findings: Positive TSRs are more important for the academic adjustment of older children, especially during the transition from grade school to middle school. Unfortunately, as the authors point out, relationships with teachers tend to become less positive as students get older. In addition, the authors found that student race was a moderator for the relationship between supportive TSRs and achievement, with supportive TSRs having more of an influence on achievement for students of color than for White students; however, student race was not a

moderator for the relationship between negative TSRs and achievement. The authors posit that negative TSRs have a negative impact on the school functioning of all students. They offer no explanation for why positive TSRs improve the achievement for students of color more so than White students. Perhaps one reason for this difference is that the experiences of students of color, especially BMSs, make transitioning to middle school more challenging than what White students experience, and supportive TSRs help foster a sense of belonging that mediates academic achievement.

A separate study suggests that supportive TSRs matter not only to BMSs' grades but also to their social-emotional well-being. In Kincaid and Yin's (2011) phenomenological inquiry investigating 30 "at-risk" BMSs' perceptions of their academic experience in urban high schools and the resources that contributed to or detracted from their academic success, strong human support systems emerged as an indicator of achievement. Students cited positive adult relationships at school and at home as a positive influence on their academic outcomes. Negative adult relationships at school or at home threatened students' personal confidence and motivation, thereby detracting from their academic success. A key takeaway from this study is that teachers and classrooms had the power of parents and home to build these young men up or break them down. Perhaps the need for BMSs to see a parent in a teacher and a home in a classroom indicates both a sense of not belonging at school and a yearning to belong.

Howard (2002) found a sense of *parent* and *home* essential to the success of 30 Black students attending urban grade schools and middle schools. In his study of Black students' perceptions of their learning environments, students framed effective teaching in a socio-cultural manner that stressed the fluidity between home and school. These students described effective teachers to be similar to effective parents: those who establish family, community, and home-

like characteristics in the classroom and those who establish culturally connected caring relationships with students. Howard (2002) defines "culturally connected caring" as caring that occurs within a cultural context with which students are familiar—specifically, behavioral expectations, nurturing patterns, and forms of affection that take place in a manner that doesn't require students to abandon their cultural integrity. Unlike Broom's (2019) study, which suggested that White teachers who had high SEC and an equity mindset could develop supportive TSRs with BMSs, effective teachers in Howard's (2002) study were Black teachers whose supportive TSRs were based on a cultural connection. Broom's (2019) findings raise several questions relevant to this present study. *Are White teachers capable of providing BMSs with culturally connected caring? That is, can they effectively "parent" BMSs at school? Would BMSs be receptive to White teachers if they tried?* Howard (2002) doesn't discuss associations between teachers' race and teaching BMSs in his study. Indeed, scholars are divided as to whether Black students are better served by Black teachers or White teachers (Warren, 2015).

We shouldn't assume that Black teachers, simply because they are Black, can "connect" with BMSs. One study of de facto segregated schools in the Midwest (Eubanks, 2001) found that both White and Black teachers in predominately Black high schools perceive their students' emotional, behavioral, and social characteristics more negatively than White and Black teachers perceive students in predominately White high schools. In addition, Warren (2015) points out that teacher-student differences such as socioeconomic class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and race can create perceptual differences that impact the way all teachers, regardless of race, interact with and teach students. Viewing supportive TSRs as having more to do with teachers' character than teachers as parent-proxies, Warren contends that perceptual differences make empathy a vital professional disposition for all teachers who work in a multicultural setting. Survey results

from his study of measuring teacher empathy for BMSs indicate that although teachers agree empathy is important for BMSs' academic success, they don't apply empathy consistently in their own practice. For example, teachers were more likely to use empathy with BMSs during interactive tasks such as classroom management than during respondent tasks, such as grading homework. Survey results left Warren wondering how teachers act out their conception of empathy—for example, a White teacher may feel she is being empathetic by referring a BMS to Special Education, but he offers no suggestions on how to build the SEC in teachers to employ empathy.

Building teacher capacity for empathy in a multicultural setting is the purpose of CULTURES training, the efficacy of which is the subject of a much-cited study by McCallister and Irvine (2002). The authors write that teachers' empathy often manifests itself as care for students, but care is not enough to improve students' academic outcomes; teachers must also have subject-matter competence and instructional-competence. The authors warn that empathy, for White teachers, may provide a "false sense of involvement" (p. 434) that may prove detrimental to their TSRs if they assume they know and understand their students when they may have only a superficial understanding of them. Worse, a false sense of involvement may lead to a "paradox of appropriation" (p. 434), in which White teachers equate their own experiences with their students', essentially erasing any relevant distinction. Despite these dangers, the authors advocate for all pre-service and in-service teachers in multicultural settings to be trained in adopting an empathetic disposition. They found that, regardless of race, teachers trained in CULTURES' empathetic practices connected caring behavior such as listening, patience, and being supportive to empathy and believed that such behavior on their part fostered better relations with their culturally diverse students.

Alder (2002) views caring teachers to be integral for the success of urban middle schoolers, especially Black students. She treats "caring" as a choice teachers make when responding to students' social-emotional and academic needs. Similar to Howard (2002), Alder's (2002) research approach is phenomenological. Whereas Howard focused on student perception, Alder asked both students and teachers from predominately Black middle schools how caring TSRs are formed. Students described caring teachers as those who were strict but fair, who were able to control disruptive classroom behavior, and who cared about students' academic achievement. Teachers described caring teachers as those who took the time to know students and their parents. They viewed supportive TSRs as essential for student learning, while admitting that building and maintaining caring relationships with students while trying to "control" the classroom was exhausting. This admission is an important reminder that teachers, regardless of SEC, need ongoing support and training to prevent burnout and to decrease attrition. Alder (2002) doesn't comment about building the SEC in teachers to care in ways that would benefit their TSRs with Black students.

In my review of research on supportive TSRs with BMSs, I found no studies connecting specific dimensions of teacher SEC to TSRs. Goroshit and Hen come close in their body of work, focusing on the relationship among teacher emotional self-efficacy, teaching self-efficacy, and empathy—although not as they directly relate to BMSs (e.g., Goroshit & Hen, 2013, 2014, 2016; Hen & Goroshit, 2016). Nevertheless, the authors, recognizing that empathy contributes to both supportive TSRs and school belonging, ask a unique question: What contributes to teacher empathy? Their recent study of the interrelationships among the social-emotional competencies among teachers examined how teachers' beliefs in their own emotional and teaching abilities contributed to their empathy towards students (Hen & Goroshit, 2016).

Findings indicate that teachers who believe in their efficacy to identify and regulate their emotions will be empathetic towards their students. To a lesser degree, the same is true for teachers who believe in their teaching-efficacy. For both efficacies, the association is stronger in the classroom context than in the school context, suggesting that teacher empathy has a more profound effect in the classroom than at the school as a whole.

A separate study published the same year (Goroshit & Hen, 2016) supported that both efficacies predict teacher empathy in a similar manner: The higher teachers are in both self-efficacies, the higher they are in empathy. However, this study showed teacher self-efficacy to be a stronger predictor than emotional self-efficacy, suggesting that a teacher's confidence in her ability to teach was more associated with being empathetic than her confidence in her abilities to identify and regulate her emotions. The authors, surprised by this finding, suggested an explanation: that emotional self-efficacy is a basic feeling that contributes to teaching self-efficacy, and taken together with other teaching components, predicts stronger empathy in teachers. Their explanation is supported by their earlier findings (Hen & Goroshit, 2013) that emotional self-efficacy and empathy are strong predictors of teaching self-efficacy and that emotional self-efficacy predicts both empathy and teaching self-efficacy, more so than teaching experience (Goroshit & Hen 2014).

As a whole, Hen and Goroshit's work indicates three important ideas that support Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) Prosocial Classroom Model. First, teachers' emotional self-efficacy (i.e., the belief in their ability to identify and regulate their emotions) predicts teacher empathy more so than their teaching efficacy (i.e., the belief in their ability to teach). Second, teachers' emotional self-efficacy may even boost their teaching self-efficacy. Third, teacher empathy has more impact on students' sense of classroom belonging than school belonging.

Although Goroshit and Hen don't directly connect emotional self-efficacy to CASEL's Framework, this efficacy resembles the CASEL 5 components Self-Awareness and Self-Management. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) agree that teachers' emotional regulation and empathy are predictors of supportive TSRs. They suggest that the CASEL 5 competencies Social Awareness, Self-Management, and Relationships Management may play a role in teachers' capacity to form and maintain supportive TSRs but point to the need for more research to better understand the relationships among these competencies and TSRs. Finally, they suggest that supportive TSRs play an important role in creating a healthy classroom climate, which, as I maintain, is the condition from which a sense of classroom belonging is derived.

Classroom Belonging

In education research, students' sense of belonging is more often discussed in terms of school belonging than classroom belonging. Researchers' preference for school belonging suggests a greater importance to or a separateness from classroom belonging, which doesn't follow, considering students spend the majority of their school day in the classroom. In addition, the often-used definition for school belonging—namely, students feeling a sense of acceptance, value, inclusivity, and encouragement from teachers and peers (Goodenow, 1993, as cited in Kiefer et al., 2015)—applies more so to classroom belonging. I borrow this definition in my research of classroom belonging and add that BMSs who have a sense of classroom belonging are equipped with an equal opportunity to learn. Because school belonging and classroom belonging are nearly always interchangeable in the literature, I'll be using studies of school belonging in this literature review of classroom belonging. In addition, because the research on Black students' sense of classroom belonging in general outnumber the research on BMSs' sense of classroom in particular, I'll be using the former to make sense of the latter.

Research identifies a strong association between supportive TSRs and a sense of classroom belonging, both being essential for BMSs' academic success. Boston and Warren's (2017) study of the effects of belonging and racial identity on urban Black high school students' achievement led them to call for more professional development to establish supportive TSRs with Black students. The authors noted that student participants who reported high race centrality—that is, race being central to their self-concept, also reported a strong sense of belonging. This sense of belonging, however, was mainly derived from Black peers, who provided empathetic support against racial discrimination and stereotyping at school. Student participants reported a stronger sense of belonging when they had teachers who cared for them personally and had high expectations for them academically. Such teachers were also able to promote mutual respect and positive interactions among Black students and their peers in the classroom, which enhanced Black students' feelings of belongingness.

Matthews (2020), too, suggests that Black students' sense of classroom belonging begins with teachers' high academic expectations and supportive TSRs. In his study of the impact of teacher care practices on students of color in urban secondary schools, math teachers who took a "people support" strategy with their students along with rigorous content-related expectations were able to foster a strong sense of classroom belonging, resulting in their students scoring higher on the state standardized math assessment. It may be that, similar to supportive TSRs, a sense of classroom belonging is particularly important to BMSs during their middle school years. Kiefer and colleagues (2015) characterize middle school as a time when education and peers become particularly important to students just as their motivation, engagement, and belonging begin to decline. For these authors, teacher support, being academic and social in nature, can

promote students' academic motivation, classroom engagement, and classroom belonging—thereby contributing to students' overall adjustment to middle school.

Although it's true that all students have a need to belong and that a sense of classroom belonging can result in positive academic outcomes for all students, the need for and benefits of classroom belonging may be especially relevant to BMSs. In their work on being Black and belonging at school, Gray and colleagues (2018) ask what opportunities Black students have to establish a sense of belonging when school systems have historically prohibited Black students from receiving a formal education and are currently complicit in providing them with an inequitable education. They note that behavioral engagement and classroom belongingness decline in middle school as Black students become more aware that the school context doesn't address their needs. For these authors, any sense of belonging inspired by supportive relationships with teachers and peers is proven ineffective without interrogating the instructional settings, institutional norms, and institutional policies in which these supportive relationships operate.

Booker (2007) also implicates systemic racism in hindering Black students' sense of fully belonging in school, warning that students who feel a lack of belonging are more prone to experience negative feelings such as loneliness, depression, and alienation—all of which can decrease motivation and academic achievement. She sees the ethnic composition of a school as a critical component to the relationships between Black students' sense of belonging. For example, in a school setting where White students and staff retain the biggest power differential, Black students are likely to feel a diminished sense of belonging to the greater community, which can affect their academic achievement. Without mentioning supportive TSRs specifically,

Booker argues that this power differential can be mitigated by teachers and staff who make classrooms psychologically welcoming for and supportive of all students.

Whereas Booker (2007) views belonging as a means to increase Black students' academic achievement, Murphy and Zirkel (2015) deconstruct belonging as experienced by Black students. In their study of race and belonging in 7th grade Black students attending a middle-class, predominately Black middle school, the authors identify belonging as important for Black students even when they make up the majority of the school. The authors explain that *belonging* can refer to the particular school setting and also school as an institution. This latter dimension of belonging relates to whether school as an institution makes Black students feel that they can grow, graduate, and progress to college, as well as whether people who look like them have a central place in the curriculum, organization, and running of the school. *School-as-an-institution belonging* is an essential component of *school belonging* and may explain why previous studies have found that White students tend to report more sense of belonging than racial minority groups. It may also explain why Black students' sense of belonging is predictive of their educational goals and efficacy more so than among White students, even in predominately Black schools (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015).

We've seen that supportive relationships with teachers can impact BMSs' sense of classroom belonging, which can impact their academic achievement; it seems that classroom belonging may also have the potential to impact BMSs' SEC. In Korpershoek and colleagues (2020) metanalysis of 82 studies of school belonging in secondary schools, the authors discovered that students who felt a sense of belonging were likely to perform better in school and show more favorable motivation, social-emotional outcomes, and behavioral outcomes. In addition, the study revealed a positive and moderately strong relationship between school

belonging and students' self-concept and self-efficacy, highlighting the importance of classroom belonging for students' social emotional functioning in school. Supportive relationships with teachers and peers, the authors suggest, seem to stimulate students' self-esteem. These findings were consistent in their study, despite region and grade level, with no significant differences relating to socioeconomic status, leaving the authors to advise stimulating a sense of belonging among all secondary grade levels and among advantaged and disadvantaged students by finding ways to improve TSRs.

Korpershoek and colleagues' (2020) study brings us full circle: By recognizing the important role supportive TSRs play in fostering a sense of classroom belonging for BMSs—a precondition for their academic success and social-emotional well-being, we must now ask which teacher SEC dimensions are associated with building these relationships. That is the purpose of this current study. By identifying the teacher SEC capacities associated with supportive TSRs, education leaders will be able to choose professional development that develops teacher SEC, thereby improving academic outcomes for BMSs. And by doing this, education leaders will have recognized and acknowledged an important way teachers contribute to the opportunity gap. For student success isn't based solely on teachers' pedagogy or discipline mastery. Also important is the way teachers interact with their students.

The Current Study

Too often in education, the words *Black male students* are seen or spoken in close proximity to the words *school-to-prison pipeline*, *achievement gap*, and *discipline* gap, indicating a concern that BMSs are not achieving academically. While researchers acknowledge that BMSs may act out in the classroom and avoid challenging themselves academically (Brooms, 2019; Noguera, 1996), they also challenge us to acknowledge—indeed, we must begin our

acknowledging here—that historical and present-day systemic inequities in education and society make academic success more challenging for BMSs than their White counterparts (Noguera, 1996). For this reason, Noguera (2003) argues that efforts to improve BMSs' academic performance must include strategies that counter the harmful effects of environmental and cultural forces. Based on my personal research, observations, and experiences, such strategies too often put the onus of change on BMSs without considering the harmful effects environmental and cultural forces have on teachers and their instruction, especially White teachers and their instruction. My study shifts the paradigm, predicting teacher SEC as influencing TSRs with BMSs, which, in turn, influence BMSs' sense of classroom belonging, which ultimately influences their academic and social-emotional outcomes. As a conceptual framework for my study, I used Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) Prosocial Classroom Model.

In a prosocial classroom, students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes all hinge on teachers' SEC and well-being, which, in turn, are impacted by students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes. Teachers high in SEC are more likely to form supportive TSRs, manage their classrooms effectively, and implement SEL programs successfully, all of which contribute to a prosocial classroom climate. In addition, these variables are all mediators within teachers' control—that is, they are based on a SEC skillset that can be developed with dedicated effort and support, unlike contributing contextual factors such as school and community. A prosocial classroom climate is more conducive to learning and promotes positive social-emotional and academic outcomes among students.

Furthermore, a prosocial classroom allows for both students and teachers to experience growth and well-being. Teachers high in SEC are able to help develop students' self-efficacy and SEC, which further develops teachers' self-efficacy and SEC. Conversely, teachers low in

SEC are unable to manage the social-emotional challenges in their classrooms. Their students respond with low levels of on-task behavior and decreased academic performance. As this happens, the classroom climate deteriorates, triggering a "burnout cascade" in teachers that degrades their self-efficacy and SEC and impacts students' social-emotional well-being. Without proper support and guidance, teachers experiencing burnout will either leave the profession or stay on—increasingly embittered, increasingly ineffective.

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) acknowledge several research questions that must be addressed to assess the value of the Prosocial Classroom Model. The question that inspired this current study is one that has received little attention: What is the relationship between teacher SEC and TSRs? I ask the question a little differently and more extensively: What is the relationship between teacher SEC and TSRs, especially as they relate to teacher characteristics such as race and gender and student characteristics such as race and gender? What is the relationship between TSRs and students' sense of classroom belonging, especially as they relate to student characteristics such as race and gender? These questions are illustrated in Figure 1 below. The Prosocial Classroom Model doesn't include race or gender as a variable, but Jennings and Greenberg do state that teachers who move to a school composed of students from an unfamiliar culture may require additional SEC support and training. This suggests, as I have argued in my literature review, that White teachers in urban schools may not have the SEC to form supportive TSRs with BMSs and would benefit from targeted professional development that would enhance their SEC and make them more equity-minded. However, I've also explained that we shouldn't assume that teachers of color have the requisite SEC for these relationships simply because of a shared "culture" with students when other student-teacher differences—for example generational, socio-economical, and gender—are bound to exist. By

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answering these research questions, I not only assess the value of the Prosocial Classroom Model but also lay the groundwork for future researchers to expand upon this knowledge and current education leaders to make informed decisions about professional development aimed at closing the opportunity gap and the discipline gap. Supportive TSRs are essential for the academic success of BMSs and their social-emotional well-being. In addition, teachers need ongoing professional development and support to maintain supportive TSRs with their students.

Figure 2.1
The Relationships Among Teacher Social Emotional Competence (SEC), Teacher Student Relationships (TSRs), and Classroom Belonging
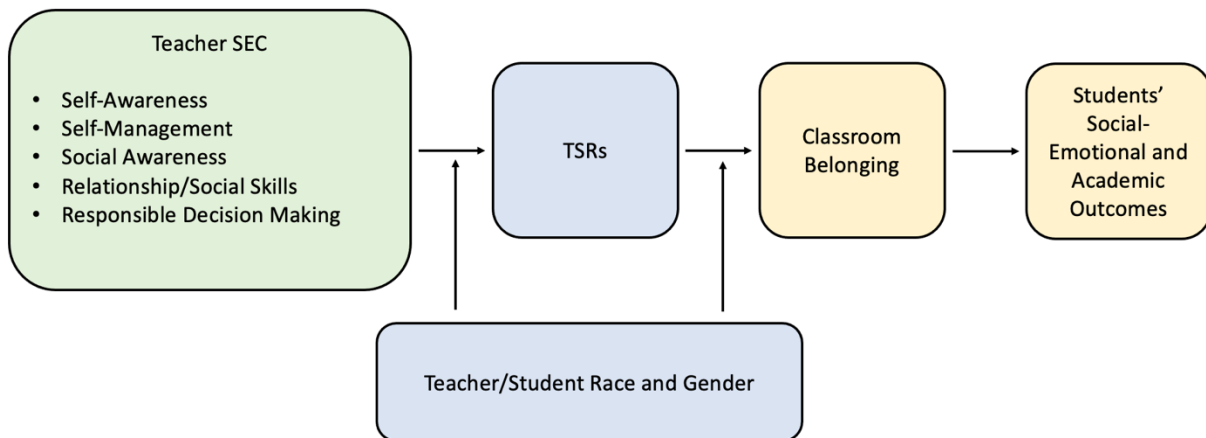
Notes: Figure is an adaptation of The Prosocial Classroom Model by Jennings and Greenberg (2009, p.494).

Conclusion

The research cited above indicates that the quality of relationships BMSs have with their teachers is associated with BMSs' academic success. Research supports this argument, but as educators, we also know from our personal observations and experiences that this just makes sense. In urban schools, where BMSs are more likely than their peers to fall into the opportunity gap and discipline gap, a supportive relationship with a teacher can make a difference in a young man's life. Building such a relationship, however, is not without its challenges. BMSs may bring trauma, experiences, and culture that teachers—especially White teachers—may not know how to relate to or respond to. However, it isn't a teacher's race but their SEC that determines

the quality of relationship they will have with BMSs. Unfortunately, many teachers don't learn

how to develop their SEC in pre-service training or in-service professional development, despite

SEC's association with teacher well-being, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher attrition.

Researchers are just beginning to understand how teacher SEC can affect students' academic

outcomes and social-emotional well-being. Unfortunately, there are no extant studies connecting

the specific dimensions of teacher SEC with supportive TSRs, much less supportive TSRs as

experienced by BMSs. The purpose of my study is to fill this gap, which will help education

leaders make strategic decisions about teacher SEC professional development, with the ultimate

goal of narrowing, if not closing, the opportunity gap for BMSs.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

In this chapter, I discuss the methods used to conduct my study. First, I review the research questions that guided the study. Next, I provide a rationale for the study's site selection then I explain how I recruited study participants. I conclude by discussing my methods for collecting and analyzing study data.

Research Questions

As conveyed by the research discussed in Chapter Two, a sense of belonging is essential for the success of BMSs and supportive TSRs are vital in establishing that sense of belonging. To foster these relationships, educational leaders seem to focus on increasing the SEC in BMSs—for example, through SEL interventions that target students' relationship-building skills. It may be assumed that teachers have the requisite SEC to build supportive TSRs with BMSs; however, this isn't always the case. Although there is scant research on which teacher SEC dimensions are "requisite" to foster supportive TSRs with students in general, there seems to be no research on which teacher SEC dimensions are requisite to foster supportive TSRs with BMSs in particular. There also seems to be no research on the extent to which White female teachers, who comprise the majority of the teaching force, are able to foster supportive TSRs with BMSs. Teacher SEC may be particularly important for English and math teachers, who provide foundational skills essential for academic success across the disciplines and whose teaching has more reach than other teachers in that English and math classes make up the highest number of requisite classes throughout a student's academic career. Therefore, to address the question of how we foster supportive TSRs for BMSs, in this investigation I focus on teacher SEC.

Inspired by Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) Prosocial Classroom Model, my study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How are the teacher SEC dimensions *social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management*, and *responsible decision making* interrelated? How are these dimensions associated with teacher characteristics?

2. To what extent do teachers perceive challenges in developing supportive TSRs with all students in general and with BMSs in particular? How are these perceptions associated with teacher SEC and the teacher characteristics?

3. How are student perceptions of TSRs related to student characteristics?

4. How are students' sense of classroom belonging related to student characteristics and student perceptions of TSRs?

Research Design

My study used a quantitative, correlational survey design to analyze the associations among teacher SEC dimensions and supportive relationships between teachers and BMSs attending urban middle schools. This approach was appropriate because correlational analyses are useful in describing measures among constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although a qualitative, interview design would have allowed me to study the associations among the constructs in more depth, extant research has yet to identify the correlations among teacher SEC dimensions, supportive TSRs, and BMSs' sense of classroom belonging. My quantitative study, therefore, served to identify associations that future researchers may explain in more depth using qualitative research.

Site Selection

I selected Rancho Cucamonga Middle School (RCMS), where I worked as an assistant principal from 2017 to 2021, as the primary site for data collection. (Although all students participants were from RCMS, I recruited six teacher participants from additional school sites, which I explain in more details below.) RCMS's student and teacher demographics are representative of a typical urban middle school on the West Coast. During the 2021-2022 school year, 751 students attended RCMS, with 68% of the student population identifying as Hispanic, 16% as African American, 9% as White, and 2% as Asian. Sixty-four percent of the student body qualified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. That school year, RCMS employed approximately 40 teachers. Sixty percent of the teaching staff identified as female and 40% as male. Fifty-three percent of teachers at RCMS self-reported their race as White, 23% as Hispanic, 10% as African American, and 10% as Asian.

In addition, RCMS was an appropriate site for my study because the school had recently implemented an SEL program to benefit students' social-emotional well-being and academic achievement but was struggling to implement this program with fidelity. One reason for this struggle was that teachers felt overwhelmed by "one more thing to do." Another reason may have been that RCMS teachers didn't have the requisite SEC to model and teach SEL skills to students. Although data collection wasn't limited to RCMS teachers, to encourage buy-in for this study from the RCMS principal and teachers, I made the study results available to the principal to help her make decisions about teacher SEC professional development, providing the results in the aggregate to protect the confidentiality of teacher participants. I also provided teachers with resources to learn more about teacher SEC.

Site Access

The superintendent of Cucamonga School District and the principal at RCMS gave me permission to survey RCMS teachers and students. My study was approved by the UCLA IRB in October 2021 school year. That same month, I began recruiting study participants.

Sample Selection

The 46 teachers employed by RCMS and the 764 students attending RCMS in October of the 2021-2022 school year were eligible to participate in the study. As I explain in more details in Chapter Four, I reviewed all data from the teacher sample to answer my study's three research questions; however, to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, I disaggregated the data to focus on the responses of English teachers and math teachers. Similarly, although I reviewed all data from the student sample to answer Research Questions 2, 3, and 4, I disaggregated the data to focus on the responses of BMSs.

Recruiting Teacher Participants

In October 2021, I emailed the 46 RCMS teachers information about the study and a link to provide their consent for participating in the study. A copy of this email can be found in Appendix A. At the end of a 4-week period and after multiple reminder emails, 20 RCMS teachers had consented to participate in the study and two had declined to participate. I emailed each of the 20 teacher participants a personal link to the Teacher Survey. To increase the number of teacher participants, I emailed the survey information and consent link to six prospective participants who had taught at or were teaching at urban middle schools in the Inland Empire: three teachers came from a middle school in Rancho Cucamonga outside of Cucamonga School District, one teacher came from a middle school in Rialto Unified School District, one teacher came from a middle school in San Bernardino City Unified School District, and one

teacher came from a middle school in Riverside School District. These middle schools had student characteristics similar to those of RCMS, with the majority of students identifying as LatinX and the next largest majority identifying as Black, except one middle school, in which the next largest majority identified as White.

In addition and also similar to RCMS, the majority of students at all but one of the middle schools identified as male. Once these prospective teacher participants gave consent to participate in the study, I emailed them an anonymous link to the Teacher Survey. I sent these participants an anonymous link instead of a personalized link to keep their data separate from RCMS teacher data. With my consent, one of these participants posted the anonymous survey link, along with study information, to a Facebook page exclusive to teachers at her school site. As a result, I added six teacher participants to the study. By the end of October, I had received responses from 32 teachers from six school sites. All teachers who consented to participate in the study completed the study.

Recruiting Student Participants

In October 2021, I emailed the 764 RCMS students information about the study and told them I would be sending them an anonymous survey link if their parent provided consent for them to participate in the study. I also told them that, even if their parent consented, participating in the study was optional. A few days after I emailed RCMS students, I emailed the 764 RCMS parents information about the study and a link to provide consent for their student to participate in the study. The emails and study information were written in English and in Spanish. Copies of the emails I sent to parents and students can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C, respectively. At the end of a 4-week period and after multiple reminder emails, parents of 175 students had responded to the survey consent link. Of this number, 114 parents

gave consent for their student to participate in the study and 61 parents did not consent for their student to participate in the study. I emailed anonymous links to the Student Survey to the 114 students whose parents had provided consent. Eighty-eight students clicked on the survey link. The first survey question asked students to assent to being a student participant in the study. Students who did not assent to being a student participant were exited from the survey. Students who did assent were allowed to complete the survey. Of the 88 students who clicked on the survey link, 80 assented to being a student participant, five did not assent to being a student participant in the study and were exited from the Student Survey, and three exited from the Student Survey without choosing to assent or not to assent. Of the 80 students who assented, 71 completed the Student Survey. These 71 student participants comprised 62% of those students whose parents gave consent and 9% of total RCMS enrollment.

Data Collection

I collected survey responses from 32 teacher participants and 71 student participants. Copies of the Teacher Survey Instrument and the Student Survey Instrument can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively.

Teacher Survey Instrument

The Teacher Survey is an online survey that contains 29 items. Twenty-two items measure teacher participants' competence in five SEC dimensions—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship/social skills, and responsible decision making. Two short-response questions measure teachers' perceived challenges to building supportive TSRs. Five items capture teacher participants' demographics and other information. Because teacher participants were sent a unique link to the survey, the Teacher Survey is not anonymous but, as explained to teacher participants during the recruitment process, data was deidentified during

analysis, with protections being taken for participants to remain deidentified. I suggested to teachers that they complete the Teacher Survey during their contracted teacher prep period—the principal gave her permission for this option, or during their non-contractual time off campus. The Teacher Survey was created and maintained on Qualtrics and sent to teacher participants via work email in early November of 2021. Teachers were given a two-week window to take this survey; however, I accepted completed surveys up until mid-December of 2021. The average completion time for the Teacher Survey was 10 minutes.

Measuring SEC Dimensions

I based survey items that measure teacher participants' competence in the SEC dimensions self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship/social skills, and responsible decision making on the American Institute for Research's Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies survey (AIR, 2014). This survey is a teacher self-assessment of the CASEL 5 SEC competencies as they relate to social teaching practices and instructional teaching practices. Teacher participants completed Part B of the Social Interactions section, which measures the mentioned teacher SEC dimensions in five separate blocks. For each block, teacher participants are asked to rate the extent to which their own competence in a particular teacher SEC dimension influences their teaching practices with students. Response choices range from (1) *Strongly Disagree* to (4) *Strongly Agree*. I made modifications to the Teacher Survey items from the original survey items (AIR, 2014). For example, I changed each instance of "social teaching practices" in the original survey items to "social-emotional skills" to align more clearly with my study's focus. In addition, I modified several of the survey items to capture teachers' equity mindset—for example Item 5, to which I added the italicized words: I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement my teaching practices

with students *from diverse backgrounds and cultures*. Table 3.1 below provides information

about these measured items in the Teacher Survey.

Table 3.1
Teacher Survey Constructs

Construct	Description[1]	# Items	Sample Item
Self-Awareness	The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and cultural values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to detect when one is honoring students' familiar cultural norms and when one is responding critically to students' unfamiliar cultural norms.	4	I am able to examine my own conscious and unconscious beliefs and consider whether they hold negative stereotypes about students' cultural and stylistic codes.
Self-Management	The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations or contexts, including unfamiliar cultural situations or contexts, and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals.	4	I effectively use multiple strategies (e.g., breathing techniques and mindfulness) when I have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom (e.g., stress, anger).
Responsible Decision-Making	The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations, including unfamiliar cultural situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, social and cultural norms, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.	5	When I am teaching, I balance students' emotional needs and academic needs.
Relationship/Social Skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with students whose background or culture is different from one's own. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed.	5	I use class time to help form supportive relationships with Black male students, and I am usually successful at building supportive relationships with them.
Social Awareness	The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including students whose background or culture is different from one's own. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.	4	I usually understand the perspectives of my students from diverse backgrounds and cultures and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.
Perceived Challenges in Building Supportive TSRs[2]	The challenges, if any, that teachers perceive in building supportive TSRs with students in general and with BMSs in particular.	2	Do you find it challenging to build supportive relationships with your students/your Black male students? Why or why not

Notes: [1]SEC descriptions are adapted from the AIR survey (AIR, 2014). [2]I wrote this description.

Assessing Teachers' Perceived Challenges to Building Supportive TSRs

Two short-response survey items in the Teacher Survey measure teachers' perceived challenges to building supportive TSRs. These items allow teachers the opportunity to express their opinion about building supportive TSRs with BMSs and other students. Table 3.1 above provides more information about these measured items in the Teacher Survey.

Scoring the Teacher Survey

I scored the Teacher Survey items that assessed teacher SEC dimensions according to the tool included with the original survey (AIR, 2014), which uses a 4-point Likert-scale format. I averaged the ratings within each teacher SEC dimension to create a composite score for that dimension. I scored the short-response items that assessed teachers' perceived challenges in building supportive TSRs with students by coding a response 0="No" if it suggested a teacher did not perceive challenges building supportive TSRs with all students or BMSs and coding a response 1="Yes" if it suggested a teacher did perceive challenges building supportive TSRs with all students or BMSs. Table 3.2 below provides more information about scoring the SEC section of the Teacher Survey. After I assigned raw scores to all teacher participant responses, I downloaded the data into Excel and used Excel and JASP to conduct a series of descriptive and inferential analyses.

Table 3.2
Teacher Survey Variable Scoring

Variable	# Items	Response Options	Point Range
Self-Awareness	4	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree	1-4
Self-Management	4	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree	1-4
Responsible Decision Making	4	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree	1-4
Relationship Skills	5	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree	1-4
Social Awareness	5	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree	1-4
Overall	22	Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree	1-4

Student Survey Instrument

 The Student Survey is an anonymous online survey that contains 76 items. Thirty-two items, including two short-response questions, measure student participants' perception of closeness and conflict with their English teacher and their math teacher. Thirty-eight items, including two short-response questions, measure student participants' perception of classroom belonging and classroom rejection in their English class and in their math class. Six items capture student participants' demographics and other information. The Student Survey was created and maintained on Qualtrics and sent to students via school email in early November of 2021. Students were given a two-week window to take this survey from home or at school during their free time; however, I accepted completed surveys up until mid-December of 2021. The average completion time for the Student Survey was 10 minutes. All eligible students were entered into a drawing to win one of two $25 gift cards. Participation in the study was not a requirement for being entered into the drawing; students whose parents emailed me a request to enter their non-participating student in the drawing were also eligible.

Measuring Closeness and Conflict

 I based survey items that measure student participants' perception of closeness and conflict with their English teacher and with their math teacher on the Student Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta, 2001). This scale is a 15-item instrument designed to measure a teacher's perception of conflict and closeness with a specific student, aged 3-12. It has been demonstrate to be an effective instrument for measuring TSRs as perceived by teachers (Pianta, 2001). I modified this scale to measure student participants' perceptions of TSRs.

 Student participants were given 15 statements about their English teacher and 15 statements about their math teacher and asked to rate the degree to which each statement applies

to that respective teacher. Response choices range from (1) *Not at all true* to (5) *Completely true.* I modified the items, changing the perspective from teacher to student and focusing the respondents on the TSR with their English teacher and their math teacher. For example, I changed Item 2 from *This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other* to *My English/math teacher and I always have problems with each other*. I used the *closeness* score as a proxy for supportive TSRs. In addition to these items measuring closeness and conflict, the Student Survey includes short-response questions that allow students the opportunity to express their opinion about TSRs. Table 3.3 below provides more information about the items measured in the Student Survey.

Table 3.3
Student Survey Constructs

Construct	Description	# Items	Sample Item
Conflict	The degree to which a student's sense of conflict with an English teacher and a math teacher negatively impacts the student's relationship with that teacher.	14	Dealing with this teacher wears me out.
Closeness	The degree to which a student's sense of closeness with an English teacher and a math teacher positively impacts the student's relationship with that teacher.	16	I feel close to this teacher and comfortable when he/she is around.
Conflict and/or Closeness	Short-response	2	Is there anything you'd like us to know about the relationship you have with this teacher?
Classroom Rejection	The degree to which a student does not perceive himself or herself to be a valued member of his or her classroom community.	10	Sometimes I feel like I don't belong in this English class.
Classroom Belonging	The degree to which a student perceives himself or herself to be a valued member of his or her classroom community.	26	Other students in my math class take my opinions seriously.
Classroom Belonging and/or Rejection	Short-response	2	Is there anything else you'd like us to know about the way you feel being in this class?

Measuring Classroom Belonging and Classroom Rejection

I based survey items that measured student participants' perception of belonging and rejection in their English class and in their math class on the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSMS; Goodenow, 1993). The PSSMS is an 18-item scale designed to

measure perceptions of school belonging and school rejection in youth ages 10 and older. It has

demonstrated to be an effective tool for measuring students' perceptions of school membership

(Goodenow, 1993). I modified this scale to measure student participants' perception of

classroom belonging and classroom rejection in their English class and in their math class.

Student participants were given 18 statements about their English class and 18 statements

about their math class and asked to rate the degree to which each statement applies to their

feelings about being in that respective class. Response choices ranged from (1) *Not at all true* to

(5) *Completely true.* I modified the original survey items from Goodenow (1993) by replacing

each instance of the word "school" with the word "class." The purpose of this modification was

to change each item's focus from a student's perception of school belonging and rejection to a

student's perception of classroom belonging and rejection. In addition to these items measuring

classroom belonging and rejection, the Student Survey included short-response questions that

allowed students the opportunity to express their opinion about being in their English and math

class. Table 3.3 above provides more information about the items measured in the Student

Survey.

Scoring the Student Survey

I scored the portion of the Student Survey that measures student participants' perception

of closeness and conflict in TSRs according to the Student Teacher Relationship Scale Scoring

sheet (Pianta, 2001), which uses a 5-point Likert-scale format. I averaged the ratings of the

items in the scale to obtain a composite score, reverse coding when necessary. To score the

portion of the Student Survey that measures student participants' sense of classroom belonging

and rejection, I used the tool included in the Psychological Sense of School Membership

(Goodenow, 1993), which uses a 5-point Likert-Scale format. I averaged the ratings of the items

in the scale to obtain a composite score, reverse coding when necessary. Table 3.4 below

provides more information about scoring these Student Survey items. To score the short-

response items, I coded each response as indicating a "positive" or "negative" student perception

of a TSR/classroom belonging or "other" if the response did not suggest a clear position. After I

assigned raw scores to all student participant responses, I downloaded the data into Excel and

used Excel and JASP to conduct descriptive and inferential analyses.

Table 3.4
Student Survey Variable Scoring

Variable	# Items	Response Options	Point Range
Conflict*	7	Not at all true, Somewhat not true, I'm not sure, Somewhat true, Completely true	1-5
Closeness	8	Not at all true, Somewhat not true, I'm not sure, Somewhat true, Completely true	1-5
Belonging	13	Not at all true, Somewhat not true, I'm not sure, Somewhat true, Completely true	1-5
Rejection	5	Not at all true, Somewhat not true, I'm not sure, Somewhat true, Completely true	1-5

Note: *Contains one item that is reversed coded.

Data Analysis

After scoring the Teacher Survey and Student Survey and running description and

inferential analyses, I coded each survey's optional question data according to response themes

then used all data analyses to answer my research questions.

Answering Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asks how the measured teacher SEC dimensions *social awareness,*

self-awareness, relationship skills, self-management, and *responsible decision making* are

interrelated and to what extent these dimensions are associated with teacher characteristics. I

used data from the Teacher Survey to answer this question. I used JASP to conduct internal

consistency estimates for teacher SEC dimension scores. I used JASP to conduct a correlational

analysis and descriptive statistics. I used Excel to compute the mean score and standard

deviation for each group in each characteristic sub-category and to perform a one-way ANOVA

among the sub-categories. I used Excel to create tables and visualizations of selected results.

Answering Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asks to what extent teachers perceive it challenging to develop supportive TSRs with all students in general and with BMSs in particular. It also asks how these perceptions are associated with teacher SEC and the teacher characteristics. To answer these questions, I used data from the Teacher Survey. First, I coded data from the short-response items per my previous description. Next, I used Excel to disaggregate the data by *Teaching Assignment*, *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender,* and *All Teachers*. I used Word to create a table of this data. Finally, I used JASP to conduct a series of logistic regression analyses, with the coded responses acting as dependent variables and SEC scores acting as predictors.

Answering Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asks how student perceptions of TSRs are related to student characteristics. To answer this question, I used data from the Student Survey. I used JASP to conduct internal consistency estimates for the TSR scores. I used JASP to conduct a correlational analysis and descriptive statistics on the *All Students* data. I used Excel to compute the mean score and standard deviation for each group in each characteristic sub-category and to perform a one-way ANOVA among the sub-categories. I used Excel to disaggregate the data by *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender*. I coded data from the short-response items per my previous description. I used Word to create tables of this data.

Answering Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asks how students' sense of classroom belonging is related to student characteristics and student perceptions of TSRs. To answer this question, I used data from the Student Survey. I used JASP to conduct internal consistency estimates for the Classroom Belonging scores. I used JASP to conduct a correlational analysis and descriptive

statistics on the *All Students* data. To see the relationships between student perceptions of TSRs and student sense of classroom belonging, I used JASP to conduct a series of linear regressions, using student TSR data and Classroom Belonging data, with Belonging and Rejection scores acting as dependent variables. I coded data from the short-response items per my previous description. I used Word to create tables of this data.

Positionality

As a former assistant principal at RCMS and the current Child Welfare and Attendance Coordinator at the district office, I was aware of the power differential existing between my study participants and me and took care to maintain a researcher role throughout the study. For example, I recruited teacher participants by emailing RCMS teachers information about the study along with an opportunity to provide consent to participate in the study. I chose to email teachers instead of asking them directly because I didn't want teachers to feel pressured by my presence to participate. I also assured teachers that the study was confidential and not evaluative. As an additional way to manage my role, only teachers who provided consent were emailed a link to the study's survey. Similar to my method for recruiting teacher participants, I emailed the parents of RCMS students in order to recruit student participants. This email, written in English and Spanish, provided parents with information about the study and gave them an opportunity to provide consent for their student to participate in the study. I assured parents and students that the study's survey was confidential, that individual responses would not be shared with students' teachers, and that participation would not affect students' grades. Only students whose parents provided consent were emailed a link to the study's survey. As a condition for continuing with the survey, students provided their assent for participating in the survey once they opened the survey link.

Ethical Considerations

I maintained study participants' privacy and autonomy throughout all phases of my study. During the recruitment process, I contacted all prospective study participants by email, provided them with information about the study in English and in Spanish, and encouraged them to contact me directly if they had questions or concerns. I assured students and their parents that the Student Survey was anonymous, optional, and not tied to academic grades. Although the Teacher Survey was not anonymous, I assured teachers that the survey was confidential; that data would be deidentified during data analysis, with protections being taken for participants to remain deidentified; and that study results would not be used for evaluative purposes. During the data collection and analysis phases, all data were securely stored on Qualtrics and accessible only to my dissertation co-chairs and me. In addition, I made my study's Findings available to the RCMS principal only in the aggregate.

Reliability and Validity

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, two of the three instruments used in my study have been demonstrated to be an effective tool for measuring my intended variables. The STR survey has been proven to be effective for measuring TSRs (Pianta, 2001) and the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale has proven to be effective for measuring perceptions of school belonging (Goodenow, 1993). My Teacher Survey was based on the Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies survey (AIR, 2019)—a self-reporting instrument, and Jennings and Greenberg (2009) warn that teacher self-reporting instruments are susceptible to social-desirability biases. In order to mitigate this threat, I assured teachers that their responses to the Teacher Survey would be kept confidential and made information about the survey and teacher SEC available to them.

Conclusion

One underexplored strategy for decreasing the opportunity gap for BMSs is to develop teachers' SEC for supportive TSRs with BMSs. Supportive TSRs may foster a sense of classroom belonging in BMSs, which makes their school and academic success more likely. My study used a quantitative, correlational survey design to analyze the associations among teacher SEC dimensions and supportive relationships between teachers and BMSs attending urban middle schools. The findings of my study are useful to educational leaders as they implement strategies for closing the opportunity gap for BMSs. One goal of my study was to inspire educational leaders to create opportunities for teachers to develop their SEC, especially the SEC dimensions associated with building supportive TSRs with BMSs.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings of my study. I first review teacher and student participant characteristics then discuss study findings as they relate to each research question. I conclude by summarizing the essential findings of my study.

Characteristics of Study Participants

Teachers

Thirty-two teachers from six Southern California middle schools participated in the study. The majority of teachers were recruited from RCMS (N=20). Other teacher participants (N=12) included three teachers from an urban middle school in Rancho Cucamonga outside of Cucamonga School District, one teacher from an urban middle school from Rialto Unified School District, one teacher from an urban middle school from San Bernardino City Unified School District, and seven teachers from an urban middle school from Riverside School District. Table 4.1 below provides information about the characteristics of teacher participants. In Chapter Two, I discussed the importance of supportive TSRs between White female teachers, who make up the majority of the teaching force (Taie & Goldring, 2019; Warren, 2015), and BMSs. It is thus notable that, in the sub-category *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender*, a plurality of teacher participants identified as both White and female (38%). Also notable is that 53% of teacher participants reported to have had three or more trainings on building supportive TSRs, whereas as noted in Chapter Two, past research suggests that teachers have few professional development opportunities to develop this skill (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Table 4.1
Characteristics of Teacher Participants (N=32)

	N	%
Self-Reported Gender		
Male	11	34
Female	21	66
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity		
Black[1]	5	16
LatinX[1]	8	25
White	16	50
Asian	3	59
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender		
White Males	4	13
All Other Males	7	22
White Females	12	38
All Other Females	9	28
Teaching Assignment		
English and/or Social Science	16	50
Math and/or Science	8	25
Elective or PE	8	25
Teaching Experience		
1-10 years	11	34
11-20 years	9	28
More than 20 years	12	38
Professional Training on Building Supportive TSRs		
Included in teaching credential program	6	19
0-2 trainings while employed as a teacher	12	38
3 or more trainings while employed as a teacher	17	53

Note: [1]Includes Multi-Racial Black and Multi-Racial LatinX

Students

I recruited all 71 student participants from RCMS. Table 4.2 below provides information about the characteristics of student participants. The majority identified as female (52%). The percentage of student participants who reported their race/ethnicity as Black (39%) was equal to the percentage who reported their race/ethnicity as LatinX (39%), while White students comprised 11% of the student participants and Asian students 4%. In terms of race/ethnicity by

gender, the highest percentage of student participants reported being LatinX females (27%). The

percentage of student participants who reported being Black and male (20%) was equal to the

percentage who reported being a different race and male (20%).

Table 4.2

Characteristics of Student Participants (N=71) and Students Enrolled During the 2021-2022
School Year (N=767)

	Student Participants (N=71)		Enrolled During the 2021-2022 School Year (N=767)[3]	
	N	%	N	%
Self-Reported Gender				
Male	28	39	403	53
Female	37	52	364	47
Non-binary	6	8	--	--
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity				
Black[1]	28	39	139	18
LatinX[2]	28	39	520	68
White	11	15	54	7
Asian	4	6	32	4
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender				
Black Males[1,2]	14	20	76	10
All Other Males	14	20	327	43
LatinX Females[3]	19	27	250	33
All Other Females	18	25	114	15
Grade-Level				
6th Grade	16	23	241	31
7th Grade	27	38	253	33
8th Grade	28	39	273	36

Notes: [1]Includes Multi-Racial Black. [2]Includes Multi-Racial LatinX. [3]As reported in DataQuest.

Black students—and Black males—comprised a larger percentage of the sample than of the

school (39% vs. 18% for Black students; 20% vs. 10% for BMSs, specifically), while LatinX

comprised a smaller percentage of the sample than of the school (39% vs. 68%). This was not

intentional; however, the overrepresentation of Black students may reflect different levels of

interest in the study topic on the part of students and their parents. Finally, the highest

percentage of students reported their grade-level to be 8th grade (39%), with 7th grade being a

close second (38%). The demographics of student participants were generally similar to those of

the 767 students enrolled at RCMS during the 2021-2022 school year. That year, the highest

percentage of students were male (53%). The two largest race/ethnicities represented in the

student population were LatinX (68%) and Black (18%), with White students (7%) and Asian

students (4%) being the next largest groups. In terms of race/ethnicity by gender, the highest

percentage of students were all other males besides Black males (43%), with LatinX females

(33%) comprising the next largest group. Finally, that year, the highest percentage of students

were enrolled in 8th grade (36%), with 7th grade (33%) being the next largest group.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

I used data from the Teacher Survey to answer Research Question 1, which asks how the

measured teacher SEC dimensions social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, self-

management, and responsible decision making are interrelated and to what extent these

dimensions are associated with teacher characteristics. Table 4.3 below describes the internal

consistency estimates for the measured teacher SEC dimension scores. With the exception of

Responsible Decision Making, all of the scales had an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Table 4.3
Internal Consistency Estimates for Teacher SEC[1] Dimension Scores

SEC Dimension/Score	Number of Items	Cronbach's α (95% C.I.)
1. Self-Awareness	4	.68 (.45, .83)
2. Self-Management	4	.65 (.39, .81)
3. Social Awareness	4	.74 (.54, .86)
4. Relationship/Social Skills	5	.81 (.69, .90)
5. Responsible Decision-Making	5	.31 (.21, .63)
6. Overall SEC	22	.86 (.77, .92)

Note:[1]Social Emotional Competence

Teacher Survey Results

Table 4.4 below provides information on how the measured teacher SEC dimensions

interrelate. The mean SEC overall score was 3.09, with a range of 2.55 to 3.68. Among the SEC

dimension scores, the highest mean scores were for Self-Awareness (3.24) and

Relationship/Social Skills (3.24). The SEC dimensions with the lowest mean scores were Self-

Management (2.95) and Social Awareness (2.98). Social Awareness displayed the largest

variation among the SEC dimension scores (SD=0.56). All SEC dimension scores were

positively correlated with each other, with the majority of these correlations (11 of the 15) being

statistically significant. The strongest correlations were between Relationship/Social Skills and

Social Awareness (.726) and Relationship/Social Skills and Self-Awareness (.547). The weakest

correlations were between Self-Awareness and Self-Management (.244) and Social Awareness

and Self-Management (.279).

Table 4.4
SEC[1] Score Distributions and Correlations for All Teachers (N=32)

SEC Score	Descriptive Statistics					Correlations				
	Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-Awareness	4	2.00	4.00	3.24	0.43					
2. Self-Management	4	2.00	4.00	2.95	0.42	.244				
3. Social Awareness	4	1.25	4.00	2.98	0.56	.478	.279			
4. Relationship/Social Skills	5	2.40	4.00	3.24	0.50	.547	.398	.726		
5. Responsible Decision-Making	5	2.40	4.00	3.03	0.31	.442	.335	.283	.448	
6. Overall Score	22	2.55	3.68	3.09	0.33	.726	.585	.800	.889	.638

Notes: [1]Social Emotional Competence. Correlations with *p*<.05 are underlined.

Table 4.5 below provides information on how the measured teacher SEC dimensions

relate to teacher characteristics. There were no significant differences in mean scores according

to *Self-Reported Gender*. There were significant differences based on *Self-Reported

Race/Ethnicity* for the SEC dimensions Social Awareness ($\eta^2 = .11, p=.05$) and

Relationship/Social Skills ($\eta^2 = .13, p=.03$). For *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender*, there

were significant differences in the mean scores for Social Awareness ($\eta^2 = .19, p=.01$) and

Relationship/Social Skills ($\eta^2 = .17, p=.01$), and the Overall SEC Score ($\eta^2 = .17, p=.01$). The

highest frequency of significant differences in mean scores occurred in this sub-category, as

represented in Figure 4.1 below. There were no significant differences in the mean scores based

on *Teaching Assignment*. There was a significant difference on *Teaching Experience* based on

the mean scores for Overall SEC Score ($\eta^2 = .20, p=.03$).

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Table 4.5

Mean SEC[1] Scores by Teacher Characteristics (N=32)

		Self-Awareness (4 Items)		Self-Management (4 Items)		Social Awareness (4 Items)		Rel./Social Skills (5 Items)		Resp. Dec. Making (5 Items)		Overall Score (22 Items)	
	N	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
All Teachers	32	3.24	0.43	2.95	0.42	2.98	0.56	3.24	0.50	3.03	0.31	3.09	0.33
Self-Reported Gender													
Males	11	3.18	0.53	3.14	0.36	3.23	0.43	3.23	0.43	3.13	0.35	3.21	0.27
Females	21	3.27	.38	2.85	0.42	2.86	0.59	3.18	0.55	2.97	0.28	3.03	0.35
		$F = 0.32$		$F = 3.78$		$F = 3.38$		$F = 0.05$		$F = 1.90$		$F = 2.27$	
		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .11$		$\eta^2 = .10$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .05$		$\eta^2 = .07$	
		$p = .57$		$p = .06$		$p = .07$		$p = .80$		$p = .17$		$p = .14$	
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity													
Black/LatinX[2]	13	3.33	0.57	2.96	0.35	3.21	0.38	3.46	0.42	3.03	0.23	3.20	0.30
White/Asian	19	3.18	0.30	2.93	0.47	2.83	0.62	3.09	0.50	3.02	0.36	3.02	0.33
		$F = 0.85$		$F = 0.03$		$F = 3.93$		$F = 4.70$		$F = 0.00$		$F = 2.63$	
		$\eta^2 = .02$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .11$		$\eta^2 = .13$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .08$	
		$p = .36$		$p = .85$		$p = .05$		$p = .03$		$p = .93$		$p = .11$	
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender													
White Females	12	3.17	0.31	2.83	0.40	2.67	0.66	2.98	0.54	2.92	0.30	2.92	0.34
All Others	20	3.29	0.49	3.01	0.43	3.18	0.40	3.40	0.41	3.09	0.30	3.20	0.28
		$F = 0.58$		$F = 1.38$		$F = 7.44$		$F = 6.14$		$F = 2.49$		$F = 6.48$	
		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .04$		$\eta^2 = .19$		$\eta^2 = .17$		$\eta^2 = .07$		$\eta^2 = .17$	
		$p = .44$		$p = .24$		$p = .01$		$p = .01$		$p = .12$		$p = .01$	
Teaching Assignment													
ELA and/or SS	16	3.31	0.35	2.98	0.39	2.97	0.62	3.26	0.51	3.13	0.31	3.14	0.30
Math and/or Sci	8	3.03	0.53	2.94	0.51	3.00	0.42	3.15	0.40	2.90	0.24	3.01	0.35
Elective or PE	8	3.31	0.46	2.88	0.42	3.00	0.63	3.30	0.60	2.95	0.33	3.09	0.39
		$F = 1.32$		$F = 0.17$		$F = 0.01$		$F = 0.19$		$F = 1.83$		$F = 0.40$	
		$\eta^2 = .08$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .11$		$\eta^2 = .02$	
		$p = .28$		$p = .84$		$p = .98$		$p = .82$		$p = .17$		$p = .66$	
Teaching Experience													
1-10 years	11	3.41	0.38	3.07	0.23	3.16	0.48	3.31	0.48	3.13	0.33	3.21	0.23
11-20 years	9	3.33	0.40	3.06	0.56	3.06	0.43	3.42	0.47	3.09	0.25	3.20	0.35
> 20 years	12	3.02	0.43	2.75	0.40	2.77	0.68	3.05	0.50	2.88	0.30	2.90	0.32
		$F = 2.97$		$F = 2.24$		$F = 1.52$		$F = 1.65$		$F = 2.23$		$F = 3.84$	
		$\eta^2 = .17$		$\eta^2 = .13$		$\eta^2 = .09$		$\eta^2 = .10$		$\eta^2 = .13$		$\eta^2 = .20$	
		$p = .06$		$p = .12$		$p = .23$		$p = .20$		$p = .12$		$p = .03$	
Professional Training on Building Supportive TSRs Included in Teaching Credential Program													
Yes	6	3.17	0.44	2.92	0.34	2.88	0.26	3.03	0.20	3.00	0.22	3.00	0.20
No	26	3.26	0.43	2.95	0.44	3.01	0.61	3.29	0.53	3.03	0.33	3.11	0.35
		$F = 0.22$		$F = 0.03$		$F = 0.27$		$F = 0.25$		$F = 0.04$		$F = 0.57$	
		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .04$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .01$	
		$p = .63$		$p = .85$		$p = .60$		$p = .25$		$p = .82$		$p = .45$	
Professional Training on Building Supportive TSRs While Employed as a Teacher													
0-2 trainings	15	3.12	0.46	2.98	0.49	2.80	0.55	3.05	0.39	3.04	0.31	3.00	0.29
>2 trainings	17	3.35	0.38	2.91	0.36	3.15	0.53	3.41	.53	3.01	0.31	3.17	0.34
		$F = 2.54$		$F = 0.22$		$F = 3.27$		$F = 4.62$		$F = 0.06$		$F = 2.17$	
		$\eta^2 = .07$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .09$		$\eta^2 = .13$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .06$	
		$p = .12$		$p = .63$		$p = .08$		$p = .03$		$p = .80$		$p = .15$	

Notes: [1]Social Emotional Competence. [2]Includes Multi-Racial Black and Multi-Racial LatinX.

With respect to professional training, there were no significant differences based on *TSRs Included in Teaching Credential Program*. However, there was a significant difference in the mean scores for Relationship/Social Skills based on *Professional Training on Building Supportive TSRs While Employed as a Teacher* ($\eta^2 = .13, p=.03$).

Figure 4.1
Teacher SEC[1] Scores by Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender
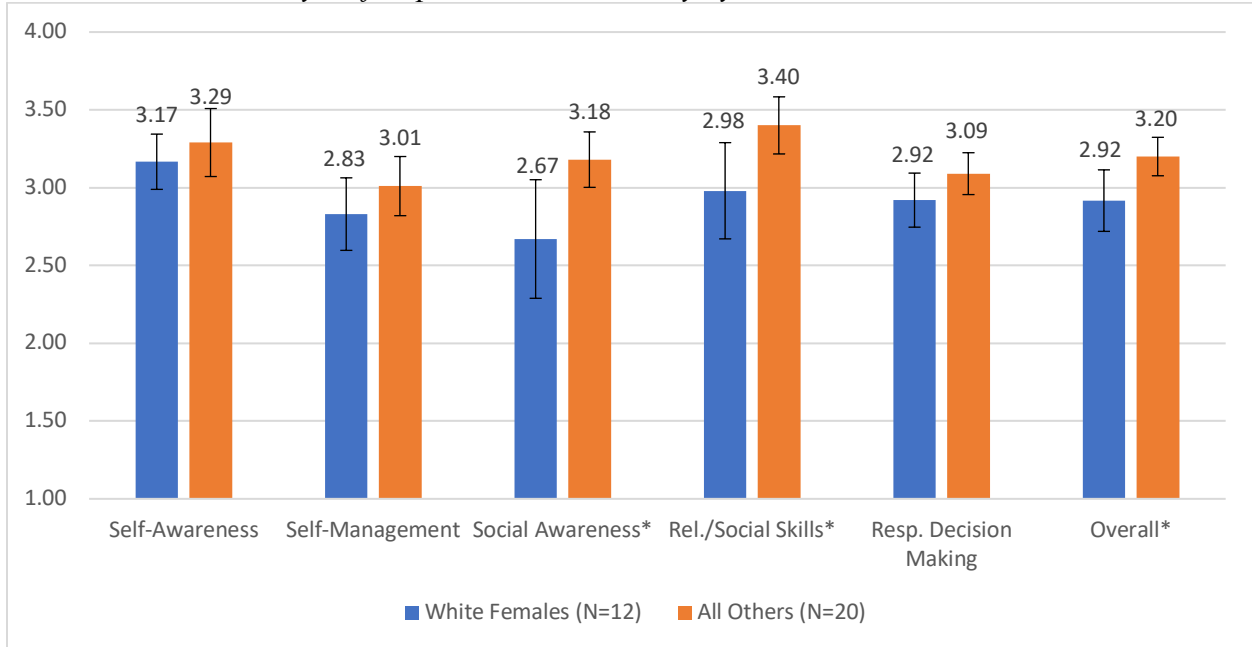
Notes: [1]Social Emotional Competence. *p=.01

Tables 4.6 and 4.7 below describe teacher responses in the sub-category *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender* to the items comprising the two SEC dimension scores found to have significant differences in the mean scores, Social Awareness and Relationship/Social Skills. For Social Awareness, with each item except Item 4, the majority of White female teachers and all other teachers agreed with the provided statements. For Item 4, "In class, I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students," the majority of White female teachers (58%) disagreed with the statement and the majority of all other teachers (90%) agreed with the statement.

Table 4.6

Social Awareness Dimension Item Ratings for WF[1] Teachers (N=12) and AO[2] Teachers (N=20)

#	Item	Group	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1	I usually understand the perspectives of my students from diverse backgrounds and cultures and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	WF	.00	.25	.50	.25	3.00	0.71
		AO	.00	.05	.60	.35	3.30	0.56
2	I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating in class, and I am usually successful at providing my students the necessary skills to participate in class.	WF	.09	.18	.64	.09	2.73	0.75
		AO	.00	.05	.70	.25	3.20	0.51
3	I successfully support positive emotions and successfully respond to negative emotions during class.	WF	.08	.33	.42	.17	2.67	0.85
		AO	.05	.05	.65	.25	3.10	0.70
4	In class, I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students.	WF	.08	.50	.25	.17	2.50	0.87
		AO	.00	.10	.70	.20	3.10	0.54

Notes: [1]White Female. [2]All Other. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree

Table 4.7

Relationship/Social Skills Dimension Item Ratings for WF[1] Teachers (N=12) and AO[2] Teachers (N=20)

#	Item	Group	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1	In class, I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths.	WF	.00	.00	.67	.33	3.38	0.54
		AO	.00	.05	.50	.45	3.40	0.58
2	I am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during class, and I have experienced success with this.	WF	.08	.42	.33	.17	3.13	0.82
		AO	.00	.05	.45	.50	3.45	0.59
3	I use class time to help form supportive relationships with my students, and I am usually successful at building supportive relationships with them.	WF	.00	.25	.50	.25	3.31	0.63
		AO	.00	.00	.50	.50	3.50	0.50
4	I use class time to help form supportive relationships with Black male students, and I am usually successful at building these relationships.	WF	.00	.58	.17	.25	3.06	0.70
		AO	.00	.00	.70	.30	3.30	0.46
5	I use class time to create an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of race or culture, feel they belong, and I am usually successful at building an inclusive environment.	WF	.00	.00	.67	.33	3.34	0.47
		AO	.00	.00	.65	.35	3.35	0.48

Notes: [1]White Female. [2]All Other. 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree

For Relationship/Social Skills, with each item except Items 2 and 4, the majority of

White female teachers and all other teachers agreed with the provided statements. For Item 2, "I

am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during class,

and I have experienced success with this," fifty percent of White female teachers (50%) disagreed with the statement and fifty percent agreed, whereas the majority of all other teachers (95%) agreed with the statement. For item 4, "I use class time to help form supportive relationships with Black male students, and I am usually successful at building supportive relationships with them," the majority of White female teachers disagreed with the statement (58%) and the majority of all other teachers (90%) agreed with the statement.

Findings Related to Research Question 2

I used data from the Teacher Survey to answer Research Question 2, which asks to what extent teachers perceive it challenging to develop supportive TSRs with all students in general and with BMSs in particular. It also asks how these perceptions associated with teacher SEC and the teacher characteristics.

Teacher Short-Response Questions

Two optional short-response questions in the Teacher Survey gave teachers an opportunity to express their opinion about TSRs. These questions asked teachers *Do you find it challenging to build supportive relationships with your students? Why or why not?* and *Do you find it challenging to build supportive relationships with your Black male students? Why or why not?*

Table 4.8 below provides information about teachers' responses to these short-response questions, which all teacher participants (N=32) answered. The majority of teachers (N=32) neither found it challenging to build supportive relationships with all students (63%) nor with BMSs (78%). Sixty-nine percent of teachers in the sub-category *ELA and/or SS* (N=16) reported it not challenging to build supportive TSRs with all students, and 40% of these teachers reported it challenging to building supportive TSRs with BMSs. Teachers in this sub-category saw supportive TSRs with all students as being predicated on teacher effort and supportive TSRs with

BMSs as being predicated on teacher-student commonalities such as a shared culture. For

example, one teacher reported that she had no trouble building supportive TSRs with BMSs

because she was a "Black woman." An Asian male teacher noted that his own cultural blind

spots kept him from building more supportive TSRs with BMSs: "I need to become more aware

of my Black student's cultural upbringing and some the challenges my black students face any

home and in the community. I can do better at accessing these areas to better understand my

black male students." Teachers in this sub-category were reflective when describing their TSRs,

especially TSRs with BMSs, and often pointed to their own SEC as the reason why these

relationships were or were not successful.

Table 4.8
Teachers' Opinions About Building Supportive TSRs[1] with All Students and BMSs[2]

| | | Challenge Building Supportive TSRs with All Students | | | | Challenge Building Supportive TSRs with BMSs | | | |
| | | No | | Yes | | No | | Yes | |
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teaching Assignment									
ELA and/or SS	16	11	69	5	32	12	75	4	25
Math and All Others	16	9	56	7	44	13	81	3	19
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender									
White Female Teachers	12	6	50	6	50	10	83	2	17
All Others	20	14	70	6	30	15	75	5	25
All Teachers	32	20	63	12	38	25	78	7	22

Notes: [1]Teacher Student Relationships. [2]Black Male Students.

In the sub-category *Math and All Others* (N=16), the majority of teachers (56%) reported

it not challenging to build supportive TSRs with all students. Eighty-one percent of teachers in

this sub-category reported it not challenging to build supportive TSRs with BMSs. Teachers in

this sub-category tended to focus on the utility of supportive TSRs. As one teacher put it, "Being

supportive aids in the implementation of effective classroom management." They seemed to

identify student behavior as the main challenge for building supportive TSRs. One teacher

suggested that students try to encourage TSRs as a strategy to avoid classwork: "[I]t's also hard

finding the balance of when they want to build a relationship/ask get to know you questions - to distract from the content." As for supportive TSRs with BMSs, teachers in this category who reported no challenges building these TSRs either cited the reason of treating these students the same as all other students or seeing these students no differently from other students because they had a multicultural family or were themselves a "minority." The one teacher who did report it challenging to build supportive TSRs with BMSs blamed stereotypes against himself as the reason: "To many folks, as a white, older male, I am a visual representation of all that is wrong in the world."

Teachers in the sub-category *White Female Teachers* (N=12) were evenly split (50%) on whether it was challenging to build supportive TSRs with all students. However, a majority of these teachers (83%) reported that it wasn't challenging to build these relationships with BMSs, and 17% reported that it was challenging. Teachers cited a variety of reasons why it was challenging to build supportive TSRs with students—for example, lack of time, negative classroom climate, and students' lack of social skills as a result of Covid 19. Teachers who reported no trouble building these relationships with students cited their ability to treat each student as a unique individual. As for building supportive TSRs with BMSs, White female teachers, similar to their counterparts, reported that having shared experiences or interests with BMSs made building relationships with them easier. One teacher felt she bonded with her BMSs by "advising them on books that reflect their experience." A different teacher wrote, "I was raised with many great Black neighbors and friends. I did not have negative experiences. […] I am not a sheltered person. I am able to find more things we have in common than an outsider may think." The two White female teachers who reported it challenging to build supportive TSRs with BMSs acknowledged racial or cultural differences as the reason. One teacher wrote

that she didn't feel BMSs respected her because she was "non-black and female." A different

teacher seemed to blame her own lack of cultural literacy: "Those students that are outspoken or

argumentative, I struggle to relate with because it is not how I react or deal with situations. It

makes me feel defensive instead of compassionate."

Teacher SEC and Predicting Teachers' Perceived Challenges with Supportive TSRs

Table 4.9 below provides information on how the measured teacher SEC dimensions relate

to all teachers' perceptions of challenges building supportive TSRs with all students in general

and BMSs in particular. For TSRs with all students, the estimated slope was negative for each

SEC dimension but only two SEC dimensions were statistically significant. Teachers with

higher scores in the SEC dimension Relationship/Social Skills were less likely to report

challenges in building supportive TSRs with all students ($b = -2.07$, $p=.03$, $Tjur R^2=.18$). The

same was true for teachers with higher scores in the SEC dimension Responsible Decision

Making ($b= -3.83$, $p=.03$, $Tjur R^2=.18$) and with higher Overall SEC scores ($b = -3.19$, $p=.02$,

$Tjur R^2=.20$). The relationships between teacher SEC and all teachers' perception of challenges

building supportive TSRs with BMSs were not statistically significant. The relationships

between teacher SEC and teachers' perception of challenges building supportive TSRs by

Teaching Assignment and *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender* were also not statistically

significant. For this reason, I chose not to include these sub-categories' data in Table 4.9.

However, it should be noted that, as reported in Table 4.4, White female teachers had lower

scores than all other teachers in the SEC dimension Relationship/Social Skills and lower Overall

SEC scores than all other teachers. These low scores suggest that White female teachers would

be more likely than their counterparts to report challenges building supportive TSRs with

students. However, as indicated in Table 4.8, White female teachers were less likely than their

counterparts (17% vs. 25%) to report challenges in building TSRs with BMS. I'll discuss this difference in responses in Chapter Five.

Table 4.9
Bivariate Logistic Regression Analyses: Teacher SEC[1] and Perceptions of Challenges Building Supportive TSRs[2] with All Students and with BMSs[3] (N=32)

SEC Dimension	TSRs with All Students				TSRs with Black Male Students			
	Est	*SE*	*p*	*Tjur R²*	*Est*	*SE*	*p*	*Tjur R²*
Self-Awareness	-1.11	0.94	.24	.05	0.06	1.02	.96	.00
Self-Management	-1.56	1.01	.12	.08	0.71	1.09	.52	.01
Social Awareness	-1.10	0.77	.15	.08	0.07	0.78	.93	.00
Rel/Social Skills	-2.07	0.96	.03	.18	-0.08	0.88	.93	.00
Resp. Dec. Making	-3.83	1.81	.03	.18	-1.77	1.64	.28	.04
Overall Score	-3.19	1.40	.02	.20	-0.08	1.33	.95	.00

Notes: [1]Social Emotional Competence. [2]Teacher Student Relationships. [3]Black Male Students. The dependent variable is whether teacher reported finding it challenging to build supportive relationships with all students in general and with Black male students in particular (1=yes, 0=no).

Findings Related to Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asks how student perceptions of TSRs are related to student characteristics. To answer this question, I used data from the Student Survey. Table 4.10 below describes the internal consistency estimates for the Closeness and Conflict constructs. All four scales had an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Table 4.10
Internal Consistency Estimates for TSR[1] Scores

TSR Scores	# Items	Cronbach's α (95% C.I.)
ELA Closeness	8	.84 (.77, .88)
ELA Conflict	7	.88 (.83, .91)
Math Closeness	8	.87 (.82, .91)
Math Conflict	7	.88 (.84, .92)

Note: [1]Teacher Student Relationship

Student Perceptions of TSRs

Table 4.11 below provides information on how student perceptions of TSRs interrelate. All student participants (N=71) responded to the ELA Closeness and Conflict questions, and 69 student participants responded to the Math Closeness and Conflict questions. Math Closeness displayed the largest variation among the measured variables (SD=0.98). Students, on average,

scored 3.50 in ELA Closeness and 1.39 in ELA Conflict, and 3.33 in Math Closeness and 1.55 in

Math Conflict, suggesting that students tend to perceive their TSRs as more supportive than not.

The mean differences between subject areas were not statistically significant (p=.12 for

Closeness, p=.06 for Conflict). All correlations among the TSR scores were statistically

significant (p<.05). As expected, ELA Closeness scores and ELA Conflict scores were

negatively correlated (-.339), as were Math Closeness scores and Math Conflict scores (-.578).

ELA Closeness scores and Math Closeness scores were positively correlated (.630), as were

ELA Conflict scores and Math Conflict scores (.635).

Table 4.11
TSR[1] Score Distributions and Correlations for All Students (N=71)

			Descriptive Statistics					Correlations		
Variable	Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	p	1	2	3
1. ELA Closeness	8	71	1.50	5.00	3.50	0.83	.12			
2. Math Closeness	8	69	1.38	4.88	3.33	0.98		.630		
3. ELA Conflict	7	71	1.00	3.86	1.39	0.63	.06	-.339	-.332	
4. Math Conflict	7	69	1.00	4.71	1.55	0.83		-.270	-.578	.635

Notes: [1]Teacher Student Relationship. *p*-values are based on paired-sample *t*-test of mean differences between subject areas (ELA vs. Math Closeness, ELA vs. Math Conflict). Correlations with *p*<.05 are underlined.

Table 4.12 below provides information on how student perceptions of TSRs relate to

student characteristics. The only statistically significant mean difference was for ELA Closeness

across student *Grade Level* (η^2 = .20, *p*<.01).

Table 4.12
TSR[1] Scores by Student Characteristics

	N	ELA Closeness (8 Items)		ELA Conflict (7 Items)		Math Closeness (8 Items)		Math Conflict (7 Items)	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
All Students	71	3.50	0.83	1.39	0.63	3.33	0.98	1.55	0.83
Self-Reported Gender									
Males	28	3.42	0.87	1.41	0.69	3.48	0.97	1.42	0.61
Females	37	3.47	0.92	1.32	0.50	3.22	1.05	1.57	0.83
		$F = 0.03$		$F = 0.42$		$F = 1.18$		$F = 0.65$	
		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .02$		$\eta^2 = .01$	
		$p = .84$		$p = .51$		$p = .28$		$p = .42$	
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity									
Black[2]	28	3.47	0.87	1.51	0.78	3.24	1.08	1.76	0.96
LatinX[3]	28	3.63	0.86	1.33	0.50	3.36	1.01	1.47	0.83

	N								
White/Asian	15	3.30	0.70	1.28	0.43	3.45	0.75	1.32	0.44
		$F = 0.76$			$F = 0.87$		$F = 0.23$		$F = 1.56$
		$\eta^2 = .02$			$\eta^2.02$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .05$
		$p = .47$			$p = .43$		$p = .79$		$p = .22$
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender									
Black[2] Males	14	3.49	0.71	1.49	0.81	3.55	0.89	1.49	0.65
All Others	57	3.50	0.90	1.37	0.59	3.27	1.00	1.57	0.88
		$F = 0.00$			$F = 0.43$		$F = 0.91$		$F = 1.56$
		$\eta^2 = .00$			$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .05$
		$p = .99$			$p = .51$		$p = .34$		$p = .22$
Grade Level									
6th Grade	16	4.17	0.61	1.26	0.58	3.70	0.86	1.39	0.67
7th Grade	27	3.37	0.73	1.29	0.57	3.05	1.22	1.72	1.07
8th Grade	28	3.23	0.85	1.56	0.70	3.29	0.92	1.42	0.66
		$F = 8.57$			$F = 1.74$		$F = 1.49$		$F = 1.68$
		$\eta^2 = .20$			$\eta^2 = .05$		$\eta^2 = .04$		$\eta^2 = .05$
		$p < .01$			$p = .18$		$p = .23$		$p = .20$

Notes: [1]Teacher Student Relationship. [2]Includes Multi-Racial Black. [3]Includes Multi-Racial LatinX.

Student Short-Response Questions

Two optional short-response questions after the TSR section in the Student Survey gave students an opportunity to express their perceptions of TSRs, and one optional question gave students the opportunity to identify the teacher, by teaching assignment, with whom they perceived the most supportive TSR. The short-response questions asked students *Is there anything you'd like us to know about the relationship you have with your English teacher?* and *Is there anything you'd like us to know about the relationship you have with your math teacher?* The identification question asked students *Which teacher did you have the most supportive relationships with this year?* The response frequencies for each question are summarized in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13
Students' Opinions About TSRs[1] with ELA and Math Teachers (N=32)

		TSR with ELA Teacher						TSR with Math Teacher					
		Positive		Negative		Other		Positive		Negative		Other	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black[1] Males	7	2	29	1	14	4	57	8	2	25	2	25	4	50
All Others	25	16	64	1	4	8	33	20	9	45	2	10	9	45
Total	32	18	56	2	6	12	39	28	11	39	4	14	13	46

Notes: [1]Teacher Student Relationships. [2]Includes Multi-Racial Black.

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Of the 71 student participants, 32 responded to the question about the relationship with their English teacher and 28 responded to the question about the relationship with their math teacher. From the 14 BMS participants, seven responded to the question about the relationship with their English teacher, with the majority (57%) not suggesting a clear position on this TSR, as indicated by responses such as "I have nothing to say." The other three participants gave unsupported positive or negative statements about their English teacher—for example, "Mrs. X is a wonderful teacher" and "Can you please get me out of Mrs. Y's class." More BMSs (N=8) answered the question about the relationship with their math teacher; however, half of these participants did not suggest a clear position on this TSR while 25% suggested a positive relationship and 25% suggested a negative one. BMSs were more descriptive in their responses about their math teachers than their English teachers. For example, one BMS whom I coded as having a positive TSR with his math teacher wrote, "We have a kinda fun relationship sometimes we make each other laugh and sometime we make each other mad/disappointed." A BMS whom I coded as having a negative TSR shared, "he doesn't talk to me alot only when he's checking on my work and other small stuff." For BMSs who did respond, interaction and the quality of that interaction seemed integral to their perception of TSRs.

From the other 56 student participants, 25 responded to the question about the relationship with their English teacher, with 16 (64%) suggesting that they had a positive relationship with their English teacher and only one (4%) suggesting that they did not. Students in this sub-category had much to say about English teachers, suggesting the desire to know teachers personally as well as learn from them. For example, one student wrote about her English teacher, "She is an amazing teacher and I have learned a lot the last trimester and gotten to know her pretty well." Students in this sub-category also seemed to value teachers who

attended to their social-emotional needs. As one student put it, "My english teachers is one of the 2 most supportive of the LGBTQIA+ in the school so i feel comfortable coming to her when i have a problem dealing with homophobic kids." The one student who did not seem to have a positive relationship with their English teacher wrote an unsupported statement that suggested a disconnect with the teacher: "I only talk to my teacher if I have to." Fewer students (N=20) in this sub-category answered the question about the relationship with their math teacher. Forty-five percent of these responses suggested a positive relationship with their math teacher, 10% suggested a negative relationship, and 45% did not indicate a clear position. As also suggested by responses about English teachers, students seemed to value math teachers who were kind and effective as teachers. With English teachers, these traits were not mutually exclusive. With math teachers, a teacher may be one or the other and still be considered supportive—as long as they showed students respect. One student whose response I coded as "negative" wrote, "My math teacher rolled her eyes at me when I told her I didn't hear the bell ring. She all so pretend to not see me rise my hand until a few seconds later she was being nice and asking me what my question was." Conversely, a student wrote, "He is a great teacher who is kind and respectful towards everyone." As with BMSs, for all other students, interactions with teachers and the quality of those interactions seemed integral to students' perceptions of TSRs.

Sixty-eight student study participants—including all 14 BMSs, answered the question *Which teacher did you have the most supportive relationships with this year?* Table 4.14 below provides information on student responses to this question. BMSs most frequently chose their math teacher (38%) or PE teacher (38%). The remainder chose their English teacher (21%) or elective teacher (7%). Among the 54 other students, their English teacher was selected most frequently (39%), followed by their math teacher (19%).

Table 4.14
Teacher with Whom Students (N=68) Perceive the Most Supportive TSR[1]

Student Race/Ethnicity by Gender		ELA		Math		PE		History		Elective		Other	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black[2] Males	14	3	21	5	38	5	38	0	0	1	7	0	0
All Others	54	21	39	10	19	6	11	5	9	7	13	5	9
Total	68	24	35	15	22	11	16	5	7	8	12	5	7

Notes: [1]Teacher Student Relationship. [2]Includes Multi-Racial Black.

Findings Related to Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asks how students' sense of classroom belonging is related to student characteristics. To answer this question, I used data from the Student Survey. Table 4.15 below describes the internal consistency estimates for the Belonging and Rejection constructs. All four scales had an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Table 4.15
Internal Consistency Estimates for Classroom Belonging Scores

Classroom Belonging Scores	Number of Items	Cronbach's α (95% C.I.)
ELA Belonging	13	.90 (.86, .93)
ELA Rejection	5	.75 (.64, .83)
Math Belonging	13	.89 (.85, .93)
Math Rejection	5	.76 (.66, .84)

Classroom Belonging

Table 4.16 below describes the score distributions for student perceptions of classroom belonging and the correlations among these scores. All student participants (N=71) responded to the ELA Belonging and Rejection questions, and 69 student participants responded to the Math Belonging and Rejection questions. ELA Belonging had a slightly higher mean score than Math Belonging (3.97 and 3.95, respectively), and Math Rejection had a higher mean score than ELA Rejection (1.95 and 1.77, respectively). Neither of these mean differences were statistically significant (p=.95 for Belonging, p=.09 for Rejection). Math Rejection displayed the largest variation among the measured variables (SD=0.93). The two Belonging scores were positively corelated (.698), as were the two Rejection scores (.543). ELA Belonging scores and ELA

Rejection scores were negatively correlated (-.469), as were Math Belonging scores and Math

Rejection scores (-.550). Both correlations were statistically significant. The weakest

correlation was between ELA Belonging and Math Rejection (-.204), and this correlation was

not statistically significant.

Table 4.16
Classroom Belonging Score Distributions and Correlations for All Students (N=71)

Variable	Descriptive Statistics							Correlations		
	Items	Valid	Min	Max	Mean	SD	p	1	2	3
1. ELA Belonging	13	71	2.15	5.00	3.97	0.74	.95			
2. Math Belonging	13	69	1.77	5.00	3.95	0.78		.698		
3. ELA Rejection	5	71	1.00	3.80	1.77	0.77	.09	-.469	-.313	
4. Math Rejection	5	69	1.00	4.80	1.95	0.93		-.204	-.550	.543

Notes: *p*-values are based on paired-sample t-test of mean differences. Correlations with *p*<.05 are underlined.

Table 4.17 below provides information on how student perceptions of classroom

belonging relate to student characteristics. The only significant mean differences were based on

Grade Level, specifically for the ELA Belonging ($\eta^2 = .17$, *p*<.01) and ELA Rejection ($\eta^2 = .10$,

p=.03) scores.

Table 4.17
Classroom Belonging Score Distributions and Correlations by Student Characteristics

	N	ELA Belonging (13 Items)		ELA Rejection (5 Items)		Math Belonging (13 Items)		Math Rejection (5 Items)	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
All Students	71	3.97	0.74	1.77	0.77	3.95	0.78	1.95	0.93
Self-Reported Gender									
Males	28	3.95	0.89	1.64	0.61	4.05	0.84	1.81	0.81
Females	37	3.93	0.77	1.79	0.86	3.76	1.04	1.99	0.95
		$F = 0.01$		$F = 0.65$		$F = 1.02$		$F = 0.65$	
		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .02$		$\eta^2 = .01$	
		$p = .90$		$p = .42$		$p = .32$		$p = .42$	
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity									
Black[1]	28	4.02	0.69	1.75	0.81	3.95	0.74	2.14	1.06
LatinX[2]	28	4.05	0.84	1.71	0.76	3.82	1.14	1.82	0.92
White/Asian	15	3.72	0.62	1.91	0.73	3.94	0.76	1.83	0.67
		$F = 1.08$		$F = 0.31$		$F = 0.01$		$F = 0.97$	
		$\eta^2 = .03$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .03$	
		$p = .34$		$p = .73$		$p = .99$		$p = .39$	
Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender									
Black[1] Males	14	3.93	0.83	1.60	0.74	4.03	0.72	1.83	0.80
All Others	57	3.98	0.73	1.81	0.78	3.86	0.95	1.99	0.97
		$F = 0.06$		$F = 0.83$		$F = 0.176$		$F = 0.31$	
		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .01$		$\eta^2 = .00$		$\eta^2 = .00$	
		$p = .81$		$p = .37$		$p = .68$		$p = .58$	
Grade Level									
6th Grade	16	4.48	0.62	1.55	0.62	4.32	0.67	1.87	1.03
7th Grade	27	3.99	0.66	1.59	0.69	3.67	1.12	2.10	1.05
8th Grade	28	3.67	0.74	2.07	0.85	3.89	0.72	1.86	0.76
		$F = 7.10$		$F = 3.83$		$F = 2.30$		$F = 0.51$	
		$\eta^2 = .17$		$\eta^2 = .10$		$\eta^2 = .07$		$\eta^2 = .02$	
		$p = .00$		$p = .03$		$p = .11$		$p = .61$	

Notes: [1]Includes Multi-Racial Black. [2]Includes Multi-Racial LatinX.

Classroom Belonging and TSRs

Table 4.18 below summarizes results from a series of bivariate linear regression analyses examining the extent to which TSR Closeness and Conflict scores predict Belonging and Rejection. Each regression model was fit to the full sample, the BMSs only, and other students only. In the full sample—and in both ELA and Math, Closeness scores were a significant predictor of Belonging scores ($b=0.701$, $p<.001$ for ELA; $b=0.653$, $p<.001$ for math). For BMSs, these slopes were larger than they were for all others in ELA (0.946 *vs.* 0.663) but weaker than all others in math (0.617 *vs.* 0.664). ELA and Math Conflict scores were all negatively

associated with their respective Belonging scores, with all slope estimates except BMSs' ELA

Conflict (b=-0.538, p=.052) being statistically significant. Conflict scores predicted Rejection

scores for both ELA (b=0.763, p<.001) and math (b=0.797, p<.001). These slopes were smaller

for BMSs than all others in ELA (0.682 *vs*. 0.821) but stronger than all others in math (1.005 *vs*.

0.768). ELA and Math Belonging scores were all negatively associated with their respective

Rejection scores, with all slope estimates except BMSs' ELA Closeness (b=-0.146, p=.633)

being statistically significant.

Table 4.18
Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis: TSR[1] Closeness and Conflict Scores Predicting Classroom Belonging and Rejection Scores

Indep. Variable Sample	r	b	SE	t	p	r	b	SE	t	p
	Dependent Variable: ELA Belonging					*Dependent Variable: ELA Rejection*				
ELA Closeness										
All Students	.785	0.701	0.067	10.523	< .001	.361	-0.366	0.104	-3.220	.002
BMSs[2]	.816	0.946	0.193	4.892	< .001	.140	-0.146	0.298	-0.490	.633
All Others	.786	0.663	0.070	9.415	< .001	.405	-0.367	0.112	-3.288	.002
ELA Conflict										
All Students	.441	-0.518	0.127	-4.083	< .001	.624	0.763	0.115	6.631	< .001
BMSs[2]	.529	-0.538	0.249	-2.160	.052	.743	0.682	0.177	3.851	.002
All Others	.410	-0.510	0.153	-3.338	.002	.616	0.821	0.141	5.806	< .001
	Dependent Variable: Math Belonging					*Dependent Variable: Math Rejection*				
Math Closeness										
All Students	.819	0.653	0.056	11.690	< .001	.540	-0.513	0.098	-5.252	< .001
BMSs[2]	.757	0.617	0.154	4.019	.002	.714	-0.639	0.181	-3.531	.004
All Others	.832	0.664	0.061	10.912	< .001	.506	-0.489	0.114	-4.274	< .001
Math Conflict										
All Students	.527	-0.495	0.098	-5.077	< .001	.711	0.797	0.096	8.276	< .001
BMSs[2]	.551	-0.614	0.268	-2.287	.041	.821	1.005	0.202	4.988	< .001
All Others	.524	-0.479	0.107	-4.475	< .001	.695	0.768	0.109	7.033	< .001

Notes: [1]Teacher Student Relationship. [2]Includes Multi-Racial Black male students. Dependent variables are the Belonging and Rejection scores in the same subject area as the independent variable.

Based on the observed differences in the slope estimates between the BMS and all other

student subgroups, I fit additional regression models that included an interaction between *Race*

by Gender (*BMSs* vs. *All Others*) and Closeness or Conflict. The interaction term was not

statistically significant for any of these models.

Student Short-Response Questions

Two optional short-response questions after the Classroom Belonging section in the Student Survey gave students an opportunity to express their opinion about classroom belonging, and one optional question gave students the opportunity to identify the class, by subject matter, where they experienced the greatest sense of classroom belonging. The short-response questions asked students *Is there anything you'd like us to know about the way you feel being in your English class?* and *Is there anything you'd like us to know about the way you feel being in your math class?* The identification question asked students *In which of your classes do you feel the greatest sense of belonging?*

The response frequencies for each question are summarized in Table 4.19 below. Of the 71 student participants, 26 responded to the question about their sense of belonging in their English class and 20 responded to the question about their sense of belonging in their math class. From the 14 BMSs participants, eight responded to the question about their sense of belonging in their English class, with the majority (88%) not suggesting a clear position, as indicated by responses such as "I have nothing to say." The other participant gave an unsupported positive statement about his English class: "Nope all good." More students in the *All Others* sub-category (N=18) responded to this question, with 50% suggesting that they had a positive feeling about being in English class, 11% suggesting the opposite, and 38% not suggesting a clear position. Student responses in this sub-category detailed how peer interactions, not teacher interactions, were associated with students' sense of classroom belonging. For example, one student whose response I coded as "positive" wrote, "The class has been very welcoming though the work is tough it is to be expected from a advanced class, but everyone is very friendly towards me." A different student whose response I coded as "negative" shared, "I have to do my

work in class and be focused and I don't think about anything else except people not looking at me." Only one student had peer interactions that didn't seem to match their sense of classroom belonging. I coded this student's response as "positive": "I feel good about being in my English class, the only thing that I have that's negative is that some of my classmates can be distracting because of them not following directions, speaking out of term, things like that." The student did not mention what made them "feel good" about being in their English class.

Table 4.19
Students' Sense of Classroom Belonging in ELA and Math Classrooms (N=25)

Student Race/Ethnicity by Gender	Classroom Belonging in ELA Class							Classroom Belonging in Math Class						
		Positive		Negative		Other			Positive		Negative		Other	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black[1] Males	8	1	13	-	-	7	88	6	-	-	-	-	6	100
All Others	18	9	50	2	11	7	39	14	4	29	-	-	10	71
Total	26	10	38	2	8	14	54	20	4	20	2	10	14	70

Note: [1]Includes Multi-Racial Black

Six BMSs answered the question about the way they feel being in their math class, all of them not suggesting a clear position—for example, one BMS responded with "nope." With all other students who responded to this question (N=14), the majority (71%) also did not suggest a clear position—for example, one student responded with "I have no other opinion on how I feel." The next largest percent of students (29%) indicated that they had positive feelings about being in their math class—for example, "EVERYONE IS SUPER NICE AND FUNNY AND CAN MAKE ME FEEL HAPPY WHEN IM SAD!!" For that student, positive interactions with peers seemed to be associated with their sense of classroom belonging. This response is also a reminder that students' sense of classroom belonging can be associated with their social-emotional well-being. A different student whom I also coded as "positive" was less specific about contributing factors to their classroom belonging: "Being in my math class makes me feel comfortable. The atmosphere in the class is very calm and somehow comforting." Perhaps positive interactions with students or the teacher created the "comforting" atmosphere for this

student. Two students mentioned their math teacher in their response. One student whose response I coded as "positive" liked the class because the teacher was "cool." The other student whose response I coded as "other" was dissatisfied with the teacher's instructional practices: "She's nice but she teaches a little too fast, and doesn't really update things when I need them to be updated." This was one of the few students who separated their TSR from his learning experience. In other words, they could think their teacher was "nice" but still ineffective instructionally.

Of the 71 student participants, 69 responded to the question *In which of your classes do you feel the greatest sense of belonging?* Table 4.20 below provides information on student responses to this question. All BMSs (N=14) who participated in the study answered the question. Fifty percent of these students chose their PE class as the class where they felt the greatest sense of belonging, followed by math (21%), English (14%), and "other" (14%). Fifty-five students in the *All Others* sub-category answered this question. The majority of these participants (29%) chose their elective class as the class where they felt the greatest sense of belonging, followed by math (25%) and English (24%).

Table 4.20
Class in Which Students (N=69) Perceive the Most Classroom Belonging

Student Race/Ethnicity by Gender	N	Classroom Belonging by Subject									
		ELA		Math		PE		Elective		Other	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black[2] Males	14	2	14	3	21	7	50	0	0	2	14
All Others	55	13	24	14	25	6	11	16	29	6	11
Total	69	15	22	17	25	13	19	16	23	8	12

Note: [1]Includes Multi-Racial Black

Conclusion

For Research Question 1, I found that, on average, teachers scored highest in the SEC dimensions Self-Awareness and Relationship/Social Skills and lowest in the SEC dimensions Self-Management and Social Awareness. Teachers who scored high in Relationship/Social

Skills also tended to score high in Social Awareness and Self-Awareness. Male and female teachers, on average, had no significant differences in either their SEC dimension scores or their overall SEC scores. White/Asian teachers had lower mean scores than Black/LatinX teachers in Social Awareness and Relationship/Social Skills. White female teachers had lower Social Awareness mean scores, lower Relationship/Social Skills mean scores, and lower overall SEC mean scores than all other teachers. English teachers and math teachers, on average, had no significant differences in either their SEC dimension scores or their overall SEC scores. Teachers who had more than 20 years teaching experience had lower overall SEC mean scores than teachers who had been teaching for less than 20 years. Whether or not a teacher had training in building supportive TSRs included in their credential program did not seem to make a difference in either SEC dimension scores or overall SEC scores. However, teachers who had three or more professional developments on supportive TSRs had higher mean scores in Relationship/Social Skills than teachers who had fewer than three of these professional developments.

For Research Question 2, I found that most teachers did not report it challenging to build supportive TSRs with all students in general or BMSs in particular. English teachers suggested that supportive TSRs with all students were predicated on teacher effort and supportive TSRs with BMSs were predicated on teacher-student commonalities such as sports interests or a shared culture. Many math teachers shared that they treated all their students the same, regardless of race, and supportive TSRs were essential for effective classroom management. White female teachers cited lack of time, negative classroom climate, and Covid 19 as challenges to building supportive TSRs with all students. With BMSs, similar to their counterparts, White female teachers reported that having shared experiences or shared interests with these students made

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building relationships with them easier. As for connecting TSRs to teacher SEC, teachers who had high overall SEC scores and high scores in the SEC dimensions Relationship/Social Skills and Responsible Decision Making were less likely than their counterparts to report challenges in building supportive TSRs with all students. The relationships between teacher SEC and all teachers' perception of challenges building supportive TSRs with BMSs were not statistically significant, neither were the relationships between teacher SEC and teachers' perception of challenges building supportive TSRs by *Teaching Assignment* and *Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity by Gender*. However, White female teachers had lower scores than all other teachers in the SEC dimension Relationship/Social Skills and lower Overall SEC scores than all other teachers, suggesting they were more likely than their counterparts to report challenges building supportive TSRs with students.

For Research Question 3, I found that students, on average, reported their relationships with English and math teachers to be more supportive than not. Students who had high Closeness scores with English and math teachers also tended to have low Conflict scores with these teachers. There were no significant differences in Closeness or Conflict scores between any of the demographic categories save *Grade-Level*, where students' ELA Closeness scores decreased by grade level, with 6th graders reporting the highest Closeness and 8th graders reporting the lowest. When asked their opinion about TSRs, BMSs who chose to share suggested that the quality of teacher-student interactions were associated with their perceptions of these relationships. These students chose their math teachers more often than their English teachers as being their most supportive teachers, but they chose their PE teachers just as often as their math teachers for this distinction. All other students seemed to have more supportive relationships with their English teachers than with their math teachers. The degree to which

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English and math teachers were able to be personable, respectful, and attend to student's social-emotional needs seemed to be associated with these students' perceptions of TSRs.

For Research Question 4, I found that, on average, students reported a stronger sense of belonging than rejection in their English and math classes. Students who scored high in English or Math Belonging also tended to score low, respectively, in English or Math Rejection. Students who scored high in ELA Belonging also tended to score high in Math Belonging, the same being true with ELA and Math Rejection. As previously seen with Closeness and Conflict scores, there were no significant differences in the Belonging and Rejection mean scores between any of the demographic categories save *Grade-Level*, where students' English Belonging scores decreased by grade level—with 6th graders reporting the highest sense of Belonging and 8th graders reporting the lowest, and where students' Rejection scores increased by grade level—with 6th graders reporting the lowest sense of Rejection and 8th graders reporting the highest. I compared these Belonging and Rejection scores to Closeness and Conflict scores to see to what extent the latter predicted the former. I found that students who perceived supportive relationships with English and math teachers tended to experience a sense of belonging in those respective classes, and students who perceived conflict in those relationships tended to experience a sense of rejection in those respective classes. For BMSs, the Closeness-Belonging relationships were stronger than they were for all others in ELA but weaker than all others in math. With the Conflict-Rejection relationships, the relationships were weaker with BMSs than all others in ELA but stronger than all others in math. When asked if there was anything they'd like to share about the way they feel being in their English and math classes, BMSs didn't express their opinion about being in either class. All other students who expressed their opinion suggested that their sense of belonging in English and math classes was predicated

more on peer interactions than TSRs. Disruptive or unfriendly peers evoked a sense of class

rejection in students, whereas "super nice" and "welcoming" peers evoked a sense of class

belonging. When asked in which of their classes they feel the greatest sense of belonging, the

majority of BMSs chose their PE class, with the next largest percentage choosing their math

class. For the majority of all other students, it was their elective class where they felt the greatest

sense of belonging, then math, and then English.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of my study and offer some concluding thoughts. I begin by discussing connections between my findings and prior research. Next, I discuss my study's research limitations. After that, I offer some recommendations for practice and suggestions for future research. I conclude by reflecting on the experience of conducting my study.

Connections to Prior Research

In this study, teacher participants high in SEC were less likely to report challenges in building supportive TSRs with all students, supporting Jennings and colleague's (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings, 2011; Jennings et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2017) suspicion that teachers high in SEC are better able than their counterparts to form supportive TSRs. As I'll explain more in the Research Limitations section, with only 14 BMS participants, I wasn't able to examine associations between teacher SEC and TSRs with BMSs. This was disappointing because I wanted to add to existing teacher SEC research, which has yet to study the impact of teacher SEC on BMSs. Teacher SEC research has also yet to identify which specific teacher SEC dimensions are associated with TSRs—and here my study was able to contribute. I thought that, like Jennings and Greenberg (2009) and Aldrup and colleagues (2020), Self-Management would play an integral role in TSRs, reasoning that teacher participants who were able to self-regulate would have better interactions with middle schoolers who couldn't. However, I did not find clear evidence of a connection between Self-Management and TSRs. Unsurprisingly, Relationship/Social skills was associated with TSRs in my study: Teachers who were high in this SEC dimension reported perceiving fewer challenges in building supportive relationships

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with students, supporting research (Aldrup et al., 2020; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) that

Relationship Management plays a role in TSRs. I found the same association between

Responsible Decision Making and TSRs—contrary to Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) work,

which suggested teachers' capacity for Social Awareness, not Responsible Decision Making, is

associated with teachers' ability to foster supportive TSRs. In my study, the association between

Social Awareness and TSRs was not statistically significant.

Also not statistically significant were the associations between White female teachers'

SEC dimension scores and those teachers' perceived challenges of building supportive TSRs

with students, especially BMSs. This was another unexpected result. To date, I know of no

studies focusing on the associations among teacher race, teacher gender, teacher SEC, and TSRs,

and I was hoping my own study would contribute some much-needed findings to the cause.

However, with only 12 White female participants, there was little statistical power to detect

associations between teacher SEC dimension scores and perceived challenges of building

supportive TSRs. Statistical significance aside, White female teachers scored lower than their

counterparts in Relationship/Social Skills and in SEC overall—two variables that I found to be

associated with TSRs and that Gregory and Fergus (2017) see as the most important SEC

dimension for White female teachers in urban schools to build up and develop—suggesting that

this group perceived more challenges than others in developing supportive TSRs with BMSs. In

fact, on the teacher short-response question, the majority of these teachers conveyed that it

wasn't challenging to do so. To what extent can their perceptions be trusted?

Looking at responses to a key Teacher Survey question that measured

Relationship/Social Skills reveals that the majority of White female teachers don't think they are

successful at using class time to form supportive TSRs with BMSs. In addition, in response to a

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question that measured Social Awareness, the other dimension where White female teachers scored lower than all other teachers, the majority of White female teachers said they did not use class time to address the racial, ethnic, and cultural commonalities and differences that exist among students. Both examples may indicate that White female teachers are uncomfortable discussing or addressing race in their classrooms or that they don't know how to do so. However, White female teachers' demonstrating racial awareness may be what's needed to combat the stereotype-threat effect BMSs may experience in their presence (Uwah et al., 2008). For many White teachers, considering the impact their own race has on the students they serve is new thinking and may evoke a variety of feelings—guilt, denial, confusion, activism. This may be why one White female teacher, who perceived no challenges building supportive TSRs with BMSs sounded defensive in her response: "I was raised with many great Black neighbors and friends. I did not have negative experiences. […] I am not a sheltered person. I am able to find more things we have in common than an outsider may think." Being a teacher of color may provide a racial advantage at least initially in building supportive TSRs with BMSs—as one teacher put it, she perceived no challenges in building these relationships because she is a "Black woman." However, a teacher of color who lacks the SEC to maintain these relationships—or who lacks the opportunity to develop this skillset, won't be cool with the kids for too long.

In general, White female teachers did seem to view their racial and gender differences with BMSs as challenges to building supportive TSRs with them. Those who felt they mitigated these differences by finding commonalities with BMSs seemed to perceive themselves more successful at building supportive TSRs than those who couldn't—or who didn't try. What I'm describing suggests *teacher empathy* as defined by Warren (2015)—teachers using what they know about students to build supportive relationships with them, but not *teacher empathy* as

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defined by Goroshit and Hen (2013, 2014, 2016)—teachers adopting the perspective of students to build supportive relationships with them. The latter *teacher empathy* may lead to a teacher's false sense of involvement that erases important distinctions between them and BMSs (McCallister & Irvine, 2002), whereas, to my thinking, the former *teacher empathy* may serve to build rapport with BMSs and is a precondition for supportive TSRs. Although it's true that other teacher participants seemed to make this effort with BMSs, being neither male nor a minority, White female teachers may need to work harder than their counterparts to connect with BMSs (Broom, 2019; Uwah et al., 2008).

In their Prosocial Classroom Model, Jennings and Greenburg (2009) posit that supportive TSRs lead to students' sense of belonging. I found support for this connection in my study: Students who perceived supportive TSRs with their English and math teachers were more likely than their counterparts to feel a sense of belonging in those classes. However, I think there's more to supportive TSRs than teacher SEC. I found that characteristics of supportive TSRs vary according to teaching assignment—something I didn't read about in extant research. In other words, there seemed to be an English-teacher style to supportive TSRs and a math-teacher style to supportive TSRs. Research suggests that Black students' sense of classroom belonging begins with teachers' high academic expectations (Boston & Warren, 2017; Matthews, 2020), which may explain BMSs' perceived closeness to their math teachers. In general, math teachers had lower SEC scores than English teachers, but the teacher optional data suggests that they leveraged TSRs to maintain a classroom environment conducive to student learning, whereas English teachers seemed to leverage TSRs for building rapport with students. Perhaps a teacher establishing confidence in BMSs' capacity for achievement is a more effective strategy for building supportive TSRs than finding common interests—at least in a math class. BMSs didn't

have more supportive TSRs with math teachers than they did with English teachers, so perhaps supportive TSR characteristics must, to some extent, match class characteristics to be associated with students' sense of classroom belonging. (I think this would be true for BMSs as well as all other students.) In other words, the very nature of an English class, with its instructional emphasis on supporting subjective truth, may necessitate the English-teacher style of supportive TSRs in a way that a math class, with its instructional emphasis on identifying objective truth, does not. I venture to add that supportive TSRs with PE teachers may be characterized by a physicality, language, and tone that wouldn't be associated with students' sense of classroom belonging in a math or English class.

All that being said, I also think there's more to students' sense of classroom belonging than supportive TSRs. Student short-response data suggests that the quality of student interactions are also associated with students' sense of classroom belonging. Although teachers can manage these interactions by building a positive classroom climate (Jennings & Greenberg, 2019), there are aspects to student relationships that are outside of teacher control and purview— for example, student interactions that take place outside of instructional time or via social media. In addition, BMSs may find their sense of belonging by interacting with peers in their own racial group, who provide empathetic support against racial discrimination and stereotyping (Boston & Warren, 2017). Unfortunately, there wasn't enough data from BMS participants to evaluate the extent to which this was true for them. Student short-response data also suggests that another contributing factor to classroom belonging unattributable to teacher SEC is a student's innate interest in the class subject. This may explain why BMS participants, who reported more supportive relationships with their math and English teachers than the converse, identified their PE class as the class in which they experienced the greatest sense of belonging—and why all

other student participants, who reported more supportive relationships with their English teachers than their math teachers, identified their elective class as such. This finding highlights the importance of so-called non-academic classes in the middle school setting. In addition to developing the SEC of all teachers, we should be leveraging the power of PE and elective teachers to inspire students toward school success.

Research Limitations

I began this study hoping to find associations among teacher SEC dimensions and TSRs, especially among White female teachers' SEC dimensions and TSRs with BMSs. My initial plan was to survey English and math teachers and their respective students, match teacher SEC scores to their student TSR scores, then match student TSR scores to student Classroom Belonging scores. This would allow me to see not only which teacher SEC dimensions were associated with students' perceptions of supportive TSRs but also to what extent supportive TSRs were associated with students' sense of classroom belonging. My study's impact seemed to hinge on matching teachers' SEC with their students' perceptions of TSRs. I did not consider how this plan might pressure students to participate in my study. When UCLA's IRB brought this fact to my attention, I decided that student participants needed to opt-in to my study and take their survey outside of class time.

Unfortunately, though warranted, this change made it impossible for me to match student survey data to teacher survey data and limited the number of student participants. My work-around was to match teacher SEC scores to teacher short-response question data. That is, I changed my focus to which teacher SEC dimensions were associated with teachers' perceived ability to form supportive TSRs. I made it work, but my findings concerning the associations between teacher SEC dimensions and TSRs were based solely on teacher self-reported data. In

addition, because the data set was small, I couldn't characterize the associations between TSRs and each teacher SEC dimension with much precision. Matching teacher data to student data would have provided a more rigorous examination of these relationships.

Other limitations related to the methods I used. This study relied on the teacher and student responses to online questionaries; I can't say with certainty how individual teacher and student participants were interpreting their respective survey questions. I'm sure there were instances of participants interpreting survey questions in a way which I didn't intend—and instances of my interpreting participants responses, especially in the short-response data, in a way which participants didn't intend. I acknowledge that both varieties of misinterpretation may have occurred. I also acknowledge that teacher and student survey responses may not represent the opinions of all teachers and students at RCMS Another imitation was that I didn't include students' perspective on the extent to which race and gender—their own and their teachers'—are associated with TSRs. In hindsight, I should have modified the Student Survey to capture this information. I may have had more BMSs respond to the short-response questions if I had invited them to make these connections. Unbidden, none of the student participants brought up race or gender in their responses. I realized this was a missed opportunity when I was reviewing the teacher short-response data and found that a White female teacher didn't feel her BMSs respected her because she wasn't Black or male—and I didn't have a student perspective to compare hers to. Finally, if time were not an issue, I would have supplemented my survey data with classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews to draw a more complete picture of the relationship among teacher SEC, supportive TSRs, and students' sense of classroom belonging. I leave these for future researchers to tackle!

Recommendations for Practice

Although educators have long acknowledged that supportive TSRs can have a positive impact on student success (CASEL, 2020; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings, 2011; Jennings et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2017), we have only recently begun to realize that teacher SEC is integral for fostering these relationships and effecting students' sense of classroom belonging, which may narrow the opportunity gap for BMSs. To that end, school districts, especially urban school districts, where students are likely to bring life experiences and cultural backgrounds to schools that may not align with those of the teachers working there (Hatchimonji et al., 2020), should consider providing all teachers with ongoing professional development in building and developing their SEC, especially in Relationships Management and Responsible Decision Making, two SEC dimensions this study found to be correlated with supportive TSRs. School districts may also want to consider including professional development in Self-Management, an SEC dimension that may be associated with a teacher's ability to maintain a sense of well-being in herself and in her students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

As this study has shown, professional development in SEC is critical for White female teachers, whose capacity to foster supportive TSRs with BMSs may be associated with racial and gender teacher-student differences. However, school districts should take care not to single these teachers out for training. Doing so would run the risk of making them defensive—thus not receptive to learning—and could also damage teacher-administrator relationships. In addition, all teachers stand to benefit from building and developing their SEC. As Warren (2015) points out, teacher-student differences such as socioeconomic class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and

race can create perceptual differences that impact the way all teachers, regardless of race and gender, interact with and teach students.

While I agree with research that recommends including SEC training in teacher credential programs (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017), these professional development opportunities should continue once teachers are hired at school sites and, as this study has indicated, should also be extended to veteran staff. Because this study and other research (Roorda et al., 2011) have shown student perceptions of TSRs to deteriorate as students age, principals should view SEC professional development opportunities for 8th grade teachers as critical.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study found that teacher participants high in SEC and the SEC dimensions Relationship/Social Skills and Responsible Decision Making reported fewer challenges in building supportive TSRs with their students. Additional research is needed to establish the associations between each teacher SEC dimension and TSRs, especially as they relate to White female teachers and BMSs. Future researchers should consider duplicating my study but finding ways to compare teacher SEC dimensions scores to students' perceptions of their teachers' SEC without putting undue pressure on teachers and students to participate in the study. In addition, multiple urban middle schools should be included in future studies of this kind to increase the number of study participants and reliability of the data.

This study also found that students who perceive supportive TSRs with their English and math teachers are likely to feel a sense of belonging in those respective classes. Future researchers should review student records such as grades, discipline, and attendance to evaluate the extent to which students' sense of classroom belonging is associated with school success, especially the school success of BMSs. In addition, although this study found that supportive

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TSRs are associated with students' sense of classroom belonging, student short-response data suggested other contributing factors to classroom belonging that seem unassociated with teacher SEC—namely, peer interactions taking place outside of the classroom and school and students' innate interest in the school subject. Future researchers should consider studying the associations those two variables have on student success, especially the success of BMSs.

Finally, as I mentioned in the Limitations section of this chapter, to draw a more complete picture of the relationship among teacher SEC, supportive TSRs, and students' sense of classroom belonging—especially how these variables relate to White female teachers and BMSs, future researchers should use qualitative analysis to answer my research questions. Classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews are three qualitative approaches that would supplement this study's findings. Such an approach would reveal students' perspective on the extent to which race and gender—their own and their teachers'—are associated with TSRs and classroom belonging. Such an approach might also reveal the teacher SEC dimension *self-management* to be more important than this study found it to be and thus inspire more professional development for teachers in stress management, mindfulness, and other strategies targeting their social-emotional well-being.

Reflection

In my more than 20 years' experience as an educator working at urban schools, I've seen the damage that negative TSRs can have on BMSs' school success and social-emotional well-being. I've been the White female teacher who's lacked the SEC to build supportive relationships with BMSs. I've been the administrator who's counseled BMSs—some of them so angry at their teachers that they act out in class or flunk out of class because they believe they are hurting the teacher, not themselves. I've also experienced and witnessed just how powerful

supportive TSRs can be for students, especially BMSs—positive changes in behavior and attendance, substantial growth in academic achievement and school engagement. All students deserve teachers who care about them and demonstrate that care. All students deserve teachers who believe in their capacity to succeed and who demonstrate that belief. But building and maintaining supportive TSRs takes a lot out of teachers. Although it's true that some teachers may be better at it than others, I believe that all teachers have the capacity to develop this skillset. Conducting this study has reinforced that belief.

I've learned many things from this study as well. First, generally speaking, student participants tend to perceive their relationships with teachers as supportive. This surprised me— I suspect because, as an assistant principal at RCMS, I spent so much time responding to student classroom misbehavior that I began to think that none of the students and teachers got along! I was happy to be wrong about that. Second, also generally speaking, RCMS English teachers build supportive TSRs by establishing rapport with students whereas RCMS math teachers build supportive TSRs by establishing respect with them. I suspect that the PE and elective departments have a "way" they build supportive TSRs as well. BMSs seem to respond better to the "strictly business" style of math teachers, but I think that they—and all students—benefit from the variety of styles that teachers from each department use to build TSRs. Third, RCMS White female teachers, especially young White female teachers, seem to be cognizant of and sensitive to the impact their race, gender, and racial history may have on their ability to build TSRs with BMSs. This seems to me an important step toward decreasing the opportunity gap for BMSs. But what is the next step? How do White female teachers navigate those differences to build supportive TSRs with BMSs? My concern is that, without appropriate professional development, White female teachers will perceive these differences as barriers instead of

obstacles. Finally, on a personal level, this study has allowed me to develop my own skillset as a researcher. As a former English teacher, I found the quantitative analyses involved in this study to be completely challenging but also ultimately rewarding.

When I began researching for this study, I was working as an assistant principal at RCMS. I knew the findings would be relevant to my work with teachers and students and would help me choose teacher SEC professional development once I became a principal. Just before I began my data collection, however, I was hired as the Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA) Coordinator for my district. Although I planned to share my study's findings with the RCMS principal, I wasn't sure if I would be able to make them relevant to my new job duties, considering that I would no longer be working directly with teachers or students. In fact, this study has guided and shaped much of my work as CWA. For example, in an effort to encourage supportive TSRs at our school sites, I hosted an administrator discipline training with the intention to lower our suspension and expulsion rates. To help meet that goal, I created a district discipline matrix that requires other means of correction as a response to most suspendable acts. In addition, I wrote a district attendance plan that instructs school site attendance teams to meet with students and provide them and their families with counseling and resources to help improve student attendance. From conducting this study, I've realized that SEC isn't just for TSRs but my own relationships with parents, administrators, and teachers as we work together to increase student success.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER EMAIL

RCMS Teachers!

As some of you know, this is my third year in UCLA's Educational Leadership Program, and I need to gather data to complete my dissertation. To that end, I'm reaching out to RCMS teachers and students with an opportunity to be involved in my research study.

You know how, as a district, we've recognized the connection between students' social emotional competence (SEC) and their well-being and academic success? My dissertation research topic builds on that idea. I'm studying which components of teacher SEC help foster supportive teacher-student relationships with Black male students in urban middle schools. From researching this topic, I've learned that supportive relationships with teachers can help Black male students feel a sense of belonging in their classrooms, which can increase their academic success in school and decrease exclusionary discipline practices. By identifying which components of teacher SEC are important in building these relationships, I aim to help educational leaders make informed decisions about choosing professional development that can decrease the opportunity gap and the discipline gap for Black male students.

You can contribute to the research on this important topic in education by taking a 5-10 minute survey about teacher SEC. Full transparency: I can't say the teacher survey is anonymous because, even though I don't ask you to identify yourself in the survey, each teacher participant will be emailed a unique survey link that links you to your data. That said, the survey is confidential. Only my UCLA research team and I will have access to survey data, which will be deidentified during data analysis, with protections being taken for participants to remain deidentified. Mrs. Williams, RCMS's principal, has agreed to give you the option of completing your survey during the school day. Once I send out the survey link, you'll have two weeks to complete the survey. (I reserve the right to pester you—once or twice—with reminder emails to get it done!)

At this point, you might be wondering how the survey results will be used. I'd like to underscore that these confidential surveys will result in deidentified survey data. Survey data won't be used for evaluative purposes, just for the purposes of my dissertation. To that end, I will be sharing an overview of my research findings with Mrs. Williams to help her make informed decisions about professional development that can decrease the opportunity gap and the discipline gap for Black male students.

Here's the part where I say that participating in my study is absolutely—*completely*—voluntary. I've attached a UCLA Research Study Information sheet for your review. Please let me know by [date] if you're willing and able to contribute 5-10 minutes of your time to this important research topic in education by clicking on this link and either consenting or not consenting to participating in the study [link]. If you'd like more information before committing, email me, call me, or stop in to see me at the

Dear RCMS parents,

As a student in UCLA's Educational Leadership Program, I'm studying the connection between supportive teacher-student relationships and Black male students' academic success in urban middle schools. From researching this topic, I've learned that supportive relationships with teachers can benefit all students, but especially Black male students, who may not feel a sense of belonging in their classrooms, which can have an impact on their classroom behavior and academic performance. By better understanding this connection between supportive teacher-student relationships and Black male students' academic success, I aim to help educational leaders make informed decisions about choosing teacher professional development that can decrease the opportunity gap and the discipline gap for Black male students.

I'm contacting you to ask permission for your student to participate in my research study. All RCMS students qualify to be participants in this study, regardless of their race and gender. If you agree to allow your student to participate, within the first few months of school, I'll send them an anonymous online survey concerning the teacher-student relationships and sense of classroom belonging as they perceive them in their current English class and current math class. The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. I'll send the survey link through JupiterEd or school email, and your student will have 2 weeks to take the survey outside of school. Students won't be graded for participating, and, because the surveys are anonymous, teachers won't have access to students' scores. All student participants will be entered into a drawing to receive one of two $25 gift cards. Note that your student's participation in this research study is not required to participate in the drawing. If you choose not to have your student participate in the study but would like for him or her to be included in the drawing, please send me an email with your student's name, grade, and student ID#.

I've attached a UCLA Research Study Information sheet for your review. I'll be sending your student a student version of this UCLA Research Study Information sheet as well. If you would like more information about the research study or the surveys, you can email me directly at eanglenewman@cuca.k12.ca.us.

Thank you for considering my request!

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[2] The Parent Email was sent to parents in English and in Spanish.

STUDENT EMAIL

Hi! My name is Mrs. Angle-Newman, and I'm conducting a study as part of my Educational Leadership Program at UCLA. I'm asking all students at your middle school to participate in this study, regardless of their race or gender. Participating in this research study is voluntary.

By conducting this study, I hope to learn more about how teachers in urban middle schools develop supportive relationships with their students, especially their Black male students. Research shows that supportive teacher-student relationships can have a positive impact on students' achievement and social-emotional well-being.

Participating in this study means that in the first few months of the 2021-2022 school year, you would take an online survey from home about the relationship you have with your current English teacher and current math teacher. The survey takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. It's also anonymous, so no one, not even your teachers, will know what you answered on the survey.

If you've had a bad relationship with a teacher in the past, you may be reminded of it when you take this survey.

You may benefit from the study by being able to share your personal feelings about the relationship you have with your English teacher and math teacher. Also, the results of the research may help adults at your school improve relationships between teachers and students, especially Black male students.

Please talk all this over with your parents. I'll also ask your parents to give their permission for you to participate in this study. If they do give their permission, I'll email you the online anonymous survey through your school email account. If you want to participate in the study, before you take the survey, you'll need to check the box that says you "assent," or agree to participate. You can choose not to participate in the study by checking the box that says you do not assent to participate.

Even if your parents give their permission, you don't have to participate in this study. Remember, being in this study is your choice and you won't upset anyone if you choose not to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.

If you have any questions about the study, you can call me at 909-987-8942 ext. 8352 or email me at eanglenewman@cuca.k12.ca.us.

APPENDIX D

TEACHER SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This survey collects information on five teacher social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, relationship/social skills, and responsible decision making. Thank you so much for giving your time and honesty to this research project. If you'd like to learn more about teacher social-emotional competencies, visit casel.org.

1 Which option below best describes your gender?
- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary

2 Which subject/s do you teach?
- ○ English/Social Science
- ○ English Only
- ○ Social Science Only
- ○ Math/Science
- ○ Math Only
- ○ Science Only
- ○ Elective
- ○ P.E.

3 Which option best describes your race or ethnicity?
- ○ African-American/Black
- ○ Hispanic/LatinX
- ○ White
- ○ Asian
- ○ Multiracial (African-American/Black and one or more races)
- ○ Multiracial (Hispanic/LatinX and one or more races)

4 How many years have you worked as a teacher?
- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11-15 years
- ○ 16-20 years
- ○ More than 20 years

5 How much professional training have you had to help you build supportive relationships with students? Check all that apply.

☐ Before I was hired as a teacher, my teaching credential program included training on building supportive relationships with students.

☐ As a teacher, I've attended one professional training on building supportive relationships with students.

☐ As a teacher, I've attended two professional trainings on building supportive relationships with students.

☐ As a teacher, I've attended three professional trainings on building supportive relationships with students.

☐ As a teacher, I've attended more than three professional trainings on building supportive relationships with students.

☐ As a teacher, I've never had any professional training on building supportive relationships with students.

6 Think about your social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your students' social, emotional, and academic skills. Please use the scoring guide below to rate yourself on how your social and emotional competencies influence your teaching practices with your students. Consider each statement and score yourself according to where each statement holds true for you.

Strongly disagree. I have a difficult time with this practice. I know I do some of the things mentioned, but I do not necessarily find them relevant to my teaching.

Disagree. I demonstrate some of these skills with my students. I think with more practice and/or more support, I could demonstrate these skills more to improve implementation of this practice.

Agree. I am strong in this area. I know I do a good job modeling these skills for my students. I use these skills most of the time when I implement the instructional practices.

Strongly agree. I am very strong in this area. I am able to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.

Self-Awareness

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of the social-emotional skills that I need to improve upon as a teacher and to grow professionally.	○	○	○	○
I am able to examine my own conscious and unconscious beliefs, and consider whether they hold negative stereotypes about students' cultural and stylistic codes.	○	○	○	○
I am usually aware of how my emotions, culturally grounded beliefs, and background are precursors to my emotional reactions, and I understand how they impact my teaching practices with my students.	○	○	○	○
I understand how student responses (positive and negative) affect my emotions and my behaviors during my teaching practices.	○	○	○	○

Self-Management

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement my teaching practices with students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.	○	○	○	○
I effectively use multiple strategies (e.g., breathing techniques and mindfulness) when I have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom (e.g., stress, anger).	○	○	○	○
Through the effective management of my emotions (e.g., use of stress reduction techniques), I am better able to implement my teaching practices, use equitable approaches to discipline, and develop a positive learning environment that is free from bias and prejudice.	○	○	○	○
I model behaviors (e.g., form guidelines, set boundaries) to help students learn to regulate their own emotions.	○	○	○	○

Social Awareness

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I usually understand the perspectives of my students from diverse backgrounds and cultures and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	○	○	○	○
I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating in class, and I am usually successful at providing my students the necessary skills to participate in class.	○	○	○	○
I successfully support positive emotions and successfully respond to negative emotions during class.	○	○	○	○
In class, I address the commonalities and differences (e.g,. racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students.	○	○	○	○

Relationship/Social Skills

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In class, I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths.	○	○	○	○
I am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during class, and I have experienced success with this.	○	○	○	○
I use class time to help form supportive relationships with my students, and I am usually successful at building supportive relationships with them.	○	○	○	○
I use class time to help form supportive relationships with Black male students, and I am usually successful at building supportive relationships with them.	○	○	○	○
I use class time to create an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of race or culture, feel they belong, and I am usually successful at building an inclusive environment.	○	○	○	○

Responsible Decision Making

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am effective at considering multiple forms of evidence, such as balancing the needs and the behaviors of my entire class, while implementing my teaching practices.	○	○	○	○
I regularly include my students and/or collaborate with colleagues to solve problems that arise in the classroom related to my teaching practices.	○	○	○	○
When I am teaching, I balance students' emotional needs and academic needs.	○	○	○	○
I stay focused and consistent when I implement my discipline practices.	○	○	○	○
I make it a practice to consider the impact my discipline practices may have on students from diverse backgrounds or cultures.	○	○	○	○

12 Do you find it challenging to build supportive relationships with your students? Why or why not?

13 Do you find it challenging to build supportive relationships with your Black male students? Why or why not?

STUDENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This research study gives you an opportunity to express your feelings about the relationship you have with your English teacher and your math teacher, and the way you feel about being in your English class and math class.

Please answer all the survey questions. Take your time and make sure the answers you choose are true to your feelings. Your opinion matters!

Thanks for participating in this survey! The data collected from the survey will help school leaders make informed decisions about your learning experience.

1 Please give your consent to participate in this research study.
- o Yes, I want to participate in this research study.
- o No, I do not want to participate in this research study.

2 Which option best describes your race or ethnicity?
- o African-American/Black
- o Hispanic/LatinX
- o White
- o Asian
- o Multiracial (African-American/Black and other races)
- o Multiracial (Hispanic/LatinX and other races)

3 Which option best describes your gender?
- o Male
- o Female
- o Non-binary

4 What grade are you in?
- o 6th grade
- o 7th grade
- o 8th grade

5 Which of the teachers below is your 6th/7th/8th grade English teacher?

6 Which of the teachers below is your 6th/7th/8th grade math teacher?

Read the following statements about you and the English teacher you have this year. Then, using the options below, rate how true each statement is to your relationship with this teacher.

7 Click the circle under the option that seems most true to you about each statement.

	Not at all true.	Somewhat *not* true	I'm not sure.	Somewhat true.	Completely true.
I feel close to my English teacher and comfortable when he/she is around.	○	○	○	○	○
My English teacher and I always have problems with each other.	○	○	○	○	○
If I'm upset, I'll go to my English teacher for comfort.	○	○	○	○	○
My English teacher makes me uncomfortable if he/she gets too close to me.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship I have with my English teacher is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
When my English teacher praises me, it makes me feel good about myself.	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes, without thinking, I share information about myself with my English teacher.	○	○	○	○	○
My English teacher gets angry with me over nothing.	○	○	○	○	○
My English teacher seems to understand what I'm feeling.	○	○	○	○	○
I stay angry with my English teacher or hold a grudge if he/she disciplines or corrects me.	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with my English teacher wears me out.	○	○	○	○	○
Walking into my English teacher's class puts me in a bad mood.	○	○	○	○	○
One minute my English teacher acts like he/she likes me, and the next minute he/she doesn't.	○	○	○	○	○
My English teacher is sneaky with me and tries to play me.	○	○	○	○	○
I have no problem sharing my personal feelings or experiences with my English teacher.	○	○	○	○	○

8 Optional: Is there anything you'd like us to know about the relationship you have with your English teacher? (It's okay if you have something negative to say, but be polite so we can take your opinion seriously.)

9 Read the following statements about the way you feel about being in your English class this year. Using the options below, rate how true each statement is to your feelings.

	Not at all true.	Somewhat not true.	I'm not sure.	Somewhat true.	Completely true.
I feel like I'm a part of my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
People in my English class notice when I'm good at something.	○	○	○	○	○
It's hard for people like me to be accepted in this English class.	○	○	○	○	○
Other students in my English class take my opinions seriously.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher of my English class likes me.	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes I feel like I don't belong in my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
I can talk to the teacher of my English class if I have a problem.	○	○	○	○	○
Students in my English class are friendly to me.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher of my English class does not like people like me.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm included in lots of activities in my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm treated with as much respect as the other students in my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel very different from most of the other students in my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
I can really be myself in my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher of my English class respects me.	○	○	○	○	○
The people in my English class know that I can do good work.	○	○	○	○	○
I wish I were in a different English class.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel proud to be a part of my English class.	○	○	○	○	○
Other students in my English class like me the way I am.	○	○	○	○	○

10 Optional: Is there anything else you'd like us to know about the way you feel being in your English class? (It's okay if you have something negative to say, but be polite so we can take your opinion seriously.)

11 Read the following statements about you and the math teacher you have this year. Then, using the options below, rate how true each statement is to your relationship with this teacher.

Click the circle under the option that seems most true to you about each statement.

	Not at all true.	Somewhat *not* true	I'm not sure.	Somewhat true.	Completely true.
I feel close to my math teacher and comfortable when he/she is around.	○	○	○	○	○
My math teacher and I always have problems with each other.	○	○	○	○	○
If I'm upset, I'll go to my math teacher for comfort.	○	○	○	○	○
My math teacher makes me uncomfortable if he/she gets too close to me.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship I have with my math teacher is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
When my math teacher praises me, it makes me feel good about myself.	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes, without thinking, I share information about myself with my math teacher.	○	○	○	○	○
My math teacher gets angry with me over nothing.	○	○	○	○	○
My math teacher seems to understand what I'm feeling.	○	○	○	○	○
I stay angry with my math teacher or hold a grudge if he/she disciplines or corrects me.	○	○	○	○	○
Dealing with my math teacher wears me out.	○	○	○	○	○
Walking into my math teacher's class puts me in a bad mood.	○	○	○	○	○
One minute my math teacher acts like he/she likes me, and the next minute he/she doesn't.	○	○	○	○	○
My math teacher is sneaky with me and tries to play me.	○	○	○	○	○
I have no problem sharing my personal feelings or experiences with my math teacher.	○	○	○	○	○

12 Optional: Is there anything you'd like us to know about the relationship you have with your math teacher? (It's okay if you have something negative to say, but be polite so we can take your opinion seriously.)

13 Read the following statements about the way you feel about being in your math class this year. Using the options below, rate how true each statement is to your feelings.

	Not at all true.	Somewhat not true.	I'm not sure.	Somewhat true.	Completely true.
I feel like I'm a part of my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
People in my math class notice when I'm good at something.	○	○	○	○	○
It's hard for people like me to be accepted in this math class.	○	○	○	○	○
Other students in my math class take my opinions seriously.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher of my math class likes me.	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes I feel like I don't belong in my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
I can talk to the teacher of my math class if I have a problem.	○	○	○	○	○
Students in my math class are friendly to me.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher of my math class does not like people like me.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm included in lots of activities in my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm treated with as much respect as the other students in my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel very different from most of the other students in my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
I can really be myself in my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
The teacher of my math class respects me.	○	○	○	○	○
The people in my math class know that I can do good work.	○	○	○	○	○
I wish I were in a different math class.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel proud to be a part of my math class.	○	○	○	○	○
Other students in my math class like me the way I am.	○	○	○	○	○

14 Optional: Is there anything else you'd like us to know about the way you feel being in your math class? (It's okay if you have something negative to say, but be polite so we can take your opinion seriously.)

15 Which 6th/7th/8th grade teacher do you have the most supportive relationship with this year?

16 In which of your classes do you feel the greatest sense of belonging?
- ○ My English class
- ○ My social science class
- ○ My math class
- ○ My science class
- ○ My art class
- ○ My PE class
- ○ My music/band class
- ○ My Mac computer class
- ○ My ASB class
- ○ My Spanish class
- ○ My ELD class
- ○ My AVID class
- ○ My leadership class
- ○ My PC Computer class
- ○ None of these

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