

Using Parental Input from Black Families to Increase Cultural Responsiveness for Teaching SWPBS Expectations

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ABSTRACT: Despite the positive effects of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) on school discipline, the overrepresentation of Black students in discipline data in SWPBS schools has alerted researchers and educators to initiate discussion about the need to blend culturally responsive pedagogy and the SWPBS approach. This qualitative research study attempts to add to this discussion by (a) exploring the perspectives of Black parents on SWPBS behavioral expectations using ethnographic interviewing, (b) incorporating parental input in the instructional design of a culturally responsive social skill curriculum, and (c) assessing the perceptions of parents and SWPBS team members on the curriculum content and design using social validity questionnaires. Results and discussion are provided in relation to findings of descriptive themes (e.g., respect, safety, family interactions, school–family interactions) from the parent ethnographic interviews and the value of using parental input to increase cultural responsiveness of school-wide behavioral expectations.

■ Implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) has been on the rise in public schools as a prevention and intervention approach for decreasing student problem behavior and supporting all students and staff at the school level (Sugai & Horner, 2009). SWPBS is a framework that consists of a continuum of evidence-based practices and organizational systems, emphasizing data-driven decision making, team-based problem solving, and multitiered systems of support to achieve academic and social success of all students (Lo, Algozzine, Algozzine, Horner, & Sugai, 2010; Sugai et al., 2010). Recent reviews and meta-analyses show promising empirical support for the effectiveness of SWPBS in reducing problem behavior, as reflected in decreased office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) and suspension rates as well as improved staff perceptions of school safety and overall organizational health (Chitiyo, May, & Chitiyo, 2012; Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey, & Peller, 2012).

Despite reported aggregate benefits of SWPBS, overrepresentation in ODRs and exclusionary practices for Black students remain even after implementing SWPBS (Vincent, Swain-Bradway, Tobin, & May, 2011; Vincent & Tobin, 2011). Note that we used “Black” instead of “African American” throughout this paper to be more inclusive of the student and parent

participants. “Black” and “African American” are considered synonyms to represent “a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa” (Kena et al., 2015, p. vii). Vincent, Swain-Bradway, et al. (2011) examined disaggregated ODR data from 153 elementary schools implementing SWPBS and reported that SWPBS reduced disciplinary gaps between White students and students with all other racial/ethnic backgrounds. However, ODR overrepresentation of Black students in those schools continued to be statistically significant. Racial/ethnic disproportionality in school discipline has long been a concern with conclusive data showing that Black students have the highest odds of receiving ODRs and being suspended or expelled for minor infractions relative to their percentage in the population and in comparison to their White peers (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Researchers have discussed staff implicit bias, cultural mismatch, and racial stereotyping as factors influencing disproportionate representation of Black students (Skiba et al., 2011; Swain-Bradway, Loman, & Vincent, 2014; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). Skiba et al. (2011) specifically argued the differentiation of classroom-level selection (e.g., referring students on subjective categories, such as disrespect or noncompliance) and administrative-level processing

(e.g., applying harsher consequences for minor violations) contributed to the disproportionality of Black students related to school discipline.

Building cultural responsiveness in school practices has been identified as a key solution to reducing disproportionality of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, including Black students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Cartledge, Lo, Vincent, & Robinson-Ervin, 2015; Gay, 2010; Howard & Terry, 2011). Recently, specific attention has been paid to addressing cultural and contextual relevance within SWPBS implementation (Fallon, O’Keeffe, Gage, & Sugai, 2015; Sugai, O’Keeffe, & Fallon, 2012; Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011). Swain-Bradway et al. (2014) discussed the importance of blending culturally responsive pedagogy and SWPBS to address the disparity in disciplinary practices for Black students. One important recommendation for being culturally responsive is for school staff to gain knowledge of students’ and parents’ unique cultures, characteristics, and prior experiences or learning histories (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Fallon, O’Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012; Gay, 2010; Howard & Terry, 2011).

The understanding of students’ cultures and heritages as a means to minimize implicit biases and cultural mismatch becomes particularly relevant in defining, teaching, and acknowledging school-wide behavioral expectations within the context of SWPBS. Lynass, Tsai, Richman, and Cheney (2012) examined behavioral matrices of 155 SWPBS elementary schools from 12 regionally representative states and found that classroom social expectations and behavior indicators in the sample are more alike than different with respect, responsibility, and safety being the top three most frequently used expectations. On one hand, these researchers acknowledged that the SWPBS staff training may have influenced the results and the teachers’ prioritized concerns of student behavior. On the other hand, they suggested results may indicate a lack of cultural relevance in the development of school expectations for students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Explicit teaching of clearly defined social expectations and behavioral indicators across school areas is one of the fundamental features of SWPBS (Sugai et al., 2010). To address the disproportionality of Black students, integrating cultural responsiveness into the definition and instruction of school-wide and classroom

expectations will likely be one of the first steps that can strengthen the effectiveness of SWPBS implementation. To do so, Lynass et al. (2012) and Swain-Bradway et al. (2014) advised school staff to address how parents perceive the valued outcomes and school-wide expectations and to involve parents in defining behavioral expectations that can appropriately represent the cultures of students. In his discussion of promoting family participation within SWPBS, Lewis (2011) referred to this type of outcome as building *awareness*, when parents and school staff share information about SWPBS expectations, implementation procedures, and student behavioral performance. In the process of building awareness, school staff can recognize cultural differences within diverse families (particularly Black families for the purpose of this paper) and gain a deeper understanding about the cultural gap that may have contributed to the overrepresentation of Black students in school discipline.

Within the traditional SWPBS framework, parental participation has been a natural part of the secondary (e.g., check in check out) and tertiary (e.g., function-based interventions or wraparound services) levels of prevention whereas parental involvement has been sporadic at the universal level (e.g., active member of SWPBS team). According to McIntosh et al. (2014), parental involvement continues to be one of the weaker features in SWPBS implementation, yet in the study’s national sample of SWPBS teams, parent involvement was determined to be highly important to the SWPBS sustainability. In order to build cultural responsiveness and to enhance positive outcomes of SWPBS for Black students, strengthening parental involvement at the universal level (such as defining school-wide expectations) is a crucial step.

Understanding parents’ perspectives about school-wide and classroom expectations requires discovering information about their cultural values and beliefs. Hence, qualitative research, and particularly ethnographic investigations, allows researchers to go deep and follow a dynamic approach to investigate those perspectives (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). Ethnographic research, initially used by anthropologists and sociologists, purports to describe and interpret a cultural or social group by using a number of tools (e.g., extensive fieldwork, participant observations, interviews). In the present study, we focused only on one specific element of

ethnographic research (i.e., ethnographic interviewing) rather than conducting an entire ethnographic study. We decided to follow this methodological approach to obtain specific information from Black parents by using specific language and tools from the ethnographic interviewing process (see description in the Method section) with the goal of developing a social skill curriculum for teaching school-wide and classroom expectations.

We used an ethnographic interviewing approach to elicit and report the perspectives of Black family members because, as Frank (2011) argued, “it is only when we see from a different vantage point that we break the cycle of rigid certainty” (p. 7). In contrast to the traditional interview, ethnographic interviewing is operated from the standpoint of interviewer’s admitted ignorance (“I do not know much about ___, so let’s find out.”) with a goal to permit the interviewees to provide a vivid description of their experiences (Westby, Burda, & Mehta, 2003). The use of ethnographic interviews with the participating Black parents allowed us to gain insights about how these parents understand and interpret the school-wide expectations. Through the ethnographic interviewing process, valuable themes can be obtained that permit the blending of cultural responsiveness and the social skill curriculum for teaching school-wide expectations. Therefore, the purposes of this study were to: (a) explore Black parents’ perspectives, through their own lens, on the school-wide expectations and classroom behavior indicators in a SWPBS elementary school; (b) use the parents’ input to develop a culturally responsive social skill curriculum for teaching school-wide and classroom expectations; and (c) assess the perceptions of the participating parents and SWPBS team members on the appropriateness, feasibility, and goals of the curriculum content and design.

Method

Setting

The study took place at the ABC School (pseudonym), a Title I public elementary school in the southeastern region of the United States with 389 students (47% White, 20% Black, 23% Latino, 2% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 5% multiracial). Sixty-five percent of students received free or reduced lunch, 9% received special education services, and 25% attended the English as a Second Language

program. This study was a part of a European grant project entailing a 2-year university–school partnership with local schools on SWPBS implementation framework. The school had been implementing SWPBS for more than 7 years and maintained a PBS exemplar state recognition status for the previous 3 years. To receive the exemplar state recognition in SWPBS implementation, a school must have successfully completed all team training modules designed by the state; have scored a Level 3 or higher on the Implementation Inventory (Lewis & Newcomer, 2005) and 95% total on the School-wide Evaluation Tool (Horner et al., 2004); have shown improvement in the required behavioral, attendance, and academic data for at least 2 consecutive years; and have documented at least one additional data collection system for data tracking. The ABC School identified being *respectful*, *responsible*, and *safe* as the school-wide expectations that guided the core values of the school and the behavioral curriculum. The behavior matrix developed by the ABC School included specific behavior indicators that exemplified the three expectations across seven settings (i.e., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus, assemblies, restrooms, and classrooms). Because the parents identified the school to be the most convenient place to meet, all interviews occurred in an office space within the school with no physical interruptions. Each interview occurred on a different day and lasted 30–75 min.

In collaboration with the ABC School’s SWPBS leadership team, we determined the focus of this study based on the prior year’s ODR data in two ways. First, there was an overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic male students in the ODR data with the first group exhibiting the highest level of overrepresentation (in comparison to the student population). Thus, we targeted Black students for intervention. Second, the SWPBS leadership team indicated that it was most beneficial for kindergarten students to receive the culturally responsive social skill instruction due to the school’s prevention efforts and a high number of ODR in kindergarten classes. As a result, we targeted kindergarteners and focused on classroom behavior indicators.

Participants

The study involved three parent participants, who were nominated for participation by the school administrators. They were selected because: (a) they had origins in one of the

Black racial groups of Africa; (b) had a Black child in kindergarten class; and (c) their child had been identified by the classroom teachers and administrators as experiencing behavioral difficulties, who would benefit from additional instruction in learning classroom expectations. Participants happened to be all females who had been collaborating closely with the school staff to address their children's needs. We intentionally focused on acquiring thick and rich descriptions of the parents' cultural perspectives on the school's behavioral expectations by targeting a small number of participants. All names below are pseudonyms.

Ms. Hartman

Ms. Hartman was in her late 20s, originally from the U.S. Virgin Islands. She was a mother of four boys between the ages of 7 months and 7 years old. All of them resided with Ms. Hartman and her boyfriend in the same house. Ms. Hartman previously had one marriage from which she had the two older boys (5 and 7 years old). During the study, Ms. Hartman reported being employed and had previous experience as a daycare employee. She noted having a strong family support system.

Ms. Riggins

Ms. Riggins was in her early 30s, originally from the southeastern part of the United States. She was a single parent of four children, two boys and two girls between 3 and 12 years old. Ms. Riggins was unemployed at the time of the interview and was attending school as a part-time student.

Mrs. Akinde

Mrs. Akinde was in her late 30s, originally from Nigeria. She identified herself as a first-generation Nigerian American. She was married to a native Nigerian man and had three young boys (two under the age of 5 and one 5-year old). Mrs. Akinde reported spending most of her life living in the northeastern part of the United States. Her educational background included two bachelor's degrees in economics and nursing and a master's degree in public administration; she was employed as a nurse during the time of the interview. Mrs. Akinde noted a very strong family support system, in which her immediate family was able to maintain their Nigerian customs and

traditions. All family members were bilingual in English and Yoruba, one of the official languages in Nigeria.

Procedures of Interview Development

We followed a two-step process for developing the ethnographic interview guide. First, we produced a set of questions addressing the school-wide expectations. Second, we sent the guide to two experts for content review in order to establish the face validity and adherence to the ethnographic methodology. We also conducted a mock interview with a third expert on qualitative research for refining our ethnographic administration process.

Step 1: Development of Ethnographic Interview Guide

The interview guide followed the guidelines suggested by Spradley (1979) and Westby et al. (2003) for developing an ethnographic interview guide. The guide included questions from three ethnographic categories: descriptive, structural, and contrast questions. Descriptive questions exist in all types of interviews; in this study, we focused on questions that allowed us to start the conversation by outlining the big picture of the family's experiences. Specifically, we started with grand tour questions that guided parents to share broad experiences about people (e.g., family, student), space (e.g., home, school), events (e.g., playtime, family gatherings), and goals (e.g., steps taken to foster culture in children). These opening questions set the stage for identifying important thoughts and ideas parents had on the topic early on in the interview process. For instance, in response to one of the grand tour questions, "Tell me about your son," the parents described their first and most important concern about their child. Based on the parents' initial responses, we proceeded with mini tour questions that prompted parents to provide concrete examples of these broad experiences (e.g., "What are some of the things you would say to him about being safe?"). Parents' responses often revealed repeated issues or words that we viewed as significant for further inquiry. Hence, we introduced structural questions. The structural questions focused on investigating possible relationships between those repeated issues or words. For example, one parent repeated the issue that her son had a "smart mouth" in the interview. We

attempted to gain further understanding of the social context in which the parent used this phrase. For this purpose, we asked a structural question (e.g., “You said he might have a smart mouth. What are some things he would say that might be acceptable to his father?”). With the structural questions, we were able to examine how the parents organized their cultural knowledge by sharing further their life experiences. A final category was the contrast questions. These questions focused on determining the meaning of certain terms the parents incorporated in their descriptions. In a typical interview guide, such questions would have started as “Why do you say this?” “What do you mean by this?” and so forth. In ethnographic interviews, we were intentional in searching those life experiences by avoiding questions that would evoke commonly acceptable and socially desirable responses. Instead, our contrast questions prompted parents to respond by giving more specific explanations of the terms used. For instance, a parent stated that her son could “go over and beyond” when being at his grandmother’s home. We asked a contrast question (e.g., “And what sort of things would he do to go over and beyond?”) that prompted the parent to define “over and beyond” using her cultural framework to posit her response. Throughout the interview guide, we alternated all three categories of ethnographic questions to document the family’s life experiences with respect to the three school-wide expectations. Examples of specific questions we introduced with respect to the school-wide expectations were “What are some things you talk with your child about respect being shown in the classroom?” “If your child came home with crumpled homework, what would be your response to that?” and “What are some things you talk with your child about being safe in the classroom?”

Step 2: Field Reviews of Ethnographic Interview Guide

Two university professors with expertise in ethnographic research, cultural diversity, and multicultural pedagogy reviewed the interview guide using a 10-item evaluation checklist, in which they recorded the presence of specific ethnographic interview elements. The evaluation criteria were based on Spradley’s (1979) recommendations. The experts could also provide narrative feedback in the open-ended section. Field reviewers’ scores were 8 and 10 (out

of 10). Based on the reviewers’ qualitative comments, we revised our guide content to include questions specifically addressing the parents’ cultures (e.g., touching as play among Black children). We also conducted a mock interview with a third expert in qualitative research. The third author served as the interviewer and practiced with the expert administering an interview. After the interview practice, we revised again our interview guide and administration procedures.

Procedures of Interview Administration

In the presence of the first author, the school counselor contacted each of the parents to schedule an interview appointment with the third author (i.e., interviewer). The school counselor served as the primary contact to make the phone calls due to her positive relationship with the parents. During each phone communication, the school counselor (a) informed the parent about the school’s collaboration with a university research team on supporting the school’s SWPBS practices and (b) invited the parent to participate in the project to share her own perspectives on the school’s behavioral expectations, which would contribute to the development of a culturally responsive social skill curriculum. With parental consent, the third author met with each participant at a predetermined time and date on the school campus.

During the ethnographic interview, the interviewer approached the interview process as friendly “speech events” to allow for discovering questions based on participants’ responses (Spradley, 1979). First, the interviewer began the interview with a greeting and an introduction informing parents about her research role, prior experiences as a teacher, her family life, and the purpose of the meeting. This description helped parents feel at ease at the start of the interview and conveyed the message to them that the interview was not taking an interrogative format about them and the school. Establishing a positive and friendly rapport allowed the interviewer to introduce a grand tour question and then continue with other descriptive, structural, and contrast questions. Shortly after the grand tour questions, the interviewer expressed cultural ignorance by articulating the research team’s need to learn from the parents about the school-wide expectations. With this ethnographic element, we attempted to help parents realize that their

role in this meeting was greater than they might have thought initially. The interviewer actively listened to the parents' responses and waited to discover information. On occasions when parents digressed, the interviewer continued listening for a few minutes and then rephrased the question. At the beginning and middle of the interview, the interviewer provided an ethnographic explanation about the study, expressing the research team's interest in understanding participants' thoughts on what the school-wide expectations meant to them and their family. The ethnographic interview process entailed continuous repeating and restating of parents' views to allow for thick and detailed responses.

It is important to note that we recognized it would be difficult to gain parents' trust based on only one interview. As a result, we implemented specific steps early in the interview to build trust by (a) communicating clearly to parents about their right to share as much or as little as they wished, (b) asserting that parents' responses would not be shared with the school personnel, (c) stating that we were serving as advocates for families of Black children, and (d) listening and responding in a nonjudgmental verbal and nonverbal way throughout the interview.

Interview Administration Adherence

In order to ensure adherence to the ethnographic interview elements, the first author listened to two of the three audio-recorded interviews and scored adherence using a 10-item integrity checklist. The integrity checklist was developed based on the guidelines suggested by Spradley (1979) and Westby et al. (2003). Once the first interview was completed, the first author assessed the procedural integrity of the interview and the administration adherence was 85%. The first and third authors had a discussion about the missing steps. An integrity check of the second interview yielded adherence of 100%.

Design and Data Analysis

This qualitative research design used specific principles and guidelines from ethnographic interview research to describe and explore Black parents' perspectives on the school-wide expectations. Parent interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. We conducted the thematic analysis in two

stages. The first stage involved the identification of themes related to the three school-wide expectations. We used those themes to develop a culturally responsive social skill curriculum for teaching kindergarten Black children school-wide expectations. The second stage involved obtaining more detailed insights regarding parent participants' life experiences, aiming to assist in the development of culturally responsive SWPBS at a broader level.

During the first stage of analysis, the first author used an inductive process and read the transcripts several times to familiarize herself with the data and to identify data patterns and possible themes related to the school-wide expectations. Then, she developed a codebook draft and used it during an open coding process of the first interview. An iterative process followed that resulted in revisions of category definitions and themes during the coding of the remaining interviews. Definitions of potential themes were drafted and checked against the other themes and the original transcripts in order to establish internal coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness. When coding was completed with categories identified, specific themes were determined to be incorporated in the social skill curriculum. A second stage of analysis then took place to identify additional themes with respect to parents' life experiences (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The third author independently coded 66% of randomly selected transcripts using the codebook's rules and definitions in order to establish inter-coder agreement. Inter-coder agreement was calculated based on point-by-point comparison. Data showed a mean inter-coder agreement of 81% across coded units over two randomly selected interviews. After a consensus meeting with both coders, the agreement reached 100% for unit coding (Patton, 2015).

Credibility Measures

We administered four measures to establish the credibility of this study. First, we involved investigator triangulation during the design of the study. We included three experts in qualitative research to assess the content validity of our interview guide and administration procedures. Second, we established acceptable inter-coder agreement on the coded data. Third, we maintained an audit trail for keeping track of interviews conducted at specific times and on specific dates. Finally,

we employed an external auditor to examine the coherence and research basis of the study's inferences and findings (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The external auditor was a university professor with expertise in qualitative research. The external auditor provided positive feedback regarding the study's theoretical framework and methodological procedures. For instance, she commented,

The questions that I read as relevant are focused on whether a curriculum like the SWPBS is actually culturally responsive, and how it can become so for specific populations that are traditionally positioned as at risk—many times, because of their cultural distance from the school norm rather than any pathological basis. I look forward to seeing how this is deconstructed.

The auditor provided suggestions for reporting the study's findings by emphasizing certain aspects of the study to the readership. For instance: "Again, I am wondering how the parents' responses related to school-wide expectations and programs. This would help me understand the proximity/distance between the parents and the school and thus see how the culturally responsive was perceived in the study." We addressed thoroughly and carefully all the auditor's comments.

Development of Social Skill Curriculum

As mentioned previously, the first stage of data analysis involved identifying specific themes from the parent interviews in order to develop a culturally responsive social skill curriculum for teaching school-wide expectations to Black children. The ABC School identified 11 expected behavior indicators for the classroom setting as shown in the SWPBS behavior matrix with four indicators for *respect*, four for *responsibility*, and three for *safety*. For consistency, we grouped two indicators together for both the *respect* and *responsibility* expectations based on content similarity so that there were three lessons for each school-wide expectation (for a total of nine lessons). Development of the social skill curriculum followed an iterative curriculum design process focusing on the content and structural components of the curriculum. Specifically, we analyzed parents' responses from the ethnographic interviews by identifying appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for each school-wide behavioral expectation (see *Table 1*). It is important to note that the purpose of this study was not to assess the cultural relevance of the

school-wide expectations, but to redefine their meaning using parents' input. Notably, we matched parents' input to the school's "defined" behavior indicators for the classroom settings because we did not mention any of the indicators (e.g., being considerate of other's property, being a problem solver) specifically to the parents during the interviews.

With respect to curriculum structure, we used three related areas of literature to guide our work. First, all lessons adhered to explicit social skill instruction literature emphasizing important components of skill definition and rationale, modeling, behavioral rehearsals with performance feedback, and strategies to promote maintenance and generalization (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995). Second, the lessons followed Robinson-Ervin, Cartledge, and Keyes' (2011) guidelines on developing culturally responsive social skill instruction for Black students to include important skills for instruction, use culturally relevant materials, include culturally competent peer models, integrate student personal experiences, and allow opportunities for students to apply learned skills within a natural environment. Finally, the lessons mirrored the lesson format in Microsoft PowerPoint developed by Lo, Correa, and Anderson (2015) in their empirical research on a computer-assisted, culturally responsive social skill instructional program with a few modifications to be age-appropriate for kindergarten students (e.g., embedded voice-over for all text, explanations, and scenarios; included video models of same-age Black peers demonstrating the skill). To ensure lesson consistency, we developed all lessons by following a 30-item content validity checklist (available from the authors). The checklist addressed structural components (21 items) and aspects pertaining to cultural responsiveness (nine items).

Social Validity

To obtain the potential feasibility, appropriateness, and usefulness of the social skill curriculum, three core members (i.e., coach, chair, administrator) of the ABC School's SWPBS team reviewed three randomly selected PowerPoint lessons each and completed a 14-item social validity questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 11 items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and three

TABLE 1
Examples of Parents' Input on Appropriate and Inappropriate Behavior Indicators for Each School-wide Expectation

Schoolwide Expectations	Parents' Input	Classroom Behavior Indicators
Be respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Use arm space/length" • "Not touching others' belongings/things" • "If it's not yours, don't take it. Don't be destructive of other people's property" • "Listening and sharing and the things he is supposed to do; be on best behavior" • "Do what your teachers ask you to do" • "Greet and address someone by name (not he/she) and with a title (Mr./Ms.) especially if older" • "Do not jump in others' zone" • "Do not use a smart mouth, mouth-wise, or talk back to people" • "Do not touch others" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be considerate of others' property • Follow directions & classroom routines, allow others to learn • Use kind words and actions
Be responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Remember there is always an answer and figure out your answer" • "Find a 'solution' when someone cuts in line" • "Provide help to someone who is having a problem with schoolwork or cheer him/her up when seeing a student having a bad day" • "The way you keep your things reflects the way you want others to treat your things" • "Get things out of the book bag and put them where they need to be" • "Do not keep book bag on the floor" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a problem solver • Be prepared and on time, participate, and do quality work
Be safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It may be okay to play rough at home, but not at school" • "Pay attention to your surroundings" • "Stay together ... and do not wander off" • "Use scissors appropriately" • "Do not play with outlets" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep all areas neat • Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself • Transition carefully • Use materials and equipment carefully

open-ended items. It addressed aspects related to the need for the school-wide expectations to be culturally responsive, the benefits of involving parents in the definition of school-wide expectations, the appropriateness of the lessons for addressing Black students' needs, and the potential value of the culturally responsive lessons in the school's effort to reduce disproportionality for Black students. Further, two of the parents, who were available to meet for a second time, reviewed a randomly selected PowerPoint lesson and completed a seven-item questionnaire. Five items required the parents to rate their perceptions using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being least important or least appropriate and 5 being most important or most appropriate. These items addressed the importance of involving parents' views on school-wide core value and classroom expectations, the degree to

which parents' input was embedded in the sample lesson, and the extent to which the sample lesson attended to parents' cultural values and was appropriate for their child's learning. Two additional open-ended items allowed parents to share their thoughts on the culturally responsive social skill lesson.

Results

Descriptive Themes

The content analysis of the interview transcripts yielded six major themes from 167 coded units and 15 categories. Based on parent responses, we found 72 units for respect, 13 units for responsibility, and 24 units for safety (from the first stage of analysis) as well as 23 units for family interactions, 11 units for

school–family interactions, and 24 units for community–family interactions (from the second stage of analysis).

Respect

Respect was the most frequently represented theme in the parents' responses. All parents described incidences of respectful and disrespectful behavior based on their life experiences across various settings (e.g., home, family events, school). Two parents described respect incorporating a cultural explanation, and the third parent considered respect based on specific family life events. For instance, Ms. Hartman, the single mother of four young boys, described how "playing" was viewed in her own cultural group:

My family...we're actually from the U.S. Virgin Islands. So with my little cousins, they [her boys] play rough, too. But we are tryin' to teach all of them, you know, you can't be as rough to these *other* [emphasis added] kids cause they might not like our roughness...try to adapt to everything we see down here than what we would do down there... Yeah, cause we, as girls, we even play rough 'cause that's all we knew back then, but now you know we're gentle and stuff, which we're trying to teach our kids.

In Ms. Hartman's response, it was evident that "playing rough" at home was appropriate and did not signify a sign of disrespect among family members. This parent articulated clearly the distinction between the appropriateness of this behavior in classrooms and her efforts in explaining to her children the difference between "playing rough" at home and in school.

Mrs. Akinde, who identified herself as a Nigerian American, described vividly the importance of respect at her home:

Our culture is extremely rigid when it comes to the way you should respect. Starting from when you wake up in the morning the way you greet your parents. The men, they prostrate, and the women, you kneel. It has always been, always [will] be... So when he [her kindergarten son] wakes up in the morning, he comes in and he greets his mom and dad the traditional way and he knows that's the way to do it.

Throughout the interview process, Mrs. Akinde uniquely provided extensive and vivid descriptions of her cultural heritage as a Yoruba member when explaining respect.

The way we greet or the way we as Yorubas greet is different, it's us, there's a more rigid way that we expect them [her children] to do certain things. We do things very differently than the other cultures you know. You can stand eye to eye and greet your mother and father whereas for us these are the initial leaders or head of our home and we pay them homage by doing what we need to do. Till tomorrow I go to my parents' house, I kneel. And I am going to be 40 soon.

Interestingly, both parents explained that the behavioral patterns their children had been showing at home or in their community were not suitable to emit at school. Ms. Hartman indicated that with her kindergarten son she would tell him that

we're playin', not to hurt the person...Yeah, just playin' with them [her son's classmates] but you have to, you know, tell the person "wanna play?" But Shawn [pseudonym] is the type that will come up and just start playing with you even if you [are] not playin' with him.

Mrs. Akinde explained at the interview that her kindergarten son "finds it difficult" to follow the cultural greeting tradition at school by expressing that:

when he's in a classroom he's to observe a more circular type of greeting. You never walk by an adult or by teacher or by anyone without saying hello, good morning, how are you, and you go about your daily activities ... Not everybody is going to understand why you are on the floor ... I say it all the time... So, [if] you're not my age mate, you're not my playmate, then homage is to be paid.

The third parent, Ms. Riggins, provided a different view of respectful behavior within a classroom setting. When asked to share some examples of how she would want other students or adults to respect her kindergarten son, Ms. Riggins shared,

Um... making him feel safe, making him not scared to tell when there [is] something wrong... Being watchful so injuries or mishaps may [not] happen. Um, my big thing, my big thing is safety... As long as he's safe and not being yelled at extremely too much because of highly aggravated situations.

Ms. Riggins' perspective about respectful behavior may have been influenced by a life event that had taken place in her early parent-hood years, in which her first child had been born with heart problems and had been in

critical danger due to “faulty supplies” supporting her child’s heart. Ms. Riggins said, “So everything kind of scares me a little, and that’s why I teach safety more often than I teach anything because its oooooohhh!” Ms. Riggins’ life event could have explained her emphasis on safety when discussing respect. Her views of considering certain safe behaviors as signs of respect were not found in the other two parents’ perspectives. Conversely, Ms. Hartman’s and Mrs. Akinde’s views on respect more closely aligned with the defined behavior indicators provided by the school (see *Table 1*).

Responsibility

This theme raised the least attention in the parents’ responses when sharing life experiences. The three parents viewed responsibility either as a way of taking care of belongings or assisting other people when experiencing problems. It could be argued that for the three parents, the value of responsibility might have carried less weight in their family’s functioning and child upbringing compared to the values of respect and safety. Additionally, it is plausible that the parents perceived responsibility as less relevant for the behavior of their kindergarten child, who might be expected to carry fewer responsibilities than older children.

In responding to responsibility, Ms. Riggins gave an altruistic perspective about helping her kindergarten son develop problem-solving skills:

If he sees a student having a bad day and he wants to cheer them up at recess or something like that... I try to do a lot of conflict resolution between them [her children]... I’m more or less trying to teach them [that] you actually can be a helper and not a hinderer.

Mrs. Akinde viewed problem-solving skills from a different life angle, whereby she indicated that her family promoted conversations to encourage their children to think and try possible solutions to school and personal problems:

I like them to try to figure it out what they wanted to because if I’m always saying, “No you don’t do that, you do this,” this is just someone else telling you what you’re going to do about your situation... So knowing that ... your mom and dad are not going to be in that schoolyard with you. Whatever they’ve given you, you’ve got to figure out a way to make it all your own when you’re out by yourself, you know.

Safety

Parents shared their definitions of what safe and unsafe behaviors would look like at home, school, or other community settings and provided specific actions that they took with their children. Safety as a theme revealed parents’ concerns with inappropriate use of sharp objects (e.g., scissors) and physical contact with others (e.g., classmates, strangers). Interestingly, Mrs. Akinde and Ms. Hartman made explicit references to close contact and touching others. Both parents described that their families were affectionate and “hugging,” but they expressed concerns with their children related to safety. Mrs. Akinde stated that

at home we kiss and hug, we are always together... At school, I felt invasion of personal space and teaching him... If it’s an adult [unknown person], they need to be at least an arm length away from me [referring to her son], where they can’t grab and reach you, you can still turn around and run.

Ms. Hartman expressed concern about her son creating harmful situations. She shared that her kindergarten son had “a touching problem” by “putting his foot out,” and the parent explained that “I would tell Shawn watch the way you walk... I don’t know where he gets this stuff from ... so we are tryin’ to teach him, you know, you can’t hurt your friends... We always gotta say do not touch!” Conversely, Ms. Riggins related the importance of her children being in a safe environment by stating, “making sure they’re in an area, where, um, it is designed for them... that’s my biggest thing, I just don’t want anything to happen [to them].” Parents’ responses on safety were consistent with the school-wide expectations for safe behaviors in classrooms. However, it is interesting that their responses distinguished between personal space in school and at home. For example, Mrs. Akinde repeated this view frequently in her responses sharing her efforts in helping her son “not touch others.”

Family Interactions

Parents described how their family members functioned through different family events and routines. All mothers provided incidences of family language communication, child discipline, and entertainment. Ms. Hartman and Ms. Riggins shared about the tactics they had used to address their children’s social behaviors during store visits. For instance, Ms. Hartman had

to interrupt her visit whenever her son's behavior escalated whereas Ms. Riggins had used a "hands behind their back" rule to avoid having her children throw around unwanted items when shopping. Both mothers described their practices as a way to avoid any embarrassment in the presence of others. Further, Ms. Hartman gave descriptive information about her efforts in building a positive relationship with her son despite her long working hours.

During the interview, Ms. Hartman reflected on her child discipline practices, stating that

like my mom, if we didn't listen and stuff like that she would pop us ... but with my kids I don't pop them. But it's just to the point where I'm like okay maybe I might have to start popping Shawn every once in a while so that he can know that I am not playing 'cause sometimes he do take advantage of me.

Mrs. Akinde presented a less direct approach in her parenting. She considered herself "a big believer" in conversations rather than confrontations with her son. She related using visual imagery as a means to speak to her son about "harboring bad feelings about himself":

It's like a slithering snake. You don't know when it's going to strike. See, you want to know what's in there [her son's mind]. I'd rather you talk to me about it. Even if it's something I don't necessarily like. Let's just have a conversation about it.

School–Family Interactions

The parents described incidences of their interactions with school staff members when discussing their child's behaviors at school. Parents' responses included references to positive interactions with teachers and administrators, expressing feelings of support and open communication. Specifically, Ms. Hartman indicated that her son's teacher had recommended collaborating on a behavior chart rather than introducing specific medication to him. Mrs. Akinde noted that there was no difference between what her son's teacher had been teaching and her own family practices. Likewise, Ms. Riggins expressed satisfaction with the school's counselor stating that "she has the whole class teaching social skills, and it seems like they're really retaining it 'cause they come home and they tell me." However, the parents' responses also revealed some disappointment about their communication with teachers. For instance, Ms. Riggins shared that her son's teacher had not been consistent in

reporting her son's problem behavior between medical forms and notes sent home. The inconsistency in teacher reporting created frustration for Ms. Riggins and prevented her son from receiving a conclusive medical treatment for possible attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Community–Family Interactions

Throughout the interviews, the parents described how extended family members and friends interacted with their families on several occasions. Ms. Riggins noted her role of being a supporter to others and her efforts in instilling such behavior in her children. Ms. Hartman described several family events at the church, birthday parties, visits at grandmother's house, whereby her relationship with her son had taken a negative path. Ms. Hartman shared that "When I'm there, he doesn't listen. When I'm away, he will." Ms. Hartman appeared once again introspective in her responses, stating, "so I'm just like, you know, what am I doing wrong? ... so there's a lot of things that I'm also trying to learn with Shawn."

Culturally Responsive Social Skill Lesson Example

In developing the social skill curriculum, we used the parents' input (see samples from *Table 1*) from the interviews focusing on the themes of respect, responsibility, and safety (first stage of analysis) to build the cultural responsiveness of the lessons. All nine social skill lessons were in an entirely scripted format with audio voice-over and limited text on each slide to be age appropriate for kindergarten students. The same instructional outline applied to all lessons within each instructional unit of respect, responsibility, and safety as follows: (a) definition of the expectation (e.g., respect) with its rationale (e.g., "why is it important to show respect?") and different ways to achieve the expectation (through demonstrating the three classroom behavior indicators); (b) definition of the targeted behavior indicator, its importance and skill steps, and opportunities for students to recite the skill steps; (c) introduction of explicitly defined skill steps with examples and opportunities for students to apply the skill steps in a multiple-choice format and in a role-play situation; (d) reminder of the skill steps; (e) presentation of a video showing same-age Black peer(s) demonstrating the targeted skill, followed by an opportunity for students

to respond to questions about the video and to role play the situation presented in the video; (f) presentation of an additional video showing a “problem” situation that requires students to role play and act on using the taught skill; (g) review of the skill steps; and (h) encouragement for students to practice the skill in the classroom/school environment.

An example of integrating parents’ input in the lesson development relates to the concept of “not touching.” During the interview with Ms. Hartman, it became apparent that she perceived one aspect of respect as “not touching others’ belongings.” In our lesson development for the unit of respect, we rephrased Ms. Hartman’s response to positively state the expectation and defined the skill steps of “being considerate of others’ property” as “only touch our things unless given permission” and “ask before touching others’ things.” In another lesson addressing the unit of respect, we integrated Ms. Riggins’ input about “do not jump in other’s zone” and Mrs. Akinde’s input about “use arm space/length” by explicitly explaining “giving others space” as a way to show respect for others. To further demonstrate for kindergarten students, we created a visual image to show appropriate and inappropriate actions of respecting others’ space by using the illustration of keeping “bubble space” (i.e., a visual indicating a “bubble” around a Black child to show acceptable space between two children).

Social Validity

The overall mean score for the social validity assessment from the three SWPBS core team members was 4.82 (range 4 to 5) from the 11 Likert scale items. The chair, coach, and administrator of the ABC School’s SWPBS team all reported strong agreement with statements related to the need for developing culturally responsive school-wide expectations, the value of exploring families’ views, the appropriateness of the lessons for kindergarteners, and the benefits and suitability of the lesson components. For example, the administrator commented that the audio voice-over not only can support kindergarteners in their comprehension of the lesson, but also can support the instructor who will facilitate the lesson delivery. The SWPBS team chair specifically reported that students may benefit from the visuals, demonstrations of skills, reviews, role playing, opportunities to reflect, and reinforcement embedded within the lessons. This person also suggested adding

pictures/videos from actual students from the ABC School and the school mascot to make the lessons “more relatable to [our] students.” The SWPBS coach particularly pointed out the appropriateness of using a photo of the “Kid President,” a well-known Black young motivational speaker for young children (www.kidpresident.com) in several slides of the lessons. Interestingly, the coach indicated that she had been using the talks of the Kid President in her guidance instruction at ABC School.

Both Ms. Hartman and Mrs. Akinde rated all of the Likert scale items as 5. On the open-ended items, Ms. Hartman reported that the “lesson was great,” her child “can relate to it,” and she can see her child learning from it. Mrs. Akinde shared, “culturally, we believe direction/preparation equals to success when [given] opportunities” and the “video[s] represent this cultural ideal.”

Discussion

This qualitative study explored the perspectives of three Black parents whose kindergarten children had been identified by school personnel as at risk for behavioral difficulties. Results from ethnographic interviewing confirmed previous assertions that ethnographic perspective-taking allows researchers and educators to discover interesting cultural information from parents from different ethnic backgrounds (Frank, 2011). By using ethnographic interviewing, we were able to develop thoughtful conversations with parents and to obtain rich descriptions about parents’ perspectives on the school’s three SWPBS behavioral expectations of being respectful, responsible, and safe. Respect was the most frequently represented theme in the interviews and was considered an important value in the lives of these families, which was described as being part of their families’ daily routines and interactions (e.g., play, greetings). The ethnographic interviewing tools revealed Ms. Riggins’ anxiety regarding her son’s safety and her definition of safety as a sign of respect to her and her family. Similarly, we obtained deep and valuable descriptions about Mrs. Akinde’s and her families’ unique expectations for showing respect related to their cultural heritage as Yoruba members as well as her kindergarten son’s struggle in practicing the traditional greeting in school. Obtaining parents’ perspectives about school-wide expectations from their cultural lenses allowed us to build awareness about families’ views (Lewis, 2011).

This awareness then assisted in the development of the culturally responsive social skill curriculum for teaching school-wide expectations and classroom behavior indicators.

A unique contribution of this research study is its focus on taking an initial step to blend culturally responsive pedagogy and SWPBS for Black students showing risk by gaining parental knowledge regarding their cultures, lived experiences, and perspectives about school-wide expectations. Lynass et al. (2012) suggested that the content of SWPBS expectations should be culturally relevant for diverse students and attend to the school culture. This study represents an active step toward addressing the overrepresentation of Black students in discipline referrals with an attempt to decrease cultural mismatch and to make social skill instruction culturally responsive (Robinson-Ervin et al., 2011). For schools to develop culturally responsive SWPBS expectations, parental input on their cultural heritage merits important investigation within SWPBS systems and practices (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Swain-Bradway et al., 2014). Using the tools and language of ethnographic research, we were able to identify specific, relevant, appropriate and inappropriate SWPBS behavioral expectations based on parental input to address them in a social skill curriculum. Two of the parents who completed a social validity questionnaire validated the importance of embedding their cultural values and views in the social skill lessons to achieve cultural responsiveness. The positive ratings and comments from the ABC School's SWPBS core team members on the social validity assessment further support our effort to blend cultural responsiveness and SWPBS implementation in teaching school-wide behavioral expectations. The SWPBS team coach's comment, "I absolutely love these lessons! I think we need to create some for ABC school!" is an indication of how the lessons for teaching school-wide expectations infused with parental input may be of particular value not only for kindergarten students but also for the whole school.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations for this study. First, the convenience sampling of participants (i.e., female parents who had an overall positive relationship with school staff) impacted interview themes and, hence, the development of our curriculum content and structure. Thus, our lesson content cannot be generalized to other

families and settings. Second, although all participants were grouped under the racial category of Black, their cultural heritages were quite different from one another. The lived experiences and cultural influences from Nigeria, U.S. Virgin Islands, and a southeastern state of the United States are substantially different. Caution is needed when interpreting or generalizing the findings to other Black subgroups. Third, the ethnographic perspectives obtained in this study were limited to one source (i.e., interviews). There is a need to include additional elements of ethnographic research, such as observations of participants at home and school as well as fieldwork notes to develop a more comprehensive and rich cultural awareness of Black groups. Fourth, although we attempted to make parents feel at ease by building rapport, conducting interviews at the school site may have affected parents' comfort level with sharing sensitive information.

To examine the generalizability of our findings to the larger Black cultural group, future research is warranted that includes more participants, uses varied elements of ethnographic research to enrich the data, and builds longer relationships with the parents. In addition, a logical next step of research inquiry will be to conduct an intervention study to examine empirically the extent to which the culturally responsive social skill curriculum effectively supports Black kindergarten students' acquisition of school-wide expectations and classroom behavior indicators, and reduces occurrences of problem behavior. Despite the positive social validity ratings reported about the curriculum, an experimental study is warranted to measure the effects of this curriculum on students' ODRs. Finally, considering that Hispanic/Latino students were also overrepresented in school discipline in the ABC School, exploring families' perspectives from the Hispanic/Latino backgrounds in comparison to the perspectives from Black families may be of great value.

Implications for Practice

Through the ethnographic interviewing process, we gained important insights from parents to assist the ABC School in developing a social skill curriculum that was more culturally responsive for young Black children in learning school-wide expectations. Schools can benefit from obtaining parents' perceptions about SWPBS values, systems, and practices to attend to the voices of families from various cultural

backgrounds within SWPBS programming. Furthermore, parents may feel empowered when offering input on how to reach children from culturally diverse backgrounds, which can foster a stronger and healthier parent–school relationship. Another important implication for the ABC School relates to incorporating results from the second stage of thematic analysis in the SWPBS action plan for the design of family and community outreach activities. For example, Ms. Hartman’s and Mrs. Akinde’s input on “child discipline” may suggest training opportunities the school can provide to families on effective strategies to support their children’s social behavior at home and in the communities. Building and enhancing family–school and community–school relationships is an important feature of the SWPBS framework (Muscott et al., 2008). Family and community members can be engaged in SWPBS practices in efforts to improve school climate and student social outcomes.

Although individual interviews provided an avenue to gain valuable information for developing the social skill lessons in this study, SWPBS teams may find it more feasible to collect information from parents in a group setting, such as a focus group. Additionally, schools may create additional opportunities for collecting other types of qualitative and quantitative data for understanding students’ cultural background (e.g., visiting neighborhoods, conducting observations and informal interviews with families and students, administering rating scales and surveys). These opportunities may allow parents, teachers, and administrators to work collectively toward a goal of increasing cultural responsiveness within the SWPBS context of their schools. A clear focus and open communication may decrease cultural misunderstanding from both parents’ and the school’s perspectives, potentially decreasing disproportionate disciplinary actions against minority students. A collective movement consisting of both parents and school staff with a shared vision can be a powerful mode for change in the climate of a school when implementing SWPBS.

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