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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

Culturally Responsive Teaching for Diverse Students:
Inherent Dispositions and Attitudes of Effective Teachers

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Josie Alberta Jackson

Committee in Charge:

University of California, San Diego

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California State University San Marcos

Professor Annette Daoud

Professor Patricia Prado-Olmos

2015

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The Dissertation of Josie Alberta Jackson is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
California State University, San Marcos

2015

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to several of my beautiful family members and friends. Without their love, support, and belief in me, this journey would not have been possible. First and foremost, I want to thank my two beautiful, intelligent, and strong willed adult children Rene Jr. and Mariah for being my constant driving force and fueling me with the desire to do better and always learn more so that I can be the best mother and role model to them. From the moment I was blessed with them, I have strived to be their hero. I am also indebted to my husband and best friend, James, who never falters at supporting me, even with all the sacrifice that support may bring. He has been my constant; my biggest supporter, cheerleader, ear to listen, and shoulder to cry on. He's the only one who knows exactly when to challenge me, encourage me, and protect me. I appreciate him more than he will ever know. Thank you for sharing your life with me my love; including my bonus kids, Jasheen and Jamyah.

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And to anyone who says it is not possible to be a dedicated mother, become educated, and have a successful career even when you have kids at a young age; I say, "Si se puede!" Everything is possible when you work hard and have perseverance,

passion, and true dedication. *You have to do what you say, not just say it!* Last but not least, thank you to all the boys and girls who have allowed for me to touch their lives and make a difference. **I do this work for ALL of YOU!**

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Culturally Responsive Teaching for Diverse Students:
Inherent Dispositions and Attitudes of Effective Teachers

by

Josie Alberta Jackson

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2015
California State University San Marcos, 2015

Professor Frances E. Contreras, Chair

The achievement gap in education has existed in our society for as long as we have chosen to pay attention to it. Certain demographic groups have always performed better on federal and state assessments compared to others. This study will focus on culturally proficient teaching, specifically, teacher dispositions and attitudes that contribute towards the successful learning of diverse students.

Teaching diverse students is a challenging feat because of the fact that the majority of our educators come from different backgrounds, compared to the diverse students they teach. These differences related to race, class, and socioeconomic status affect students' education, as the tremendous gap we know continues to exist. The intent of this dissertation is to: (a) provide a basic understanding of culturally responsive teaching for diverse students, (b) explore why an understanding of culturally responsive teaching strategies by teachers is crucial in order for all teachers to help diverse students to be successful, (c) explore how teacher perceptions; efficacy; and expectations of and towards students affect the learning of diverse students, (d) suggest ideas related to professional development and culturally responsive teaching that support teachers in successfully teaching diverse students. The literature presented here regarding culturally responsive teaching will focus on a number of methods with a specific concentration on social justice and the known barriers and solutions for successful use of culturally responsive teaching. Studies emphasize the importance of implementing culturally responsive teaching to help diverse students to be successful throughout their educational careers (Anderson, 2012; Bales & Saffold, 2011; Bergeron, 2008; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Gay, 2002 & 2010; Hynds, Sleeter, Hindle, Savage, Penetito, & Meyer, 2011; Bennett, 2012; Santamaria, 2009; and Siwatu, 2011). For these reasons, it is crucial for all teachers to know that culturally responsive teaching strategies, along with their inherent dispositions and positive perceptions will help diverse students the most to be academically successful. This is why this proposed study is so important to add to this body of research.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, diverse students, African American students, Hispanic students, low socioeconomic students, funds of knowledge, self efficacy

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Teachers have been found to show more negative expectations with respect to Latino and African American students relative to European American students and also to direct less positive speech, including less encouragement, to the former as opposed to the latter (van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, and Holland, 2010, pg. 501).

This quote represents the pattern of expectations that exists for Hispanic (Latino) and African American students that attend our public schools in United States historically as well as present day. In United States schools, there are an increasingly large number of low socio-economic, African American, and Hispanic children (Bennett, 2008). The number of these diverse students in United States schools continues to grow. Nationally, enrollment for Hispanic students has increased from 12, 502,000 (16%) in 2005 to 14,121,000 (17%) in 2009 (U.S. Census, 2012). Enrollment for African American students has increased from 10,885,000 (13%) in 2005 to 11,110,000 (14%) in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The misunderstanding of these diverse groups continues to exist because the teachers who teach them come from different cultural groups and have a difficult time relating to and understanding them. In this paper, diverse students are students from culturally, racially, and economically different backgrounds compared to White, mainstream United States (Gay, 2007). This includes people of color (Hispanic, African American, and low-socioeconomic students) who may or may not speak a primary language other than English. Native American, first generation, or immigrant students are normally included in this group of diverse students. However, for the purposes of

this study, they are not included due to the fact that the proposed research site does not include these demographic groups.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) reports that nationally the number of Hispanic students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools during this report period increased from 8.2 million to 11.8 million students and their share of public school enrollment increased from 17 to 24 percent. In contrast, the number of White students enrolled decreased from 28.7 million to 25.6 million, and their share of public school enrollment decreased from 60 to 52 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, p. 48).

Although enrollment of diverse students in teacher education programs continues to grow, the teaching force is still mainly from middle-class households. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) states that of the 3,385,200 reported new teachers entering the field 264,100 are Hispanic; 231,100 are African American; and 2,773,200 are White. Schools of education face many challenging issues related to enrollment. For example, as enrollment becomes increasingly racially diverse (approximately 40% nationally, although the state average range is from 7% to 68%), the teaching force is actually becoming increasing White, due mainly to the prominent decline in African American, Hispanic, and Asian enrollments in teacher education programs since 1990 (Hodgkinson, 2002 & U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). In the United States, most College of Education programs admit candidates primarily on the basis of academic ability alone and assume that teacher education's job is to prepare them to teach everyone. As a result, the national teaching force remains about 84 percent White (Sleeter, 2008).

In order to support diverse students in receiving an education that enables them to pursue a successful educational outcome and to ultimately bridge the gap of differences between them and the teachers who teach them, there must be information and training provided to teachers that will support this outcome. The influences that are known to support the success of diverse students that are utilized by successful teachers in bridging this gap will be studied, so that they can then be shared with teachers to successfully impact the educational outcomes of diverse students.

Statement of the Problem

Diverse students do not perform as well in school as White students, for many reported reasons. One of these reasons is due to the differences that exist between teacher and students relative to educational factors that are influenced by race, culture, and class (Anderson & Cowart, 2012). It is difficult for the majority of classroom teachers to successfully educate diverse students. Oftentimes teachers do not understand the culture of diverse, urban students and therefore cannot successfully teach diverse, urban students (Smith & Smith, 2009).

Diverse students face significant educationally ethnic disparities that reflect the ongoing social inequities that exist throughout their educational careers. These ethnic disparities in education are critical to achievement because they continue to reflect ongoing social inequity (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). These disparities include teacher biases, perceptions, and attitudes as they relate to different ethnic and cultural groups. These biases, perceptions, and attitudes contribute significantly towards “making or breaking” a diverse student’s academic success. Research further suggests that regardless of these misconceptions that teachers may have when teachers take

responsibility for student learning despite the students' race, culture, or class all students are more likely to be successful (Halvorsen, Lee, & Andrade, 2009). They must focus on positives, not negatives, and acknowledge the difficulty of their work. This is why it is imperative that teachers know and learn about the diverse students they teach.

In addition, studies have also reported that students of all races feel more valued when their teachers know and hold high regard for their history, language, and cultural celebrations (Anderson & Cowart, 2012). It is difficult to do this when you are not familiar with what these histories, languages, and cultural celebrations are. Most teachers are not familiar with what these look like with regard to diverse students. On the other hand, it has been reported that when students feel that their teachers respect their culture, they want to do well in school and ultimately do perform at high levels, compared to when they do not connect with their teacher (Anderson & Cowart, 2012). This supports that teachers should know and show respect for diverse students' cultures. This will likely encourage diverse student achievement.

There are several reasons that may account for student differential performance, but one key issue that is thought to contribute to it is teachers who lack understanding of working with diverse populations. Numerous research studies have found that most White teacher candidates bring deficit-oriented stereotypes about children of color and little cross-cultural background, knowledge, and experience (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2008; Valdes, 1996; and Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). There is a persistent pattern of failure that exists among diverse students in our education system because of this. This pattern requires that society

closely examines all the factors, one of which is the lack of teachers from backgrounds that are similar to the children they teach. Classroom teachers must know about and effectively respond to factors associated with race, culture, and class if they are to be successful in affecting the teaching and learning environments of all students.

Classroom teachers must use culturally responsive teaching practices if they are going to effectively teach diverse students, (Siwatu, 2011). Specifically, teachers must know that their inherent dispositions and attitudes must be positive towards their diverse students, so that the students can successfully learn. This information, combined with a positive relationship that is built on the foundation of trust is necessary in order for diverse students to learn successfully.

Purpose of Study and Research Question

The best way to address the instructional needs of diverse students is through culturally responsive teaching; though this is not a high priority in Colleges of Education. Colleges of Education do not adequately prepare the teaching force for teaching diverse students with culturally responsive teaching practices (Siwatu, 2011). This is a significant problem in that diverse students are not achieving at the same rates of non-minority students (Gay, 2007). In order to improve achievement of diverse students, teachers and prospective teachers must learn to be more culturally responsive in their teaching of diverse students. It is unknown specifically if the achievement gap is due to teacher education programs not adequately preparing teachers to teach diverse students, or if other factors also contribute. Self efficacy has also been a positive contributor to helping to improve the achievement of diverse students (Siwatu, 2011). Siwatu, (2011) also explains about the importance of self

efficacy when he says that “Becoming an effective culturally responsive teacher requires both the acquisition of related knowledge and skills, and the self-efficacy beliefs to put those skills to use (p. 367)”.

The purpose of this study is to examine Culturally Responsive Teaching and to explore how Culturally Responsive Teaching affects diverse students’ academic success, along with teacher characteristics that promote successful academic outcomes for diverse students. I have witnessed firsthand how most teachers do not connect with their students and give up, especially when working with diverse populations of students at the urban school where I served as principal. These teachers have received a lot of professional development in how to teach using the instructional strategies and pedagogy adopted by the district. However, they have not been successful at teaching our diverse students proficiently. Our students continue to not meet state and federal guidelines and our teachers continue to blame our students and their families. The problem that this research could inform is how to more successfully teach diverse students, incorporating ongoing instructional practices professional development, and culturally responsive teaching, while focusing on which positive teacher perceptions and characteristics that must be present in order to produce a successful learning outcome for diverse students.

This research study seeks to answer this question:

How can Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies influence outcomes for diverse students, as well as practices for teachers? More specifically, this study examines:

- (1) How do teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching approaches as a tool for being effective with diverse students?
- (2) What are the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how do they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students?

In this study, these questions are explored by observing and administering a questionnaire to teachers who were chosen because they are considered to be successful at teaching diverse students. These teachers were chosen by a survey that was completed by their current administrator. The survey was provided to the administrators in order for them to utilize in choosing the sample of teachers included in this study. The information gathered from these observations and questionnaires was then utilized to provide information regarding characteristics of teachers that support the successful learning of diverse students.

Definition of Terms

- *Culturally Responsive Teaching* - Culturally Responsive Teaching should be understood as a complex and intricate set of processes that many practitioners and researchers have suggested may improve student learning (Gay, 2010).
- *Diverse students* – Students in the United States who are usually from low socioeconomic families; of African American or Hispanic ancestry; and speakers of a home language other than standard American English. Native American, first generation, or immigrant students are normally included in this group of diverse students. However, for the purposes of this study, they are

not included due to the fact that the research site did not include these demographic groups.

- *African American Students* - Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).
- *Hispanic Students* - Hispanic or Latino: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).
- *Low Socioeconomic Status* - “socioeconomically disadvantaged” is defined as: A student neither of whose parents have received a high school diploma OR A student who is eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program, also known as the National School Lunch Program (California Department of Education, 2014).
- *Funds of Knowledge* - The Funds of Knowledge approach to education connects home, school, and community where anthropology, psychology, and education intersect. This theoretical approach assumes that families and communities are valuable educational resources (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).
- *Self-efficacy* - Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. There are different degrees of efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Current research supports this definition of self efficacy. Building collective teacher efficacy—by providing teachers with opportunities to build instructional knowledge and collaborate with colleagues,

with feedback that is insightful and with a vision of success in which teachers are treated as sources of expertise (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). These different degrees or levels of efficacy contribute to several different outcomes or successes for people.

Significance of the Study

The achievement gap has existed for several years before No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was signed into law on January 8, 2002 (Sherman, 2008). This is said to be the most comprehensive federal legislation since the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 that was proposed to “fix” education. The ethnic groups that make up the gap have historically consisted of Hispanic, African American, and Low Socioeconomic Status. Our education system continues to fail in providing successful academic outcomes for these ethnic groups. One of the contributing reasons is that differences exist between teacher and students relative to educational factors that are influenced by race, culture, and class (Anderson & Cowart, 2012). It is difficult for the majority of classroom teachers to successfully educate diverse students. Oftentimes teachers do not understand the culture of diverse, urban students and therefore cannot successfully teach diverse, urban students (Smith & Smith, 2009). These differences affect a teacher’s ability to successfully teach diverse students. However, combining Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies with positive teacher perceptions and teaching of the disciplines show promise in helping to improve the learning success of diverse students. Research further implies that teacher biases, perceptions, and attitudes definitely affect the achievement of diverse students, specifically with relation to race and socio-economic status. The Wright and Ready

(2011) and Auwarter and Aurguete (2008) studies prove that the cognitive ability perceived of students is related to their background, particularly their social class. The McKown and Weinstein (2008) as well as Smith and Smith (2009) studies report findings that tell us that teachers are biased and do not relate to stereotyped (African American and Latino) groups of students. These studies imply the need to change this perception through providing effective staff development to help teachers relate to, better understand, and to successfully teach their diverse students.

This research study observed and utilized responses from a questionnaire provided to “successful teachers” to find the characteristics that work to produce academically successful diverse students. These characteristics, as well as the resources that these “successful teachers” implore are explored to find trends and patterns related to the characteristics and resources noted, and to report information on what was observed. Ultimately, this study seeks to potentially provide information and resources to pre service or practicing teachers to improve the academic success of diverse students. The next section of this paper discusses how this research study will be organized.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter One, the rationale for investigating the characteristics and resources that “successful teachers” utilize to teach diverse students is supported by stating the current problem that exists in our education system. These issues were analyzed to start to investigate how diverse students are successful, and the research questions were formulated to further inform all teachers on characteristics that work to allow successful learning for diverse students. Chapter Two is comprised of the current

body of literature related to Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies combined with positive teacher characteristics and effective teaching strategies that most effectively support successful learning of diverse students. This chapter also links the literature and this research topic to the existing framework that is related to this study. Chapter Three discusses the methodology used in this study and explains how the research was collected and analyzed. Chapter Four discusses the data that was collected and how the trends of the findings were analyzed to be reported out. Chapter Five reports the findings for this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the potential impact of culturally responsive teaching in supporting diverse students in public schools. First, it provides an inclusive definition of culturally responsive teaching, and describes what culturally responsive teaching is and is not. Second, it discusses teacher perceptions, efficacy, and expectations and how these respectively affect culturally responsive teaching. In particular, the review discusses teacher bias towards students when related to socioeconomic status and ethnicity; as well as the crucial role of trust and efficacy in order for teachers to effectively instruct diverse students; and the importance of high expectations for students in order to successfully teach all students. Lastly, research concerning professional development and culturally responsive teaching in relation to teacher preparation programs and colleges of education and how these institutions are preparing teachers to successfully teach diverse students by integrating culturally responsive teaching strategies will be discussed. Professional development in culturally responsive teaching strategies for post certification teachers will also be analyzed, as this too has been associated with improving instruction for diverse students.

Information related to Funds of Knowledge is included to explain how this theory is tied to teaching strategies, teacher perceptions, and teacher attitudes. This framework provides the conceptual foundation that drives this research study.

Defining Culturally Responsive Teaching and its Impact on Teaching Practices

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) has been described in several different contexts. Some simply describe culturally responsive teaching as great teaching an

the ability to relate to diverse students so they are academically successful. Gay (2010) and Ladson –Billings (1995) define culturally responsive teaching as a collection of best teaching practices to enhance the academic success of students who are culturally different in classroom settings as well as holding high expectations. For this literature review, culturally responsive teaching should be understood as a complex and intricate set of processes that many practitioners and researchers have suggested may improve student learning (Gay, 2010). The evaluation of its effectiveness must continue to be studied so the application of its discovered successes can be used to continue to help culturally diverse students improve academically.

Culturally responsive teaching focuses on activating students' prior knowledge and experiences as they relate to their cultural lives and connecting it with learning. It involves being able to learn through story (Gay, 2010). People learn through story by connecting their experiences to the learning that is related to what they know. Narratives are framed through a story, which is how we learn best; connecting our learning to what we know, framed in the format of a story (Gay, 2012). This form of teaching allows for students to better understand and relate to information that is new or unfamiliar to them by connecting it to their own stories. Culturally responsive teaching should not be mistaken in limited and simplistic ways such as cultural celebration, trivialization, essentializing culture, and substituting culture for political analysis of inequalities (Sleeter, 2012). These forms of sensationalizing culture do not allow for students to connect what they know through experience. This is because their way of celebrating may not be the same as what the mainstream sensationalizes it to be. This sometimes occurs when teaching is related to multi-cultural education, in

the form of cultural celebration, in the aforementioned contexts. The celebration is not familiar to the student, but rather to the mainstream. It does not connect to student learning. Culturally responsive teaching and cultural celebration are two different concepts. Cultural celebration, when misconstrued as culturally responsive teaching, focuses attention to culture and away from instruction (Sleeter, 2012). This allows for low expectations to be ignored, as well as the lived culture of the school and the classroom. Power relations are ignored altogether. When culturally responsive teaching is placed in an inappropriate context it is not as beneficial to diverse student learning. This is because the focus is not on relating learning by activating prior knowledge and high academic expectations to students' individual cultural lives in order for them to better make connections and understanding.

Research suggests that although culturally responsive teaching has a positive impact on diverse students, it is more effective when combined with positive teacher perceptions, high teacher efficacy, high teacher expectations, effective teaching strategies, and support in teacher education programs (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2007; Shevalier & Mckenzie, 2012; Rubie-Davies, 2012; Bui & Fagan, 2013; Hynds, Sleeter, Savage, Penetito, & Meyer, 2011).

In one such study, culturally responsive teaching was found to be highly effective when combined with the ethical principle of knowing the real difference between caring about and caring for students (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012). They further explain that most teachers do not know the difference between caring about and caring for. Most teachers believe that caring about is effective, when caring for is necessary in order to make a difference in student learning. This is because caring

about is too broad of a concept that does not allow for teachers to make individual connections with students. Teachers who care about student learning normally do not connect learning to individual students. This is because the caring is connected to an overall concept. Teachers who care for students are able to make individual connections with their students and their stories. This helps to better meet their academic needs. This ethical perspective when combined with culturally responsive teaching provides the most effective environment for diverse students to learn (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012).

Teacher Perceptions and Culturally Responsive Teaching

The research in the area of cultural proficiency related to teacher perceptions of low socio-economic, Hispanic, and African American students implies that most Colleges of Education do not prepare teachers to be culturally responsive in today's diverse, urban classrooms (Smith & Smith, 2009). It is difficult to teach cultural responsiveness, especially when teachers have negative perceptions and biases towards diverse students. Although it is hard to measure "bias," teacher perceptions between group differences related to socio-demographic background, contribute to about half of the gap in literacy in diverse students. The other half of the gap in literacy is related to bias in teacher perception (Wright & Ready, 2011). In order to change this, the research suggests that teachers focus on their own shortcomings as a teacher and not on students' cognitive shortcomings (Wright & Ready, 2011). Before this can happen, teachers must admit that they actually have shortcomings. This will be difficult to do because most human beings do not want to admit they have shortcomings related to diverse students. This would imply potentially negative views

of them by others. It would also be difficult to name the shortcomings because everyone has different beliefs based on their life experiences.

Teachers are not adequately prepared to teach diverse students in urban districts for several reasons (Smith & Smith, 2009). First year teachers report classroom management and discipline as being the most difficult areas of teaching urban students. The lack of teacher awareness of diverse students' behavior can lead to misunderstanding student actions as deviant and cause teachers to treat them punitively or lower expectations of them. Socioeconomic status is another factor that contributes to teacher perceptions of students. It was reported that teachers favor students from high socioeconomic backgrounds compared to students of low socioeconomic backgrounds (Auwarter & Arugete, 2008). Teacher biases have also been reported to be affected by how teachers perceive the ability of students of diverse ethnicities (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). The biases of teachers affected the year-end achievement gap for stereotyped (African American and Hispanic) students in their classrooms. Teachers had low expectations for these stereotyped students and high expectations of non-stereotyped (Euro American and Asian American) students (McKown & Weinstein, 2008).

In order to be successful with diverse students, teachers should create an environment that focuses on learning about their students' cultures to connect it to their learning (Bondy, et al., 2007). Creating this type of learning environment requires that the teacher develops relationships and establishes expectations through the use of "insistence" and culturally responsive communication style. Teachers must

learn the cultures of the students they teach, and understand how to use it to connect it to respect and learning (Bondy, et al., 2007).

Teachers must take the time to use what they know about their students and utilize it to then teach students what that behavior looks like in the classroom (Smith & Smith, 2009). Furthermore, if we don't understand diverse students' intentions, then we often drive them away from education and continue to produce the inequalities that exist in our society. Middle-class pre-service teachers' lives rarely intersect with low-income students until they begin teaching them (Bennett, 2008). This prevents pre-service teachers from the crucial background knowledge that is necessary in order to even begin to understand diverse students so they can successfully teach them. Pre-service teachers would better understand diverse students if they developed an awareness of socio-economic differences, developed an empathetic rapport and caring attitude, and developed a commitment to culturally responsive teaching (Bennett, 2008). These characteristics could be fostered through pre-service teacher education programs.

Teachers tend to stereotype urban, lower-class students and their families as "lacking values" (Smith & Smith, 2009). This assumption more than likely contributes to teachers' attitudes that if the parents don't care, then why should they? This ultimately leads to teacher excuses and blaming of the students and their families. There is also a lack of awareness of socioeconomic differences between teachers and the urban students they teach (Bennett, 2008). This stereotyping of students has existed for a long time. In a 1970's study, it was found that students were grouped before they even entered kindergarten, based on the interview their teacher had with

their parent(s) (Rist, 2000). The higher SES students were placed in a group, the mid-low SES students were placed in a group, and the low SES students were grouped together. The teacher basically ignored the students of the low SES group and set precedence for the rest of the students to follow by doing so. The low SES students were basically viewed as not knowing anything, and they were chastised by the teacher and other students merely because of their SES (Rist, 2000).

Teachers cannot relate or begin to understand and respect the differences between themselves and low SES students if they are not exposed to the reality of the challenges faced by these students. The reality of these students' lives is incomprehensible to someone who has not experienced or been informed. In turn this "unknown" does not support the fostering of the environment of which we know is necessary for student success: development of an awareness of socioeconomic differences, development of empathetic rapport and caring attitudes, and development of a commitment to culturally responsive teaching (Bennett, 2008). This makes it extremely difficult and sometimes impossible for middle class teachers to connect with and teach diverse students.

The research regarding teacher biases and perceptions as they relate to student achievement indicates that there is room for improvement so that all students are seen as being highly capable. However, there is also research that explores how effective teachers' attitudes positively affect student learning of diverse students. Halvorsen et al. (2009) determined that teachers in urban, low income schools are able to make a difference when they take responsibility and focus on three perspectives: a focus on positives, not negatives; high expectations for all students; and acknowledging the

difficulty of their work (p. 208). This positive view towards working with diverse students was also apparent in research that reported that working with the American Excellence Association fosters an achievement culture and provides participants with the sense of cultural competence to help diverse students succeed in our school system (DeCuir-Gunby, Taliaferro, & Greenfield, 2010). Three emerging themes were noticed through their research that helps to produce educational success: Promoting African American achievement, creating a feeling of belonging and cultural competence, and developing critical consciousness through community service (p. 190).

Teacher Efficacy and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Teacher efficacy is defined as a teacher's view of his or her ability to support student learning (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010). Teachers with high teacher efficacy believe that they can positively impact student achievement despite a possible range of perceived challenging circumstances (such as low socio-economic status of the students or a lack of resources, race, or ethnicity). Teachers with low efficacy believe that they have a limited ability to influence student learning and achievement. A teacher with low efficacy believes that they cannot control if certain students learn and that it is well beyond them and little they can do to enhance student learning (Bruce, et al., 2010). Although the literature indicates that teachers require more training to better understand and relate to diverse students' race, culture, and class, it also implies that collective efficacy is even more necessary to ensure that all students learn, especially low-income students (Hoy, 2012). Furthermore, when teachers take responsibility for student learning, that learning transfers to all students

learning successfully in the classroom (Halvorsen et al., 2009). Teachers who take responsibility set high expectations for all learners. This is because they focus on students' assets rather than their deficits. They know their work is both challenging and rewarding. The combination of culturally responsive teaching and caring for students creates the best, most effective environment for students to learn (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012).

Additionally, the combination of efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis has been found to have parallel meanings at the individual teacher level (Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Hoy, et. al. (2008) defines academic optimism as follows, "A teacher's positive belief that he or she can make a difference in the academic performance of students by emphasizing academics and learning, by trusting parents and students to cooperate in the process, and by believing in his or her own capacity to overcome difficulties and react to failure with resilience and perseverance" (p.822). When a teacher has this belief system or believes they are capable of successfully teaching all students, their beliefs turn into actions for positive student achievement. Academic emphasis then reinforces a strong sense of teacher efficacy, (Hoy, et al., 2008). In addition to efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis it is also thought that school climate, collective efficacy, and cooperating teachers (in service, practicing teachers) could play a significant role in the efficacy of the developing teacher (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008).

Collective efficacy is thought to be affected by several factors of school climate (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). A school climate where student achievement is high tends to have higher collective efficacy, compared to schools that

have lower student achievement because adverse factors such as low SES, which cause lower student achievement (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). Specifically, teachers who work at schools that service students of low SES, have lower efficacy because low SES students tend to show lower achievement overall, compared to high SES students (Hoy, et al., 2008). Even compared to ethnic or racial factors or students with disabilities, low SES students were found to affect teacher efficacy more negatively (Hoy, et al., 2008).

Further research in this area is highly necessary in order to better understand just how much teacher perceptions and efficacy affect diverse students' learning, and ultimately their academic success or non-success throughout their academic career. It is through this knowledge that will allow our society to alter the injustices that perpetuate the education of low performing groups of diverse race and class so that society can begin to eliminate the currently existing achievement gap. According to Hoy (2012), "In some studies, collective efficacy is more important than SES in influencing student achievement: This finding is especially significant because collective efficacy is more amenable to change than the social backgrounds of students" (p. 84).

Teacher Expectations and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Ethnic biases towards students in ethnically diverse classrooms (specifically African American and Latino students) affect teacher expectations, regardless of student achievement history (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). This is alarming, as it implies that our education system is helping to ensure that some ethnic groups of students fail. In contrast, McKown and Weinstein (2008) found non diverse

classrooms do not produce the same biases by teachers. It is only when classrooms consist of diverse learners that this bias exists. Socioeconomic status also affects teacher expectancy, as teachers tend to perceive low SES boys as not having promising futures and teacher expectations for these students tend to be low, compared to high-SES boys (Auwarter & Aurguete, 2008).

Low teacher expectations of low SES boys emulate low feelings of efficacy of the teacher towards the student, thus perpetuating low student achievement for this group of students (Auwarter & Aurguete, 2008). Wright and Ready's (2011) study further supports the misperception of low-SES students as being correlated with low ability as it relates to learning. Teachers perceive substantial differences in literacy ability across student socio-demographic subgroups. Low expectations exist for certain ethnic groups of students, namely low-SES, African American, and Latino students. These groups of students receive lower levels of instruction, are held to lower expectations compared to other students, and are targets of negative stereotypes about their ability, compared to other groups of students (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Negative teacher expectancy effects have been found to happen towards stigmatized groups of students and therefore possibly play a role in the relatively lower academic achievement of diverse students (van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010).

In general, students do better when their teachers have high expectations of them. This is apparent in the research. Teachers who recognize positive characteristics of their students, regardless of their backgrounds, are more successful (Rubie-Davies, 2010). High teacher expectations foster positive student attitudes and

social relationships which leads to success in school. This is regardless of negative factors that could affect this student achievement (Rubie-Davies, 2010). When teachers set low expectations for students, this affects student achievement negatively. Rist (2000) reported a follow up to his 1970 study wherein teacher expectations were used to group students before they entered kindergarten. The groups were mostly formed on the basis of SES. Students were set up to know their expectations of the teacher from day one. Students were placed with different groups: high, medium, and low depending on their SES. The students' achievement suffered throughout their education because of the expectations set by their teacher (Rist, 2000). Teacher expectations play a huge role in the success of all students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Instruction

There are studies related to multidisciplinary instruction under the umbrella of culturally responsive teaching that have reported promising results. These studies have found that using culturally responsive teaching strategies in combination with the teaching of different disciplines has proven to be more successful than teaching alone. In Bui and Fagan's (2013) study that looked at incorporating an integrated reading comprehension strategy, it was discovered that implementing this type of culturally responsive teaching model for reading improves diverse students' learning. The linking of social constructivism and culturally relevant pedagogy to improve science instruction for diverse students was studied by Patchen and Cox-Peterson (2008). Both studies utilized successful culturally responsive teaching strategies along with teaching of reading and science. Both discuss the need to provide diverse students

with culturally responsive teaching along with specific strategies for learning and to develop the responsibility to learn, especially for diverse students.

Diverse students benefit from the use of culturally responsive reading comprehension strategies that incorporate grammar instruction and story mapping explicitly (Bui & Fagan, 2013). These strategies were proven to be highly effective for diverse learners. This is because when culturally responsive teaching is used with strategies that work, diverse students are given opportunities to bring in their personal experiences and make connections to their learning. Students connect prior knowledge with new knowledge. The use of graphic organizers and/or word webs to build conceptual knowledge also allowed students to build background knowledge related to unfamiliar words, especially English learners. A pre-reading strategy called text overview and prediction was also used. This grabbed students' attention and kept them engaged during reading (Bui & Fagan, 2013).

The culturally responsive teaching strategies used in this study offered great results for the students (Bui & Fagan, 2013). Students performed better with the integrated reading comprehension strategy even without the two additional strategies provided to the treatment group. These results relate to the results of a different study that found that diverse learners need a variety of practices in order to meet their needs (Santamaria, 2009). Diverse learners most effectively learn when certain aspects of direct instruction and culturally responsive teaching are combined. The students in both studies improved and/or performed at great rates when culturally responsive teaching was used in combination with other effective teaching strategies. Students were taught through the use of their own cultural and experiential experiences, and

more importantly teachers were aware of the students' culture and this is why these students were successful in their learning (Gay, 2002).

Culturally responsive teaching, a complex and intricate set of processes that many practitioners and researchers have suggested may improve student learning (Gay, 2010) along with effective strategies for diverse students was also used in a study related to teaching science. During the first phase of purposive sampling, a total of sixty five Expert Science Teaching Educational Evaluation Model (ESTEEM) teachers were given a Teaching Practice Assessment Inventory (TPAI) when they attended a local science conference (Patchen & Cox-Peterson, 20008). During the second phase of purposive sampling, two teachers were chosen because they truly used ESTEEM practices in their classrooms and also had diverse populations of students. These two white, female teachers were observed ten times over a six week period and field notes, videotape, and audiotape were used to collect information. Five semi-structured interviews were also included. After the data was collected and analyzed, a theme of culturally relevant pedagogy occurred. The researchers found three main related themes between social constructivism and culturally relevant pedagogy: authority; achievement; and affiliation. They also found that the key difference in culturally relevant pedagogy compared to constructivism as practiced by these two teachers is the way in which culturally relevant pedagogy works explicitly to recognize power relations. They then used this recognition to look at how to better provide educational access and opportunities for minority students. Teachers who were thought to have an adequate grasp on how to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy and social constructivism continued to only provide students with the

opportunity to work cooperatively (Patchen & Cox-Peterson, 2008). The study suggests that teachers continue to broaden their learning about how to use more opportunities for students to actually learn, construct, and reconstruct science knowledge. This is how diverse students will be able to apply the highest levels of learning that is relevant to them. Studies indicate that diverse learners learn more effectively when their teachers infuse culturally responsive teaching with effective teaching strategies.

Linking direct instruction strategies with culturally responsive teaching strategies helps diverse learners to be more successful (Santamaria, 2009). It was established that incorporating direct instruction with culturally responsive teaching helps culturally and linguistically diverse students to be more successful academically. The combining of these two strategies is referred to as a *hybrid methodology* (Santamaria, 2009). These findings are related to a study that looked at including culturally responsive curriculum to one pre service teacher's education program to help improve that teacher's classroom before her first year of teaching (Bergeron, 2008). The teacher in the study found that building a community, linguistic support, instructional practices that made students successful, and a sense of minority, majority were all important factors that she focused on during this first year of teaching. Bergeron (2008) determined the teacher was successful in teaching her diverse students because she learned how to practice these culturally responsive strategies through her pre service teacher education program. Although this is one case study that follows one teacher and can be critiqued for its generalizability, the results of this study are also powerful. Specifically, the study shows that providing support in how

to effectively teach diverse students during pre service programs helps teachers who have different backgrounds, in order to better serve their diverse students once they are actually teaching them. The teacher in this study focused on building community; linguistic support; instructional practices that made students successful; and a sense of minority, majority (Bergeron, 2008). This teacher came from an extremely different background compared to the diverse students she taught during this case study.

Professional Development and Culturally Responsive Teaching

The literature tells us that culturally responsive teaching has been helpful for the learning success of diverse students. This implies that there is a need for professional development training of pre service and in service teachers in order to help them to better understand and utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies for teaching diverse students. We cannot reach diverse students with teaching them academics in a standalone manner. This is apparent when you look at the achievement gap that currently exists between diverse students compared to other groups of students.

It was discovered that providing training to in service teachers in relationship-based pedagogies that included culturally responsive teaching strategies helped them more successfully teach the Maori (Indigenous) students of New Zealand (Hynds, Sleeter, Savage, Penetito, & Meyer, 2011). This case study looked at professional development that was drawn from findings of a large-scale, independent evaluation of Te Kotahitanga professional development. Thirty three secondary schools participated in two phases reflecting different starting points, and data were gathered from all 12 schools that participated for four years and a representative sample of 10 of the 21

schools that participated for two years. The interview data reported emphasized the dimensions of relationship-based pedagogies which were the focus of the professional development activities. The researchers interviewed one hundred and fifty teachers across 22 secondary schools who participated in the Te Kotahitanga professional development. This was a professional development offered to teachers to help them to more successfully teach Maori students. These are the Indigenous group of students who have been historically underachieving and perceived as being hard to teach, very similar to our underserved populations in the United States. The interview data provided strong support for teachers valuing relationship based pedagogies.

The teachers receiving the staff development in the relationship-based pedagogies found that better understanding their students allowed them to better understand and ultimately teach them with more success. This is a study from another country that found positive results in developing relationships with students (culturally responsive teaching) through the use of professional development called Te Kotahitanga. This supports the use of the pedagogy of cultural responsiveness.

A similar study was implemented with twenty –seven pre service teachers to help them better develop their own culturally responsive teaching strategies for diverse students (Richards & Bennett, 2012). The researcher found through this study that by training pre service teacher in how to provide culturally responsive and personalized writing tasks, providing multicultural quality picture books to students, and implementing sincere relational care and concern for each student, as well as planned, individualized and collaborative writing lessons, supported student writing success. The study suggests that when teachers provided this type of writing it allowed for

students to share their ideas, suggestions, and opinions. The study further claims that this further supports the students working cooperatively which is how students learn most effectively, especially culturally diverse students. A case study also supports that providing a curricular and pedagogical focus to teach what we know about effective teaching practices for diverse learners helps to better support future teachers in successfully teaching diverse learners (Bales & Saffold, 2011). The instructional support model used was reported to assist these pre service teachers' perspectives of and towards diverse students after better learning about them. This model serves to move beyond the powerful forms of the structural inequality that persists in schools (Bales & Saffold, 2011).

Several pre service teachers do not receive the necessary professional development in order to successfully teach diverse students. Pre service teachers feel confident about general teaching practices that require the integration of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Siwatu, 2011). These practices are discussed during their preparation courses. However, pre service teachers reported that many of the culturally responsive teaching strategies that would help them to form self efficacy were not discussed in their courses (Siwatu, 2011). Efficacy has also been thought to develop through working with inservice teachers who have high efficacy, even when working in urban settings (Knoblauch & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2008). Therefore, ensuring the placement of preservice teachers with highly efficacious in service teachers to perform their student teaching should be highly considered (Knoblauch & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2008). In addition, forming positive relationships with students (culturally

responsive teaching) through the use of professional development supports diverse student learning and successful teaching (Hynds, et al., 2011).

The cultural responsiveness that one must be aware of in order to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies is not something that comes naturally to most teachers. Research implies that it is imperative that pre-service teachers receive training and that practicing teachers receive on-going staff development in teaching students of contrasting cultures and socioeconomic status. Bennett (2008) supports this when he states, “Rather than avoiding a major social issue confronting teachers in public schools today, studying poverty and its implications for the school and community can change thinking and prompt teachers to action” (p. 254) . Our society must educate and inform our teachers about the success that implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies can have on diverse students if we want to change the status quo. Teacher education programs must re-design their programs to advance in the areas of social justice and equity (Matsko and Hammerness, 2013). There have been noted pros and cons to teacher preparation programs teaching future teachers for all settings versus specific types of contexts. However, teacher preparation programs should at least give future teachers the option of the program they would like to participate. You could teach anyone a specific context; however, if they do not have a desire to teach in that context, then they will not be able to successfully teach the students in that context.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that theorizes, examines, and challenges the ways that teacher characteristics, perceptions and efficacy, along with their education and

training implicitly and explicitly impact social structures, practices and discourse is Funds of Knowledge. This theory provides the framework for understanding the findings from this literature review and has guided the formation of the study to further the necessary research in this area.

Funds of Knowledge Theoretical Approach. The Funds of Knowledge approach to education connects home, school, and community where anthropology, psychology, and education intersect. This theoretical approach assumes that families and communities are valuable educational resources (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005 and Moll, 1992). This thinking is based on the very simple premise that people are competent and have life experiences. These experiences have allowed for accumulated knowledge, or “forms of capital” (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). The concept of Funds of Knowledge is defined by Moll, Amati, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) as: “these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). This definition is grounded in the seminal works by Vélez-Ibáñez (1983) on U.S. Mexican households and their social and economic systems of interchange and from a sociocultural approach. Households build several bodies of knowledge, skills, and ideas in order to maintain the household as well as each individual’s well being. For Instance, Latino households in Arizona have built up a vast knowledge in areas such as agriculture, mining and metallurgy, ranching and animal husbandry, cross-border transactions, literacy and bi-literacy, painting, design and architecture, business or religion (González, et al., 2005). These are the Funds of Knowledge that result from these people’s lived experiences, including their social

interaction, their varied language-related activities, and their participation in multiple job markets (Moll & Cammarota, 2010). Culture is lived practices and experiences, that is, what it is that people do, and what they say about what they do. It is through these lived experiences grounded in the process of everyday life and daily activities that one gains and uses the funds of knowledge.

The Funds of Knowledge theoretical approach supports positive teacher perceptions and acknowledges diverse students' knowledge as a resource. This framework is important in understanding that Culturally Responsive Teaching is important in bringing out the background and knowledge of diverse students. This approach can help to better relate teaching to these experiences and support diverse students' learning. This framework has been used in this study to inform the research and to support its outcome.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

The Funds of Knowledge theoretical approach supports positive teacher perceptions and acknowledges diverse students' knowledge as a resource. This approach helps to better relate teaching to support diverse students. This conceptual framework serves as the support in providing information on how teachers can better support the learning of diverse students to help them receive a more equitable education in the United States.

The literature review conducted in this study relates to Funds of Knowledge in several specific areas, which support the research conducted. These specific areas are: Defining Culturally Responsive Teaching and its impact; Teacher Perceptions and Culturally Responsive Teaching; and Teacher Expectations and Culturally Responsive

Teaching. Culturally Responsive Teaching should be understood as a complex and intricate set of processes that many practitioners and researchers have suggested may improve student learning, (Gay, 2010). Related to this body of research, teachers who care for students are better able to make individual connections with their students and their stories. This helps to better meet their academic needs. This ethical perspective provides the most effective environment for diverse students (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012). As with Funds of Knowledge, when teachers utilize Culturally Responsive Teaching, they are valuing diverse students and their backgrounds to most effectively meet their academic needs.

Teacher perceptions and Culturally Responsive Teaching also relates to the Funds of Knowledge body of work. Teacher biases and perceptions between group differences related to socio-demographic background, contribute to about half of the gap in literacy in diverse students. The other half of the gap in literacy is related to bias in teacher perception (Wright & Ready, 2011). Teachers tend to stereotype urban, lower-class students and their families as “lacking values” (Smith & Smith, 2009). Providing a more accurate and positive perspective of diverse students through teacher education programs and on-going professional development, will help to support teachers. Teachers will value the backgrounds of diverse students instead of developing these inaccurate perceptions towards these students and their families.

Teacher Expectations and Culturally Responsive Teaching research reports that there are many biases towards the abilities diverse students. There are ethnic biases towards students in diverse classrooms (specifically African American and Latino Students) which affect teacher expectations, regardless of student achievement

history (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Teachers show low expectations towards boys who come from a low socio-economic background, which emulates low efficacy towards these groups of students, and ultimately perpetuates low student achievement for this group of students (Auwarter & Aurguete, 2008). Directly related to the Funds of Knowledge theoretical framework, teachers who recognize positive characteristics of their students regardless of their backgrounds, produce more successful students (Rubie-Davies, 2010).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

A Review of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine Culturally Responsive Teaching and to explore how Culturally Responsive Teaching as well as other instructional strategies affects diverse students' academic success, along with positive teacher perceptions and characteristics that promote successful academic outcomes for diverse students. As a former principal at an elementary school, I have witnessed firsthand how most teachers do not connect with their students and give up, especially when working with diverse populations of students of urban schools. They become frustrated and start to believe that diverse students cannot learn because of barriers that they begin to construct in their minds, such as "their parents don't care, they don't have help at home, education is not that important to their families, the student is distracted and will not listen, they are too far behind and maybe even have a disability, etc". In most instances, teachers do not even notice that they display these negative perceptions or characteristics towards diverse students in their daily interactions, and most importantly, they do not intend to display negative perceptions or characteristics towards diverse students. These teachers have received a lot of professional development in how to teach using the instructional strategies and pedagogy that the district has adopted. However, they are not teaching the diverse students in a manner that allows the students to be proficient at grade level standards. There is a disconnect and our students continue to not meet state and federal guidelines and our teachers continue to blame our students and their families. As previously mentioned in chapter one, this research contributes to the literature on culturally responsive teaching that

promotes successful learning for diverse students. The results of this study will provide more information on how to more successfully teach diverse students, incorporating ongoing instructional practices, professional development, and culturally responsive teaching, while focusing on which positive teacher perceptions and characteristics that must be present in order to produce a successful learning outcome for diverse students.

This research study seeks to answer this question:

How can Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies influence outcomes for diverse students, as well as practices for teachers? More specifically, this study examines:

1. How do teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching approaches as a tool for being effective with diverse students?
2. What are the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how do they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students?

In this study, these questions will be explored through the use of a qualitative case study. A snow ball sample was collected through the assistance of Principals at three school sites in an urban, diverse elementary school district in Riverside County. The Principals utilized a checklist provided by the researcher to use to select one to three teachers from each of the three school sites who teach third through sixth grade and who are “successful at teaching diverse students.” The checklist (See Appendix A: Teacher Selection Checklist) contains questions regarding the teachers’ culturally proficient teaching strategies, as well as teachers’ dispositional behaviors. The teachers selected by the Principals are teachers whom the Principals purposefully

assign and/or place diverse students in their classrooms because they are successful at teaching them.

The Principals were interviewed by the researcher before the interviews were conducted to ensure that the teachers they recommended met the criteria of the study. Once the researcher followed up on the checklist completed by the Principals the researcher sent the selected teachers an email (as seen in Appendix B: Recruitment email to participants) to gather a minimum of six participants who are considered to be “successful at teaching diverse students,” according to the completed survey and their Principal. The candidates who were willing to participate then completed a short survey (as seen in Appendix B) and sent it back to the researcher. Participants were then asked to review Appendix C: Consent form to participate. The participants then signed these consent forms to participate.

The researcher then scheduled forty minute observations of the six teachers. The observations were conducted by Co-Investigator Benjamin Gaines, who collected the data in order to alleviate the potential effects of positionality. The information gathered through these observations has been analyzed and coded to provide information regarding culturally responsive teaching practices as well as other teaching strategies, coupled with positive teacher perceptions and dispositions that support the successful learning of diverse students. The data collected has been analyzed and will be shared in order to help teachers who already work with or plan to work with diverse students.

The third step in the collection of data involved a written questionnaire that each teacher participant answered. The teachers each responded to the open-ended

questionnaire (Appendix D Teacher Questionnaire) through the use of an on-line Google document. A questionnaire was utilized instead of face to face interviews to protect the confidentiality of the teacher participants and to allow for ample time to reflect. The teacher participants were given a window of four weeks to respond to the questionnaire. They were allowed to respond over more than one sitting and at their own pace. The data collected through these electronic questionnaires has been analyzed, coded, and the themes are reported in chapter four. During the data analyzation process, the data was triangulated until themes collected through both methods were found.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative design was utilized in this case study of teachers who are effective with diverse students. Qualitative design was best suited because the study explored the central phenomenon of “teachers who are successful with diverse students,” which is the key concept or idea that this study explored (Creswell, 2012). The literature review regarding this concept has reported that culturally responsive teaching and other instructional practices; along with positive teacher perceptions and characteristics all support teachers in successfully teaching diverse students. The research questions were formulated taking this concept into consideration and in order to add to the research, and to further assist teachers in successfully teaching diverse students. The participants were asked questions that provided more information related to “how to successfully teach diverse students.”

Context of the Research Site

The research site is a small, urban elementary school district in Riverside County that serves diverse students. The district's total student population is 5,882 students. Included in this total are 5,102 Hispanic students; 430 African American Students, 197 White students; 153 students of "other" races; and 4,200 Socio-Economically Disadvantaged (SED) students (California Department of Education, 2014). This district has eight elementary schools that serve students in grades Transitional Kindergarten through Eighth Grades. Principals from three schools were asked to recruit a snow ball sample of successful teachers to participate in this study. The three schools that were selected are all located within a five mile radius of each other. One of the schools is the largest in the district and serves over 1,000 students; the second school serves over 860 students and is a magnet school, and the third school serves 686 students. All schools serve students of the same demographics and have similar state testing scores. The gender and ethnicity of the teachers who serve at each of the schools is highly comparable. There are 40 teachers at site one; there are 32 teachers at site two; and there are 23 teachers at site three.

Participant Recruitment

The participants of this study were recruited through the use of a yes or no checklist related to teacher characteristics based on Villegas & Lucas, 2002. The checklist utilizes research related to the Six Strands of Effective Culturally Responsive Curriculum. The principals of the three school sites were asked to choose one (1) to three (3) teachers who teach third through sixth grade and who are "effective with teaching diverse students." The participants were chosen only if the principals could

check “yes” to all six of the questions on this checklist (as seen in Appendix A). These principals were the first point of contact to begin the recruitment process. Once the participants were selected and after the researcher followed up with the principal and the teacher/participants were confirmed, they were sent an email (as seen in Appendix B). As previously stated, recruitment was through the use of a snowball sample driven by the principals. Snowball sampling was the most appropriate method to recruit participants due to the fact that the principals knew which teachers they work with on a daily basis that best fit the criteria of “effective with diverse students.” Once 5-6 teacher participants are confirmed, a Consent form to participate was emailed to the proposed participants (as seen in Appendix C). The consent form explained the study, provided more information associated with what to expect, and other specific details.

The study recruited six teachers who are effective with diverse students; who teach third through fifth grade; and who work in a district that serves a diverse population of students. These teachers completed the profile related to their class and themselves (as seen in Appendix B).

This study investigated what professional development related to culturally proficient teaching as well as other instructional strategies, coupled with which positive perceptions and dispositions that these teachers who are “successful with diverse students” possess, that make them successful with effectively teaching diverse learners.

Data Collection

One forty (40) minute classroom observation was performed in order to gather notes regarding teaching strategies and dispositional behaviors that the teachers exhibit while the teacher was teaching. The co-investigator collected the observation data for the researcher in order to alleviate some positionality. This data was utilized in triangulating the data collected and reported out. The culturally responsive teaching strategies along with dispositional behaviors that are noted to support the learning and success diverse students is what this study will report out.

The researcher also used a questionnaire to collect data from six participants/teachers after their classroom observation. These questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions that the teachers answered electronically, utilizing a Google doc. The researcher sought to “get to know” the participants by using structured and open-ended questions. The participants helped the researcher gain insight related to the research topic. The researcher asked each participant twenty nine (29) open ended questions which took them approximately forty-five to sixty minutes to answer. The questions were grouped into six main subject areas related to teacher participants’ backgrounds, teaching strategies, teacher perceptions, student interactions and race, student interaction and discipline, and closing questions.

A questionnaire was the form of collecting data because it provided the opportunity for the participants to share their story and report out the necessary data for this study, in order to allow the participant teachers the time to think, reflect, and share on their own time. Questionnaires are a practical form of collecting data through the use of open-ended questions wherein the participants recorded their response in

their own time, electronically. The transcribed responses from the questionnaires were used for data for analysis (Creswell, 2012). See the protocol for structured and open-ended questions (Appendix D: Interview questions).

Data Analysis

Observations allow for the gathering of open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site, (Creswell, 2012). Observations have advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that the researcher was able to record information in the setting, as it occurred. Additionally, observations allowed for another form of data collection for participants who have difficulty verbalizing their ideas to be seen interacting. Some of the disadvantages were that observations are limited to the sites where a researcher has been given access, thus limiting the research. Participants may also have difficulty developing a rapport with the researcher, which could also affect the collection of data. The researcher did not meet the participants before the observation and was not able to develop a rapport before conducting the observations. The researcher did not interact with the students; therefore developing a rapport with the students was not necessary.

Narrative analysis is an examination of how people construct their self-account. Collecting individual stories is the process of collecting information through the chronological perspective of individual experiences (Creswell, 2012). Through this process the researcher asks the participants to tell a story (or stories) about their experiences related to a set of questions. Narrative researchers then use this information and place emphasis on collecting the stories told to them by individuals. This information is gathered and analyzed, looking for key elements and in order to

begin the writing process to retell the story from the narrative inquirer's interpretation (Creswell, 2012).

Interviews were asked electronically unitizing a Google document and using open-ended, narrative questions related to teaching strategies and teacher perceptions. These recorded and already transcribed responses were coded for themes. The transcribed responses were coded around major themes that are related and are thus pertinent. Capturing these major themes was very important to understand the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012). The coding process was long and can be seen as a funneling procedure beginning with many possible themes down to the most significant themes. The goal was to finish with few major themes (i.e., 5-7 themes) that help to narrate the experiences of those teachers who are effective with diverse students. The researcher managed and coded the complex data by hand. This was more effective due to the fact that the data was known very well after collecting, reading, and finding themes from the observations and collected responses from the interviews.

As a final note, data collection and data analysis are reviewed simultaneously. While collection of data occurs, the researcher can also begin to analyze and "test" emerging themes against subsequent data gathered from the interviews and the observations. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis are conduits for an inductive strategy where coding begins and themes emerge (Creswell, 2012).

Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

Validity of a narrative account is very important. This study was collaborative between the participants/teachers and the researcher. This allowed for validation to

occur throughout the case study observations and interview process. Several validation practices such as member checking, triangulation among data, and the searching of disconfirming evidence were useful in determining accuracy and credibility of this narrative account (Creswell, 2012). Validity and reliability are bound together very complexly. These two terms sometimes overlap and at other times can be mutually exclusive. In this study, validity should be thought of as the larger, more encompassing term related to the interview protocol. Reliability should be thought of as the measure of consistency of the utilization of the responses. These two sources were stable and consistent so they could be used optimally.

The participants/teachers responses seemed to be true and accurate data based on their practices related to successful teaching of diverse students. The participants/teachers were observed and interviewed and observed individually and should not have had the competition of responding based on the response of a collective, competing group. However, depending on the individuals' personalities, some of the behaviors and/or responses may be inflated, which is always a possibility when dealing with human beings. Therefore, the participants/teachers will be considered trustworthy.

Ethical Issues and Role of Researcher

The researcher must practice ethics throughout the entire process of conducting a study. Initially, the researcher must get the permission from the appropriate gatekeepers of the proposed study site. There must be minimal disruption to the participants which includes the principals, participants/teachers, students, as well as all staff at the three selected school sites. The researcher must always respect all aspects

of the research site as well as the participants, especially their time. During data collection, the researcher must report honestly and not change or alter the findings to satisfy certain predictions or thoughts related to the research. These ethical issues were all followed during the collection of data at the research sites.

Limitations of the Study

Generalization. Narrative inquiry is specific to the participant's experience in a particular time and place. Therefore, generalization could not be adopted to describe the experiences of all teachers who are "effective with diverse students." In other words, the participant told the story based on personal and social interaction as it relates to a particular time (i.e., past, present, future) within a certain context or place. As a result of the narrative inquiry process, participants of this study did not define or generalize the teaching experience or characteristics of teachers who are "effective with diverse students."

Use of Observations and Questionnaires. There are both advantages and disadvantages to observations and questionnaires. An advantage is that the researcher gives one on one attention to the participant during the entire collection process, and time is dedicated to record the data related to the participants' experiences. Some disadvantages are that the information collected is "filtered" through the views of the observers, when utilizing observations, and by not being face to face when using a questionnaire instead of face to face interviews. Not interviewing the teacher participants face to face will not allow for seeing facial responses and to read and see body language. Observation and questionnaire data can also be deceptive and provide the perspective the teacher participants want the researcher to hear and read. During

the observations, the presence of the researcher may have affected the participants' actions or responses. For example their responses and/or actions may not have been articulate or clear. Since the questionnaire responses were collected electronically, these issues will not exist. The teacher participants were given time to really think and respond to the questionnaire and they were able to answer on their own time. There can also be issues with recording or transcribing equipment. Again, the use of Google documents to collect the questionnaire data did not cause issues collecting the data related to recording or transcribing.

Positionality and Reflexivity. Positionality and reflexivity are human traits that are expected to play an acute role in the researcher's own experience. As humans researching humans to gain a better understanding of life around a specific topic, it is nearly impossible to maintain a purely objective view. As a researcher, my position was likely to influence the study because as a former teacher and principal I identify with teachers who are "effective with diverse students." Furthermore, I'm currently "living" the very topic the study seeks to investigate through my experience and current job. I had a responsibility to be aware of my position as a researcher, and balance reporting the truest form of the study's analysis. Because collaboration is more of an inquiry technique, it required the researcher to be involved within the world of the participant during the narrative inquiry process, to then eventually leave that world in order to retell the participant's story in the most truthful meaningful way. Therefore, positionality became a living reminder of "self-checking" during the research process by distinguishing what is a subjective view versus an objective view.

My position as a former teacher and principal was held by certain views, beliefs, and biases that will shape the way I will interpret the proposed study (Creswell, 2012). I'm talking about reflexivity which asserted that my personal background and work experiences played a role throughout the study. But by virtue of this expected malefactor, I was able to reflect how my personal background did indeed influence the study. My position and reflexivity reminded me that I came with a history and background of information and experiences which helped to learn the perspectives in which the participants shared their world and I learned through this experience.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine how teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching approaches as tools for being effective with diverse students. This study also examines the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how they address these attitudes to be more effective with their diverse students. Culturally Responsive Teaching approaches as well as inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess were examined through the lens of Culturally Responsive Teaching to uncover the culturally responsive teaching practices and perceptions of teachers related to their diverse students. Teachers were first observed and then they answered an electronic questionnaire using Google documents wherein they answered open-ended questions related to teaching strategies and teacher perceptions. Teachers were asked about their social and academic experiences with their diverse students. This chapter presents the analysis of the qualitative data that provided information from teacher observations and the questionnaire they completed.

Qualitative data was gathered through classroom observations and the questionnaire with all six teachers who teach grades third through sixth. Each of the six teachers was observed during their regular instruction for at least forty minutes. The teachers were observed in their natural teaching environments in order to capture their interactions with their diverse students. Notes were recorded in order to look for themes and patterns related to culturally responsive teaching, as well as positive perceptions and attitudes of the teachers. The data collected through the observations was utilized to develop themes and patterns, in addition to the questionnaire data.

Each of the six teachers also answered a questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted electronically through the use of Google documents. A questionnaire was used instead of a face to face interview so that the teachers would have ample time to sit, think, reflect, and provide the most accurate and complete answers. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended narrative questions related to teaching strategies and teacher perceptions related to diverse students. The questions were related to socio-cultural awareness; being positive advocates for diverse students; and understanding how diverse students construct knowledge. The teachers answered twenty-nine questions in this format (Appendix D: Teacher questionnaire). The questionnaire asked the teacher participants to share their experiences related to what makes them successful in teaching diverse students, developing trust, respect, and knowing how to reach them through getting to know them. The questionnaire also asked the teacher participants to share information regarding their background, education, and experiences.

This chapter explores the following themes that emerged as a result of the classroom observations and questionnaire.

Prior to delving into the emerging themes, it is essential to review the research questions and to also gain a better perception of the participants.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the questions related to how do Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies influence outcomes for diverse students, as well as practices for teachers. More specifically, this study examines:

1. How do teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching approaches as a tool for being effective with diverse students?
2. What are the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how do they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students?

In relation to answering these questions, data was gathered from six teachers who work at three different school sites, in a medium-sized elementary school district in Riverside County, which is in an urban area and serves diverse students.

Participants Profiles

The names have been changed to ensure anonymity. Additionally, a brief profile of each of the interviewees is presented first to offer further contextualization and understanding of the teacher in their relationship to the school and students.

Table 1. Participant Information

Teacher	Race	Age	Years Teaching	Degree & University	Special Certifications	Lives In Community
Participant 1: Suzy	White American	31	8	BA/CSU San Marcos MA/Azusa Pacific	CLAD	no
Participant 2: Jamyah	Caucasian	35	12	BA/Univ of Redlands MA/ Univ of Redlands Ed.D/ Univ of Redlands	CLAD Admin Credential	no
Participant 3: Nanette	Hispanic	29	4	BA/UCR MA/CSU San Bernardino	BCLAD	no
Participant 4: Rita	Spanish-Mexican	40	8	BA/CSU San Marcos MA/CSU San Marcos	CLAD	no
Participant 5: Mariah	Mexican-American	28	5	BA/CSU Fullerton MS/CSU Fullerton	BCLAD	no
Participant 6: Ilene	Hispanic-Latina	32	4	BA/CSU San Bernardino MA/Azusa Pacific	BCLAD	yes

Participant 1: Suzy. Suzy is a 4th grade teacher at ABC Elementary School. She teaches all subjects to her students. In her class, she serves English Learners, Hispanic, African American, White, Students with Disabilities (SWD), and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. Her teaching career began 8 years ago.

She has taught second and fourth grade, all in the ABC Union School District. Since she was younger, working with kids was always something that Suzy enjoyed. She loved going to school and learning anytime she could. Suzy did not come from a family of teachers, like most teachers in the profession, but from a family with a business background. When she made the decision to go into education, there was skepticism from her family. However, this was the career that Suzy enjoyed, so she was ultimately supported by her family. As an educator, Suzy thinks that all educators want the same thing, which is for students to learn more than they knew. Suzy wants each student who comes into her classroom to leave with more than what they came in with. For Suzy, she wants her students to know they are in a safe place where they are able to make mistakes, and to learn from all of their actions, whether they are positive or negative. Suzy learns from her students every day. She expressed that even though she is there to teach her students, there are so many times that they have taught her. Suzy says that every student that has come into her room has taught her to be better than she is. Suzy wants her students to know that every day is a new day, and that they are all going to learn something. Suzy has had cultural responsiveness training throughout her bachelor's, credential, and master's programs as well as at her school site. She feels that being culturally responsive ties into being culturally aware. Suzy believes that as teachers, we need to know those who we are around and influencing.

Participant 2: Jamyah. Jamyah is a 6th grade teacher at ABC Elementary School. She teaches all subjects to her students. In her class, she serves English Learners, Hispanic, African American, White, Students with Disabilities (SWD), and

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. Her teaching career began 12 years ago in the ABC Union School District. Teaching was not Jamyah's original first choice in careers. She was introduced to education when she had to complete 80 hours of volunteer work during college. Jamyah completed these volunteer hours working at Head Start. Jamyah changed her major the next semester from Computer Science to Liberal Studies. However, Jamyah believes her desire to teach more than likely came before this event because her parents were very involved in her education and were a huge part of extra-curricular activities. Jamyah grew up with parents who had a huge part in helping kids in various aspects of their lives. Jamyah has an Ed.D. in Educational Justice, where cultural responsiveness was one of the foundations for the program. Jamyah feels that it is imperative to know about the culture of her students. She wants students to understand that she is interested in their lives, which especially includes their culture. She feels that if a teacher doesn't have an understanding of their students' cultures the necessary connection between them will not exist in order to make the students feel comfortable in her classroom.

Participant 3: Nanette. Nanette is a 5th grade teacher at Superstar Elementary School. She is also the technology lead for the school, wherein she is charged with developing tools for colleagues and students to help them become familiar with technology and to utilize technology as a learning tool. She teaches all subjects to her students. In her class, she serves English Learners, Hispanic, African American, White, Students with Disabilities (SWD), and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. She is finishing her 4th year in teaching in the ABC Union School District. Nanette knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. During difficult times

in her life, she saw school as a way to escape the reality of her unstable home life. Her teachers provided support and guidance during times she felt lost. This is why Nanette decided to become a teacher; so that one day she too could offer hope for a new generation. Nanette's philosophy of education is to strive to enable students to become capable, fulfilled, successful, and contributing members of society. She treasures the difference that she makes in the daily life of young students in her community. Nanette received training in cultural responsiveness in the form of training and professional development during the 2013-2014 school from her site principal. She believes that knowing a student's culture and values helps to develop rapport with students and families.

Participant 4: Rita. Rita is a 3rd grade teacher at Raintree Elementary School. She teaches all subjects to her students. In her class, she serves English Learners, Hispanic, African American, White, Students with Disabilities (SWD), and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. Her teaching career began 8 years ago. She has taught first, third and fifth grades, all in the ABC Union School District. Rita comes from a family of educator; her father was a teacher as well as many of her aunts. She originally wanted a career in the film industry but decided she didn't like that field due to the lack of diversity. Ultimately, Rita decided to pursue a career in education because she felt it was a better way to make a difference and to be surrounded by diversity. As an educator, Rita believes that it is extremely important that students feel valued. She let them know she values them by creating a safe environment that allows for mistakes in learning as well as a working together. Rita took a multicultural class in college. She is a firm believer that getting to know you

students is important. When you get to know your students, you learn about their culture and background. It is a part of making students feel valued and understood.

Participant 5: Mariah. Mariah is a 6th grade teacher at Superstar Elementary School. She teaches all subjects to her students. In her class, she serves English Learners, Hispanic, African American, White, Students with Disabilities (SWD), and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. Her teaching career began 5 years ago in the ABC Union School District. Mariah has always had a great respect and appreciation for teachers due to the fact that she started school as an English Learner. Her second grade teacher had a great impact on her learning because she helped Mariah each morning before school in learning English. Mariah appreciated her second grade teacher so much that she volunteered in her classroom when she was a high school junior. During this time, she knew she wanted to pursue a career in teaching. Mariah believes that her primary role as an educator is to foster learning by empowering her students. She believes in not just teaching them through the delivery of information, but also by involving students in their own learning as much as possible. Mariah encourages and supports students in taking risks without being afraid to make mistakes. Mariah has received some training during a few staff meetings at her school site last year. In addition to the training at her site, she also took a class which focused on culturally responsive teaching while she was enrolled in her Master's Program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Mariah believes that it is crucial to know about her students' cultures in order to be an effective teacher. Knowing students' cultures allows for her to connect more with her

students on a personal level and to better understand how to engage her students in meaningful conversations.

Participant 6: Ilene. Ilene is a 6th grade teacher at Superstar Elementary School in the ABC Union School District. She teaches all subjects to her students. In her class, she serves English Learners, Hispanic, African American, White, Students with Disabilities (SWD), and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students. Ilene has taught for 4 years and was a substitute teacher for 2 years prior to that. She has taught sixth grade all 4 years in the ABC Union School District. Ilene became a teacher because she wanted a career that she would truly enjoy. She found this joy and passion in teaching. Ilene loves the amazing experience of helping students to grow academically and socially that teaching provides to her. Her philosophy as an educator is that she doesn't expect students to practice something, whether it's a skill or behavior that she hasn't taught. Ilene knows that students behave the way they know how to behave, and it's up to her to show them how to behave in the school setting. She feels in doing so, she builds relationships with her students that includes a mutual trust. This has to happen in order to have an effective teaching environment. Ilene is not familiar with the term responsiveness; however she has been exposed to the term cultural proficiency. She received training in cultural proficiency from her site administrator during a few staff meetings in the 2013-2014 school year. Ilene expresses that it is vital to know about her students' culture. It is beneficial for activating prior knowledge during instruction and providing accessible materials or topics to students. It's also vital to know about culture when dealing with parents of students.

Results

In addition to reviewing the personal data related to the participants, the transcriptions from the observations and questionnaires were read and reviewed a minimum of three times. The first review was simply to read and begin to familiarize myself with the information and to begin to formulate themes and connections related to the research questions. The second reading of the transcripts was to begin to highlight important information and quotes, as well as to notate my thoughts related to the connection of themes and connections related to the research question. A third review of the transcripts was to apply codes, which ultimately became themes, by hand. This process was completed over and over again until all the data was coded with themes that related to the research question. In analyzing the data from the observations and questionnaires, there were three distinct categories that emerged, giving insight into my research questions. The three categories were 1) efficacy, 2) respectful relationships and 3) shared stories. All three categories were based on a relationship with the foundation of trust. Without trust, each category would not exist. Using the lens of a culturally responsive teacher, including not only instruction, but also their thoughts, perceptions, and inherent dispositions, it became evident that each of the study's participants always enacted all three categories to successfully connect with diverse students. In addition, all six of the teacher participants which were selected by the principals, were educated beyond a bachelor's degree, and were highly skilled in teaching pedagogy. Therefore, they all possess a high level of skill in teaching. However, they all expressed the need to build a relationship of trust with their students, or else it is impossible for them to learn to the fullest.

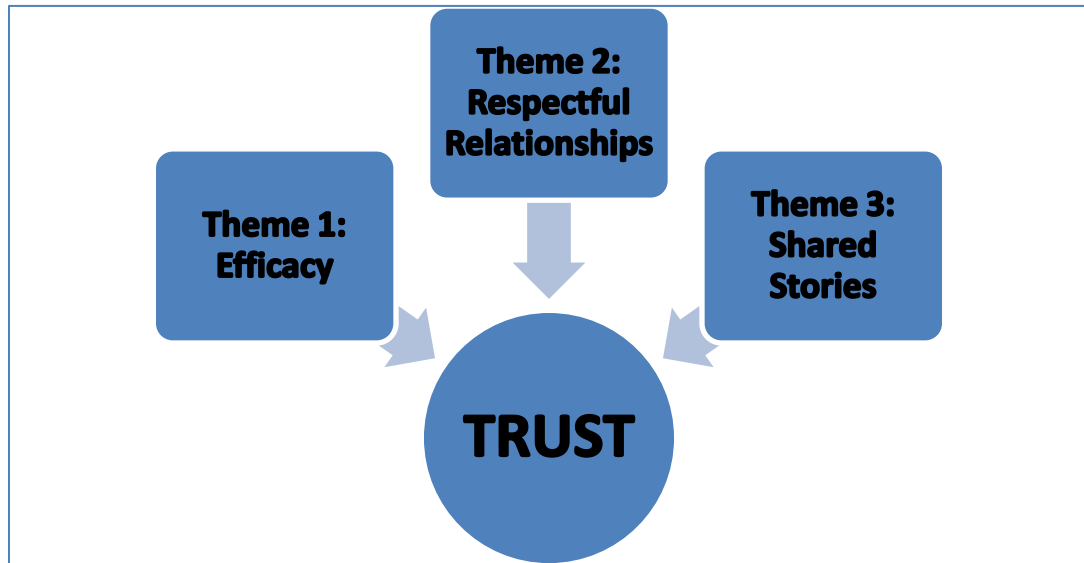


Figure 1. Results – Themes of Data Collection

The six teachers who were observed and interviewed were very knowledgeable of the role that each of these categorical themes attribute to their successful ability to build a trusting relationship and mutual respect with their diverse students. The teachers all talked about the challenges that come hand in hand with the ability to teach diverse students. They each understand that in order to cross that barrier or challenge, they must develop trust, efficacy, respectful relationships, and shared stories with their diverse students. The teachers in this study have a range of years in teaching experience. The range is from four to twelve years of experience. All of the teachers in this study have completed their years of teaching experience in the district where they currently teach, and where the study was conducted. The teachers all shared their love of teaching in this district, due to the diverse students that they are able to reach on a daily basis. They all truly enjoy working with the population that they serve, which is a diverse student population.

There are a number of sub themes that emerged within the three main themes or that are presented. Several of the sub themes are interrelated to the other themes and serve as practical approaches to the field of teaching, specifically related to teaching diverse students. Sub themes within each theme carry over and are not limited to the theme in which they are presented.

Theme 1: Efficacy

All teacher participants possessed efficacy and built it in their students. They specifically possessed belief in themselves as teachers, which was mutually demonstrated by all of them through their education levels. Each teacher participant possesses beyond a Bachelor's Degree and credential, and all possess a Bachelor's Degree plus at least a Masters Degree. Personally, the teacher participants set goals and all reached them; one of the mutual goals of being able to most effectively reach their students and guiding them to be successful learners. The teacher participants possess master level teaching skills, which were observed during the observations that were conducted.

The teacher participants all work diligently to instill efficacy in their students. This was expressed by the teacher participants through their questionnaires where they responded with statements such as "I believe that my primary goal as an educator is to foster learning by empowering my students", and "my approach is to create an environment that allows students to participate in their education". Another teacher participant stated "I approach teaching with the goal of facilitating learning academically and socially". Each of the teacher participants shared numerous ways of building efficacy with their diverse students and that they knew how important

efficacy is to support success. They shared ways to make students more comfortable with their learning environment “first and foremost, we are a community”, by ensuring the building of a community in their classroom. The teacher participants duly noted that these views are crucial in building an environment that empowers their students to be proud of their learning and to have a deep belief in their abilities to be successful. Each teacher spoke of their own way in creating this efficacious environment, sharing several ways in which they accomplish this with their students. The teachers’ reports were confirmed through the classroom observations wherein it was apparent that students were empowered by their teachers, who emulated great pride and belief that their students are successful learners by responding during a lesson, “that is awesome, you knew the answer and took the time to think about it”, and “you can do this, I will help you and so will your partners”.

Within this theme of efficacy, the following sub-themes emerged in contributing to building an efficacious environment: a) empowerment b) developing interests, c) belief in students and self, and d) teacher collaboration with peers. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed in order to support the idea of building efficacy with diverse students.

Empowerment. A sub theme to efficacy that emerged early on amongst the teacher participants was that of empowering students to be their own learners. It was clear that all the teachers worked hard, early on in the school year to teach students to become learners of their own will “my approach is to create an environment that allows students to participate in their education”, and “I believe that my primary goal as an educator is to foster learning by empowering my students”. The teacher

participants expressed how their role as the classroom teacher allowed them to empower students “my role as an educator is to provide an equal and substantial education for all students to use as a vehicle of self-empowerment” and what they want for their students “I think as educators, we all want the same thing, we want our students to learn more than they knew”. It was also apparent that empowerment was built through community “first and foremost, we are a community. This means we work together. This also means that our classroom is a safe place where we SHOULD make mistakes”, and through relationships “it is essential to build a relationship with students that includes mutual trust in order to have an effective teaching environment”. It was clearly expressed and observed that each teacher supported their students in becoming empowered learners during instruction by interactions such as “you can work with your partner that’s fine. You can always work with your partner” and “you guys have your elbow partners; you can quiz them on any of this. You can quiz by asking them the 3 questions”.

It was evident that the teacher participants supported the students becoming empowered in their learning through gradual release “yes, what are you going to be creating? A postcard, yes! Great, any questions before you get started?”, and “go to Google classroom and find your assignment. Find a partner and work on your assignment. I will be around to check on your progress”, which ultimately results in student independence. All the teacher participants scaffold student learning by modeling and then releasing the students through support. Students who require more support are always provided with such. This is crucial in empowering students to

want to learn on their own because they feel like they can be successful no matter what the circumstances present.

Developing Interests. Each of the teacher participants in this study developed the interests of their students in a multitude of ways. Students are encouraged to take risks and try things that are out of their comfort zone. The teachers shared “as an educator, we need to know where our students come from to help them to advance”, and “I feel that if a teacher doesn’t have an understanding there isn’t going to be the connection with students that is necessary to make them feel comfortable in our classroom”. Along with developing interests, a teacher participant shared “it is vital to know about the culture of one’s students. It can be beneficial in areas like activating prior knowledge during instruction and providing accessible materials/topics to students”, while another teacher participant shared “...by teaching the essential subjects, I believe students will be able to develop interests in different areas and then pursue their interest”. The teacher participants all shared that getting to know their students assisted them with developing their students’ interests in learning. The teacher participants shared that “by getting to know them, we are better able to reach them through learning”. The teacher participants state that getting to know their students allows them to support their students’ learning styles and relate their prior knowledge to new learning. The teacher participants mutually expressed that this is a critical piece in developing the efficacy in students. It also seems to contribute to the further development of the teachers’ efficacy.

Belief in Students. “Behaviorally we can provide students with high expectations and acknowledge their success and areas for growth”. The teachers in

this study shared several instances wherein they supported students towards believing in themselves. A lot of their daily interactions included guiding students in the right direction to be successful, as one teacher participant shared “academically we support students through small group instruction or one to one. Socially we can provide models and examples to support their interactions and relationships with others. Behaviorally we can provide students with high expectations and acknowledge their success and area for growth”. The teacher participants all agree that they must know their students’ academic levels “I use a variety of supports and strategies to hit all types of learners”, and use this information to support their learning so that they feel successful. When the students feel successful, they believe they can accomplish anything.

The teachers support students in being successful learners, no matter what it takes “I like to work with them one-on-one and/or in small groups”, all teacher participants take the time to meet the different needs of their diverse students through working with them based on their needs. Even if students are struggling, the teachers know how to use strategies and have positive outcomes so that students are ultimately successful. The teacher participants ensure that all students are successful and believe that “every student has a gift”, so they find a way to work towards a successful experience. Once the students learn, even after a little struggle, they begin to believe in themselves and continue to work hard. “Students that are doing well academically need the positive acknowledgement as well as the opportunity to be challenged”.

Teacher Collaboration with Peers. The teacher participants shared about how they collaborate with their peers “I am fortunate to work with a team that is very

effective communicators. I have had students that have struggled this year both academically and behaviorally. With that teacher, I have stated the problem that I have observed, and talked about what we can do to support the students”, in order to most effectively help struggling students. The collaboration that occurs with peers is invaluable “I would address the teacher at a grade level meeting by asking how teaching a standard or topic is going, what has worked and what has not worked”, to the success in helping diverse students. The teacher participants expressed “I will individually meet with both the student and the teacher in order to discuss what issues they are having”, and that they get to know all of the students at the grade level they teach in order to ensure the most success for their students.

The teachers are clear with regard to how collaboration contributes to the success of their students. They shared that they become involved “I would get involved by providing ideas on how to best help this student”, and have various conversations amongst their peers “I think about placement, learning style, and other students in the class”, in order to help the successful learning both academically and behaviorally of their students. It is apparent that collaboration is a normal event that occurs between all of these teacher participants and their peers.

Theme 2: Respectful Relationships

A theme that continued to emerge through the teachers was that of developing respectful relationships with their students in order to continually build trust. Each teacher participant shared several different ways in which they worked with students in order to develop a relationship of respect with them. The teacher participants expressed that respect was crucial, in order for diverse students to trust them, in order

for diverse students to want to learn from them, and in order for diverse students to be successful in school.

The sub-themes that emerged within the theme of respectful relationships are: a) respect, b) getting to know the students, and c) understanding students' culture. These sub themes are interrelated and collectively form the theme of respectful relationships, which was a theme that emerged through the teacher participants' interviews.

Respect. All of the teacher participants share a relationship of respect with their diverse students. The teacher participants all spoke of the importance of being supportive towards their diverse students. When the teacher participants were each asked to describe their relationship with their students, they explained "I know all our kids. I set high expectations for all students", and "I have a supportive relationship with my students. They know I have high expectations for them, and that I am here to support them with any problems they may be having, whether academic or personal". During an observation, the teacher monitored and helped students who were struggling by asking questions to support their understanding. Students were not just left to fall behind. The teacher supported and respected their learning, and ultimately created respect between the students. Each teacher participant responded that their relationship was grounded by some form of respect "I believe there is a mutual respect between us". Respect is a trait that all of the participants expressed as being a crucial part of their relationships with their diverse students. Respect is what enables the participants to develop the relationship that is necessary in order to teach all students and learning styles. The participants expressed how important mutual respect is "I

think that I have a great relationship with my students. My students respect and trust me because I truly respect and trust them”, in order to have a successful student/teacher relationship that supports successful learning.

Getting to Know the Students. In addition to a mutual respect, another sub-theme that all teacher participants expressed was getting to know their students. A teacher participant stated “at the beginning of each year I ask students to complete an “all about me” survey that helps me find out things that I can later use to connect to a student”. One shared “I dedicate the entire first week of school to “getting to know you” activities so that I can learn about my students and they can learn about me as well”, all the teacher participants spend time right at the beginning of the year to get to know their students.

The teacher participants all stated that getting to know their students initially, also helps them to make “connections to their lives”, when the school year starts. The teacher participants feel this is crucial in order for them to form the necessary connections that allow for them to successfully reach their students academically, behaviorally, and socially. As the year progresses, the participants shared how they continue to get to know their students “even when we are reading a story we make connections”, to continue to build positive relationships throughout the school year with their diverse students. “I have high expectations for all of my students. I want them to do all that they can to be successful”. The teacher participants “do their best”, to understand their students’ needs. They also “interact with them by making them feel valued and showing interest in what they have to say” through the instructional day.

Understanding the Students' Culture. The teacher participants contend that getting to know their students also includes getting to know their students' cultural backgrounds. The teacher participants shared several instances wherein they learned more about their students' cultural background which in turn helped them to better understand and connect with them so that they could ultimately teach the students successfully. One of the teacher participants shared "it was then that I saw the support that my student had for the younger siblings as I saw this quiet student come alive", during a time when families were invited to the classrooms after school for a reading event. Another teacher participant shared a time when she used a student's family business in a math word problem "I had a student who was greatly encouraged when I shared a word problem with the class about their parents having a taco stand", and the student became greatly encouraged in learning the math lesson that was being taught. The teacher participant had gotten to know about the student's family life and what their family business entailed. This information allowed for her to make a connection to the student and the learning that was meaningful to him and also encouraged him to learn.

When the teacher participants were asked to share about the advice that they would give to a new teacher who is entering a diverse classroom setting, they all stated "learn more about your student" or "celebrate and embrace the cultural differences", because getting to know the students' cultural background is extremely important in order to successfully teach diverse students. The teacher participants expressed the importance in getting to know their students' cultural backgrounds in order to form the

connections that are necessary to reach them and successfully teach them. Knowing about their students' culture allows them to make this crucial connection.

Theme 3: Shared Stories

“On the first day before we get into the expectations and policies, I show them a keynote about my life (Participant 2: Jamyah).”

A theme which emerged and supports the connection between the teacher participants and students is the power of sharing stories. Each teacher participant described the sharing of stories “I share information about my life as appropriate situations come up”, and how this impacts their relationship with their students “the first day of school, I like the kiddos to learn about me”. A student was observed in more than one classroom sharing stories about themselves. A teacher knew information about a family's business due to this sharing and used this to teach math in the form of a word problem. The teacher participants want to share stories about themselves and also hear stories about their students “I talk to them as often as I can and I tell them stories as often as I can”. In the context of this study, story-telling is a factor that goes both ways between student and teacher. The teacher participants discussed how they tell stories about themselves and also listen to their students' stories so they are able to learn relevant information about them and ultimately connect at a higher level.

Embedded within the theme of storytelling, it became apparent that there were two sub-themes that contribute to the power of stories. Such sub-themes are: a) shared interests, and b) shared struggles. Each of these sub-themes is interrelated to each other and forms a distinct collective experience of shared story.

Shared Interests. A theme that emerged early on amongst the participants was that of developing a connectedness through learning about students and their interests. All of the teacher participants discussed how important it is for them to learn about their students' interests in order to gain a better understanding of their lives. The teacher participants "listen", to the students and "all them to get to know them". The teacher participants also share information about themselves with their students "in sharing about my family, students have an understanding of the culture that I come from and get to know more about me", this supports making valuable connections. This shared information between them provides a powerful connection that is necessary in order to form a mutual trust.

Shared Struggles. Another emerging theme was that of the teacher participants sharing their struggles to relate to students and build connections. The teacher participants shared their real life struggles "I like to let my students know that I have been through many of the things that they are going through", with their students so that they could relate on a deeper level. The teacher participants explained that sharing the struggles they overcame earlier in their lives helped them to get where they are now. One teacher participant shared "I like to share my own experiences of when I was a struggling English learner in school and how I overcame my language barrier to be where I am now. My sharing some of these personal experiences with them and giving them the opportunity to ask me questions about myself, I have been able to make a connection with them right from the beginning". The teacher participants state that sharing struggles also helps to support a "better understanding", and "connectedness", between the teacher participants and their diverse students.

Overarching Research Question and Sub Research Question #1

The teacher participants were chosen by the use of a checklist completed by their Principals (Appendix A: Teacher selection checklist). All teacher participants that were selected by Principals completed at least a Masters degree or higher. Responses to the questionnaires did not focus heavily on teaching pedagogy that the teacher participants related to successful teaching of diverse students. Instead, the teachers' responses to the questionnaire focused more on the inherent dispositions and attitudes that they display in teaching their diverse students. Therefore, this study focused more on inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students. Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies were not a focus in this particular study

Sub Research Question #2

The data collected in this study reported on the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students. This study found three main themes related to inherent dispositions and attitudes of teachers who are effective with diverse learners: 1) efficacy, 2) respectful relationships and 3) shared stories. All three categories were based on a relationship with the foundation of trust. Using the lens of a culturally responsive teacher, related to their thoughts, perceptions, and inherent dispositions, it became evident that each of the study's participants always enacted all three categories to successfully connect with diverse students.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the conclusions for research questions based on data analysis of the qualitative study conducted. Chapter 5 also presents a discussion of the implications for educational practice, pedagogical teaching practices, study limitations, recommendations for future research and a closing summary.

Summary of the Study

In our nation's schools, there is a cultural gap that exists, which greatly impacts the success of diverse students. This cultural gap continues to grow within the diverse student population, and it continues to show in the results of our federal and state testing programs, as well at the school sites where it exists. Additionally, our nation's education systems continue to grow in the area of minority student populations, as well as our nation's overwhelmingly white, middle class teacher force. This cultural gap places a dividing line between students and teachers, which impacts the success of diverse students. In their study, McKown & Weinstein (2008) collected a cross-sectional, naturalistic sample of first, third, and fifth grade students from urban elementary school classrooms. The data collected was utilized to test the contribution of teacher expectations to the year end achievement gap in high and low biased classrooms. Teachers had low expectations for these stereotyped students and high expectations of non-stereotyped. This study focused on how to intervene in the low expectations presented by teachers towards diverse students and also how to improve them. Teachers must know that low expectations affect the performance of diverse students. Teachers must also know that their inherent perceptions of students affect the performance of diverse students. If diverse students are to be successfully

supported, teachers must be aware of this and be provided with ways to change this.

This qualitative study adds to the aforementioned study by focusing on the following guiding questions in order to add to this body of research:

1. How do teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching approaches as a tool for being effective with diverse students?
2. What are the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how do they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students?

In relation to answering these questions, data was gathered from six teachers who work at three different school sites, in a medium-sized elementary school district in Riverside County. The district is in an urban area and serves diverse students.

Data were analyzed and triangulated. The first phase of this study included the collection of qualitative data through (1) 20-30 minute classroom observation of each teacher participant. The second phase of this study focused on the gathering of qualitative data through the use of a Google document questionnaire, answered by each of the teacher participants. Data were analyzed and triangulated.

Several themes emerged from the results: trust; caring relationships; shared stories; and personal understanding. Several themes that must be improved emerged from the results: trust; efficacy; respectful relationships; and shared stories.

Trust as an Implied Factor

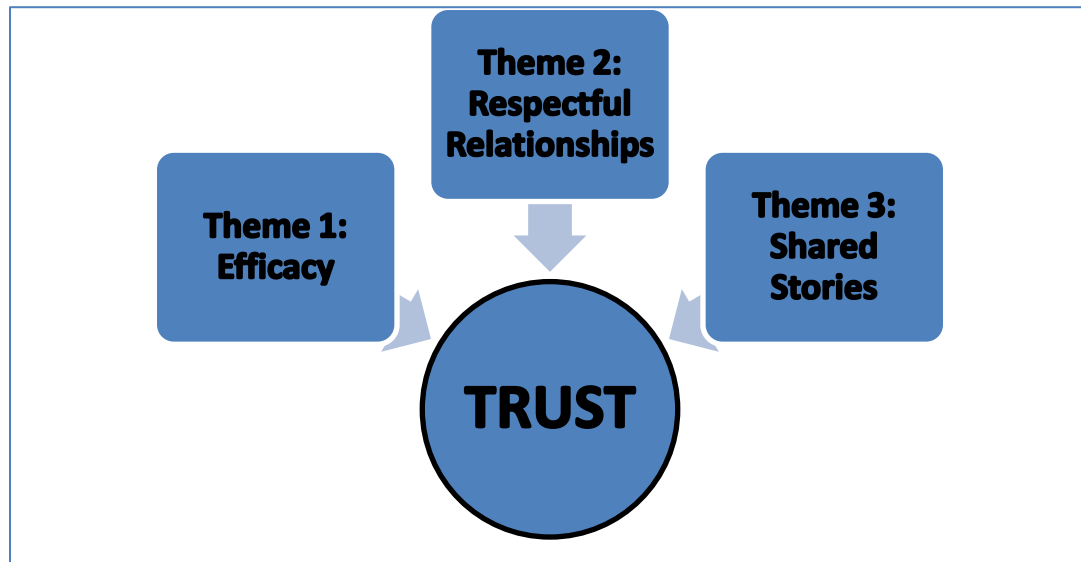


Figure 2. Trust is the Underlying Factor of the Three Themes

In this study, there is a constant assumption that contributed a central role in all the factors that create positive learning outcomes for students, which is trust. Trust remained an underlying assumption related to all major themes that emerged in this study. Trust is the glue that holds all of these themes together, even though it may have not been explicitly stated throughout the study, it is apparent that each outcome was grounded on the foundation of trust. Therefore, in this study, trust plays a cause and effect role in this study. The absence of trust would prevent the foundational relationships. As reported in the data, teachers initiate the building of trust towards students. This extension of building trust to students results in the relationship of trust being built between the students and teachers. Without trust, efficacy; respectful relationships; or shared stories would not happen between the teachers and students.

Theme 1: Efficacy

In the context of answering the research questions, one contributing factor to creating positive learning outcomes and dispositions and attitudes of teachers in being more effective with their students is efficacy. The major theme of efficacy was the first theme that emerged after careful and deep analysis of the interviews and classroom observations. The data suggest that building an environment that empowers their students to be proud of their learning and to have a deep belief in their abilities to be successful, causes successful learning outcomes for diverse students. Each teacher spoke of their own way in creating this environment that builds efficacy, sharing several ways in which they accomplish this with their students. The teachers' reports were confirmed through the classroom observations wherein it was apparent that students were empowered by their teachers, who emulated great pride and belief that their students are successful learners, through their confidence and interaction with the students. In the words of one of the teacher participants Mariah, "I believe that my primary goal as an educator is to foster learning by empowering my students".

Teacher efficacy is defined as a teacher's view of his or her ability to support student learning (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010). The existing literature indicates that teachers with high teacher efficacy believe that they can positively impact student achievement despite a possible range of perceived challenging circumstances (such as low socio-economic status of the students or a lack of resources, race, or ethnicity). Teachers with low efficacy believe that they have a limited ability to influence student learning and achievement. A teacher with low efficacy believes that they cannot control if certain students learn and that it is well

beyond them and little they can do to enhance student learning (Bruce, et al., 2010). Results in this study indicate each of the teachers' have strong efficacy and pass this on to their diverse students successful learning. Each teacher noted that efficacy creates the environment that supports the success of diverse students. Diverse students are held to high standards, are expected to be successful, and take great pride in their learning. As described in the data analysis, the classroom observations noted the efficacy that was present within each teacher-student interaction. Students felt that they were held to high expectations in classrooms where they felt the teacher genuinely believed in them.

The subthemes that emerged can serve as pedagogical strategies one can use to build efficacy with diverse students. The subthemes and resulting pedagogical strategies will be discussed in this next section.

Pedagogical Implications

Empowerment. The findings indicate that each teacher empowered students to be their own learners. Students took advantage of this empowerment by becoming independent learners who were comfortable working independently and were also comfortable asking the teacher participants when they need help. Each teacher was intentional in ensuring that all students became independent, and comfortably approached their teachers for assistance, to complete schoolwork or to just talk. Each teacher was intentional in ensuring, early on in the year, that students become learners of their own will. As well, students were observed working successfully and independently during observations. Students asked their teacher participants questions as needed during independent work time and were engaged in all their assignments.

Developing Interests. A second subtheme in efficacy was developing interests. Each of the teacher participants in this study developed the interests of their students in a multitude of ways. Students are encouraged to take risks and try things that are out of their comfort zone. The teacher participants shared information during their interviews related to getting to know students and using this knowledge in developing the interests of their students. Many teacher participant comments from the interviews stated that “I believe students will be able to develop interests in different areas and then pursue their interest.” Having students develop their interests was a key factor in having high expectations for students. Teacher participants shared that when students develop their interests; they become more engaged and can therefore be more successful in their learning. Their learning becomes their own and they are highly engaged and interested in being successful in learning of their choice. This is a critical piece in developing the efficacy in students. It also supports the development of the teacher’s efficacy.

Belief in Students. The third subtheme in building efficacy is teacher belief in students. Teacher participants shared that “Behaviorally we can provide students with high expectations and acknowledge their success and areas for growth”. Teachers shared several instances wherein they supported students towards believing in themselves. A lot of the teacher participants’ daily interactions included guiding students in the right direction to be successful. The teacher participants shared that in order to do so; they must know their students’ academic levels and use this information to support their learning so that they feel successful.

The teacher participants support students in being successful learners, no matter what it takes. Even if students are struggling, the teacher participants know how to use strategies to create positive learning outcomes so that students are ultimately successful. Once the students learn, even after a little struggle, they begin to believe in themselves and continue to work hard.

Teacher Collaboration with Peers. Findings of this study indicate that part of building trust involves teachers collaborating with their teacher peers. The teacher participants shared about how they collaborate with their teacher peers in order to most effectively help struggling students. The collaboration that occurs with teacher peers is invaluable to their success in helping their students. The teacher participants expressed that they get to know all of the students at the grade level they teach, and that they communicate closely with teacher peers/other teachers on their team, to ensure the most success for their students. This teacher peer collaboration is grounded in trust. First and foremost, the teacher peers trust each other and share their weaknesses with one another through discussing strategies that work to use with their mutual students. This teacher peer collaboration creates and supports efficacy through the foundation of trust. Without trust, this teacher peer collaboration would not occur.

The teacher participants are clear with regard to how collaboration contributes to the success of their students. The teacher participants shared that they become involved and have various conversations amongst their peers in order to help the successful learning both academically and behaviorally of their students. It is apparent that collaboration is a normal event that occurs between these teacher participants and their teacher peers.

This study indicates that when teachers collaborate with their teacher peers, they are more successful in teaching their diverse students both academically and behaviorally.

Theme 2: Respectful Relationships

The major theme of respectful relationships proved to be an important factor in supporting the successful teaching of diverse students by teachers. A common trend woven throughout the data was that having respectful relationships with diverse students continually builds trust between these diverse students and the teacher participants. As a result, the teacher participants expressed that respect was crucial, in order for diverse students to trust them, in order for diverse students to want to learn from them, and in order for diverse students to be successful in school.

The literature supports the building of respectful relationships as it relates to teacher expectations. When teachers do not respect the capabilities of diverse students and form respectful relationships with diverse students, this adversely affects the learning of these diverse students. As reported, ethnic biases towards students in ethnically diverse classrooms (specifically African American and Latino students) affect teacher expectations, regardless of student achievement history (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). When teachers respect diverse students and believe they can learn, diverse students are successful and learn.

Within the theme of respectful relationships, there were three sub-themes that surfaced: respect; getting to know the students; and understanding the students' culture. Each of these sub-themes serves as pedagogical steps to take in order to support the respectful relationships between teachers and diverse students.

Pedagogical Implications

Respect. All of the teacher participants share a relationship of respect with their diverse students. The teacher participants all spoke of the importance of being supportive towards their diverse students. When the teacher participants were each asked to describe their relationship with their students, they each responded that their relationship was grounded by some form of respect. Results from this study demonstrate the necessity of respect in building the relationship that is necessary in order for diverse students to learn successfully. Respect is a trait that all of the teacher participants expressed as being a crucial part of their relationships with their diverse students. Respect is what enables the teacher participants to develop the relationship that is necessary in order to teach all students and learning styles. The teacher participants expressed how important mutual respect is, in order to have a successful student/teacher relationship that supports successful learning.

Getting to Know the Students. In addition to a mutual respect, another sub-theme that all participants expressed was getting to know their students. The participants stated that they had students start off the year by discussing themselves in some way so that the participants/teachers could get to know their students and so that students could get to know the participants as well as their fellow students.

Each teacher participant deliberately creates a space and time for students to share their experiences. This helps bridge the cultural gap where teachers may not know specific life experiences of their students. The teacher participants in this study report that they encourage students to share about their life experiences, cultures and values. The teacher participants report that a greater understanding and respect for

each student is built through this sharing according to the teachers. The teacher participants dedicate time in class to share about themselves in different ways. The teacher participants report that in order to build relationships, connect with students and truly build positive relationships, a time for sharing experiences is necessary.

The teacher participants all stated that getting to know their students initially, when the school year starts, is crucial in order for them to form the necessary connections that allow for them to successfully reach their students academically, behaviorally, and socially. As the year progresses, the teacher participants continue to get to know their students and continue to build positive relationships

Understanding the Students' Culture. The teacher participants assert that getting to know their students also includes getting to know their students' cultural backgrounds. The teacher participants shared several instances wherein they learned more about their students' cultural background which in turn helped them to better understand and connect with them so they can ultimately teach the students successfully. The teacher participants expressed the importance of getting to know their students' cultural backgrounds in order to form the connections that are necessary to reach them and successfully teach them. Knowing about their students' culture allows them to make this crucial connection.

Theme 3: Shared Stories

A product of the first two themes is shared stories that developed as a necessary means to connect diverse students with their teachers whose backgrounds are different from theirs. This theme emerged as the product of building genuine

relationships and providing the space for students to share their stories. Within the findings of shared stories, two sub-themes emerged; shared interests and shared struggles. When students feel that their teachers who come from different backgrounds and cultures can relate to their interests and also can relate to their struggles, they feel more connected.

Pedagogical Implications. A factor which emerged and supports the connection between the teacher participants and students is the power of sharing stories. Each teacher participant described the sharing of stories and how this positively impacts their relationship with their students. In the context of this study, story-telling is a factor that goes both ways between student and teacher. The teacher participants shared how they tell stories about themselves and also listen to their students' stories so they are able to learn relevant information about them and ultimately connect at a higher level. Data collected pointed to teacher participants being able to better connect with their students because they listen to them, share stories, and find connections.

Shared Interests. A theme that emerged early on amongst the teacher participants was that of developing a connectedness through learning about students and their interests. All of the teacher participants shared how important it is for them to learn about their students' interests in order to gain a better understanding of their lives. The teacher participants told about how they also share information about themselves with their students, to support making valuable connections. This shared information between them provides a powerful connection that is necessary in order to form a mutual trust and to connect teaching and learning.

Shared Struggles. Another emerging theme was that of the teacher participants sharing their struggles to relate to students and build connections. The teacher participants shared their real life struggles with their students so that they could relate on a deeper level. The teacher participants explained that sharing the struggles they overcame earlier in their lives helped them to get where they are now. This sharing also helped to support a better understanding and connectedness between the participants and their diverse students.

Implications and Findings

Based on the discussion of the major themes discovered in this study, the following series of implications can serve as lessons learned to assist pre-service teachers, teachers, school officials, district level officials and teacher educators to close the cultural gap for diverse students in elementary level classrooms (grades third through sixth), a majority of whom are taught by middle class, White teachers. It provides data that will help to build the necessary dispositions and attitudes of teachers who are effective with diverse learners. All three categories reported are built on a relationship with the foundation of trust. A teacher must have, and constantly work towards the dispositions and attitudes reported in this study to successfully connect with diverse students. For this reason, these characteristics relate to and should be a part of the academic teaching pedagogy that is necessary to successfully teach diverse students.

The multifaceted implications address the cultural gap that may prevent students from connecting to schools, and potentially resulting in high levels of discipline, disengagement and school dropouts (Blum, 2005). The intent of this study was to find pedagogical steps teachers can take to more successfully teach their

diverse students and that help to close the achievement gap that currently exists in our country. The data collected was in the form of teacher perceptions and attitudes per se which are more considered to be more pragmatic vs. pedagogically related to Culturally Responsive Teaching. Furthermore, this study sought to find the inherent dispositions that teachers of diverse students possess and how do they address these attitudes to be more effective with their students. The pedagogical strategies that were highlighted in this study are:

1. Efficacy
2. Respectful Relationships
3. Shared Stories

Efficacy. Findings from this study and the research literature related to teacher efficacy and successful learning of diverse students ostensibly link these two characteristics to successful outcomes for diverse learners. The combination of efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis has been found to have parallel meanings at the individual teacher level (Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Hoy, et. al. (2008) defines academic optimism as follows, “A teacher’s positive belief that he or she can make a difference in the academic performance of students by emphasizing academics and learning, by trusting parents and students to cooperate in the process, and by believing in his or her own capacity to overcome difficulties and react to failure with resilience and perseverance” (p.822). When a teacher has this belief system or believes they are capable of successfully teaching all students, their beliefs turn into actions for positive student achievement. Academic emphasis then reinforces a strong sense of teacher efficacy, (Hoy, et al., 2008). In addition to efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis it

is also thought that school climate, collective efficacy, and cooperating teachers (in service, practicing teachers) could play a significant role in the efficacy of the developing teacher (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008).

The teacher participants of this study all emulated efficacy and passed this efficacy on to their diverse students. In order to build the efficacy of their diverse students, this study found four strategies that teachers can take to achieve this: 1.) Empowerment. In order to build efficacy in their diverse students, the teacher participants were intentional in ensuring that all students became independent, and comfortable to approach them for assistance, to complete schoolwork or to just talk. Each teacher participant was intentional in empowering their diverse students early on in the year so that students become learners of their own will. 2.) Developing Interests. Teacher participants supported their diverse students to develop their interests. When students develop their own interests, they become more engaged and can therefore be more successful in their learning. Their learning becomes their own and they are highly engaged and interested in being successful in learning of their choice. This is a critical piece in developing the efficacy in students. It also further supports the development of the teacher's efficacy. 3.) Belief in Students. Teachers can support students towards believing in themselves. Teachers really get to know their students' academic levels and use this information to support their learning so that they are successful, no matter what. 4.) Teacher Collaboration with Peers. The teachers collaborated with their teacher peers in order to maximize the strategies to use that support the learning of diverse students. The teachers know all of their students at their grade level and they are not afraid to ask their teacher peers for help to reach

their diverse students. The teacher peers trust each other and share their weaknesses with one another through discussing strategies that work to use with their mutual students. This teacher peer collaboration creates and supports efficacy through the foundation of trust. Without trust, this teacher peer collaboration would not occur.

Respectful Relationships. Historically in education, providing an equal education is fair and the acceptable thing to do for all students. In reality, providing an equal education is not fulfilling the needs of all students, especially the needs of diverse students. We must provide an equitable education for all students in order to meet their different needs. Equality vs. equity is how education must reform if we are to ever meet the needs of all students, especially diverse students. In order to meet the academic needs of diverse students, teacher must develop respectful relationships with them, which allow for them to get to know them, and ultimately use this information to provide a successful education for these diverse students. As educators, we should build relationships with students by developing respect, getting to know the students, and understanding the students' culture. Similarly, students want to know about their teacher. Each of the interviewed teacher participants had their own unique way of developing respectful relationships. In order to create a classroom environment where respectful relationships are developed both ways between students and teachers, this study found the following pedagogical approaches:

1. Develop trust between you and your students so that a mutual respect for one another naturally develops. Respect is what enables the teacher participants to reach their diverse students' learning styles.

2. Encourage students to share with you about who they are and use this information to really get to know them. Tell them about you as well so that you are each getting to know each other.
3. Develop your knowledge about your students' cultural backgrounds and use this information to make connections to their learning.

Shared Stories. Knowing and understanding are two distinct concepts. One can be an expert and know a lot about something, yet not actually understand it. This concept is also true for teachers and their diverse students. As a teacher, it is imperative to not only get to know your students, but truly seek to understand. Findings indicate that the teachers involved in this study understood their students through listening to them through their telling about themselves through stories. Each teacher participant described the sharing of stories and how this positively impacts their relationship with their students. Data collected pointed to teacher participants being able to better connect with their students because they listen to them, share stories, and find connections. This study found some practical ways to share stories in order to develop relationships and the learning of diverse students:

1. Know your students' interests and share your interests with them
2. Connect your shared interests to student learning
3. Learn about students' struggles and share yours – this develops a connectedness

As educators, administrators, district leaders, and teacher education faculty, we must find a way to eradicate the achievement gap. In order to do so, we must first understand how to develop ourselves as professionals, in order to understand the

cultural gap that so often separates our students from their teachers, who come from extremely different cultures, compared to theirs. Schools must develop equity for students that includes know the cultures of all students, caring about them and valuing all cultures, so that students feel they can be successful, no matter who teaches them. The achievement gap will continue to persist if we do not take pragmatic steps to fill the cultural gap. This study has offered relevant steps through the eyes of successful teachers of diverse students in grades third through sixth. We must put these findings into practice in the classroom, teach future teachers in our nation's teacher prep programs, and build a culture of connection with all leaders from the top to the bottom in our nation's school systems, if we want to successfully teach all students and close the achievement gap.

Limitations of this Study

The findings of this study are limited in terms of generalizability because the data collection took place at three different school sites that were located in only one district, located in Riverside County. Likewise, since the study was conducted with diverse students, the results of the study may be generalized more appropriately to Latino, African American, and low Socioeconomic Status students only rather than minority students as a whole.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings and conclusions developed from this study have provided three recommendations for future research. Through this research, various subtopics emerged that led to future research recommendations. Each recommendation will add to the body of research on the nation's achievement gap that continues to persist. The

research in each recommendation will serve as a means to help close the achievement gap we continue to face. Listed are the three recommendations:

1. The first recommendation for future research is how to provide teachers who are not successful with diverse students a pragmatic skill set that more effectively prepares these teachers to work in socioeconomic disadvantaged schools. In addition, should these skills that are pragmatic be included as pedagogical since they are known to support the learning of diverse students?
2. The second recommendation for future research is to find out if there is a correlation between teachers who have an education level of at least a Masters degree and in these teachers' inherent dispositions and attitudes they possess related towards teaching in a diverse community that positively serves diverse students.
3. The final recommendation for future research is to investigate the circumstances and characteristics that differentiate high achieving minority students with those who are low achieving. What are the inherent dispositional differences and how do we develop those differences in all students?

Summary and Conclusion

This qualitative study informed through the lenses of teacher voice and observation, the pragmatic strategies teachers can use in classrooms to help bridge the achievement gap that continues to persist for the diverse students of our nation. During the Spring of 2015, observations were first conducted with each teacher, and then each teacher participated in responding to a questionnaire through the use of open

ended Google document. The data from the observations and questionnaire were analyzed, coded and organized by theme and presented in chapters 4 and 5.

Many studies exist in the literature concerning the importance of culturally responsive teaching that supports the learning of diverse students in our nation's schools. Prior to this study, pragmatic strategies related to teachers inherent dispositions and attitudes of teachers who are effective with diverse learners and that help teachers to successfully teach diverse students were not as apparent. This study adds to the current body of literature through uncovering pragmatic strategies related to teacher attitudes that can be shared and taught to pre-service teachers, current teachers, and administrators. This study is a practical dissertation that can be used to influence practitioners in the classroom as well as leaders of schools.

As a former administrator, this study was initially chosen due to the disconnect that I witnessed on a daily basis between teachers and the diverse students they teach. I wanted to know why teachers did so much for students, had their best intentions in mind to successfully teach them, but were still unable to reach them. I worked with several teachers who gave so much of their time, but were still not successful in reaching all of their diverse students. I also had the privilege of working with teachers who were able to reach these same students that others could not. I trusted these teachers with the most difficult students, and year after year, assigned these students to these teachers. I wanted to know why not all teachers were capable of teaching all diverse students. I wanted to research this topic to help these students and these teachers as well. Sadly, I saw the miscommunications, ill-informed assumptions and negative interactions that these teachers held towards students and their families. I

saw teachers afraid to enter the very neighborhoods where their students live due to fear and uncertainty.

As a result of this study, I have pragmatic strategies that now can be shared with teachers, shared with administrators, and used to provide professional development to use by educators around the country. These pragmatic strategies are simple, yet often so easily overlooked and should be a part of a teacher's pedagogical skill set, even though they are classified as pragmatic. This study has given me a better understanding as to how to better support teachers and administrators to make a difference for diverse students. Since I started my research, I have spoken about my findings throughout the process. Due to this communication and sharing, my district started cultural proficiency training two years ago for the management team. This year, my superintendent asked a colleague and myself to continue the training for the management team and provide practical staff development that linked to those past trainings. We realize that education must change and focus on confronting and developing the uncomfortable humanistic skills that teachers must have if they are going to successfully teach diverse students and eradicate the achievement gap. We have a long way to go, but we have started the challenging journey to ultimately get there.

This research is important to add to the related body of existing research because it can inform multiple sectors related to academia, theory, the related literature, and policy. Academically, this information can be used to inform current pre-service teacher programs. The pragmatic findings should be used and incorporated into the pedagogy taught to future teachers. Future teachers can be

provided with a concrete list of what contributing characteristics to incorporate into their teaching to improve the success of diverse students; trust; efficacy; respectful relationships; and shared stories. Theoretically, this research supports the Funds of Knowledge body of research, in that the findings emulate the importance of respecting and valuing diverse students and capitalizing on this in order to teach them and support them to develop a love for learning. This research adds to the current body of literature related to cultural proficiency, specifically what positive attitudes and perceptions are necessary for teachers to successfully teach diverse students. Lastly, this research could affect policy if it is decided that teachers must be recruited differently for diverse students, if we as a society are going to truly support the successful learning of diverse students. Namely, should it be required that in order to teach diverse students, a teacher must have an education of at least a master's degree? This would be another avenue to explore; whether or not the education level of the teacher matters when it comes to successfully teaching diverse students.

There are multiple sectors related to education that remain to be explored in order to know how we as a society can best support the successful learning of diverse students. This body of research is another piece of that of which remains to be explored.

APPENDIX A

Teacher selection checklist

This Teacher Selection Checklist was created using Villegas and Lucas (2002) research related to the Six Strands of Effective Culturally Responsive Curriculum. As a site Principal, please select a teacher that teaches third through sixth grade for whom you can answer “yes” to each of these six questions.

Teacher’s Name: _____

<i>Use a checkmark to answer “Yes” or “No”</i>	Yes	No
1. Teacher understands their own socio-cultural identity and also recognizes the intricate connection between schools and society. Strand 1: Socio-cultural Consciousness		
2. Teacher has an affirming orientation toward student diversity and understands the consequences of teacher attitudes on student learning. Strand 2: An affirming Attitude Toward Students from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds		
3. Teacher believes that schools can be sites for social transformation and also recognizes that schools have typically served to maintain social inequities. Strand 3: Commitment and Skills to Act as Agents of Change		
4. Teacher provides students with frequent opportunities to interpret ideas, solve problems, explain solutions, defend explanation, and refute arguments. Strand 4: Constructivist Views of Learning		
5. Teacher regularly creates the opportunity to learn about his/her students. Strand 5: Learning About Students		
6. Teacher has a vision of what culturally responsive teaching entails and an understanding of what culturally responsive teachers do. Strand 6: Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices		

Next Steps:

1. Please recruit at least four (4) checklists for eligible Teachers from your site.
2. Notify the selected teachers that if they wish to participate in this research study, the next step is to email the Researcher at: justjosie2014@gmail.com.
3. The Researcher will then email the Teachers information regarding the study to determine if the teachers accept participation in this research study.

Thank you for your assistance!

APPENDIX B

Recruitment email to participants

My name is Josie Gomez, and I'm currently enrolled at UCSD/CSUSM Educational Leadership Program. I am also the Human Resources Coordinator II of the Perris Elementary School District. Refusal to participate in this study will not affect any potential participant's employment or relationship with the district or school. The goal of this email is to recruit participants for my qualitative methods research dissertation. My research seeks to explore instructional strategies; positive perceptions; and dispositions of teachers who are successful with diverse students.

Diverse students do not perform as well in school as White students, for many reported reasons. One of these reasons is due to the differences that exist between teacher and students relative to educational factors that are influenced by race, culture, and class (Anderson & Cowart, 2012). It is difficult for the majority of classroom teachers to successfully educate diverse students. Oftentimes teachers do not understand the culture of diverse, urban students and therefore cannot successfully teach diverse, urban students (Smith & Smith, 2009). This study seeks to provide information to all teachers, so that all teachers can successfully teach diverse students.

My research plan includes one 30 minute classroom observation as well as one forty minute individual interview that will be conducted in the form of an open ended electronic questionnaire with each Participant for this narrative case study. These classroom observations and interviews will be performed by my Co-Investigator, Benjamin Gaines, in order to protect the confidentiality of Participants. During the classroom observations, information will be noted that involves the characteristics of

the interaction of teacher and student related to the successful teaching of diverse students. The electronic questionnaire will consist of open ended questions that will ask for information regarding your successful teaching of diverse students. The findings will provide an in-depth understanding of the professional development related to culturally proficient teaching as well as other instructional strategies, coupled with which dispositional behaviors and perceptions that these teachers who are “successful with diverse students” possess, that make them successful with diverse learners.

You are receiving this because you have been identified by your Principal as a teacher who is effective with diverse students. In this study, teachers who are effective with diverse students are defined as having been successful in helping diverse students to show academic and behavioral improvement in the context of the classroom and related to the criterion set forth above. If this appeals to you, please answer the following profile questions. I will schedule your first observation for Friday, April 17th. The consent form is also included in this email, which includes more information about the study. Please feel free to contact me directly at justjosie2014@gmail.com with any questions you may have. You will receive the electronic questionnaire via email after your observation.

Profile Questions Related to Participant:

1. I identify as: Hispanic, White, African American/Black or
Other: _____
2. I identify as: Male or Female
3. I have taught for _____ years.

4. I received my teaching credential from

_____.

Thank you for your time.

Josie A. Gomez
(951) 756-4212
justjosie2014@gmail.com

Appendix C: Consent form to participate in research

University of California, San Diego
Consent to Act as a Research Subject

Culturally Responsive Teaching for Diverse Students:
Effective Teaching Strategies for Successful Student Achievement

Josie Gomez, graduate student, is conducting a research study to find out more about what instructional strategies and characteristics make teachers effective in successfully teaching diverse students. You have been asked to participate in this study because you have been designated by your principal as a teacher who successfully teaches diverse students. There will be approximately six participants to be enrolled in this study. Josie Gomez also serves as the Human Resources Coordinator II for the Perris Elementary School District, which is the district in which you are employed. Refusal to participate in this study will not affect your employment or relationship with the district or school.

The purpose of this study is to document the instructional strategies and inherent characteristics of teachers that contribute towards successful learning for diverse students. The information collected through this study will be reported out in order to help pre service as well as practicing teachers.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will happen:

- There are two procedures for collecting data in this study 1) classroom observation and 2) on-line questionnaire.
- Once you read and sign this consent form, you will be contacted to schedule a 30 minute classroom observation of you interacting with your students. During the observation, interactions that include instructional strategies; positive perceptions; and dispositions that make you successful in teaching diverse students will be documented and noted.
- This will not be recorded with a voice or video recorder.
- The observation will be documented and noted through the use of handwritten notes and a computer to type notes. The observation will not be audio or video recorded. The transcribed notes will be used as data and will be utilized in the research study.
- The questionnaire will be an on-line questionnaire that consists of twenty-nine open-ended questions that you will respond to using Google documents. You will be given a four week window of time to answer the entire questionnaire. You do not have to answer all of the questions in a single sitting.

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- You will be given a study identification number in order to keep your data confidential.
- The questionnaire will ask questions related to what professional development; instructional strategies; positive perceptions; and dispositions that you possess that make you successful in teaching diverse students.
- The consent forms will be reviewed at the time of the observation.
- The observation will be recorded when you respond on-line, in the form of a Google document. All responses to questionnaires are confidential and can only be viewed by the researcher. Each recording will be transcribed and the data will be utilized in the research study.

Your participation in this study will take forty minutes for the classroom observation and approximately sixty minutes for the on-line questionnaire. The overall duration of your involvement in this study will take one hour and forty minutes.

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include the following:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. You will be assigned a study identification number during the data collection process in order to keep your information confidential. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.
2. Discomfort, fatigue, stress, nervousness, stress, or boredom from the interview or being audio recorded, or from being observed in the classroom. You can end the interview or observation at any time for any reason.
3. May recall uncomfortable, sad memories or current struggles that are deemed difficult to articulate or share. You can end the interview or observation at any time for any reason.
4. May experience deeply rooted unexpected and unresolved feelings. You can end the interview or observation at any time for any reason.
5. You may feel that information collected during interviews and observations may be used against you and affect your employment with the district. This will be addressed through the use of a co-investigator who will collect the data for the Primary Investigator in order to keep participant identity confidential by assigning a study identification number during the data collection process. You can end the interview or observation at any time for any reason. Additionally, as previously stated, refusal to participate in this study will not affect your employment or relationship with the district or school.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant new findings.

The alternatives to participation in this study are simply to not participate

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There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. I, however, may learn more about instructional strategies and inherent characteristics that teachers exhibit that help to successfully teach diverse students and society may benefit from this knowledge.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw or refuse to answer specific questions in an interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide that you no longer wish to continue in this study, you will be required to notify the Primary Investigator or Co-Investigator at any time.

You will be told if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue.

I may remove you from the study without your consent if I feel it is in your best interest or the best interest of the study. You may also be withdrawn from the study if you do not follow the instructions given you by the study personnel.

In compensation for your time you will receive a \$20 gift card for Starbucks for participating in this research. You will earn \$5 of the Starbucks gift card for signing the consent to participate; \$7.50 of the Starbucks gift card after you have completed the interview; and \$7.50 of the Starbucks gift card after you have completed the observation.

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

Josie Gomez has explained this study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Josie Gomez at (951) 756-4212.

You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 657-5100 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

You agree to participate.

Subject's signature

Date

APPENDIX D

Teacher Questionnaire

(Participants answer on-line in a Google document)

Opening

1. What is your name and role at your school?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. What lead you to the career of teaching?
4. How would you describe your approach to teaching? Or a philosophy of teaching?
5. How do you describe yourself as related to your ethnicity and or ethnic background?
6. Tell me about your school.
7. How would you describe the ethnic diversity of your school?
8. What other factors make your school diverse?

Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Instructional Strategies

1. Have you had any training in the area of cultural responsiveness?
2. Do you think that knowing about the culture of the students you teach is important?
3. Do you have a sense of how the students in your classes are doing academically overall?
4. How do you support struggling students?
5. How do you support students who are doing well academically?
6. If one of your students is struggling in another teacher's class, do you get involved? If so, what would that look like?

Teacher Perception Regarding Students

1. How would you describe your relationship with your students?
2. Tell me some of the ways that you get to know your students in the beginning of the year?
3. How do they get to know you?
4. How do you keep up with their lives as the year progresses?
5. How do you know when you've "connected" to a student? Tell me about a good relationship you have had with a student.
6. How do you handle it when you haven't "connected" to a student? Tell me about a relationship that wasn't the best, or wasn't what you wanted it to be.

Teacher-Student Interactions and Race

Please read this definition of "Diverse" to help you answer the questions in this section.

Diverse: Students in the United States who are usually from low socioeconomic families; of African American or Hispanic ancestry; and speakers of a home language other than standard American English. Native American, first generation, or immigrant students are normally included in this group of diverse students. However, for the purposes of this study, they are not included due to the fact that the proposed research site does not include these demographic groups.

1. How would you describe the relationship between you and the diverse students at your school?
2. Tell me about a positive interaction you have had in working with a diverse student in your classroom.
3. Tell me about a negative interaction.
4. Tell me ways in which you connect to the diverse students in your classroom?
5. How might your students describe you in terms of your cross-cultural abilities to connect with diverse students?
6. What advice would you give to a new teacher who is entering a diverse classroom setting?
7. Tell me about some of the things you do to connect with students outside of your culture.

Teacher-Student Interaction on Discipline

1. What is your first level of intervention when a student misbehaves in class?

Closure

1. Is there anything else you would like to share with regard to your experience working in this diverse setting?

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