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Investigating novice White Teachers in African American Classrooms: A Phenomenological Investigation of Cultural Responsiveness

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, INVESTIGATING NOVICE WHITE TEACHERS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLASSROOMS: A PHENOMENOLOGIAL INVESTIGATION OF CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS, by DEBRA JEAN BARRINEAU, was prepared under the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the students' Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all the standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

INVESTIGATING NOVICE WHITE TEACHERS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLASSROOMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

by

Debra J. Barrineau

This study deconstructed the degree to which novice White teachers in an elementary school in a rural middle Georgia district were aware of and prepared for the challenges inherent in teaching in a predominantly African American classroom. Four novice, White teachers participated in the study. The student population of the school was 72% African American, nearly 10% White, and more than 17% Hispanic. Using a phenomenological approach, data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire in order to determine the teachers' perceived academic and non-academic needs of their students and to explore how their awareness of the needs of their students influenced the educational experiences the teachers provided in their classrooms. Classroom observations were utilized in order to determine how the teachers related to their students and the manner in which they demonstrated responsiveness to the students' academic needs, through the activities they provided.

The teachers demonstrated only a limited ability to understand the academic and non-academic needs of their students, due mainly to a lack of understanding of the cultural dynamics of the African American students residing in this rural community. Through a lack of ability to build necessary bridges within the school community, the teachers failed to establish a trusting relationship with parents, which would have helped mitigate the disconnect between the environment of the school and the environment of the students' homes. In addition, the teachers' efforts to support their students through

multicultural activities were merely superficial. Some of the teachers were more focused on the perceived needs of the students than on using the rich heritage of students in order to build a community of learners that would foster greater levels of academic success. The findings of this study will benefit those interested in cultural responsiveness by suggesting the need for teacher preparation programs to increase the academic and experiential focus on cross-cultural teaching. It will also benefit school districts by suggesting the need for ongoing professional development and focused induction programs for teachers who are teaching cross-culturally.

INVESTIGATING NOVICE WHITE TEACHERS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLASSROOMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

by
Debra J. Barrineau

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy
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in
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in
the College of Education
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Atlanta, Georgia
2012

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ABBREVIATIONS

IEP Individual Education Program

RIQ Reflective Interpretive Inquiry

RTI Response to Intervention

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

While our schools' teaching force is primarily White, female, and middle class, the student populations of our schools are increasingly comprised of students of color (NCEI, 2011). The percentage of African American students enrolled in public schools has increased steadily since the conclusion of the Civil War (U.S. Census, 1993). Figure 1 below represents this national demographic trend.

In 1990, the percent of Whites enrolled in public schools was 62.1%, while African American enrollment was 17.2%, and Hispanic enrollment was 15.6%. By 2009, the White enrollment in public schools was 54.1%, with African Americans comprising 16.8%, and Hispanics 22.1% (NCES, 1995). The percentage of teachers who are female has increased from sixty six percent in 1980 to seventy six percent in 2008. In addition, the teaching force currently is 83 percent White, seven percent African American, seven

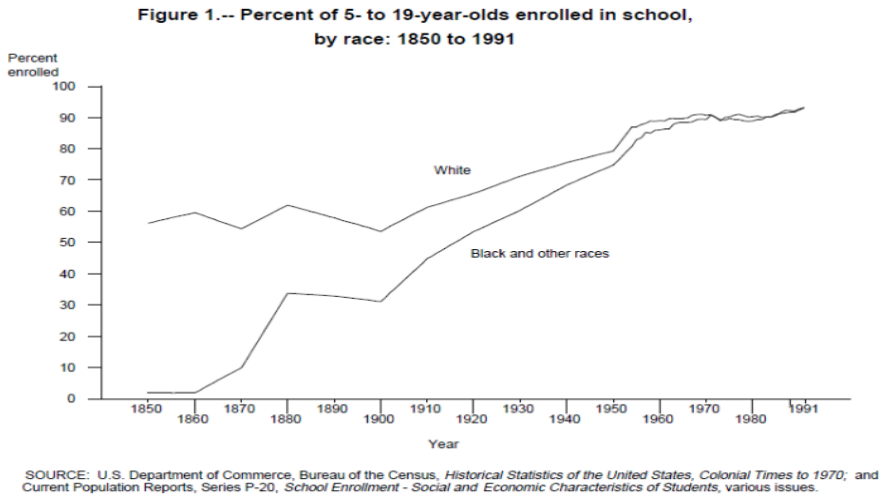

Figure 1. Percent of 5-19 year olds enrolled in school, by race: 1850 to 1991.

percent Hispanic, and three percent other (NCES, 2012). This trend has remained largely unchanged since 1995, when White teachers were 86.5 percent of the teaching force and 7.4 percent were African American (NCES, 1995). The number of Hispanic teachers has changed slightly since 1995, increasing by 2.8 percent (NCES, 1995).

It is important that educators recognize the impact that race and culture have on teaching and learning. It is evident that culture plays too vital a role in the learning environment to ever be overlooked by educators (Ware, 2006). Indeed, "cultures reflect the belief systems and behaviors informed by ethnicity, as well as other sociological factors" (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2002, p. 53). For the purposes of this study, culture will denote a sense of belonging to a group (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2002). In addition, Robins, et al. (2002) noted the significance of individuals being identified and defined by their cultures.

Erickson (1997) speculated that culture is intricately involved in the conduction of human activity. As Nieto (2000) espoused, teachers must be able to understand the manner in which students are culturally "bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and /or religion" (p. 139). While many aspects of culture are concrete and visible, such as dress or artistic expression, there are other less tangible aspects of culture, such as attitudes and forms of communication (Nieto, 2000). Indeed, Nieto (2000) cautioned that teachers must be aware that cultural differences may affect classroom practices. Educators may be addressing cultural choices either "explicitly and within conscious awareness, or they may be addressed implicitly and outside conscious awareness" (Erickson, 1997, p. 34).

Since I believe that other novice White teachers may have similar experiences to the subjects in my study, I saw my work as having value to others in the education profession. Van Manen (1990) stated that "we gather other people's experiences because they allow us to be more experienced ourselves" (p. 62). From the standpoint of my own research, I provided avenues for opening up dialogue and consideration of the manner in which novice White teachers address culturally responsive teaching practices.

Definition of Terms

Banking theory - The educational concept where the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. (Freire, 2006).

Cross-cultural - The educational concept referring to the teacher's culture being different from the students in the classroom or school.

Culture - "Culture is the set of practices and beliefs shared by members of a particular group that distinguish that group from other groups" (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009, p. 16).

Cultural capital - "A theoretical hypothesis which makes it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success" (Bourdieu (1986), in J.G. Richardson, p.247).

Cultural competence - "Refers to helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead" (Ladson-Billings (2006), in Ladson and Lewis, p. 36).

Cultural competence - “Aligning your personal values and behaviors and the school’s policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive of cultures that are new or different from yours and the school’s and enables healthy and productive interactions”(Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009, p.7).

Cultural proficiency - “Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just society; interacting with your colleagues, your students, their families, and their communities as an advocate for lifelong learning to serve effectively the educational needs of all cultural groups” (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009, p. 7).

“Culture of Power” - This refers to an important aspect of discrimination, which may occur in cross-cultural teaching, in which we consider the dominant culture as the one possessing the “culture of power.”

Equity pedagogy - “An equity pedagogy exists when teachers use techniques and teaching methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups.” (Banks, 2002, p. 17)

Novice teachers – Teachers who are in their first three years of classroom teaching.

Statement of the Problem

Novice White teachers who lack the knowledge and insight to teach effectively in multicultural classrooms are at a disadvantage when working in such environments. In this study, I focused on the culturally responsive beliefs of novice White teachers working in classrooms with African American students as a way to inform our understanding of the teaching practices of these teachers with respect to their whiteness. The literature suggested this is a worthy study since “it is time for multicultural teacher education to assume a proactive leadership role or else risk a marginalization that will

have dire consequences for the fate of our teachers, our schools, and our nation" (Ladson-Billings, 2001b, p. 756).

Sleeter (2001) acknowledged that novice White teachers do not often bring the rich experiences to cross-cultural teaching, which teachers of color possess and can draw on, to create their pedagogy. Haberman (1996) found that the most successful White teachers in urban schools possessed attributes which provided a cultural match to the children they instruct. In addition, hooks (1994) advocated for teachers creating an unbiased, inclusive learning environment, where there is no "single norm of thought and experience" (p. 35). In addition, teachers must confront diversity in their multicultural classroom, recognizing that the norm of whiteness has shifted (hooks, 1994). Those entering the teaching force can no longer consider topics from one perspective, that of Whiteness, but must do so from the multiple perspectives of the diverse backgrounds embodied in today's classroom (hooks, 1994).

My goal was to better understand the experiences, and by virtue of the experiences the culturally responsive beliefs of White teachers in their early years of teaching. With schools becoming more diverse, it has become more difficult for novice White teachers to utilize their pre-service training to appropriately respond to the cultural complexities of their classroom (White-Clark, 2005). Sleeter (2001) pointed to the benefits of performing research to follow White preservice teachers at the conclusion of their teacher preparation in order to determine how multicultural teaching has actually carried over into their classrooms. Having a clearer understanding of the manner in which White teachers relate to their African American students reveals a great deal about multicultural teacher education. Considering the effectiveness of multicultural teacher education is important

because according to LeCompte & McCray (2002), teacher cross-cultural awareness of student needs influences classroom educational outcomes. Through complex conversations, this study addressed this issue.

While acknowledging the integral role culture plays in learning, Nieto (2000) noted culture is not static, since it influences and affects every individual differently. She regarded multicultural education as transformative, allowing culture to be seen as "a characteristic of the learning environment" (p. 141), not merely a characteristic of a particular racial or ethnic group. Banks (1997) asserted that teachers need to engage in "an equity pedagogy" (p. 22). In order to provide equity in schooling, it is important that teachers be able to engage in classroom pedagogies that have meaning and cultural relevance to the students they will instruct (Howard, 2003). These pedagogies must be crafted by teachers who astutely recognize that students' cultural aspects may from time to time stay the same, or undergo change (Erickson, 1997). Banks (1997) asserted such a modification in teaching practices will promote the academic achievement of diverse groups in the classroom, whether those groups are defined racially, culturally, or socially. As Robins et al. (2002) pointed out, becoming culturally proficient is about teachers developing relationships in the classroom and creating a learning environment where all students can learn.

Research Questions

As McIntyre (1997) asserted, novice White teachers are largely unable to perceive themselves as being part of a culture. Their inability to reflect on social inequality, their own privilege, and the cultural needs of their students in a predominantly African American setting may promote defensiveness in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1996).

In this study, two questions were examined: (1) What factors affected the novice White teacher's ability to understand the academic and non-academic needs of their students?(2) In what ways do the novice, White teachers' believe their awareness of their students' multicultural needs influence classroom practices, and ultimately the experiences they provide for their students?

Even as efforts have been made to make educational opportunities more universally inclusive, providing an equitable education to diverse cultures continues to be more and more complex (Tyack, 2003). For example, Gordon (2006) noted that students being educated in predominantly Black schools are more likely to be exposed to a poor quality teacher than their counterparts in a predominantly white school. Teaching opportunities for inexperienced teachers are prevalent in schools comprised of students of color since these jobs offer the greatest number of challenges and academic risks (Gordon, 2006). It is also likely that novice teachers will be overwhelmed in their new roles in the diverse classroom, where their support is often limited (Ladson-Billings, 2001a). Further, Ladson-Billings espoused that despite the fact that many novice teachers have feelings of inadequacy, there are a number of examples of successful first year teachers who serve as excellent examples to others. For the purposes of this study, novice teachers were considered to be those who were in their first three years of classroom teaching.

Ideally, educators have the opportunity to provide an environment for learning that all students deserve, by developing a transformative pedagogy that discards old methods of teaching (hooks, 1994). This transformation in pedagogy is a reflection of the teacher's level of understanding of the multicultural face of our public schools (hooks, 1994).

Learning to teach with cultural proficiency involves a process of engaging in instruction where all cultures or groups are considered of equal value to society and all learners have equitable outcomes (Robins, et al., 2002). These equitable outcomes remain in concert with the teaching styles proposed by Banks (1997), in espousing equity pedagogy. The practice of equity pedagogy leads to greater levels of academic achievement, the personalization of the needs of diverse ethnic groups, and the celebration of unique cultural perspectives (Banks, 1997).

A transformation of current teaching practices requires both school and university educators to look beyond standardization and prescription in teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2001). By honoring and celebrating the diversity of their classrooms, novice teachers may be able to produce a learning environment capable of meeting the needs of children, who otherwise would be likely to have diminished opportunities and life choices (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Thus, the crux of our education system may very well rest upon the ability of novice teachers to transition from theory to a pedagogical practice that embodies all the complexities of transformative multicultural education.

Understanding the complexities of the classroom learning environment and committing ideologically to provide for social justice poses a daunting task for even an experienced educator. However, as Nieto (1996) asserted, multicultural education embodies opportunities for students to bring about social justice, allowing students to reflect on contradictions in society and empowering them to collectively bring about change where needed. This reflective action lies at the heart of social justice and schools can never “be separated from social justice” (Nieto, 1996, p. 317). The focus on social justice is parallel to the dimension of multicultural education that Banks (1997) regarded

as “empowering school culture” (p. 23). For example, Banks (1997) called for an examination of the disproportionate enrollment by various racial and ethnic groups in gifted and special education programs.

There is evidence that teacher beliefs are significantly more important to student success and teacher effectiveness than many other individual aspects of the learning environment (Obidah & Teel, 2001). In addition, Obidah and Teel espoused the significance of teachers being conscious of the impact of their own biases and unintentional actions in the classroom. If White teachers are not sufficiently prepared, their classroom practices may be a detriment to the academic success of African-American students. White teachers must be willing to acknowledge and confront their own unearned privilege, while recognizing how their “inherited hegemonic position continues to influence the educational process today” (Howard, 2006, p. 38). Addressing their cultural capital provides the White teachers a means of effectively interacting with all of their students (Nieto, 1999).

Increasingly, educators must recognize the value of the experiences and traditions which students from nondominant groups might bring to the learning community (Nieto, 1999; 2002). As Nieto (1999) pointed out, students must never be placed in a position to lose their own cultural identities in school. “A multicultural perspective does not simply operate on the principle of substituting one ‘truth’ or perspective for another” (Nieto, 2006, p. 45). According to Nieto (2006), when students are taught to critically examine what they see and hear and how to respect and reflect on multiple viewpoints, students will grow in their understanding of reality.

This study was influenced by my own whiteness, along with my ability to interact with the novice White teachers regarding their multicultural beliefs and cultural proficiency. In addition, not only was I acting as the researcher of the beliefs the novices espoused, I was also a student of the multicultural beliefs they demonstrated through their pedagogical practice. The degree with which they identified the needs of their students and provided appropriate activities to meet those needs was of primary importance in determining their cultural responsiveness. Those engaged in teacher education must continue to explore ways to better prepare teachers to be effective in environments where their race is different from that of those students. Through the interviews I conducted in this study my intent was to identify how well the novices could perceive the academic and non-academic needs of their students; and through the classroom observations that were a part of this study, I had a glimpse of the type of classroom experiences the novices provided their students. This study sought to enlarge our understanding of the manner in which novices were able to relate to those whom they had been entrusted to provide meaningful educational experiences.

Background of the Problem

Takaki (1993) noted that from our nation's inception, to be an American meant to be White, or of European ancestry. However, from its beginnings, the United States has desired to live out the slogan "'Out of many, one'" (Takaki, 1993, p. 3). As Tyack (2003) noted, from even the early years of our republic, there were worries about how immigrants could be assimilated into an Anglo political system.

In the colonial period, education was a form of Americanization, increasingly tied to providing a moral education (Tyack, 2003). In those early years, the schools contended

with ethnocultural conflicts involving issues of religion, language, and ethnicity. Regarding our national slogan, '*E pluribus unum.'* Tyack (2003) observed that "the *unum* and the *pluribus* have been in inescapable tension, constantly evolving as Americans struggled to find common ground and to respect their differences" (p. 63). Currently, "over fifty- four percent of the public school student population in the United States is made up of students of color," (NCES, 2007), which results in the majority of students being taught by a teacher whose race may be different from their own.

As struggles to bring equality brought civil rights to center stage, America was forced to confront concerns about how to treat students in an equitable manner. Tyack (2003) stressed that producing workable educational policies required an examination of student differences with respect to both race and diversity. Thus, as Tyack argued, "the power of the public school system should be employed not to eradicate ethnic differences but to preserve and strengthen them" (p. 96). Despite the oppressions in our nation's past and the recurring struggles for social justice and equality, today is time for us "to accept ourselves" (Takaki, 2003, p. 428). From this nation's inception until the days post *Brown v. Board of Education*, our nation has struggled to preserve a seamless social system where every American had equal opportunities for educational advancement and life chances (Takaki, 2003). In order to create opportunity for equality, our schools must engage in celebrating our rich cultural diversity, while undergoing a multicultural transformation (Robins, et al., 2002).

There is an overarching need for Americans to learn to break down the biases and barriers that act to impede our ability to negotiate racial and cultural boundaries (Delpit, 1995). Research on novice White teachers indicated there is a process of change

experienced by them in transitioning from preparation to practice in diverse classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Ladson-Billings (1998) suggested the need for teachers to be engaged in critical reflection about race and culture, as a means of addressing a culturally relevant pedagogy. Delpit (1995) cautioned that the proportion of students of color taught by White teachers would likely increase in the future. The author noted that there would likely be proportionately fewer African American teachers since people of color have more professional choices available to them. Recognizing "the growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students, along with the continued academic failure of African-American, Native American and Latino students," Ladson-Billings (1995b, p. 483) espoused the need for a culturally relevant theoretical perspective.

Nieto (2002) concluded that many view teaching as a form of transmission from teacher to student. Freire (2000) identified an act of depositing of communiques from the teacher, a " 'banking'concept of education" (p. 72). Making instruction culturally relevant requires a transformation in both beliefs and practices. For example, Freire (2000) recommended a synthesis of educational cultures where teachers "do not come to *teach* or to *transmit* or to *give* anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world" (p. 180). Many first year White teachers may not realize the significance of their own personal experiences in encouraging "their own 'independent intelligence'" (Delpit, 1995, p. 125) or in transforming their pedagogy. Indeed, as Freire (2000) espoused, knowledge of an existing culture should lead teachers to a transformation of actions.

In dispelling a banking connotation of teaching in favor of one based on problem-posing, Freire (2000) saw teachers as being taught through interaction and dialogue with their students. The knowledge of the teacher becomes re-created, even as the knowledge of the students is more refined. hooks (1994) noted that teachers instructing in transformative ways were able to encourage risk-taking on the part of their students, while they grew intellectually and were empowered as well. The empowerment of the school culture was one of the dimensions of multicultural education that Banks (1997) advocated can lead to both racial and social-class equity.

The challenges inherent in such a process of learning are enormous, especially when a classroom is culturally diverse. For, as Nieto (2002) asserted, students from diverse cultural backgrounds may have rarely been challenged to engage in serious reflection as a means of creating new knowledge. Banks (1997) pointed to the importance of educators examining the knowledge construction process, since bias and cultural perspectives often lie at the heart of the way learning is transmitted. It is increasingly important for teacher education programs to consider how White teachers can be better trained to teach in an ever-increasing, culturally diverse society (Johnson, 2002).

Marx and Pennington (2003) conducted research on discourse with White teachers regarding race, finding White teachers have had little practice in this area. Often not enough has been done in the area of multicultural education for preservice teachers, even though “beliefs play a central role in how teachers impart education and how students receive it” (Easter, Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1999). In a survey of college of education students, 96% believed they could be effective teaching in urban settings even though less than 25% had any life experiences as a basis to inform their beliefs (Easter et

al., 1999). Research considering the importance of teacher beliefs has been undertaken, but more is needed (Marx & Pennington, 2003; Easter et al., 1999).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Undergirded with Socio-Cultural Theory

The multiculturalism of today draws on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory for depth of meaning. In a multicultural classroom, Vygotsky theorized that students needed the proper psychological tools to enable them to create learning. His socio-cultural theory stated that students' development of higher order mental processes was dependent on mediating agents in the environment. Kozulin (2003) explained that the teacher plays a significant role in providing the organized learning activities that mediate the child's culture.

Nieto (2002) espoused five tenets of sociocultural theory: "agency/co-constructed learning, experience, identity/hybridity, context/situatedness/positionality, and community" (p. 5). She stipulated that learning in a cross-cultural environment should rely on "mutual discovery by students and teachers" (p. 5). Many students come to school not knowing a great deal about the dominant culture, so that "power relations are a fundamental, although largely unspoken aspect of school life" (p. 8). Thus, Nieto (2002) believed that the manner in which teachers responded to the cultural capital of their students was critical to the students being able to use their previous life experiences to create new knowledge. Despite the fact that power issues are often ignored by educators, "questions of power are at the very heart of learning" (Nieto, 2002, p. 14).

The school environment has everything to do with learning, so context is extremely important. Nieto (2002) affirmed that culturally responsive pedagogy is about "context and positionality" (p. 14). As Ladson-Billings (1994) has pointed out, culturally relevant

teaching is about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society" (128). In addition, Nieto (2002) theorized that teachers "need to acknowledge their students' differences and then act as a bridge between their students' differences and the culture of the dominant society. Teachers must work to build relationships with their students and the community of which they are a part (Nieto, 2002).

This investigation involved the study of four novice teachers by examining their whiteness within the context of the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1995) utilized the term culturally relevant pedagogy to advance the idea that those who teach in a culturally responsive manner provided cultural experiences relevant to the student. Indeed, one of the most important goals for teachers in developing culturally relevant pedagogy is the academic achievement and economic success of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Cultural responsiveness requires that:

1 Successful teachers focus on students' academic achievement.

2 Successful teachers develop students' cultural competence.

3 Successful teachers foster students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 144).

Research on novice White teachers indicated there is a process of change experienced by them in transitioning from preparation to practice in diverse classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001). The literature suggested the need for teachers to be engaged in critical reflection about race and culture, as a means of addressing a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Race has such an important impact on society that it would be impossible to disregard it in the examination of issues critical to education (West, 1993). Theories regarding the role race plays in society abound. Each theory serves to illuminate the complex nature of cross-cultural instruction. For example, racial identity theory espouses that race is socially and psychologically constructed (Howard, 2006). In fact, Howard (2006) noted, "theories of racial identity development are primarily concerned with the social, psychological, and political implications of our perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors regarding racial categories" (p. 89).

Bourdieu (1986) has expanded our understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of schooling and race. He noted that middle class students have cultural capital within the middle class institution of schooling. This cultural capital, typified by such variables as speech, dress, etiquette, and social interactions, achieve for these students added value in an educational system that favors the middle class and often excludes students of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005). Thus, cultural capital has a major influence on the expectations and attitudes of teachers concerning students from disenfranchised diverse backgrounds (White-Clark, 2005). Our educational system tends to reinforce social differences, rather than diminish those differences (Bourdieu, 1993). In so doing, Bourdieu (1993) espoused schools are responsible for transmitting the culture of the dominant class by silencing the voice of those who are less valued in society.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that it involved a small group of four, novice White teachers in one rural Middle Georgia school setting. Since the study is limited in scope,

there is difficulty in generalizing the results to other locations or groups of students. Another limitation of this study involved my own whiteness. Despite my efforts to set aside any beliefs I held regarding my own experiences as an educator teaching cross-culturally, part of my positionality as an educational researcher was obstructed by my own race and my ability to interact with novice White teachers with regard to their cultural responses, as it was informed by their whiteness. In retrospect, in my interviews with the teachers, I needed to press them harder to answer the interview questions, especially in the area of sensitive questions of race. Doing so, might have provided additional data for interpretation.

While I engaged in some triangulation, which entails gathering and analyzing the data in more than one way (Curtin & Fossey, 2007), in order to ensure accuracy of my findings, my research was limited by the extent to which I engaged in triangulation. In addition to the interviews and observations of teachers, I could have added parental interviews. By identifying the characteristics of my research situation and highlighting them, I would have provided additional depth to my research by the inclusion of persistent observation (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Had I considered a prolonged engagement in this teaching environment, or persistent observation, maintaining my contact with the research participants and continuing my research through continued interactions with them, I might have found fresh eyes, in the process, to reveal more about my study (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).In addition, persistent observation might have added more validity to my findings and generated greater trustworthiness in my research results (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

While member checking is viewed as a technique for establishing the validity of an account and has shown itself to be useful in some qualitative research studies, some researchers have established that member checking can have drawbacks. The process of member-checking may lead to confusion rather than confirmation because participants may change their minds about an issue, particularly in dealing with sensitive issues such as race and socio-economics; participants cannot be expected to detach themselves from interpretations of their personal experiences and provide an academic critique (Bloor, 1978; Bryman, 2003). Morse (1994) espoused the research participants may not agree with the findings of the researcher and might see the same situation from a different perspective.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bergeron (2008) espoused that there is a cultural mismatch between the experiences of many novice White teachers and their students, since novice teachers "are often placed in the most diverse and socially complex classrooms" (p. 5). As Sleeter (2008) acknowledged, student populations of schools continue to diversify, even though the teaching force does not. Teachers find themselves in positions of authority in a classroom setting surrounded by a multitude of cultural challenges deeply rooted in the experiences of their students (Howard, 2006).

Cultural Disequilibrium

According to Bergeron (2008), a cultural disequilibrium results when novice White teachers feel unprepared for classroom situations. To become culturally responsive, teachers must be equipped to "ferret out and identify the political demands, the sociocultural foundations, and the competing truths" (Olsen, 2008, p. 4) that surround education in a multicultural environment. Those who see Whites and non-Whites having the same access to educational opportunities may view providing teachers training in multicultural education as an attempt at "equipping presumably unbiased individuals with additional skills and strategies to use with diverse populations" (Sleeter, 2008, p. 561). Instead, teachers must be encouraged to develop teaching practices that move multicultural education "from one centered primarily on content infusion to a more comprehensive and complex field of study" (Howard & Aleman, 2008, p. 164). Banks (1995) indicated that teachers' practice must embody "(a) content integration, (b)

knowledge construction, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture" (p. 4). The teacher's preparation to engage in such practices must be viewed through an understanding of the life experiences that have informed the educator's beliefs (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Cochran-Smith (1995) stressed, "this kind of examination inevitably begins with our own histories as human beings and as educators" (p. 500).

In applying the four levels of content integration: "the contribution approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach" (Banks, 1997, p. 233), the practitioner may be required to effortlessly blend ethnic content into an already established curriculum or even introduce students to a new unit of study. In critically examining an event in history from the perspective of different ethnic groups, students may be more consciously aware of the advantages of social change (Banks, 1997). All of the dimensions of Banks' (1997) multicultural teaching are realized in the culturally relevant pedagogy of Gloria Ladson-Billings (2001).

Particularly there are a number of forces impacting first year White teachers' classroom practice with African American students (Windschitl, 2002). The literature suggests that race has such an important impact on society that it would be impossible to leave it out of any examination of issues critical to education (Helms, 1990; Howard, 2006). However, little or "no examination of the articulations between the conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political planes" (Windschitl, p. 131-132) affecting classroom cross-cultural instructional practices has been undertaken. In addition, Sleeter (2008) exposed the difficulty White teachers have in building meaningful relationships with their African American students. Often, this difficulty arises as a direct result of the White

teachers' failure to relate to the communities from which the students come (Sleeter, 2008).

Sleeter (2008) further speculated that White teachers often failed to understand African American students' lack of engagement in the learning process. The beliefs and attitudes the novice White teachers bring to their preparation programs may result in feelings of inadequacy to teach in such environments. White novice teachers have little understanding of discrimination and inadvertently often set lower expectations for African American students (Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 2008).

Personal Dispositions

Olsen (2008) stated that, "a beginning teacher combines professional theories and the wisdom of practice with …personal dispositions, conceptions, feelings, goals, and memories to construct an always developing understanding of and approach toward teaching" (p. 21-22). Thus, the teacher's knowledge is constantly undergoing construction as the practitioner invokes a set of lived experiences on pedagogical practices and classroom interactions with students (Olsen, 2008). The beginning teacher's professional knowledge has not been produced in isolation; rather it is a social episteme (Foucault, 1970). The teacher has processed the pre-service and credentialing phase of her training within "particular political, social, cultural, economic, and epistemological features" (Olsen, p. 77). Naturally the teacher's construction of truth at any given moment is the end product of a multitude of factors, which converge to exercise a "great influence on how student learning unfolds" (Olsen, p. 9).

As Korthagen and Kessels (1999) indicated, teachers receive preservice training and complementary field experiences, which act as preparation for the transfer of

knowledge to their classrooms. In order to teach for understanding, Windschitl (2002) stated that teachers must be capable of repositioning their instruction so the culture of their classrooms finds harmony with the constructivist philosophy. Often, however, teachers are so influenced by their own ways of learning and preconceptions about teaching that they unconsciously project them to their own students (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999).

It is apparent that teaching professionals change their thinking and beliefs about their competency over the course of their careers as they move from novice to expert (Daly, 1999). The participants in Daly's study "moved from being overwhelmed by events to creating a narrow focus for themselves, and finally, to expand in their learning in multiple areas" (p. 142). Daly's findings paralleled the research conducted by Pultorak (1996), who illustrated that when novice teachers are encouraged to engage in reflection, they will develop an open-mindness and a reflective growth. Indeed, Daly (1999) called for further examination of the way professionals shift between novice and expert, by asking, "is the shift a result of maturational and developmental forces" (p. 145)? Olsen (2008) speculated that teacher's classroom knowledge is informed by their conceptions of their subject matter, their conceptions of their students, and their conceptions of the manner in which teaching and learning occur (Olsen). These conceptions inform the practice of the teachers and produce their emerging knowledge. Therefore, Olsen asserted that teachers' professional identities are influenced significantly by their own life histories.

Knowledge Development

In examining novice teachers' knowledge development, Olsen (2008) indicated that effective teachers are more interested in teaching life lessons than merely subject content. These beliefs shape the manner in which teachers interact with their students and the curricular goals that are set for the classroom. This idea parallels the notion of the school as a social system where there is a hidden curriculum that no teacher explicitly teaches, but all students implicitly learn (Banks, 1997). Banks' (2001) notion of knowledge construction has been valuable in explaining the importance of the role the teacher plays in helping students see how bias, perspectives, and cultural frames of reference create a cultural position that greatly influence the manner in which their knowledge is constructed or produced.

In addition, by confronting their own limitations, novice teachers must recognize that the curriculum is representative of a particular viewpoint (Nieto, 2002). Through culturally responsive instructional practices, the novice teachers should attempt to make students aware that the curriculum is merely a reflection of those who created it. For example, if historical events were to be written or presented from another point of view, the events might appear quite different. Banks (2001) advocated for student awareness of the role that cultural assumptions have played in the formulation of generalizations and conclusions that have become accepted as truth in our body of knowledge.

There is evidence that teacher beliefs are significantly more important to student success and teacher effectiveness than many other individual aspects of the learning environment (Obadiah & Teel, 2001; Olsen, 2008). Irving (2006) reported that when teachers failed to consider their own beliefs and biases they were more unlikely to be able

to meet the needs of students who have a different cultural paradigm than their own. If White teachers are not sufficiently prepared for cross-cultural teaching, their classroom practices may be a detriment to the academic success of African American students (Obadiah & Teel, 2001). In addition, Obidiah and Teel exposed the significance of teachers being conscious of the impact of their own biases and unintentional actions in the classroom.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to engage in relationships with students that allow them to feel cared for by those who are putting their best interests at heart. Nias (1999) believed that one of the most demanding obligations of teachers is to have a clear and focused vision of individual student needs. Bazron, Osher, and Fleischman (2005) recognized that teachers should be mindful of the cultural stresses students experience at the beginning of each school week as they transition from home to school. In addition, Windschitl (2002) noted that providing students with options of topics of interest to study, in an effort to promote higher levels of engagement, can pose challenges to the classroom management of novice teachers as well. Novice teachers may lack the confidence to give their students such latitude in matters of learning (Windshitl, 2002), but such actions help build caring relationships

Cultural Responsiveness

An aspect of the care which teachers can typify for their students is to advocate for them. Cultural responsiveness embodies an obligation on the part of teachers to ensure that all students learn (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). It is important for teachers to be able to set firm limitations on classroom behavioral expectations for their students, while teaching the whole child and meeting the students where they are culturally, socially, and

intellectually. (Hackett, 2003). The care embodied in culturally responsive teaching can go a long way toward empowering students by promoting social class equity and the academic achievement of every student (Banks, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Nieto (1999) espoused that pre-service teachers must be able to consider privilege and how belonging to a particular social group may significantly determine the outcome of classroom learning. Nieto (1999) cautioned that White pre-service teachers do not have enough opportunities to come to terms with the fact that some in society benefit from their race while others are confronting an unequal playing field. Tatum (1997) stated that quite often White people construct their racial identity not from the perspective of group membership, but from viewing themselves as an individual, supporting societal beliefs in meritocracy. Hollins (1996) noted that "when teachers examine their own cultural origins, it enhances understanding the significance of culture in the classroom" (p. 153). In having a clear understanding of the role that race and cultural identities have played in shaping the norms which operate in our society, Hollins (1996) believed educators might begin to scrutinize long-standing and taken-for-granted beliefs, in order to produce societal change.

Racial identity is molded through beliefs that we have become part of a distinct racial group through a shared heritage (Helms, 1990; Howard, 2006). Many of these ideas primarily take shape within the culture in which we grow up (Howard). Thus, in addition to respecting the racial identity of students (Ladson-Billings, 1994), the teacher must be able to shape instruction within the context of the culture of the students in the class (Nieto, 1999). Since students' culture impacts such a variety of aspects of the learning environment, teachers must become responsive not only to students' learning styles but to

their cultural needs as well (Nieto, 1999). As a result, it is important that the teacher makes an effort to know how students are processing information being presented in class (Adams, Jones, and Tatum, 1997). As a result, teachers must realize "that social diversity and social justice education involves journeying into life experiences that are often fraught with fear, suspicion, lies, and shame" (Adams, et al., 1997, p. 325).

White teachers, who often fail to view themselves as cultural, must be challenged to transcend their prior socialization (Sleeter, 2008). Indeed, White teachers must be encouraged to acknowledge the social implications of their whiteness as a means of addressing the cross-cultural divisions that are apparent in classrooms with predominantly African-American students (Sleeter, 2008).

Tatum (1997) believed that White individuals have difficulty in shifting their racial identity to group membership, since doing so often results in the loss of their own self-identification. Such group identification of white privilege often angered White people and caused consternation to people of color (Tatum, 1997). Ladson-Billings (1994) clarified that Whites often were reticent to identify themselves as having played a role in perpetuating the current state of our cultural norms. In fact, while these same individuals purport their color-blindness, many "fail to challenge the status quo, when they accept the given as the inevitable" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 32). In examining the teacher education curriculum, Cochran-Smith (2000) spoke of "an underlying White European American construction of self identity and other" (p. 175). Teacher training must prepare novice White teachers to teach those they encounter in the classroom by reaching all students irrespective of their culture (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Only by exposing and acknowledging our society's failure to blot out forms of organizational racism will

Whites be capable of understanding their own complicity in perpetuating the current system of oppression (Cochran-Smith, 2000).

In a recent study, Parsons (2005) deconstructed the notion of caring from the perspective of a White educator. The White educators in the study acted in caring ways toward Black students as a means of providing the students what the educators believed to be the same quality of experience as White students. Just what must be done to provide the same quality of experiences for African American students? As McIntyre (1997) acknowledged, White teachers must be willing to recognize that caring for their African-American students must embody more than hugs and pats of the back. It requires the White teachers, who have been placed in positions of authority, to recognize the need for them to become agents for change in our current educational system. Teachers must develop an attitude of respect for their students that embodies their understanding of their own bias and prejudice (Tourscher, 2001).

Parsons (2001) recognized that many teachers may be conscious of their feelings regarding equity in the classroom, but remain silent and do little to act on their equity concerns. Noddings (1999) has proposed that a theory of caring just might be able to bridge the issues of justice and equity currently found in educational matters. Indeed, for Noddings, the teacher should be exercising care as a virtue. The teacher should attend to her students to guide and support them, while responding in a Dewey-like fashion to their needs and interests. As educators seek to do work that was once expected of families, schools will encourage joy in learning, while educating “for both self-understanding and group understanding” (Noddings, 2003, p. 260). Culturally responsive teachers demonstrate to students that they care about them by striving to identify their individual

strengths (McKinley, 2010). Such acknowledgement of students' efforts by their teacher leads students to achieve goals and develop personal self-efficacy (McKinley, 2010).

Novice White teachers teaching cross-culturally often encounter difficulty in eliciting ideas students bring with them to the learning environment, along with their ability to make new ideas available to their students (Windschitl, 2002).Thus, first year teachers must be able to place their students' needs at the center of their classroom practice. Fostering a community of learners is quite a challenge for even experienced teachers (Windschitl, 2002). In engaging this community of learners, the teacher sees teaching as an art, and the art as an avenue for giving back to the community at large (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

It is important for novice White teachers to come to terms with the fact that African-American teachers and students share a common culture (Beachum, Dentith, McCray, & Boyle, 2008). In advocating an antithesis of colorblindness, the authors believed that open discourse which is honest and cognizant of racial privilege will ensure that all educators openly accept the importance that race plays in developing our identities and shaping our experiences. Many first year White teachers, challenged to be effective with students in urban schools, are confronted by the complexities of "leadership, pedagogy, and relationships" (Beachum et al., 2008, p. 210). Indeed, the color line that divides our country has become more of a color prism. There is an urgent need to prepare first year White teachers to effectively perform cross-culturally "somewhere between 'havens of hope and killing fields'" (Beachum, et al., 2008, p. 210).

It is imperative that educators no longer be 'colorblind' or 'colormute' to these social and cultural issues (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Pollock, 2004). Beachum, Dentith,

McCray, and Boyle (2008) advised the development of colortalk in schools in an effort to promote healthy relationships. In addition, the authors espoused the abandonment of a colorblind perspective in schools as key to the promotion of a healthy organization (Beachum et al., 2008). As Ladson-Billings (1994) cautioned, when efforts at colorblindness abound, an unconscious form of racism persists. Nieto (2004) stated that some think "to be color-blind, is to be fair, impartial, and objective because to see differences, in this line of reasoning, is to see defects and inferiority" (p. 145). Instead, Nieto (2004) cautioned, such reasoning can result in a failure to acknowledge differences, thereby "accepting the dominant culture as the norm" (p. 145). Indeed, as Ladson-Billings (1998) noted, the problems of racism and social injustice in schools requires "intense study and careful rethinking about race and education" (p. 22). While many would rather not acknowledge it, race matters to as great an extent in the classroom, as it does in society (West, 1993).

Cultural-Ecological Theory

Ogbu (1999), in asserting a cultural-ecological theory, espoused that the performance of minority children is a result of both the system and community forces at work. Foster (2005a) pointed out the importance of Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory lies in the fact that it provided a paradigm for considering the ways in which forces in the community act to hinder the academic achievement of minorities. He observed that those who voluntarily place themselves in positions where their cultural paradigm is in the minority were more likely to seek to achieve academic success. In contrast, others who involuntarily feel ostracized by the dominant culture often choose not to be successful (Ogbu, 1999). There is a need to make African American students aware of the value of

academic success by pointing to not only successful entertainers and sports figures, but to prominent African American professionals (Ogbu, 2003; Foster, 2005b). Ogbu's work has been noteworthy, though limited by his reluctance to examine contemporary theories of class, race, and ethnicity (Bartlett and Brayboy, 2005).

Foley (2005) and Bhatti (2006), among others, have sought to refute Ogbu's claims "that judged voluntary minorities as relatively consistent and effective academic achievers, and involuntary minorities as persistent academic failures" (Foster, 2005b, p. 565). Ogbu (2003) made assertions that fueled ongoing discussion and debate about the manner in which many African American students chose to disengage themselves from educational opportunities (Foster, 2005b).

Mediating the Culture of Home and School

An important aspect of the school culture that first year teachers should be cognizant of involves an understanding of the collectivism of the African American culture (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). In such a cultural orientation, African Americans are more likely to relate their personal goals to a larger group (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Trumbull et al. (2001) noted the lack of understanding of this collectivistic orientation is played out in American classrooms, where teachers may not be able to bring harmony to parent and student interactions.

Children who represent a collectivistic orientation were more likely to be taught to share personal property and that the teacher should be authoritative instead of stressing students engage in self-control in the classroom (Trumbull et al., 2001). Obidah and Teel (2001) related the importance of White teachers being authoritative with African

American students and of White teachers being aware that cultural differences exist in communication styles and levels of assertiveness between teachers of both races. Teel, a white middle class teacher, in showing her lack of awareness of cultural differences, related how her African American students viewed her as unable to control the class, while she viewed them as collectively testing her authority and demanding her respect (Obidah & Teel, 2001).

Tyler (2008) examined research hypothesizing a cultural discontinuity between the home and classroom experiences of many ethnic minority students. Sue and Sue (2003) pointed to the significance of the fact that public schools introduce many minority students to values that reflect mainstream Western values, while discouraging any exhibition of any formerly held cultural values of the students. Yet, Tyler (2008) noted, our knowledge acquisition and thought processes are shaped largely by our cultural experience.

The pedagogy of the first year teacher is an end-product of the manner in which the first year teacher is able to negotiate the complexities of cross-cultural instruction in light of their preservice training. Lingenfelter & Lingenfelter (2003) stressed the transformation of pedagogy the first year teachers were able to produce comes as a response to their reflection on various experiences and ideologies. To effectively teach others cross-culturally, teachers must have a clear understanding of the formation of their own cultural identity and how that identity may inhibit their ability to serve students (Lingenfelter & Lingenfelter, 2003). In addition, Lingenfelter & Lingenfelter (2003) believed that earning student trust by listening and encouraging is vitally important in serving students cross-culturally.

The recognition of the importance of culture in education is indispensable. Gay (2000) stated that culture is “a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs” (p. 8). In addition, Hollins (1996) noted a theory of cultural mismatch that proposes that there is a difference between the cultural practices of the student’s home culture and the practices of the school which can impact academic achievement.

Recognizing a mismatch may exist between the culture of home and that of the school can also be referred to as the theory of cultural congruence (Hollins, 1996). Generally speaking, cultural congruence refers to the manner in which teachers alter communication and classroom interaction to more closely resemble the cultural style of the students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Most recently, Beachum and McCray (2004) referred to a phenomenon known as cultural collision in urban schools. Proponents of the theory of collision believed certain cultural groups are favored in our schools (Beachum & McCray, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In order to create interventions to help historically disenfranchised groups, Hollins (1996) believed schools must promote continuity with the past that balances the learning in school with the knowledge acquired outside of school. Irvine (1990) indicated that the teacher must experience a synchronization of culture in order to interact effectively with African American students and foster learning.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995b), challenging and building on the work of those who have attempted to explain how culture impacts the teaching and learning environment, proposed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1994) asserted that

instruction which utilizes and develops a diversity pedagogy requires a commitment on the part of teachers, along with an understanding of the complexities of the teaching-learning process. Culturally responsive teaching should be "a celebration of possibilities and of individual potential" (Bergeron, 2008, p. 25). Through celebrating diversity, students develop a greater vision of their world and themselves (Bergeron, 2008). Indeed, the culturally responsive teacher must be able to enlighten students regarding the role that their cultural perceptions plays in implicitly shaping the framework by which students view knowledge in their world (Banks, 1997).

Ladson-Billings (1995b) suggested that African American students be encouraged to affirm their cultural identity, along with learning to "challenge inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate" (p. 469). In addition, Ladson-Billings (1995b) theorized culturally relevant pedagogy may help African American students negotiate academic success in schools. Successful African American students are often ostracized in school and become isolated academically, if they appear "white" (Gay, 2000). Gay (2000) stated that, through a process of *cultural continuity*, students should never feel the need to intentionally sabotage their own academic success out of fear that to do otherwise would compromise their ethnic integrity.

However, Lew (2006), along with Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005), have pointed out that both White and Black students embrace academic achievement. There is less evidence that African American students are experiencing any peer pressure related to their cultural capital alone (Lew, 2006). Lew (2006) countered that any additional research should focus instead on "how students' racial and ethnic identities intersect with culture, class, race, and school context" (p. 351).

Ladson-Billings (1995b) believed the cultural values of African American students must be affirmed. Hilliard (1992) indicated that African American students who were allowed to demonstrate cultural competence can produce academic leadership and achievement. Generally speaking, Hollins (1996) believed culturally responsive teachers were able to make connections between student experiences and perceptions and classroom context. Likewise teachers who engage in justice and equity in their classrooms can influence students in ways that will improve the human condition (Banks, 1988).

As Ladson-Billings (2006) noted, teachers must be able to 'do democracy' (p. 39). Teachers must recognize that the responsibilities they have for their students supersede the academic year. All teachers need to develop a social conscience and become engaged in preparing students for the roles they will play in society (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Indeed, Hollins (1996) noted the effective transformation of cultural pedagogical practice related to the practitioners' ability to understand how their students' experiences have been shaped in societal context.

Three broad characteristics are shared by teachers who engage in culturally relevant teaching. First, teachers who engage in culturally relevant teaching strategies, believe all students are capable of success in school. Ladson-Billings (1994) noted that culturally relevant teachers instill competence in their students through building confidence in their intellectual capabilities. In addition, culturally relevant pedagogy teachers, using the art embodied in their teaching, use their beliefs to give back to their community. These teachers pull knowledge from their students, while permitting no one

"to choose failure in their classrooms" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 479). While employing culturally relevant pedagogy, the teachers do not dwell on what their students are lacking but are concerned with their own limitations in ensuring student success. It has been found that students in poorer districts, who are often perceived to have deficits, can be equally capable of success when they are guided by teachers properly trained to help them navigate the learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

In developing a community of learners where success was of paramount importance, the culturally responsive educator created what Banks (1997) termed an empowering school culture. Ladson-Billings (1994) believed that the culturally responsive, multicultural educator could only extend student abilities by building on former successes. White-Clark (2005) has supported Ladson-Billings' (1994) belief in the importance of teacher training in culturally relevant pedagogy. White-Clark (2005) is convinced that it is only through adequately training teachers that they would be able to meet the challenges of the multicultural classroom. Interestingly, White-Clark (2005) has noted that "a distinct gap has been identified between the preparation and experience of teachers who teach in culturally isolated schools and those who teach in more affluent districts" (p. 24).

In addition, these teachers, while seeking a classroom community of success, eliminated competitiveness and produced equitable and reciprocal relationships between themselves and students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Students, encouraged to respond to peers in collaborative ways, were taught to be responsible for the success of others. Bergeron (2008) asserted the importance of developing a classroom community for

teaching. Clear expectations must be communicated to students in an assertive business-like environment for learning. In addition, Bergeron strongly believed effective, culturally responsive teachers must develop relationships with their students, while demonstrating care in attending to their emotional and cognitive needs. The teachers must choose not to focus on a language of shortcomings, teaching instead with energy and in a manner that supports community pride (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teacher beliefs about success should be evident in their social relationships within the classroom community.

The qualitative research which Bergeron (2008) undertook demonstrated that first year White teachers must be willing to take pedagogical risks by empowering all students and providing opportunities for them to succeed. In addition, novice teachers need a strong support system which advocates constructivist practices (Bergeron, 2008). The success of students is self-fulfilling. Self-efficacy is predicated on the proposition that students who do well develop confidence that they can succeed at a task (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Providing for the success of all learners is reflective of the creation of an equity pedagogy, which Banks (1997) depicted in describing the dimensions of multicultural education. When instruction does not facilitate success, students who have accumulated failures develop a form of "'learned helplessness'" (Gay, 2000, p. 25). To counter such classroom failure, Banks (1997) advocated the incorporation of an equity pedagogy, which sought the modification of instruction to meet the needs of diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. In culturally responsive multicultural teaching, students develop a commitment to learning as an outgrowth of their dedication to their teacher and their classroom community (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The third ideology rested upon the beliefs of teachers regarding knowledge. The teachers employing culturally relevant pedagogy used scaffolding and bridging to help students make connections to previous learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). They were passionate about knowledge and encouraged students to determine their own area of expertise. In addition, Banks (1997) believed that by considering the importance cultural assumptions play in the construction of knowledge, students were encouraged to investigate the basis of some of their beliefs and perspectives. In fact, one of the critical factors in student learning is the manner in which teachers relate to their students. Sheets (2005) believed teachers must understand that students cannot construct new knowledge until they are able to make connections to their former cultural knowledge. Thus, the construction of new knowledge is always dependent on our cultural frame of reference (Banks, 1997). In understanding the knowledge construction process, students might view their performance on standardized tests as merely part of the rhythm of their learning.

Ladson-Billings (1995b) researched “the need for a culturally relevant theoretical perspective on the growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students” (p. 483). Teacher beliefs, in espousing a culturally relevant classroom, have important implications for teacher education. Central to teacher preparation was “the educability of students” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 484). A defining characteristic of culturally relevant teachers was their ability to recreate knowledge between the students and themselves (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The teacher might at times take cues from students as to their academic interests. By allowing the

students to take the lead in exploring a topic, the teacher actually became a learner in the classroom community. In addition, the culturally relevant teacher made efforts to critically analyze curriculum content and produce learning opportunities for students independent of textbooks (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). In addition, culturally relevant teachers were strict, caring, and capable of setting high standards for both academics and behavior (Harding, 2005).

In qualitative research undertaken to understand some of the attributes of successful teachers of urban students of color, Harding (2005) used portraiture to describe the manner in which a White educator was able to relate to her students. The White teacher used her understanding and validation of her African American students' culture to inform her practice. In addition, the teacher held a strong belief that students would be academically successful when their curriculum was presented in a relevant way. The instruction was geared to empowering the students, by pushing them to think for themselves and occasionally speaking to them "'in their own language'" (Harding, p. 69).

Not all White teachers would be comfortable speaking this language, but the effective teacher identified by Harding (2005) had deep-seated notions of the institutional racism pervasive in our society. The culturally relevant educator acknowledged the need for White teachers to speak to African American students in a stern, yet matter of fact manner, assuring students they had their best academic interests at heart (Harding, 2005).

Gay (2000) stated that teachers can never nurture individuality in students they do not know. Such ignorance of ethnicity can lead teachers to either insulting cultural heritages or ignoring them. Therefore, teachers must teach both routinely and radically.

Culturally responsive teaching was said to be routine in that it provided for African American students what current ideologies had always done for their middle class Anglo American counterparts. At the same time, culturally responsive teaching radically recognized that improving student outcomes could only come about from an acceptance of the legitimacy of ethnic group cultures. At the center of this multi-culturally responsive way of teaching was the realization that there is "no single version of 'truth'" (Gay, 2000, p. 35). Students should be encouraged to view problems and issues from many different perspectives so that they can construct knowledge in their own way and find their own voice (Gay, 2000). Indeed, teacher education programs must be generating graduates who can empower all students of all races in the classroom, "an advocate for students of color, and a much-needed antiracist role-model for White students" (Lawrence &Tatum, 1997, p. 341). This is a daunting task, but one worthy of our best efforts, if we truly desire to create learning institutions where equity is paramount.

Attitudes and Perceptions

White-Clark (2005) believed attitudes and perceptions were critical to student educational success. In addition, Howard (2006) noted the manner in which teachers deal with race makes all the difference in the way teachers related to their students. Haberman (1996) stressed that the life experiences of the teachers were more important than their preservice training. White-Clark asserted that effective teachers of African-American students are concerned with the cognitive, social, and emotional development of their students.

In a study conducted by Harding (2005), the White female teacher prompted students to be successful with more stringent academics, reminding both her students of

color (and their parents) of their capability and of her intentions to empower them. The teacher demanded that her students develop proficiency through coming to terms with the culture in power. Harding (2005) speculated that the manner in which the White teacher constructed race was at the heart of her teaching practice and her ability to make her instruction culturally relevant. Tatum (1997) articulated the importance of breaking free from our fears with regard to exploring a relational dialogue about race. In addition, Tatum (1997) noted we must be willing to free our society from a "culture of silence" (p. 201) so that there can be greater insight into the perceptions of Whiteness that have long been quieted.

Teacher Reflection

It is significantly important that preservice White teachers think critically about themselves with regard to their race, gender, and culture (Milner, 2006). In addition, the preservice teachers must be able to consider "their students' ways of knowing" (Milner, 2006, p. 351). Milner pointed to the mismatch that may occur between students and teachers because of stereotypes embedded in the preservice teachers' experiences. Further, Milner noted teachers who were more capable of deeper levels of reflection were more able to come to a greater understanding of cross-cultural teaching. Often this type of introspection, though difficult to contemplate, resulted in greater professional growth (Milner). Phuntsog (1998) stated that self-reflection by the teacher was of critical importance in order to prevent cultural bias from infiltrating the curriculum. The teacher must use opportunities to include different cultural perspectives to generate a respect for diversity in the classroom. In fact, Phuntsog cautioned that this transformation in one's

belief system must be cyclic and continuous, if one is going to become culturally sensitive.

Korthagen and Kessels (1999) encouraged practitioners to be able to take an objective, epistemic theory and connect it to a phronesis, in order to generate behavior that does not require much conscious reflection. The authors suggested a spiral model for teacher reflection requiring "action, looking back, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternative methods of action, and trials" (ALACT) (p. 13-14). Bergeron (2008) noted when teachers were able to be reflective regarding the cultural aspects of their classroom interactions, instruction was more culturally responsive. Such classroom responsiveness is empowering for students, and enables teachers "to be successful with *all* the children whom they teach" (p. 8).

Pultorak (1996), through investigating novice teachers, ascertained the importance of reflection in teacher preparation. He modeled his research after Van Maneen's (1997) three levels of reflectivity. At level one, the teacher reflected based on his or her own personal experiences. At level two, "the teacher analyzes student and teacher behaviors to see if and how goals and objectives were met" (Pultorak, 1996, p. 284). At the deepest level of reflection, the teacher considers "moral and ethical criteria such as whether important human needs are being met" (Pultorak, 1996, p. 284). His research findings indicated that novice teachers were often consumed with issues of class management and content preparation. However, he speculated that novice teachers were capable of level three judgment of instruction, that of determining if human needs are being met. Indeed,

with guidance, first year teachers can move “from novice thinking to expert understanding” (p. 291).

Hollins (1996) advocated reflective-interpretive-inquiry (RIQ), “a process whereby educational practitioners construct meaning by reflecting on their own practice and their students’ experiential backgrounds in ways that facilitate focused and strategic inquiry concerned with improving professional competence and the benefits provided their students” (p. 56). She found that teachers who were effective in diverse classrooms had developed an ability to reflect on their practice Above all, teachers must be aware of whether or not they were unconsciously communicating forms of bias or prejudice (Walker & Tedick, 1998). Indeed, as Walker and Tedick proposed, teachers must commit themselves to “a change in self and in the beliefs and theories that underlie their practices” (p. 194).

Milner (2006) stressed that preservice teachers must be exposed to courses that scaffold their practical experiences. As a means of informing their practice, the preservice teachers must be able to connect theory and pedagogy. This connection of theory and pedagogy was a key component to the transformation of practice that was required by first-year White teachers who were effective in cross-cultural teaching (Milner). Indeed, Freire (1996) spoke of the need for teachers to see beyond the subject-object relationship in teaching, one where the students bridge or extend their knowledge to yet another subject, creating another link in their learning relationship. Such dynamics of thinking and rethinking move the boundaries, making “education the practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994, p. 12).

Social Domination

Howard (2006) believed that it is critically important for White educators to examine their position of social dominance. The denial of this dominance prevents many White educators from being able to gain a perspective on the hierarchical aspects of race in society. Teachers should be willing to carefully examine the dynamics of their classroom interactions in order to better understand how class and race may be part of the hidden curriculum in our schools. Part of the hidden curriculum involves the perpetuation of the dominant cultural influence which is White. Many White teachers would like to believe that hard work (i.e., meritocracy) provides upward mobility in a social system which seems open and equitable (Howard, 2006). Few Whites want to acknowledge that race and class act as an impediment to the life chances of many in our society. Once our beliefs are formed, Howard noted that denial and defensiveness makes the examination of White dominance a difficult one for people to grasp. Seeking to understand the problems of discrimination and racism as it pertains to schooling is one of our greatest challenges (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005).

Construction of Racial Identity

Certain experiences can be critical in the development of our racial awareness and how we construct our own racial identities (Johnson, 2002). It is vital to the teaching profession that it attracts pre-service teachers committed to inquiring into the challenges of cultural diversity and race (Cochran-Smith, 1995). It is not enough for students to be exposed to non-Anglo customs and celebrations in other cultures. Cochran-Smith (1995) recognized it is imperative for White teachers to consider their own experiences not only

in their role as teachers, but also as members of a certain gender and race. Our classrooms must be communities in pursuit of truth, where culture is affirmed and dissent welcomed (hooks, 1994). As hooks (1994) noted, strategies for building these communities have not yet been perfected. Even so, novice White teachers must be willing to commit themselves to the struggle, if greater equity is to be achieved (hooks, 1994). Students must be given opportunities to consider the hidden curriculum and how implicit cultural viewpoints have shaped perspectives and generated bias in knowledge construction (Banks, 1997).

The relationship between race and schooling, which has always been a troubled one, continues to be carefully scrutinized (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005). Ignoring issues of race served merely to reinforce the position of privilege of Whites in society (Gordon, 2005). Bartlett and Brayboy (2005) believed that educators must find ways to better educate students of color by critically examining aspects of racism and discrimination which have prevailed for decades. Accepting that many African American students experience a mismatch between their culture and the culture of their school may bring a solution to one of education's greatest challenges (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Beachum & McCray, 2004). Beachum and McCray (2004) pointed to the importance of understanding this "collision of cultures" before schools can appropriately take steps to meet the needs of African American youth. As Ladson-Billings (1994) noted, "while it is recognized that African-Americans make up a distinct racial group, the acknowledgment that this racial group has a distinct culture is still not recognized" (p. 9). There must be a greater examination of Whiteness in the teaching learning process (Marx & Pennington, 2003).

Preservice Teacher Training

Disenfranchised students are often taught by uninspired teachers, who possess low expectations of student performance (Gibson, 1999). As professional intellectuals, first year teachers must be able to determine the teaching methods that are most effective for reaching their students (Milner IV, 2007b). The literature on cross-cultural instruction indicated that teacher performance is shaped by how teachers understand and utilize their preservice training (Windschitl, 2002). However, one difficulty for novice teachers lies in their ability to make quick decisions in their classrooms in a variety of situations when there is little or no time for contemplation. In addition, many of the theories the preservice teachers thought they understood may not really have any value until there is an opportunity to utilize them in concrete situations (Kothagen & Kessels, 1999).

Many first year teachers may know many theories and strategies, but not know under which conditions to utilize them. While many novice teachers see college preparation programs providing a glimpse of the plight of children of color, the training oftentimes leaves teachers feeling somewhat destabilized and unsure of how to apply their training (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Thus, first year teachers may find difficulty in taking objective, epistemic knowledge and transferring it into a perceptual, subjective classroom situation (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999).

Conclusion

There is an imperative to ensure that White first year teachers are adequately prepared to teach cross-culturally. Oftentimes teachers may feel powerless, considering the ever-increasing demands made on them to meet a multitude of academic needs while

ensuring student performance on standardized tests (Ayers, 2000). However, Ayers (2000) stated that teachers should be entrusted with choices about how they will view the world, how they will see their students, and what philosophies they will embrace. To this end, first year teachers must be willing to examine their own identities within the larger purposes for which we educate in our society (Ayers, 2000).

Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, & Isken (2003) advocated that of utmost importance was the need for novice teachers to be able to feel that they could become empowered in the urban classroom environment, rather than frustrated by it. There are proven ways to help increase the likelihood that novice teachers will be successful in cross-cultural environments. Often, there were few teachers in an urban school setting who have enough experience to become role models for the novice educators (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In addition, Kershaw, Benner, Scherff, Brommel, Suters, and Barclay-McLaughlin (2004) acknowledged that when preservice teachers have been placed in urban environments during their preservice training, they are more apt to feel more prepared in those placements as a first year teacher. Thus, placing preservice teachers in urban environments for training and pairing them with appropriate role models seems paramount to their later success in such settings.

Watkins (2000) speculated that the vast majority of Americans desire schools capable of blotting out bias, while serving as beacons of hope and social justice. Our schools must be able to provide educational options to students of all colors that will guarantee them viable employment and opportunities to participate fully in society (Watkins, 2000). Those entering the teaching profession for the first time must be able to

see children three-dimensionally, by providing for their cultural, social, and academic needs (Ayers, 2000). The hopes and dreams these children bring to the classroom may pose a “knotty, complicated challenge” (Ayers, 2000, p. 2) to novice teachers unprepared for understanding student academic needs. Teachers must be capable of helping students achieve success based on their “actual lived experience, personhood, and learning modalities” (Howard, 2006, p. 131).

The required culturally responsive teaching is an outgrowth of cultural competence demanding teachers who understand deeply the intellectual task before them “since every judgment is contingent, every view partial, every conclusion tentative” (Ayers, 2000, p. 2). The passion for supporting White first year teachers teaching cross-culturally drives research. As the literature revealed, the teachers of today are engaged in educating students in a changing world. The novice teachers must possess a deep regard for their students and be capable of convincing them “to reach out, to reinvent, and to seize an education fit for the fullest lives they might hope for” (Ayers, 2000, p. 3). Success in cross-cultural settings requires a transformationist pedagogy that occurs “where our passion for equity intersects our cultural competence” (Howard, 2006, p. 133).

Indeed, the teachers must be ethical, ensuring that students have access to everything needed to participate in a global economy. Effective cross-cultural instruction requires teachers to open students’ eyes to the world as it exists, and help them to find the strength to change anything that might “bureaucratize the brain” (Ayers, 2000, p. 1). There must be a return to a consideration of the higher purposes of educating.

The efforts of Ladson-Billings (2001) to depict the attributes of the culturally responsive educator, along with her suggestion that we as educators might find a way to "Cross Over to Canaan," suggest the powerful impact that cultural responsiveness might play in the success of future generations of African American students in our schools. Those who prepare novice teachers cannot afford to turn a deaf ear to the plight of "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995), nor should they lose sight of the cultural collision present in our nation's classrooms (Beachum & McCray, 2004). According to Gary Howard (2006), there are many things about the cultural mismatch in our schools awaiting novice White teachers and preventing their effectiveness with the African American youth.

There is a crucial need to examine teacher preparation (Olsen, 2008). Olsen (2008) has espoused that rising student enrollment numbers coupled with efforts to lower class sizes have created a pressing need to ensure that all students have access to a well-prepared teacher. In an effort to better understand the preparation of teachers for diverse populations, teacher education must be linked to classroom practice and continued professional development (Sleeter, 2001). As White teachers envision more authentic ways to connect with their African American students, the African American youth will respond with a more "empowered sense of racial and ethnic identity" (Tatum, 1997, p. 113). The prescriptive, "what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children" (Dewey, 1915, p. 3), should reverberate in the hearts and minds of first year White teachers as they accept the challenges of cross-cultural teaching.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In an effort to determine the factors affecting the novice White teacher's ability to understand the academic and non-academic needs of their students and the ways their beliefs influenced their awareness of students' multicultural needs and their classroom practice, along with the experiences they provided their students, I chose phenomenology as my approach to this study. My passion in this study was in seeing how the beliefs held by the novices manifested themselves in the manner in which they demonstrated cultural responsiveness to the needs of the African American students.

Relying on the writings of Dewey (1938/1997), who espoused that every experience embodied some aspect of what had preceded it, I considered the experiences the novice White teachers related to me. In so doing, "although the specific experiences of human beings are culturally and historically variable, experience appears to have a primary and basic common structure" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 51). Dewey (1938/1997) theorized that through a process of modification, the subsequent experiences became simply a modification of earlier ones. Since I was interested in the essence of the meaning the teachers attached to their pedagogical experiences, I elected to use a phenomenological data analysis of the data from the multiple interviews, due to its appropriateness in this setting. I was interested in locating and highlighting common statements or quotes in the transcripts that indicated how the research participants had experienced the phenomena, in this case, cultural responsiveness in a cross-cultural teaching environment (Creswell, 2007).

Van Manen (1990) espoused that "phenomenological reflection is not introspective, but retrospective" (p. 10). By suspending my own beliefs regarding the first year of teaching, and by being thoughtful in listening to the novices' descriptions of what it was to be a novice White teacher in a cross-cultural environment, I attempted to extract meaning regarding this phenomena. My phenomenological investigation sought to explicate meaning from the everyday existence of the group of teachers in my study. All of the teachers had been in the classroom one to three years, relying significantly on their pre-service training as they honed their pedagogic intentions, and as their educational intentions animated from their experiences with the students (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenologists believe "that there is some commonality to how human beings perceive and interpret similar experiences" (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 432). By studying the essence of the experiences of the four teachers, I hoped to be able to determine the commonalities in their perceptions.

The four teachers participating in this research were engaged as novice multicultural educators in an elementary school which served a predominantly African American student population. The school is located in a small, rural, middle Georgia community of less than 10, 000 people. The community is considered to be the peach capital of Georgia, and strives to maintain its rich heritage by hosting a peach festival each year, which draws a number of visitors. The community is nearly three-fourths African American, twenty-two percent White, and around four percent Hispanic. The median age in the community is 28.5 years, with women heading more than thirty percent of the households. The housing units are comprised of approximately fifty-four percent rental properties and forty six percent owner occupied. (Area, 2000).

Thirty percent of the residents have yearly household incomes of less than $25,000. Ten percent of the residents work in the food service industry or in public administration, thirty percent are engaged in the field of education and social services, twenty percent work in manufacturing and construction, and approximately four percent in agricultural pursuits. Forty-one percent of the residents are not in the work force and 8.8 % are unemployed (U.S. Census, 2010).

The teachers were in the process of constructing their understandings related to their experiences during their early years of teaching. I employed a phenomenological approach that included qualitative interviews and classroom observations as the basis of my inquiry with the teachers. I was especially interested in how the novices were experiencing the world of their classrooms, which were situated within the context of a particular school culture in a rural elementary school.

The assumption underlying my research was that qualitative methods, while richly value-laden, favor no single approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). My interest centered on how the backgrounds, educational beliefs, and preservice training of the study participants have combined with classroom experiences to produce meaning about cultural responsiveness. It was my desire to expose the themes and deeper meanings that were revealed within the experiences of the novice teachers in order to give meaning to my research. For this reason, I chose interviews as my primary mode of inquiry.

Easter, Shultz, Neyhart, and Reck (1999) have studied the beliefs and attitudes of preservice teachers with regard to diversity and urban education using survey data. Marx and Pennington (2003) used interactions with White teacher education students to explore whiteness and understandings of race. Qualitative research practices seemed to be well-

suited for the purposes of my research problem, which was to understand the experiences of White novice teachers, having from one to three years of experience in the area of multicultural teaching. As the classroom researcher, I tried to gain a perspective on this problem from my vantage as a non-participant observer. As Creswell (2007) pointed out, the job of sorting through the interviews with these teachers in order to see patterns or themes would be labor intensive.

The research problem being investigated became more clarified as I gained more information about the responsiveness of the novice White teachers to the needs of the predominantly African American classrooms. Since I had received no formal training in culturally relevant pedagogy during my own teacher preparation, my research experiences were personally enriching to me as a professional educator. Undergirding my own understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy were my own experiences, both as a novice White teacher and as a supervisor of student teachers in schools with predominantly African American students. I selected an elementary school in a district located in a small, rural middle Georgia setting, where agriculture served as the primary means of support to the economic base. By the time I began the process of interviewing the teachers, the teachers had become immersed in the school culture and had an opportunity to become somewhat acquainted with the school community.

Selection of the Participants

The four White teachers were in their first three years of classroom teaching in a rural district in middle Georgia. Three of the four teachers were actually in their first year in the classroom, while one of the female teachers was in her second year of classroom teaching experience. I selected the district and the elementary setting because I believed

its demographics were representative of the experiences of many novice teachers in other rural districts in the Southeast (Howard, 2003). In the elementary school, I used purposive sampling to select the novice teachers, due to the nature of the study. As Welman and Kruger (1999) noted, choosing those who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation is thought to be one of the most significant types of non-probability sampling. Below is a table outlining the demographics of the four novices' classrooms in which I observed them interacting with their students. The elementary school housed 737 students, with four administrators, approximately 42 classroom teachers, and 3.2 support personnel. Seventy-three percent of the student body was eligible for free-and-reduced lunches (GADOE archives, 2012). In addition, the school was identified by the national initiative No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (GADOE archives, 2012). The teacher-student ratio was eighteen to one.

Table 1

Demographics of the Novices' Classrooms

Teacher	African American	White	Hispanic
Alex	26 (92.9%)	0 (0%)	2 (7.1%)
Beth	4(57%)	3 (42.9%)	0
Carl	26 (74.3%)	4 (11.4%)	5 (14.3%)
Dawn	23 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Before I began interviewing the novice teachers, I was aware they might have many different perspectives as they characterized how teachers could be culturally responsive to the needs of their students. Those beliefs would be directly related to their knowledge of multicultural education, to their own past experiences, and to how they perceived the rich experiences they were having with their students (Olsen, 2008). Additionally, I remained mindful that not all African American students are homogenous in their characteristics or needs. Understanding there are vast differences in the academic and non-academic needs of African American students must be an important aspect of any generalizations that can be taken from this study. The teachers' perceptions of the students and the manner in which they characterized them were directly related to their own life experiences.

I interviewed the teachers and observed them, gaining insight into the cultural responsiveness they seemed to portray, both through their answers to interview questions and through the activities they provided their students. Thus, their reality was manifested in the meaning they attached to their social interactions. The richness of their experiences was primarily related to the pedagogical approaches in which they engaged within those early teaching experiences and those they experienced during their preservice training. Thus, through my phenomenological investigation, I sought to find meaning in their words, and through their memories. In fact, as I analyzed their interview transcripts, I found meaning through their choice of words and "in spite of the words" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 13). For example, when a novice teacher stated that she did not see color, then I knew she was, in fact, conveying to me a form of dysconscious racism. Finding the

essence, or the very nature of something, is what makes phenomenology unlike other forms of research (Van Manen, 1990).

Methods for Collecting Data and Quality

I contacted the superintendent's office in this rural county, and the associate superintendent set up a meeting for me with the elementary school principal. The principal forwarded a letter I wrote to the faculty advising them of my desire to have some participants for my research study. Those who expressed an interest in participating met with me after school one afternoon in order to learn more about the overall plans for the study. I advised them that they were under no obligation to continue and that they could choose to leave the study at any time. I explained my plan to use qualitative interviews and classroom observations to generate information from my participants. I indicated that I would be gleaning information from them about their initial experiences in their early years of teaching.

Each teacher was interviewed three times for approximately an hour each time. This research constituted an effort to learn what was essential in experiencing the world of a novice White teacher (Van Manen, 1990). The interviews took place in their classrooms during their planning time, during the time their students were out of the room for physical education, or after the school day concluded. During the initial interview, I questioned the teachers about their personal histories, their desire to become educators, and their personal teaching philosophies. This was important, because as stated by Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189), "the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people

involved." Gathering information on their personal histories helped me contextualize their interview responses.

After the first interviews were concluded, I visited in the classrooms of the novice teachers for thirty minutes each, to observe how the teachers were relating to their students and the manner in which they were demonstrating responsiveness to the students' academic needs, through the activities they provided. This provided me an opportunity for detached observation in the culture of the elementary school (Dealt & Dealt, 2002). In addition, the visits to the classrooms allowed me to compare my field notes to the teachers' interview responses in order to determine if they yielded similar findings (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bloor, 1997; Holloway, 1997). The second round of interviews centered on the novices' awareness of the academic and non-academic needs of their students. The second round of classroom observations took place after the second round of interviews with the novices. During each classroom observation, I was an uninvolved observer of the classroom activities, focusing particularly on the practice of the novice teachers, their degree of awareness of multicultural needs, and the types of activities in which the students were engaged. The third round of interviews inquired about how the teachers felt the students benefitted from having them as an instructor and how they felt their preservice training could have better prepared them for the cross-cultural instruction.

After the initial interview with each of the novice teachers, I observed them in their classrooms, in hopes of seeing evidence of how they related to their students and whether student beliefs were valued (Ladson-Billings, 2006). From my field notes, I was able to determine some important aspects of the classroom climate, in which the novice teachers

interacted with their students. I was anxious to determine if any reciprocal teaching was occurring, where the teacher was not only instructing children, but was also engaged in learning from her students about their needs (Ladson-Billings, 2006). My field notes served as an analytic tool, which provided a basis for further inquiry (DeWalt &DeWalt, 2002). DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) suggested the experience of participant observation often leads to greater and richer avenues of exploration.

Ethical Considerations

When I began this research, I was mindful of my own conceptions of whiteness and my own lived experiences in teaching diverse populations. Since my study involved trying to understand several novice White teachers shared experiences in teaching in a school where they were teaching cross-culturally, I tried to "bracket" any preconceived notions I had regarding cultural responsiveness (Van Manen, 1990). Thus, I tried to set aside any notions or formerly held ideas I held about teaching cross-culturally. I listened to the teachers' responses to my questions, while observing their body language and gesturing. In asking questions and probing them for deeper understanding of their responses, I was trying to reach the essence of the meaning attached to their experiences.

I was also aware that my own subjectivities as a White teacher might limit my questioning of the White teachers about their ability to interact with diverse populations. I was aware that the manner in which we had interrogated our whiteness impacted our collective understanding of multicultural teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, and other aspects inherent in teaching cross-culturally. I sought to determine how the teachers "did" cross-cultural instruction, with those whose life experiences might be very different from their own. I was limited by what the teachers conveyed to me through self-reporting

and by what I was able to observe during my observations in their classrooms. I admit my own limitations in discerning how the teachers' practices were perceived by me. In addition, the attempt to analyze the data with a phenomenological approach was transformative for me as the researcher (Bentz & Rhehorick, 2008). As Bentz and Rhehorick (2008) indicated, "phenomenology clears the focus, reflecting a deeper and truer image of who we are" (p. 4). As I grew both as a scholar and researcher of the phenomenon of culturally responsive teaching, I was striving to uncover emergent ideas not formerly seen and perhaps new paths for further investigation (Bentz and Rehorick).

The Investigation

My study involved gaining insight into the novice White teachers' changing beliefs and perceptions. My research investigation employed a deconstructing of their beliefs and perceptions regarding their awareness of the demands of teaching cross-culturally with African American students. It was intriguing to see what challenged the teachers in developing their own culturally relevant pedagogy or the shortcomings apparent in their failure to successfully execute cross-cultural instruction. In addition, I was able to deconstruct how the novice teachers' awareness of their own identity was intricately tied to their responsiveness to their students. The distinction between what might appear to be cultural responsiveness and the genuine meaning the teachers attached to their classroom student interactions produced the essence of my findings (Van Manen, 1990).

Examining Phenomenological Analysis

Through researching the lived experiences of novice White teachers who were working within a multicultural environment teaching predominantly African American

students, I wanted to better understand how they related to their students. I employed qualitative interviews, with the use of the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) of qualitative analysis and the interpretivism of phenomenological analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). “Intentional experience incorporates a real content and an ideal content, in and through which we dwell in thought, perception, memory, judgment, and feeling, in order to comprehend its essences” (Moustakas, 1994). I desired to examine the meaning that a concept has from the lived experiences of a number of individuals (Creswell, 2007). The “phenomenology is rooted in questions that give a direction and focus to meaning, and in themes that sustain an inquiry” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59).

Van Manen (1990) stipulated that “phenomenology must describe what is given to us in immediate experience without being obstructed by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions” (p.184). Thus, I was interested in perceiving what the teachers had experienced in teaching students whose backgrounds were very different from their own and how they had experienced it. Through interviews, participants were asked to describe an experience from the perceived meaning that they attribute to the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). In my study, the “evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first person reports of life experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 84).

In analyzing the data using a phenomenological approach, I read and re-read the transcripts of the interviews, looking for statements, which Creswell (2007) identified as being significant, in that they embodied the essence of how the participants experienced the phenomenon of being a novice White teacher in a cross-cultural teaching environment. Creswell (2007) identified this essence, as “the essential, invariant structure” (p. 62) of the phenomenon. Since the experiences were multi-dimensional, I as

the researcher attempted to expose the layers of meaning. Originally, every statement was treated as having equal value or meaning, which Moustakas (1994) called "horizonalizing" (p. 97). Afterwards, I engaged in reflection about the emerging meanings derived from the interview questions. Once the interviews were transcribed, my role as researcher was to try to achieve a deep, rich description of the lived experiences of the novice teachers, which is the phenomenon under investigation. Miles and Haberman (1994) noted that the essence of meaning derived from " 'uncovering' and 'explicating' is typically based on successive observations and interviews, which are reviewed analytically" (p.8). Thus, the task for me was to determine how the novice teachers "come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day to day situation (Miles & Haberman, 1994, p. 8).

Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative method is concerned with developing plausible theoretical ideas by comparing events, some from memory, that were subsequently used to integrate and recreate categories of the participants' responses. After reading and rereading the transcripts, theories began to take shape which I delimited (Glaser, 1965), resulting in fewer and fewer plausible categories and the development of my concluding themes. Glaser (1965) noted that the constant comparative method of research data analysis is an inductive method that results in the researcher creating developmental theories which have not yet been tested. The comparison can be done within an interview or between interviews. Boeije (2002) espoused that the constant comparative method seeks to answer the question "Is A talking about the same thing as B?" (p. 396).

In order to develop themes, I used a number of sequential steps. The reading and rereading of the transcripts lead to a familiarization with the teacher responses to the interview questions. I used color-coding of the transcribed interviews to help me see how many times a participant mentioned a category or unit. I kept looking at what seemed possible hypothetical themes, and organizing a category of responses into units. As these categories emerged, I was constantly redesigning my themes. It should be noted that Glaser (1965) noted that two researchers who had the same sets of data would not necessarily achieve the same results. My experiences as a high school mathematics teacher allowed me to take advantage of "the vagueness and flexibility" of this method (Glaser, 1965, p.438), because I am accustomed to formulating hypotheses and using inductive approaches. As a result, I was able to remove nonessential elements in the transcripts and leave the essence of the meaning the teachers attributed to the experiences they had encountered. In addition, I used my familiarity with the responses to questions to determine if the interviewed teachers, Alex, Beth, Carl, and Dawn were describing similar experiences.

I coded their responses in different colors, and by doing so, I deconstructed and derived meaning from the words of the novice teachers. As Kvale (1996) stated, I attempted to make sense of the world of the research subjects from their view and opinion expressed in their own words. Indeed, Kvale (1996) stated that the interview is an "inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 2). In addition, Kvale (1996) explained that the researcher is a traveler on a journey that leads him to wander in a landscape unfamiliar and into territory unknown. Kvale (1996) also asserted "the journey may not lead to new knowledge; the

traveler might change as well" (p. 4). Since I have supervised student teachers who were novices in the classroom, I had some ideas about the challenges the first year teachers would have faced. However, I was also learning vicariously with them as I journeyed in what was for me, my initial opportunity to see culturally responsive teaching through the eyes of novice White teachers. I was learning about culturally responsive teaching through the dialogue they had with me. Interestingly, conversations can be a basic form of interaction between researcher and research participant (Kvale, 1996). I kept in mind that the purpose of these interviews was to unearth "descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, pp. 5-6). It was important for my interviews to have specific purposes, in order to lead to greater layers of meaning.

While the interviews seemed reasonably easy to conduct, it was important to remember that I had to be knowledgeable of the topic and prepared to understand something about how knowledge may be produced through dialogue (Kvale, 1996). I made an effort to create an atmosphere that was comfortable to the novice interviewees and conducive to a trusting relationship. Generally, I employed an interview protocol, which asked the research participants to explain which dimensions of their earliest classroom experiences held the deepest meaning for them. Afterwards, using phenomenological analysis, the statements were examined in order to reveal the meaning attached to the novices' choice of words in their responses.

One major consideration in phenomenological analysis was that I was to be able to set aside any pre-judgments of the phenomena under investigation (the Epoche), in order

to be as receptive as possible to the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). In order to “bracket” my own feelings regarding cross-cultural instruction, as the researcher, I had to try to examine the novice teachers’ body language. In addition, I listened to their choice of words as they responded to my interview questions retrospectively, removing as many of my own thoughts and feelings as possible. It was in the process of bracketing my own preconceived notions of being a novice White teacher that I sought to find the essence of what they had experienced (Van Manen, 1990). While I tried to remain as objective as possible as I listened to their reflections, I was interested in seeing how what they described in their experiences “fit” with the body of knowledge regarding culturally responsive teaching. The research has held both personal meaning to me, as a White teacher of African American students, as well as social significance, as the diversity in our nation’s schools continues to increase (Howard, 2003).

Van Manen (1990) believed the lifeworld of the participant in a phenomenological study provided the data to the researcher through rich conversation and careful observation. During each round of interviews, the novice teachers were asked to explain details about their experiences (Seidman, 1998). In addition, as the researcher, I was constantly aware that as the participants in the phenomenological interviews were describing their experiences, the data being collected were recollections of former experiences, which had been processed. In conducting the phenomenological interviews, I utilized open-ended questions, in which the participants could freely respond (Moustakas, 1994).

Further, Van Manen (1990) pointed out that the researcher sees any phenomenon as one which could have been experienced by someone else in another context. Knowing there is a chance that the phenomenon being researched possibly existed in the human experience is what gave it a universal appeal (Van Manen, 1990). Indeed, my role was not merely to gather experiences in order to report on them, rather, I sought to determine the level of awareness the novice White teachers had of the needs of their African American students. In analyzing the data, I synthesized the meaning the participants described in their responses to interview questions and integrated all of their experiences into a unified whole.

Finding Meaning Through Reflection

Van Manen (1990) asserted that the researcher must write about the experiences from the inside in order to uncover the deeper meaning. In so doing, I made an effort to ensure the interviews provided a vehicle for making connections to the research participants, in order that a deeper understanding of their experiences could be obtained. One way for me to get to the deeper meaning of an experience was to gather anecdotes, since these might serve to reveal themes evident in the participant accounts (Van Manen, 1990). In addition, the participants had to be able to act in the role of informants, providing information about the nature of the experience itself, through a variety of specific descriptions of the topic (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Van Manen (1990) asserted that themes became the focus points around which phenomenological descriptions were tethered. The process of gathering these themes required me to examine transcribed text as a whole, selectively, and line-by-line. Once I began the process of transcribing taped interviews, I also needed to engage in reflections

about my interviews. These reflections required me to re-visit certain descriptions or themes with the research participants. As Polkinghorne (1989) noted, the researcher must keep the participants focused on descriptions of specific instances of the theme, allowing the theme itself to emerge. In addition, Van Manen (2002) stated that the tone of the phenomenological writing is critical to bringing to the forefront the deeper meaning which is often attached to the participants' words.

Giorgi (1985) explained that the researcher must be able to make sense of the data, systematically synthesizing and determining the essence of the meaning it holds. In addition, the teachers had to interrogate their own understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive. However, the interviews enabled me to have an opportunity to better understand the intricacies of their teaching context through their own words. Triangulation was used to compare the self-reporting of the novice teachers, with the scripted notes from my classroom observations, along with the notations I made of their lesson artifacts in their classrooms. I relished the opportunity to investigate the participants' stories and their ability to act in culturally responsive ways. Using phenomenological analysis, my role as researcher was to attempt to see the world anew through the eyes of my participants (Crotty, 1998).

Middleton (2002) conducted research on how preservice teachers' beliefs and commitment are shaped. Milner (2007) found that teachers who are unsuccessful with diverse students often behave in ways that imply that they are culture-blind or color-blind. How White teachers are able to negotiate this new environment in relation to their lived experiences would be critical to their ability to interact with their diverse students.

Milner (2006) noted that many educators are "falling behind in their thinking, pedagogy, and curriculum decision–making, particularly where students of color are concerned" (p. 79). One of my challenges as a researcher was to ask questions that pushed the thinking of the novice teachers in such a way so as to have them critically examine the student-teacher interactions.

In the process, I was relying on some of my own experiences in teaching African-American students. However, I had to temporarily suspend any preconceived ideas I had about the novice teachers or their ability to act in culturally responsive ways. In addition, part of my background that I needed to bracket as I approached my work with the novice teachers involved the years I supervised student teachers earlier in my career. The knowledge I obtained from the novice teachers and the kinds of experiences they provided their students gave me some insight into the manner with which they approached teaching cross-culturally. Looking beyond their mere words and verbal descriptions revealed a great deal about the mindset with which they approached their cross-cultural instruction.

Limitations and Strengths

As a new social science researcher, I was a novice in analyzing the data. Therefore, one of the limitations of my phenomenological analysis has continued to be my ability to bracket my own preconceived notions of culturally responsive teaching within a multicultural environment. As I searched for the layers of meaning in their choice of words to answer my interview questions, I was also aware of the fact that any conclusions I could draw from my study were limited to the small "snapshots" I had of the novices' classrooms, recognizing that the answers they gave to my interview questions might have

been different if they had been asked at another time. I was constantly aware of my own personal limitations and how my lack of experience in the realm of social science researcher and phenomenologist was affecting my questioning techniques and subsequent analysis of their responses. I was also constrained in some ways by my own whiteness. I have continued to grow throughout the process of this research, both in terms of my ability to conduct a phenomenological analysis, but also in my ability to question teachers of my own race about sensitive topics.

An additional limitation, and one of great importance to note, was that I recognized at the outset of the research that generalizations regarding the challenges involved in teaching cross-culturally cannot necessarily be made from this rural environment to all other predominantly African American environments or from the socio-economic status of this community to other communities with differing socio-economics. Thus, any meaning I made from my interviews with the novice teachers must remain situated in the socio-economic context of the rural environment in which my interviews were conducted.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The principal of the elementary school suggested a specific group of the teachers who could be potential participants in the research project because they were all novice White teachers in this predominantly African American school. Once the approval for the research was obtained, I met with the teachers, explained consent procedures and assured confidentiality per Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies. Each of them was employed as a full time teacher and had been certified to teach his/her respective grade level. In addition, all of them held dual certification in elementary education and special education in the state of Georgia.

Upon obtaining the teachers' consent to become part of the research, I conducted a preliminary one hour interview with each of the four teachers, followed by classroom observations of approximately an hour. These observations allowed me to get a snapshot of their respective teaching environments. Two additional rounds of one hour interviews and one additional round of classroom observations followed. During the interviews the teachers were allowed to speak and think freely; if a response to one question fit better with a subsequent question, I made the substitution, when I analyzed the transcripts. All of the interviews were digitally recorded and all the observations gave me an opportunity to note how well their espoused teaching philosophies and cultural responsiveness matched what was demonstrated in their practice in their classrooms. As I observed, I noted the manner in which the academic and non-academic needs of the students were reflected in the activities the teachers chose for the students in the cross-cultural environment.

Interview Results

The four participants in my research were elementary teachers in a Middle Georgia school district. The four teachers, two of whom were male and two female, will be referred to as Alex, Beth, Carl, and Dawn. One male and one female teacher, Beth and Carl, were traditional college students who enrolled in teacher education programs immediately after graduation from high school. The others, Alex and Dawn, were non – traditional students, who entered the teaching profession as a second career. The two non-traditional teachers decided in early middle age to pursue a degree that would lead to becoming elementary school classroom instructors.

The school system and the elementary school were selected using purposive sampling because my research study involved novice White teachers in a rural, cross cultural environment. The district was especially suitable for research purposes because it is located in a rural, predominantly agricultural community. It is important to note that while much current research has been conducted regarding the cultural responsiveness of teachers in urban settings, little research has been reported with teachers in rural schools (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Hands & Hubbard, 2011). The interviews and observations were conducted with the objective of answering the two primary research questions:

1. What factors affected the novice, White teacher's ability to understand the academic and non-academic needs of their students?

2. In what ways do the novice, White teachers believe their awareness of their students' multicultural needs influence classroom practices and ultimately the experiences they provide for their students?

Participant Alex.

Alex was in a fourth grade classroom with 26 African American students and two Hispanic students. Alex grew up in a racially divided rural Southwest Georgia county, where his best friend was an African American classmate. In developing friendships, Alex remarked “I don’t see color, I see behavior.” Teaching was a second career for him, as he decided to return to college to pursue a degree in education when he was approximately age forty. Alex stated that he loved the administrative personnel of the school and was unequivocally delighted to have made this career change. He admitted openly that he wished he had done it sooner. His passion for teaching seemed evident in his classroom by the manner in which he responded to his students and the fact that he was chosen by his peers as a candidate for teacher of the year during his first year of teaching. Alex appeared to do an effective job of using positive reinforcement. He also created a strict, but caring environment that sought to understand the children as much as he could “from the perspective of their own turf.”

One memory Alex cited from his early life was that most White residents of his county believed that predominantly African American schools were something to remain apart from, and that White teachers needed to work in schools in the predominantly White part of the county. However, Alex pointed to his age, and life experiences as positives that provided him with advantages and tools to overcome situations which younger teachers might find more difficult to manage.

Participant Beth.

Beth was a novice first year teacher, in a classroom with two White and six African American students. Her classroom was a self-contained kindergarten class of

mildly to moderately intellectually (MI/MO) impaired students. According to Beth, she had always been attracted to working with children with special needs. Beth attended college immediately after completing high school and began teaching upon graduation from a traditional teacher education program. Beth's stated desire to serve and advocate for others, made her appear ideally suited to work with students, who may have mild autism or demonstrate moderate characteristics of Down's syndrome. She cited her parents being non-judgmental as playing a role in her choosing this career. Her parents encouraged her to give back to the community and to ask the question, "What can I give to those less privileged?"

Participant Carl.

Carl, like Beth, enrolled in a traditional teacher preparation program in a local college, soon after completing high school. He stated that he was an only child and was seen as a leader in his neighborhood. Carl, a young, novice male teacher, accepted many challenges in his first year in the classroom. Besides his responsibility to the seventy-two fifth grade students he had been entrusted to teach mathematics and prepare for the fifth grade CRCT, Carl consented to being the assistant coach of the girls' high school softball team.

Participant Dawn.

Dawn's first career was working as the supervisor of a camp that served mentally challenged adults. Her job involved training staff; she indicated that her background in this arena led her to return to school as a non-traditional college student. Dawn began teaching a fourth grade class for the first nine weeks of the school year and was then moved to a fifth grade classroom that was created from two overcrowded fifth grade

classes. She is in her early forties and in her second year of teaching, having taught third grade last year. She taught social studies and science to a group of about seventy-two fifth grade students, who changed classes throughout the day.

Participants' Responses to Interview Questions

What is your background and how did you come to be a teacher?

During the first round of interviews, I asked the teachers something about their backgrounds and how they had come to be teachers; gathering information help me to conceptualize their interview responses. The two male teachers shared how the spark for teaching had been kindled in their lives. Alex related how in his earlier life he had worked in wrestling management and interacted with people from all walks of life. He stated that being involved in raising his own children kindled in him a desire to work with students in the schools. Carl stated that being the only child at home during his youth put him in a leadership role early in life. As one of the oldest children in the neighborhood, Carl taught other children how to play games or do things, which was a role he enjoyed. Carl credits these early experiences with instilling in him a love of teaching.

The two female teachers shared how their upbringing had influenced their decision to teach. Beth explained how her parents encouraged their children to give back to the community, through all sorts of volunteerism. This resulted in what Beth termed her desire to work with special needs children. This background also resulted in Beth having a very "empathetic view" of teaching.

Dawn grew up in a very large family. As a result of her mother suffering some mental health issues, her father worked to try to keep everything going. Since Dawn's mother's mental health issues left her unable to give her children all of the emotional

support they needed, Dawn realized the value of children having the encouragement and support of adults in their lives. She also explained that her parents moved a lot from one rental property to another, and never setting high expectations for her success. Her first career involved work at a camp where she trained staff to work with incapacitated adults. The training of those with incapacitations led her to pursue a teaching degree.

All of the teachers pointed to some type of experience that, for them, explained how they arrived in their current circumstance. As Olsen (2008) espoused, each teacher possesses beliefs and dispositions about teaching and learning that inform the experiences they construct once in the classroom. One common thread was that the teachers had felt some sort of calling to teach children, or to give back to the community, or to advocate for those who could not advocate for themselves. A factor that influenced their decision to accept teaching positions in their current cross-cultural setting was the fact that Beth, Carl and Dawn had engaged in short-term practicum assignments in their current school while in college. Alex completed his student teaching assignment in the school. The tightening of the job market was also a factor in their decision to work in this community, in that they took jobs which were readily available.

What are some of the demands and challenges of teaching cross-culturally as a novice teacher?

Alex indicated that one of the difficulties in being a novice teacher teaching cross-culturally was that veteran teachers in the school were often bothered by his positivity. He seemed unyielding in his faith to “win the battle” with the veterans who saw him as too idealistic, due to his use of different approaches with his students. He cited the support of both administrators as integral to his positivity, noting that they reminded the

teachers at the beginning of the school year that they expected the teachers to do whatever is necessary in order for the students to achieve success. Alex said he interpreted this to mean that he must always go the extra mile to ensure his students understood the material.

Beth explained that a challenge for her in being a novice teaching cross-culturally with special needs students was that they required frequent redirection and an acceptance that they learn at a lower rate. Since the students have moderate intellectual disabilities, just developing their basic social skills is important. Beth indicated that she occasionally found that her kindergarteners would stubbornly refuse to stop playing with particular toys, when she was anxious for them to experience other educational games. Some of the additional challenges involved organization, for example knowing how to respond when students are acting out, while at the same time keeping the rest of the class going.

Carl failed to express any challenges of cross-cultural teaching as a novice. Instead, Carl's stresses during his first year of teaching seem to stem from non-teaching responsibilities he accepted. Carl's responsibilities during his first year of teaching required him to put in long days that began early and finished late. Carl's days went as late as ten o'clock on the nights his girls' softball team had away ballgames. He also accepted the head coaching position of the middle school boys' baseball team. Carl explained that he was newly-wed and that his wife was feeling somewhat neglected, as he settled into his early weeks of teaching. He stated the word that came most rapidly to his mind in considering the first few weeks of school was "overwhelmed." In addition, Carl's classroom had a grant that involved the addition of a Promethean whiteboard to his classroom. The whiteboard and learning to utilize it, he noted, provided another source of

stress. Carl specifically pointed to how hard the teachers at this school work. Carl indicated this was true in part because of their four day school week, and in general because they jobs demanded it. The fear of having a poor evaluation as a first year teacher was also a source of stress to the novices.

In describing what it is like being a novice White teacher in a cross-cultural environment, Dawn pointed to the challenge of establishing good classroom management. Her classroom was fairly traditionally arranged with desks in rows and the usual classroom rules being adhered to in her room. Dawn's explanation of what she expected from her students painted a picture of Dawn as a strong disciplinarian. Dawn reported that "children are children." She stated in a matter-of -fact manner, "they believe they are grown at fifth grade;" but, she continued "I remind them that I am in charge."

When asked what was most valuable to her with managing her students, Dawn stated it was what she termed her ability "to determine the child's currency." She found out who to call that the child would most respond to at home. If she was having difficulty getting the child to be successful in her class, she spoke to the other two fifth grade teachers to see if they are having success with the student. If all three were having difficulty reaching the student, Beth said the teachers would use a Response to Intervention (RTI) and perhaps have the student tested for some type of learning disability. Beth spoke of being firm with the students, while maintaining that "I am careful to be sure the students do not view me as racist." Beth was fearful that the students might equate too many demands and too much firmness on her part, as bordering on uncaring, unfeeling, or even racist, since she was White. In addition, Dawn stated emphatically that the teacher must follow through to do exactly what he/she says will

happen as a consequence in the classroom; if the teacher does not, the teacher will be diminished in the eyes of the students.

When asked about some of the demands and challenges involved in being a novice cross-cultural teacher, Alex talked about the difficulty inherent in responding to the academic needs of students who were performing on a variety of reading levels. In spite of his apparent optimism in terms of making a difference in his current school context, Alex acknowledged he was aware of teachers who found the environment of working with the students from a low socio-economic background, who exhibited behavior problems and lower academic performance, too much of a challenge and left the classroom as a result.

Beth, who teaches special needs students, remarked, “Parents have expectations of the child’s rate of success and often have some level of denial about their child’s developmental ability.” Beth further stated the importance of relating to the parent who may possess unrealistic expectations for his/her child, as well as being willing to listen and reassure the parent who may be fearful of pushing a special needs child to go beyond what the parent sees as the child’s current “comfort zone.” Beth stressed that it can be difficult getting information from families, because sometimes phone numbers have been disconnected or students may not always live with their parents. She indicated the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting may be her only contact with the parents. Beth believed her young age was one of the reasons she often had difficulty relating to her African American paraprofessionals and some of the other teachers of special needs students, rather than the color of her skin. She indicated that her best parental relationships were with two White parents and one African American parent. The lack of

communication with parents, often due to a parent who may have two, or even three jobs, made her job especially challenging this year.

Carl stated that one of the challenges for a novice White teacher, in a cross-cultural setting, is that of understanding the environment. Carl indicated, that in all classroom interactions, “I have learned you must never let the students get the upper hand.” Carl continued by adding the importance of the teacher understanding the role the environment plays in shaping the students’ communications. Carl noted that what he first perceived as a student’s rudeness was merely the child’s attempt at playfulness. He used as an example, a student calling him a “Georgia cracker.” He reported keeping the student behind one afternoon in order to discuss the situation. Afterwards, the student replied he merely was playing. Carl’s initial and subsequent interpretation of the student’s statement shows his confusion regarding how to more accurately assess a student’s statement in a cross-cultural environment.

Dawn reported one of her biggest challenges this year had been in identifying the students’ academic needs and in differentiating instruction to help meet those needs. She reported she had been trying to develop a community of learners by having more capable students help others. Dawn’s classroom was run more strictly than those of the other novices in this study and she demanded that the students behave in a quiet and orderly manner. One of the challenges Dawn was quick to point out was that students in lower performing schools often do not have study skills and often lack the ability to read with comprehension. She pointed out that she works to teach them how to use context clues and even the glossary of the book effectively. In addition, Dawn related to me that she believed there was a segment of the students who felt that it was not necessary for them

to learn certain things that were being taught. As a result, Dawn indicated this same group of students did not necessarily see learning as a priority.

As a novice White teacher in a classroom with predominantly African American students, to what extent do you feel that you are able to relate to your students?

Alex stated that he gained a lot of insight by looking at cumulative folders. He indicated that he made every effort to not send students to the office, but chose instead to work with students himself in responding to discipline problems. Alex felt that he related well to his students because he told them every day that he cares about them. He told them they have the necessary tools to go on to fifth grade and he encouraged them to take pride in their work and care about what they were doing. He reminded them that passing to the fifth grade was their choice and that it was up to them to demonstrate that they were capable of moving to the next grade. Alex tried daily to encourage his students' success by setting high expectations for their performance.

Beth pointed to the substituting work she did while attending college as beneficial in helping her relate to her students. While substituting, Beth was given an opportunity to work with students who were considered economically disadvantaged. In addition, she pointed to her own upbringing where she was taught "there is more to a book than meets the eye." Beth spoke openly that "growing up privileged I have had a heart for those who are not as privileged." According to Beth, her special needs children, who were four and five years old, "seem not to notice gender whatsoever, or in my opinion even color for that matter."

. As for Carl, following the success he enjoyed serving as head girls' softball coach in the early fall of the year, he made the decision to use the same "team" approach in

setting up his classroom. He said he succeeded in establishing camaraderie among the middle school baseball team members, even though it was comprised of students of differing ages, grades, and races. Carl indicated that he thought the same approach should work well in his fifth grade classroom. He said he told the class, "You know we are all different, but we're all the same too. We are going to treat each other equally too." Carl indicated that the "team" approach helped to eliminate inappropriate behavior on the ball field, so he wanted to try that approach in his classroom. Carl explained to me the following about the middle school boys' team:

> I saw the kids get kind of short and rude with each other and then that causes a lot of friction. I saw the same kind of thing out on the ball field. I had 5 sixth graders, 4 seventh graders, and 5 eighth graders that made the team. So that was a good distribution there. Six African Americans and seven Caucasians made the team. Actually I had a very proportionate team as far as demographics goes, even different grade levels.

Carl was able to create camaraderie with his team, using the approach that "we are all in this together."

Carl spoke very matter-of-factly as he explained how it had been for him trying to relate to his young students who came from various backgrounds quite dissimilar from his own. He explained that there can be no homework in a home without (electric) power. Knowledge of the poverty in the area made him capable of understanding that students may sometimes have their power cut off and were therefore unable to complete assignments at home. He noted that it was difficult for him to relate to students who might have experienced the death of a sibling caused by some type of violence. He stated that his knowledge of the area made him aware that many students live in a home with extended family members.

Despite the fact that he is a product of schools in the same county, Carl's experiences were in another segment of the county, one primarily White. Carl, in trying to convey to me the contrast in these two communities, sounded a little reminiscent of Charles Dickens relating the contrast evident in "The Tale of Two Cities." Dickens coined the words "it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. It was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness." Carl analogously expressed the tension which has traditionally been part of the lives of those who grew up in two very different communities, one White, the other African American.

As a result, Carl explained that the majority of students graduating from the same teacher education program as his own, usually took positions in a neighboring county, as a means of side-stepping any decision about which community to teach for in this county. In addition, Carl was quick to point out that the school where he is currently working gets, in his words, "a bad rap." He stated that the schools in this community were often labeled as bad, because of the poverty in the area. However, just a quickly, he countered by stating that being from this area had been an advantage for him. Carl indicated he is convinced that his familiarity with the area made him feel more prepared to teach cross-culturally than other first year teachers. In Carl's words, "You have to stay on top of it." "It (the environment) will weed you out very quickly, but it is more rewarding." So, for Carl, while the location is the challenge, he believes that he is prepared to meet the challenge.

In talking about how she related to her students, Dawn stated that she expected them to be respectful and engaged in learning. She noted that students were beginning to have raging hormones and saw her predominantly African American students as having

management problems typical of all students of this age group. Students could expect a phone call to go home if necessary to bring their behavior in line. One of her patented strategies was to spell out Q-U-I-E-T when students engaged in too much talking. If she got too far in to the spelling, then students could expect to write, “I must be quiet” fifty times. Rather than raising her voice, she directed students to stay in from their recess time to write words. For failure to complete assignments, students may be required to remain in from their recess time in order to listen to social studies lessons on tapes.

Dawn pointed to the fact that her mother’s emotional problems prevented her from having a permanent career and that her father had difficulty providing the resources needed by their large family as being similar to the financial struggles of some of her students. She reported that she could also relate to the students’ perception that they were not certain how all of the things they were doing in the classroom were really going to benefit them in the future, since many may have felt they would never leave this small community. Dawn explained that she felt well- qualified to relate to her students and their upbringing because her own parents expected her to be married and have a baby by age eighteen. Dawn acknowledged that when she was in elementary school she never thought she would have a college education.

How do you feel about teaching students whose life experiences are very different from your own?

Alex indicated that many of the students lacked social skills and did not know how to effectively work with others in the social setting of his classroom. In addition, Alex reported that some students were perfectionistic and found working with others unacceptable, while others resorted to hitting as a means of communication. Alex stated

that friendships he had forged during his school days in a community which was two-thirds African American, coupled with relationships he had developed with African Americans during his career in wrestling management had given him insight into establishing relationships with his African American students. He stated that he can be persistent with his students because of his belief "that you can be whatever you want to be."

Alex reiterated that he wanted to be here and that while it was not "Disney World," he was certain that "God did not make bad children; children make bad choices." Alex cited a male African American teacher as having certain liberties that he does not possess, such as using the fear factor in a one on one confrontation with students. As Alex related to me how his African American co-worker effectively used a "fear factor," I could not help but note that one thing Alex seemed unfamiliar with is that in African American communities teachers are often successful when they demonstrate control of the teaching environment (Delpit, 1995). In fact, according to Delpit (1995), "teachers who do not exhibit these behaviors may be viewed by community members as ineffective, boring, or uncaring" (p. 142).

Beth noted that many of the parents of her students had been born in the county, graduated from high school in the county, and probably would never leave this area. As a result, Beth described the community as close–knit. Beth stated that it is likely many of these students would be destined to remain in this community, due to family ties and the limitations imposed by their socio-economic circumstances. As I observed her working with her special needs students, Beth seemed to be comfortable with her current teaching environment. Beth noted that she graduated from a high school in an adjacent county and

was somewhat familiar with the school community before accepting her teaching position. Beth noted that the students have grown up in a poorer environment than the one in which she was raised.

Carl's explanation regarding the historical contrast between the two small towns in this county generally embodied the differences in experiences between the novice teachers and the students they had been entrusted to teach. Alex also pointed out the differences between the predominantly White community and the predominantly African American one. It is important to point out that all four of the teachers had been given brief, pre-service experiences in this community as part of their teacher education requirements. In addition, all of the teachers completed their student teaching within this county. As the youngest of eight children, Dawn was the only one of the four teachers who seemed able to relate to the socio-economic issues of many of the students, as she reiterated in the interviews that her father had a difficult time providing all the resources a large family required.

What makes you an effective educator of African American students? From you experiences thus far, what do you consider to be key components of effective teaching with your African American students?

Alex explained one of the things he viewed as effective that had been tried by the team of teachers was the selection of up to fifteen students the last Thursday of the month for recognition as students of the month. He sent letters to parents, explaining how their children behaved on that particular day and why they had been selected for recognition. As I observed his class, I observed that students often heard Alex say, "I want you to be a

success in school and in life." He stated that he has to earn their respect through letting them know that he likes them, but that whether they like him or not is not why he was there teaching. In an effort to reinforce positive social skills and reward good behavior, Alex instituted a system of rewards with candy as prizes.

For Alex, there were certain tenets of teaching African American students:

> Dedication is the first one. Dedication to the profession and to the students…and patience is another one, because a lot of teachers teach to the smart kids. I notice that. And obviously we would all like to have that but it doesn't each the others. They just teach the easy part. And, I mean, we could all do that, you know. But you have some others in there that just aren't going to get it unless you do something else. And if you don't, then they just aren't going to get it. That's why some of them are sitting here now in third grade because they didn't get it last year. I mean they have to get it somewhere. You have to have thoughtful collaboration with coworkers because we all have the same product. Differentiation is key.

In an effort to be successful with his students, Alex created a rap song to assist the class in learning the 13 colonies. In one of my observations, the students seemed to enjoy participating in the reciting of the words of the rap. A number of reading materials relating to Rosa Parks and other famous African Americans, and which corresponded to their social studies lessons, were prominently displayed in the classroom for student enjoyment. In addition to Alex's statements related to cultural responsiveness, I observed him providing activities designed to meet the needs of those who were academically challenged and had poor reading skills. For example, Alex provided play dough to allow the students opportunities to create and learn land forms in social studies. He pursued positive reinforcement with what he called "catching students being good."

Banks (2010) asserted "equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse

racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups" (p. 23). The modifications could take the form of various approaches to teaching (Banks, 2010). I saw student names written on mobiles hanging from the ceiling during my observations. Celebrating all students as individuals, it appeared that Alex worked hard at building a community of learners. Students were encouraged to write creatively, observing the bulletin board identifying key academic vocabulary. There were books on NBA Hoops Heroes and NFL Superbowl standouts. There was also a book from Time for Kids entitled "Obama: A Day in the Life of America's Leader." The classroom seemed to offer an opportunity for the students "to make connections between their community, national, and global identities" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 49). In this way, Alex used his classroom materials as a way for the students to see themselves as part of a larger community that moved well beyond the walls of the classroom.

There were many evidences of "equity pedagogy" (Banks, 1997, p. 22) throughout my opportunities to take a snapshot of Alex's classroom. This was one of the reasons I was not at all surprised when I learned that a young fourth grade girl in his class had written a letter to a local television station requesting that he be recognized as "My Teacher Is Tops" for a segment on the evening news. The student's letter was selected and the local station came to his classroom, where Alex and the class were taped while he was receiving his recognition plaque.

Beth specifically cited being prepared to interact with her students' parents as imperative for effective teaching of African American students. Since her students had special needs, Beth stated she must walk a fine line between pushing students too hard or

being too lax in pushing them towards greater gains. As Beth responded to questions about her first year as an instructor, building strong communication bridges to the parents

came across as key to her success with the students. Beth responded in this manner, when asked what she considered to be keys to successful teaching of African American students:

> It is difficult for me to answer I guess because this is all I know as far as an educator's concerned is this elementary school. I haven't taught in a school that has been made up of different populations of students. I'm used to going into a classroom where there might be one Hispanic, one White, and the rest African American. This is all I know.

So I pressed her to give me something that is needed for her to be effective. Then, Beth added, "Acceptance. Willing to accept the children."

When, I asked her what made her an effective educator of African American students, she responded:

> Patience. That sums it up right there. Some days you have good days, some days you have not good days. And I am looking at that question thinking about my special education students. Patience and realizing that some days you have really great days; and, some days you have absolutely horrible days. Not giving up on them.

Beth summed up her remarks by adding, "I love it here. This is where I always wanted to teach. I always wanted to teach special education in a low income school, you know with predominantly minority students…I guess they're not minority anymore…it's majority."

I saw evidences of firm expectations about performance during my observation of Beth's class. Beth reminded the students, "Let's make a plan right now. Listen first, and then do." She seemed to reinforce positive behavior by reminding them "I liked the way

you asked: (another student to use a toy or the teacher a question to leave the group, permission to do a task, etc.)."

Carl pointed out that one of the most effective motivators was using parents to provide rewards at home following the teachers communicating the student's successful performance at school. Carl's response was somewhat different from the others when conveying the tenets of effective teaching of African American students. He answered in this way.

> Because I care personally about the future of each one of my students both academically and non-academically, I am effective because I want my students not only to learn what they need to pass the fourth grade but to leave my class with the desire to make something special of their lives. I want them to be encouraged to continue in school and become whatever it is they want to be and I will do whatever it takes to deliver the information necessary for them to be successful.

Carl seemed aware that he needed to demonstrate more encouragement of his students' academic performance.

In observing Dawn conduct a review prior to a social studies test, she walked around the room and helped students with written review questions before they actually worked on their test paper. In a science lesson, Dawn used a variety of visuals to help her students understand their content and stated her commitment to ensure the students' success. One of the challenges she was quick to point out was that students in lower performing schools often do not have study skills and often lack the ability to read with comprehension. She pointed out to me that she worked to teach them how to use context clues and even the glossary of the book effectively.

Dawn considered her classroom management to be the key to her effectiveness with her African American students. She stated, "the effective tools for classroom

management I use are: speaking with the students, parent contacts, having students reflect on their behavior, and if necessary, writing students an office referral."

What do you consider the academic and non-academic needs of your students?

Alex responded to the question of student needs by focusing on non-academic needs. It is obvious that Alex is concerned with the emotional well-being of his students and thus he responded in the following way:

> I try to talk to the students on a personal level and get to know what is going on with them. Because sometimes you'll see grades and that's all you'll see and you'll wonder why and you may get some information. So, one of my girls told me the other day…. She said, 'My mama said we won't have Christmas.' I asked 'Why?' And she said, 'Well my daddy's in prison because he robbed a bank.' And I said 'Oh, okay'. And then I said, 'Who all lives with you?' And she said, 'Well, they got a divorce, and then she married my step-daddy and he just died of cancer.' And then she said, 'My mama don't; have anybody.' And I said, 'Well, she's got you.' 'And I tried to encourage her and I ended up calling the student-counselor because I never know how severe that stuff is and anytime I get somebody talking about death I try to get them someone they can talk to because I can only talk for so long. It's just stuff like that you really don't think about and how many of these kids are like that…how many of these kids don't have the "Beaver Cleaver" kind of family at home. They don't' have that. They don't' have that support system.
> And you know teachers get frustrated because we see this end of it….You're not performing, you're not doing this, you're not doing that, you're getting into trouble, you're misbehaving, and you're driving me insane. But what is on their side of it? We don't think about that all of the time. So, I try to think about that more than I used to. And I try to talk privately about things like that to them. I don't want to talk about something like that out loud. But yeah, it is interesting because we had been studying about if something's going on with a child, what to look for…like little things. This is so we can let the other teachers know something is going on so that they (the teachers) are not going to be hard on them (the students) when they have really got something really serious that's going on. It's not maybe just the behavior issue that's going on; it's something else covering up something.

Beth believed her students suffered from a lack of positive adult role models, along with lack of academic support of school work from home. Beth's responded in the following way:

> I think it's maybe with this town or community with it being such a small town that I mean the cycle repeats itself you know because nobody ever really leaves here. You have teachers who teach here who went to elementary school here, went to middle school, high school, went to the local community college, and now they work here. Which if that's the case then great, you went to college. But, you have people who drop out of high school, maybe have children young, don't' really get a successful job and then that cycle keeps repeating itself. But then you have some children when if you can break them down, then they have the sweetest insides, and then you can see the ten year old child again. But I think a lot of it is what they've been around, what they have been exposed to they feel like ….okay when I get angry I handle things this way- because that's what they have been taught or what they have witnessed and seen. You have a lot of parents who work two or three jobs also.

Dawn believed the lack of parental support at home was reflected in student reading scores and the resulting lack of success in their on-grade level reading performance. She observed:

> I think it has to do with their mama didn't read to them. They came in here not having the proper knowledge and I don't think they will ever catch up to grade level. I mean I've seen some growth in the scores, but it's not enough to catch them up.

When asked about the academic and non-academic needs of his students, Carl seemed reflective in responding:

> Academically, I could have been more encouraging for *all* passing grades. Some of the students that I have worked with have experienced very little success in their academic life and would benefit greatly from a simple word of encouragement. For some students a 70 is equivalent to a 100. Non-academically, I could have been more understanding of the fact that it is very difficult for 25 students to adhere to the same set of standards on a regular basis when they all have come from such different sets of experiences.

Carl's response seemed indicative of a teacher who recognized after the fact that

he might have done more to focus on the need for more encouragement and understanding.

Dawn explained to me that her students have parents or grandparents who did not read, so they do not have the academic support at home that could help them get caught up. I observed Dawn convey to students that she was there to help and support them, especially in developing an academic vocabulary. Dawn indicated that developing academic vocabulary was one of her students' greatest needs. Dawn answered the question of identifying the academic and non-academic needs of students, by stating very succinctly:

> I felt that I was well prepared to meet the academic needs of my African American students as well as the other students in my classroom. The socio-economic needs of all the students at the school have a much greater effect on the students' academic needs than their race. The non-academic needs are also more affected by lack of money than race, in my opinion.

Dawn, when asked about the academic needs of her students, responded:

> A good deal of them I know are reading below grade level. I just got my STAR report the other day, out of 23 children in my homeroom, and its' the same for all classes. I've got 6 children reading in 4th and 5th grade level…the others are reading at 3rd grade and below. So, I know when we are reading these textbooks and trade books, that if they are not on 5th grade level, there's a lot of vocabulary they're not going to be able to know and they're not going to understand what they are reading. So what I'll do is when I look at it I make sure that even if it's obvious to me that I think they should know it, we talk about it. What does that mean? So that the children who do know can tell me. And the other kids can at least hear the meaning of the vocabulary….to get you know, some idea of what we're talking about.

What are the challenges in meeting their students' academic and non-academic needs?

When I inquired about the challenges of meeting students' academic and non-academic needs, Beth indicated one of the challenges inherent in her position as a teacher

of special needs students is in creating an Individual Educational Program (IEP). The IEP must be well-suited to student abilities, by looking at what has been done previously to meet the students' academic and non-academic needs. Beth indicated her desire to advocate for others, made meeting the academic and non-academic needs of her students extremely important to her.

Beth continued her explanation by relating how supportive and effective the principal is in helping to meet the needs of the students to know how to manage conflicts that occur during the school day. Beth added:

> The principal will send them home for a day: three days, depending on what they've done. Once they start inconveniencing their parents more, the parents make it known to the child to act right. The non-academic needs involve social skills and learned behaviors and maybe even anger management. Like one of my children, his mom works at night: not just one job: and it's at night: and he has a sister, and it's just those three and his grandma. So he wants anybody and everybody's attention, but he only wants it one on one. Well, that's really not a Black thing. It could be any child who is just craving attention. None of my children go without, necessarily. Maybe without attention, but not housing, food, or anything like that. I know some students who do, but not the ones I work with. A lot of times, I think, because I do work with special needs children, their parents are already more involved in their education because they're aware that there is something going on with their child that needs that extra step.

When asked to explain further about the students' academic needs, Beth added:

> A lot of it is home support, because I have heard several times this year that the parents don't understand the homework and so then it's hard for them to help them with homework. And truthfully, if you only go to school, and by the time you get home at three o'clock and you don't do anything else with school until eight o'clock the next morning, of course, you are going to fall behind. So I am not putting it all on the parents, but I do put a lot of it on the families. When they go home, they are not asked to do homework; they're not being made to read. We can send stuff home all day long and send homework home, and suggestions for websites, but if they are not made to do it or if they're not encouraged to do it, then they're not going to. You can tell the students who go home to a family

> who makes them do stuff school wise where you can tell where school work is a priority. These students come back to school the next day to where they're adding to what they were taught the day before. I don't think it's who they are necessarily, but what they have offered to them by their parents.

I asked Beth if teachers should make more home visits and if she thought parents were a big piece of this whole picture.

Beth answered, "Yes, there are a lot of children who get home visits frequently."

Then, Beth continued, by adding:

> Like our principal told us at the beginning of the year, a lot of parents and students aren't going to trust you until they think you care about their child. Once they find out that you care about their child and that you want the best for their child, then they will start trusting you and listening to you and being on your side. But there's a lot of people who make home visits especially, not necessarily the older kids, but there's quite a few people here for whom it's nothing to hear them saying 'Okay, I'll be at your house his weekend.' Or, 'I'm going to come and visit mama this afternoon.' So, I'm able to talk to the parents more often, or I have one or two parents that I struggle with, but at any time I can pick up my phone and the parent is on the phone.

I asked how can you build the bridge and make the connections with parents.

Beth answered by adding:

> I guess by learning your students and not necessarily putting down their parents. By sharing ideas with parents that you think might help their child. Lifting the parents up also; not only recognizing the accomplishments of the child, but recognizing the accomplishments of the parents too.

In what way did your preservice training enable you to (a) identify specific needs of your African American students and (b) provide experiences to effectively meet those needs?

Alex indicated that student teaching in this school helped in some ways prepare him for identifying student needs. However, he reminded me that you do not have the full

responsibility when you are student teaching. Beth said that her pre-service training taught her some time management skills. Beth stated, “Patience, willingness, and flexibility are some of the things they taught me.” Carl said he learned to expose the students to as many ways of learning as he possibly could. He added, “I have learned to use the Promethean Board, so they have different ways of seeing things.” Dawn stated that she had a wide range of cross-cultural teaching experiences during student teaching, which helped prepare her for teaching a wide variety of students. She stated that she learned to try any angle that she could find to make sure students are getting the information they need. Generally, the research participants were complimentary regarding their teacher training programs. However, none of them addressed specifics of their pre-service training.

How have the students benefitted from having you as a teacher?

Alex stated that the students have benefitted from having him as a teacher because of his passion and dedication. He continued, “My greatest strength is my passion for the children because I do want them to be successful and I do feel a connection to them pretty immediately. I feel like they are my children and so my strength is that I am a parent.”

Beth indicated that the students benefitted from having her as a teacher because she does not give up on her special needs students. Beth stated, “I truly care about the children’s best interests and what’s best for them as a child, whether it be academics….and I’m willing to communicate with the families. I have all the numbers in my cellphone so if I need to call them on the way home and just let them know…..they have a project coming up….they really did great in class.” She also added she has

patience. “There are some people with great patience and some people who just don’t (have patience).” She continued that teachers cannot afford to let all the little things annoy them.

Carl stated that “I will do whatever it takes to deliver the information for them to be successful.” In addition, Carl noted that he is open to new ideas and strategies. He also indicated that he cares personally about his students and their success.

Dawn believed that her students have benefitted from having her as a teacher because they have had an opportunity to hear her relate the things that are important to her. There are after school tutorial sessions for those who are behind in reading and/or mathematics and Dawn believed the students have had an opportunity to see another side of her in the small group interactions after school.

How could you have been better prepared for cross-cultural instruction?

When asked how they could have been better prepared for cross-cultural instruction, Alex, Beth, and Carl focused on the community. Alex indicated that he could have benefitted from having additional information about the community. He replied that even though he student- taught at this school he did not see everything. He pointed out that he was only here for a limited time, so he felt he lacked a clear understanding of the community. Beth stated that:

> Knowing the backgrounds of the students is key. Understanding their behaviors, and knowing if these are learned behaviors…how these behaviors affect your expectations in the classroom. You have to know if there is something that interests them. To know this you have to know your community…their apartment complex. You have to experience the school community; it takes time to do this. Be patient, having willingness, and flexibility. Understanding the school community comes with time, hearing from other teachers, learning to reach out more. It is hard to set them high expectations if it is something they don’t believe in. You have

> to know that this is a small town and that many families' cycles repeat themselves.

Carl added:

> I believe that I could have been better prepared for cross-cultural instruction by studying the demographics and statistics of the surrounding environment. I think this information would have given me a more precise picture of the environments that my students grew up in. I think more observation hours during my schooling and focusing on cultures, similarities and differences would have had a positive impact on my teaching experience.

Dawn's view was different. She believed she was well prepared. She stated, "I feel I had a wide range of cross-cultural teaching experiences during student teaching, which has helped me to be prepared for teaching a wide range of students." Dawn generally gave responses that reflected complete and total self-reliance.

What area of your practice has the greatest need for improvement?

In concluding our interviews, I asked the teachers to explain what area of their practice had the greatest need for improvement. Although Alex listed self-confidence as an area of needed improvement, he addressed it in a manner that was beyond his capacity to alter. He stated:

> I think self-confidence, because of the state of affairs in teaching. I don't think any of us are confident anymore. I don't think we are so sure of ourselves where we know we're going to be here next year and that's scary. That's really scary to think that I mean I have a job and when you are doing your best and loving it to know someone could just say, 'Well, we're not going to need you next year.' And not even give you a reason anymore. They don't have to do that anymore according to what they did last year. I think I would work better without the pressure of I don't know if I'll be here.

Beth responded to the question by saying it involved confidence. Beth said:

> I'm working on it, but I would think having the confidence to speak up. It's getting better, but it's speaking up, when I have to. I know this sounds

> bad, but if you have to call people out on not doing their job effectively….when it comes down to it, you are the child's advocate. You're the only one that can really fight for that child. Sometimes people make inappropriate comments about special education students.

Carl stated that the area of his practice that had the greatest need for improvement was classroom discipline. He added:

> Often I do not feel that I am as firm as I should be with students. Sometimes I feel as if I am being taken advantage of by them. It is difficult for me to juggle the notion of keeping things positive and enforcing consequences. I try to focus more on positive things in the classroom. I know I do not have the 'fear' factor with my students and the only reason I can bring them back in when behavior begins to slip is because I feel that in a way I have earned their respect.

Dawn stated that she could not think of anything she personally could do to improve. She felt that "small class sizes would help improve students' ability to receive the necessary skills that they are not availed of at home." Dawn's response regarded how the school could have been improved. It is interesting to note that none of the novices cited wanting to know more about cross-cultural teaching, or that they felt that there was more they needed to know about teaching in a more culturally responsive manner. Among all of the study participants, Alex's teaching philosophy came closer to typifying an academically safe, culturally responsive learning environment, where high expectations were set for student success, than any of the other three novice teachers. However, none of the novices were able to provide an environment in which students had opportunities to experience anything close to equity pedagogy. During my classroom observations they demonstrated only superficial attempts at providing multicultural classroom experiences, thus illustrating the need for more awareness and professional development in this area.

Key Points from Observations

After Beth mentioned during an interview that her students seemed not to notice gender or race, I made a point of observing the students' interactions, because they appeared to enjoy class activities, whether in group, or in centers, or engaging independently in movement to music. The children seemed unaffected by the developmental disabilities of their classmates and enjoyed interacting with the opposite gender as much as with classmates of the same gender. I never noted students teasing or making fun of others, even if those students were having difficulty performing a learning task. Actually, the children appeared generally loving and accepting of each other as I observed them in the learning environment. They often engaged in hugging one another. Beth appeared to make efforts to praise the special needs students in an effort to encourage them when some of their classroom tasks seemed extremely challenging for them. In addition, I saw evidence of this when Beth was having them sound out sight words, or find missing puzzle pieces.

When I observed Alex, I saw evidences of his efforts to always look for something he could praise. He identified a "secret student of the day" and announced his name at the close of the day. If the secret student had not been engaged in inappropriate behavior during the day, the entire class was given a treat. Besides his effective use of praise with students, Alex's class displayed many books on famous Black Americans, with ample opportunities to write about them. Carl always projected a calm and "take charge" attitude to his students. I never saw him raise his voice or lose his patience. He seemed to use group work effectively. This was a contrast to Dawn, who generally always seemed

annoyed with her class. Often, Dawn had her students in desks facing away from one another.

Emergent Themes from Question One

Using narrative inquiry as the research lens through which I interviewed the research subjects, and following a constant comparative method of analysis of the transcripts, a number of themes emerged. The three themes regarding Question 1: The factors that affected the novice, White teachers' ability to understand the academic and non-academic needs of their students were: 1) limited by their understanding of the community, 2) constrained by a lack of trust within the classroom and larger community, and 3) curtailed by a limited reflection on the teachers' dominance and social positionality.

Theme 1: Limited Understanding of the Community

Beth stated that vocabulary, as well as academic vocabulary, were definitely issues for some students. For example, Beth noted that some of the students, because of low socio-economics, did not have a dishwasher or even knew its functions. The teachers found students' lacking knowledge of what might be considered commonplace objects that often appeared in spelling, reading, literature, or science lessons. When I asked Beth to clarify what we had been discussing about students' needs, she said "So, one of their needs is academic vocabulary." Beth continued by saying:

> I noticed that a lot of times they need the academic vocabulary words filled in because we are talking about something in the book. If they don't know that word or a couple of words, I'll ask them about what they think that word means and if they do not know, they're not going to get a good feeling in their heads. They are kind of poor in their vocabulary. Absolutely knowing how to study. We do mnemonics and I'd had them do

> a couple of things for Science and also for Social Studies because we had to learn which states seceded first and I'm trying to load them up on hints.

In addition, Beth stated that many of the students in her class grow up "very fast" because they had experienced events that upset the family unit, such as family members being arrested or incarcerated. Dawn described many of the students in this school as having come from single parent homes which contributed to a number of students being left with older cousins who watched after them, because due to economic circumstances their parents had to work more than one job. This fact could have an impact on some students not doing their homework. These same parents, who may not have reliable transportation, often have difficulty attending parent conferences.

Carl indicated that getting to understand the community could have helped him as a teacher and as a coach. He expressed that he tried to set up his classroom like his team, since he experienced success in the way he structured his team. In comparing the team to the classroom, Carl remarked:

> We had players kind of playing for themselves, not getting along too well. The students in this school seem to be discouraged easily sometimes. They get kind of short and rude with each other and kind of negative tones with each other and that causes a lot of friction. Besides in the classroom, I saw the same thing out on the ball field (of his middle school team). There may be some tension, you know, because this is a low socio-economic area. Many of these students don't have a lot at home. And you can tell that--because with rewards and stuff like that, they could really take it or leave it. It really doesn't matter.

Carl was surprised that students seemed unaffected by offers of rewards. He added:

> Rewards don't have an impact. Actually, some of the consequences and all…it doesn't matter. Rewards, consequences, a lot of those don't seem to affect the majority of the students that I've come across here. It's been very challenging to find something that would work to correct behaviors.

Then Carl turned to a discussion of the selection of classroom activities, by adding:

> Trying activities and things like that has been a challenge because the students are so excited about it that it's difficult to work together. They all want to touch it. They all want to hold it. They all want to do it. Sometimes we don't have the resources or materials for all of them to do something on their own. They may have to share something. And when it comes to sharing it causes a lot of friction and a lot of problems at times. It's been very difficult for them to understand that everybody will get their turn. Everybody will get their chance.

So, I added," Are you saying that it takes more to reach them in an emotional way? Is that what you are saying?" Carl responded, "Yeah." Carl seems to think the students respond in the way they do when it comes to classroom activities because of their economic circumstances.

As our discussion continued, Carl said that community problems often show up at school.

> So parents in more than one conference have said that there have been problems with these guys (students) in the neighborhood at home. I would imagine that a lot of the conflicts around the school may be that way…stemming down from the neighborhood or at home that kind of trickle here on to the school. It's been interesting. Just the other day I showed a video. Are you a country music listener? (he asked me) ….There's an older song that came out maybe in the late 90s, not an old, old song. But, "Don't Laugh at Me," by Mark Willis, I believe. I was just trying to stress the point that we're not all the same and it's not good to pick on other people and push their buttons because, you want to keep things positive. I tell them if you say positive things, you get a positive reaction, if you say a negative thing, you get a negative reaction. Actually, when I show the video in all three classes, it was dead silence. I was surprised about that. I just showed the music video for "Don't Laugh at Me." It was dead silence and I had one student crying, I believe. In the video it actually had a lot of clips with school children bullying and it even showed a homeless person and explained the homeless person's situation…how they got there….How they needed to be helped out too. It's not just within the classroom. It's outside the classroom too. We are all equal. It doesn't stop here. You should have the same expectations outside the classroom and do the same thing that you would do here.

I related what Carl said to remarks made by Alex. Alex told me that he only knows the students during the hours he sees them at school, yet he is required to respond to all their needs. In addition, Alex stated, "All these needs come into this room that supersede what you have planned for the day…and then you have to adjust your plan for the day."

I did some member checking with Carl regarding Alex's comments about responding to student needs. Carl remarked:

> After the video and all, I asked: 'Do you like having people doing nice stuff for you?' 'Do you like for somebody to hold the door for you? Do you like for somebody to pick up your pencil if it falls on the ground?' They all said 'yes' and agreed to that. And I said 'Why not start doing that….somebody has to start it, initiate it. It doesn't take that much more effort to reach back and hold the door an extra second or two. Or, jump ahead of somebody to get the door for them. Just simple things like that, that sometimes I don't see happening could create such a more positive atmosphere. I have had students open the door for me. I know that you are capable of doing that.'

Carl continued by telling me that he thought the students sometimes were looking for the reactions, because he said the students knew if they closed a door on the student following them in line that they would get a negative reaction and more attention that way. Carl saw the students' response to classmates as examples of an effort to get attention that might be lacking at home, as a result of working parents or being kept by young caregivers after school.

,Theme 2: Lack of Trust Within the Classroom and Broader Community

Carl mentioned that in his pre-service training he was cautioned to remember that often teachers may find themselves showing favoritism to some students who can be relied upon to act in favorable ways in the classroom, which could lead to a lack of trust by other students. Carl noted one incident that occurred with an African American

student this year, in which the student referred to him as a “white cracker.” Carl assumed it occurred because the student thought Carl was not treating everyone fairly. Carl thought that he was demonstrating what the student considered bias. Carl described speaking to the student about the comment the following day and telling him that he did not appreciate the remark. No other actions resulted from the incident, but Carl cited this incident as an example of teachers’ need of being cognizant of the students’ culture and of being open to having frank and personal conversations with the students. Carl remarked that he was constantly assuring students that he was fair and equal with everybody. In addition, Carl asserted that he felt the need to make certain that students knew that they could trust him to not show any favoritism or bias, between races, or between students in general. Carl thought the incident with him being referred to with what he thought was a racial slur, was very telling about the importance of establishing fairness and trust in the classroom.

As a result of Alex’s selection for recognition for excellence in teaching by one of his African American students, the student’s grandmother questioned why she chose a White teacher for this honor. Alex mentioned the grandmother’s reaction to me because he saw her remarks as a matter of concern to him. Beth explained the issue of trust was manifested in the fact that parents were more likely to share personal family information with her African American para-professional rather than convey the information directly to her. Beth expressed an awareness that some of her students’ parents did not completely trust her to have their child’s best interests at heart. Beth saw her young age and lack of teaching experience as responsible, in great measure, for these feelings.

Dawn described an incident, which arose out of a lack of trust, in which students told their parents that she was showing favoritism in the classroom. Dawn related these facts about the incident, in which students accused her of prejudicial behavior:

> When I picked up fifth graders (she was reassigned to a fifth grade class after the semester began), one class in particular gave me such a hard time. They just did. They were very hormonally challenged, very not wanting to do…so when I put into place that if you're being disrespectful you are going to stay in from P. E. and write….I had the same little group of children who were being disrespectful, rolling their little eyes at me and just acting foolish. Well, I kept them in two or three days in a row. They went home and told their mama I was being prejudiced…that I was only keeping them in (from physical education time) because they were Black children. I only had one mother request a conference with me and I didn't know why… She walks into the conference and we are talking. We are talking about her daughter's behavior. She told me 'my child says you are being prejudiced….You is only keeping in the Black children.'
> And I told her, "Well no, there's two little boys in that class and they are both White and I am keeping them in as well. I said, 'I'm not keeping in any particular color of students. I am keeping in students who are being disrespectful and acting out and not doing their work.' The mother looks at me and said, 'I know you are telling me the truth. I can see the look on your face.' Dawn added, 'I was shocked. I would have thought this was the last thing this woman wanted to talk to me about.'
> And so we talked for a little bit. We decided to go and talk to Dr. B (our principal) because I thought he needed to know that the children were saying this. I have finally gotten control of these particular students in that class, to where they walk in, they sit down and they're respectful.

I asked Dawn what she thought had led to this incidence. She replied:

> I think that they just needed to see that I meant what I said and that I wasn't going to back down. If I needed to talk to mama and get prejudice straightened out we were going to get this straightened out and then still, if they're disrespectful they are going to leave the room. They are going to stay in from physical education. They may have to sit with me during lunch. It took them a little while, but, I think they look at me and they know: I mean it; we are going to do it.
> That's the only incident I have had and I mean it just shocked me: that they (the students) said that. But they were trying to tell their parents how rotten I was, that they were not doing anything and that I just didn't like them and what reason would that be…but yeah, they played the race card. They've gotten over it.

I asked Dawn if she had any advice for another first year teacher next year. She replied,

> It's going to be the same for all children. I mean, whether you have White children in your class…they all need the same rules. And if you are going to say there's a consequence for it, you better put it on. Because the first time you don't give a child that consequence…..you're diminishing your authority…even if you don't want to keep them in and you've got to keep them in. And they need to work with other teachers, because if they're being disrespectful they need to get out of your room and go to their room (another teacher's classroom), somewhere else to send them to (for a period of time out).

Beth indicated that parents often were concerned that she was either not giving homework or that she was giving too much. Indeed, Beth noted that there was clearly a lack of trust on the part of parents, regarding whether or not she held the academic needs of all of the students in highest regards. Beth related the following about the homework assignments:

> You already feel defensive like you're gonna have to defend a decision you made or something. Like it's very frustrating! I think my age is the biggest factor, if not the color of my skin. My age definitely, because you know these parents are at least in their late twenties, early thirties. Then, I'm twenty-two and it's sometimes hard to take advice from someone younger….especially when it's somebody's child involved. And so that is why I try to go above and beyond in praising the child for the good things they have done. And I'm contacting the parents when there is an issue so no one is in the dark. And you know I'm going to go the extra mile (for parents to know what is going on in the class.) Just so that way they feel more confident in me. It's like okay, I'm really here to help your child succeed and to help your concerns and issues get met also….

Theme 3: Limited Reflection on the Teachers' Social Dominance and Positionality

The novice teachers had worked with their students long enough to acknowledge that the students' life experiences differed substantially from their own. These differences contributed to their understanding of the community and the difficulty in establishing trust with students and the community. Howard (2006) noted the subjective and objective

dimensions of positionality, which relate to both how we see ourselves and how others may see us.

As has already been mentioned, Dawn demanded a more rigid classroom atmosphere than any of the other teachers in the study. She established strong expectations for student behavior. Dawn stated that, “children are children.” She reported she had been trying to develop a community of learners by having capable students help others. She stated that she believed many of her students did not necessarily see learning as a priority. Dawn explained to me that her students had parents or grandparents who did not read, so students did not have the academic support at home that helped them get caught up. Dawn remarked that she felt the students could possibly never get caught up. One of the challenges she was quick to point out was that students in lower performing schools often did not have study skills and often lacked the ability to read with comprehension.

When I asked Beth about how she felt about the relationships she was establishing with parents, she stated:

> To be honest with you and I mean I didn’t even realize it worked out this way until I just started thinking about it. The two best relationships I have in my classroom are with the two White parents and then I’d have to say I also have one Black parent that is very involved but she is very involved with her general education child as well. Um.. I think too though maybe something that is hurting I guess the communication between myself and the parents is a lack of experience….life experience on my part……If I had to work two or three jobs, it’s more of a priority than getting up and making sure your child is at school. Some of these things are normal to these parents but not to me. So not growing up in a poor environment is a kind of eye-opener…’cause I didn’t grow up in a poor environment.

Beth, as she indicated, had not spent much time reflecting on her position of social dominance until my interview questions caused her to begin to reflect on her position of

power.

Dawn stated that she let the students know that she was there for them and that she was willing to help them. Part of "helping them," in her mind, was teaching them the value they should attach to certain things in their lives, like houses, cars, and an education. As a means of teaching the students what she believed they should value, Dawn made a point of telling them her car was only worth $16, 000. Beth related that she told the students one day when the class was talking about cars, "If you want to come look at what I have, you need to look at the things that are important to me." She further explained that the car was moderately priced, because there were things she attached greater value to, such as her son's orthodontic braces, and his future college education.

Emergent Themes for Research Question Two

In using the constant comparative method to analyze the interview transcripts, there were two themes which emerged in response to the second research question regarding the ways in which the novice White teachers' believed their awareness of their students' multicultural needs influenced classroom practices, and ultimately the experiences they provided for their students. These themes were 1) a superficial approach to multicultural educational practices and 2) and some effort at community bridge building.

Theme 4: Negligible Approach to Multicultural Educational Practices

The experiences that the teachers provided for the students were a reflection of their interpretation of multicultural education and the multicultural needs of their students. Dawn had her students go to the computer lab and research famous African-Americans, in order to write and present a report to the class. Carl had the students view

an educational math video that was created with rap, in order to inspire the students to perform the math algorithm. Carl noted that most students have only basic channel television access at home, so they enjoy videos in class. Carl also used a beach ball to create a fun and cohesive group of participants in a math game in the classroom. Students in his classroom often work in groups in an effort to create a community of learners. Students were allowed to play math games on laptops when they finish assignments early, since most students do not have computer access at home. Carl sees these educational opportunities as "killing two birds with one stone," since students are learning math algorithms, while increasing their familiarity with computers.

Alex had students write their own version of the "I Have a Dream" speech. He used a literature lesson about Rosa Parks to have students write about how Rosa Parks might have felt. Some of the questions the students were responsible for answering were: 1) What once happened when Rosa Parks decided not to take the back door of the bus? 2) What made the bus driver call police? 3) Where did Rosa Parks usually ride the bus? He planned to have the students write about what things they would want to change in America if they were elected President, using President Obama as writing prompt. The student writing prompt was "I could be President because……" In addition, Alex created a rap to assist the students in memorizing the original thirteen colonies.

Theme 5: Some Effort at Community Bridge Building

The novice teachers explained that many of the students may be raised in households with limited or missing daily interactions with their parents. In addition, the teachers stated that some students are being raised by grandparents because of the illness, death, or incarceration of immediate family members. A few grandparents, who were

retired and able to make regular visit in classrooms, made welcomed additions to the classrooms I visited. These grandparent volunteers could be found working with students who were behind their peers in reading level or working one-on-one with students who needed the emotional support of a special learning partner. The weekly visits by these volunteers provided opportunities for students to demonstrate pride in their accomplishments to adults in the community. These volunteers provided an important support network to the teachers.

The grandparent volunteers assisted with classroom activities, or assisted students in packing their bookbags to take home papers for parents to see. Students seemed to enjoy having their parents/or grandparents "visit" in the classroom and the volunteers seemed to enjoy spending some time during the day with the children. One grandparent told me that she was raising her grandson, who was in Alex's class, since his mother's death in a car accident. Her grandson beamed when she entered the room for her volunteer time.

Carl added: "The teachers at this school work hard every day….it's required to do our jobs. We have to be conscious of what they (the children) are doing, responding to the actions, the communication." Carl explained that being a coach allowed the students' parents an opportunity to see him outside the classroom interacting in the community with older students. This, for him, has been a community "bridge-building" experience. Carl sees his coaching as a way for him to have a community identity.

Carl continued:

> The students are not enjoying school because they are not experiencing success. We had to reach out of the school to find something to motivate

> them. The teachers at this school work hard every day…It's required to do our jobs.

Carl explained the Mystery Motivator, which is a tool being used for special needs students in the upper elementary grades.

> The parents fill out a calendar of things they will do for their child to reward them at home for positive reinforcement of behaviors at school. Examples of rewards might be taking the child to the movies, taking them to get hair or nails done, cooking their favorite dinner, or a trip to an amusement park. When the report goes home from school, the child is entitled to receive a reward.

Carl's plan to reach out to the community to solicit parent help demonstrate that he recognized the importance of reaching out to the community.

Carl and Dawn, who were both teaching fifth graders, used a motivational tool to reach their students who seemed unresponsive to rewards. The students were allowed to "color" in the calendar to reveal their rewards, which had been written in invisible ink by their parents. Carl stated, "The parents are getting involved. Those rewards seem to be working because the behaviors we were targeting have decreased. We've had to reach out of the school to find something to motivate them." Carl explained:

> Currently I'm doing that with two of my tier process students that we were having a lot of trouble reaching as far as behavior goes. We've got one student that is constantly talking to the point that her grades are suffering because of it. She disrupts others. We have another student who lashes out at others verbally. As a matter of fact, you saw her just a little while ago and may have heard some of her comments and all. She can be very derogatory towards some of the other students. But, she has shown a lot of improvement. Now what has really worked for her is that we've taken her and put her in a kindergarten classroom as a helper. It is a completely different person that goes in that classroom than we see in these classes. Very loving, kind, caring, helping, and as soon as she gets back in here …"shut up"…..

So, I asked him to clarify in which class this student seemed loving and kind. Carl responded: “Whenever she is working with the kindergarteners.”

He added:

> It’s interesting. I think she has some built up anger. She had a younger sister that passed away unexpectedly in an accident. It took quite a while before she mentioned it to me and began mentioning it to others. But, she will talk about it occasionally.

Thus, Carl allowed this student to have opportunities to go to the kindergarten class in order to be a student helper with the smaller children. With classmates her age, she asserted herself in a domineering way. However, with the kindergarten students, the fifth grader was already feeling dominant, so she behaved in a kind and subordinate way. The experiences have been used as a form of behavior modification and have been successful. None of this would have been possible, if her parents had not approved her spending time in the kindergarten class and away from her own classroom, during non-instructional time. Carl described how he solicited the help of the parents and used their support to create a way to effectively meeting the needs of the fifth grade student.

Dawn admitted that it would have helped her to have “prior knowledge of where her students live, how they spend their free time, and what basic needs my students go without because of their low socio-economic status.” When asked what was most valuable to her with managing her learning community, Dawn stated it was what she termed her ability “to determine the child’s currency.” She found out who to call that the child would most respond to at home. If she is having difficulty getting the child to be successful in her class, she speaks to the other two fifth grade teachers to see if they are having success with the student. If all three are having difficulty reaching the student,

Beth says the teachers use a Response to Intervention (RTI) and perhaps have the student tested for some type of learning disability. Beth speaks of being firm with the students, while maintaining that "I am careful to be sure the students do not view me as racist." Beth indicated that she felt that too much firmness would be viewed negatively by her students, parents, and co-workers.

The results of the interviews reflected a great deal about the differences in the perspectives of these different individuals. Each novice teacher had a different perspective related to their own life experiences, their own student teaching preparation, their own classroom experiences, and their own sense of reflection on the questions I asked. The variety of responses reflected the richness of their individual experiences. I used my knowledge of the literature on this subject to guide my questions and probe their answers. The novice teachers provided some examples of their evidences of their efforts at community bridge-building. However, the demonstrations of the multicultural experiences provided to the students appeared constrained by their illiteracy on multicultural educational practices.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The research in this study is the result of the interest and passion I found in the topic after reading the writings of Ladson-Billings (1994), Delpit (1995), Sleeter (2008), Howard (2006), and others on the topic of culturally responsive teaching. Cultural responsiveness persists in its relevancy for solving problems of learning in American classrooms, while our teaching force persists in being primarily White, middle-class, and female. The conclusions I have drawn, based on my narrative inquiry with the four novice White teachers, and my recommendations will be discussed in this chapter. McKinley (2010) presented research on the success a group of teachers had in narrowing the achievement gap between African American and White students, when they employed a set of culturally responsive teaching strategies. I am convinced that student academic success can be increased through the use of culturally responsive teaching practices. Thus, the primary interest during my study was in determining how successfully the novices viewed themselves to be in culturally responding to the students in their teaching environment. I was interested in examining the ability of novice White teachers in meeting the academic and non-academic needs of African-American students in a cross-cultural teaching environment.

While my study is framed around Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, it also finds meaning in Dewey's (1997) theory of experience. Dewey (1997) believed that every experience in life "lives on in future experiences" (p. 27). For this reason, he espoused that "every experience is a moving force" (Dewey, 1997, p. 38). In addition, every experience changes our desires and purposes (Dewey, 1997). Theorizing that teacher

knowledge is contextual, Olsen (2008) researched a group of novice teachers in order to determine "how and from where their knowledge emerges" (p.5). Powerfully relating his findings, Olsen (2008) stated that teacher education programs have done little to help

> the novice teacher struggling to develop a professional identity that balances one's own self, one's professional goals, the approaches of the preparation program, and the many demands of the classroom, how to position oneself in relation to power, authority, and a desire to encourage authentic student learning (p. 115).

In addition to the many professional demands on a beginning teacher, Olsen (2008) explained how the novice teachers had difficulty relating to their students who were unlike themselves. While others have addressed this difficulty (Delpit, 1995; Tatum, 1997), Olsen (2008) further hypothesized that when novice teachers were confronted with students unlike themselves, they simply defaulted to prior conceptions. As a result, Olsen (2008) recommended that novice teachers be given opportunities to engage in what he termed "cultural identity work" (p. 116). Until such honest and reflective conversations occur, the beginning teachers would not fully "acknowledge the power their pasts have on their views of students, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation". (p. 166). Olsen's (2008) work explained to a great extent why the novice White teachers in my study encountered difficulty relating to students who they saw as different from themselves.

Research Question One

What factors affected the novice, White teacher's ability to understand the academic and non-academic needs of their students?

While the teachers in this study demonstrated some understanding of the academic and non-academic needs of their students, their understanding was not sufficient for the students' needs to be addressed adequately. All of the teachers in this

study revealed through their responses to interviews, a deficit in their understanding of the low socio-economic needs of their students, and how the cultural differences between the students, the community and the school generated a disconnect that resulted in students not receiving a culturally relevant education. In addition, the novice teachers had difficulty communicating effectively with parents and building trust in the greater school community that is necessary for understanding the needs of the students.

The teachers in this study attempted to teach the whole child, but their efforts were stymied on a number of fronts. While Hackett (2003) stated the importance of teachers setting firm limitations on classroom behavioral expectations of their students, he also pointed to the importance of meeting students at their point of need intellectually, socially, and culturally. Through a lack of understanding of the dynamics of the school community, the teachers had difficulty meeting the students' needs, both culturally and socially. As a result, the novice teachers had difficulty communicating effectively with the parents and building trust in the greater school community. This was evidenced by the fact that the parents of Beth's special needs students often confided personal family concerns more often to her African American para-professional than to her. It was also evidenced by the African American grandmother who was not sure why her grand-daughter wanted to recognize the teaching efforts of a White teacher. Thus, despite the sensitivity Alex seemed to show to teaching cross-culturally, he found difficulty in establishing trust in the community.

Some of the teachers did not create an environment where success could be achieved and needs met. Some teachers were guilty of stifling the intellectual and academic success of their students by failing to believe in their ability to succeed. This

was evidenced by the remarks that Dawn made that the students were so far behind that they might never catch up in reading and math. Unwittingly, they communicated to their students, lower expectations for their success through placing students in pre-determined societal categories. Dawn's general perception of her students was that there was not anything that could be done to help them make up their lost ground. Rather than focus on the students' deficits, Villegas (2002) asserted that culturally responsive teachers should encourage students to make sense of new ideas, explore topics that interest them, and are made to think " that they are capable thinkers who can create new ideas" (p. 28).

Carl stated that he believed that most of his students were difficult to motivate because they were unaffected by rewards. White novice teachers have little understanding of discrimination and inadvertently often set lower expectations for African American students (Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 2008). According to Gibson (1999), disenfranchised students are often taught by uninspired teachers, who possess low expectations of student performance. As professional intellectuals, first year teachers must be able to determine the teaching methods that are most effective for reaching their students (Milner IV, 2007b).

The lack of understanding of the needs and demands of her students was evident when Beth was asked how she could have been better prepared for teaching cross-culturally in this first year. She stated, "I would just like to say that you don't realize how unprepared you are until you get into the classroom teaching." In fact, Beth added, "It doesn't matter how you might think you might be prepared in one area, you're unprepared in another." Whether many White teachers realize it or not, one of the areas

they, as a group, have difficulty with often lies in the area of "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Villegas, 2007, p. 374). White teachers may unwittingly be stifling the learning of their students of color, by "lacking faith in the students' ability to achieve" (Villegas, 2007, p. 374).

As the novice teachers attempted to determine the academic needs of their students, they found that they were unprepared for this task because of their limited understanding of the community. Carl's lack of understanding of his students' community and therefore some of the needs of his students was expressed when he said:

> I think that a class that taught the norms of African American culture within my area would have been a very beneficial class. As a White teacher coming from a middle class family with a strong relationship it is sometimes difficult for me. I also believe that a useful professional development would be to observe more African American students within my school. To analyze their behaviors would be beneficial to me. This would allow me to focus in on things that happen that "trigger" our students or how to keep them more engaged in class activities.

Hearing Dawn relate the things in life that are important to her seems to be at cross-purposes to her students. It seems plausible that what she may think she is conveying to her students and what her students are actually hearing may be entirely different. When Dawn said that she told the students what was important to her, she was not recognizing how those remarks may be viewed as a form of social domination (Howard, 2006). Dawn seemed unaware of her social positionality in the classroom and how it shrouded her in a hierarchical arrangement. Dawn never stopped to consider the position of power she held in her classroom setting: power that came from both her role of instructional leader, but also from her racial dominance (Howard, 2006). In effect,

Dawn made an effort to impose her White, middle class values onto her students, while showing no regard for her position of power or social dominance.

While the teachers expressed a keen awareness of the differences between their childhood experiences and that of their students, the teachers often did not seem at a loss to consider how their White social dominance impacted the academic environment of their classrooms. Research has demonstrated that the White teachers may not be acquainted with the conceptualization "that Whites have been collectively allocated disproportionate amounts of power, authority, wealth, control, and dominance" (Howard, 2006, p. 33).

As I reflected on Carl's discussion of the teaching environment during our interviews, I was aware that he felt society has generally a low expectation of these students. Carl explained that in his opinion, "their (the students') behavior goes back to the environment and to their learned way of communicating." Nieto (2009) stressed that "teachers need to learn about the sociocultural realities of their students and the sociopolitical conditions in which they live" (Nieto, 2009, p. 12). Further, Freire (1998) stated that with regard to their students,

> Teachers need to know the universe of their dreams, the language with which they skillfully defend themselves from the aggressiveness of the world, what they know independently of the school, and how they know it (pp. 72-73).

Carl seemed to lack an awareness of this disconnect between the school and home environments and as a result did not fully understand the needs of his students.

The novice teachers' limited ability to make needed connections to the school community constrained their ability to develop trust among all the educational stakeholders. According to Nieto (2002), teachers must work to build relationships with their students and the community of which they are a part. In our discussions, two of the novice teachers confessed that parents often did not feel they had their children's best interests at heart. As Hubbard and Hands (2011) noted, there was definitely an implied need for "receptivity and openness" (p. 46) in the culture of the school. Dawn explained to me she had a parent conference because a student felt that Dawn was prejudiced in disciplinary actions due to issues of race. This lack of trust was also apparent when a student called Carl a "cracker." As explained by Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter (2003), earning student trust by listening and encouraging is vitally important in serving students cross-culturally. Perhaps a more receptive environment and a greater understanding of the students' academic and non-academic needs might have prevented these incidents.

The lack of understanding of the needs of students was further exemplified in the interview with Beth when she indicated that some students' weekly routine may be interrupted by staying overnight at another place rather than in their own homes. For Dawn, the students should want to learn and achieve in order to escape this community. Since Dawn does not understand the social dynamics of the community, she sees it as logical that students would want to leave this community. As Nieto (2000) espoused, teachers must be able to understand the manner in which students are culturally bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion"(p. 139). None of the teachers actually lived in the community, so it was difficult for them to understand the students' strong connection to the community. It was also

difficult for the teachers to demonstrate a commitment to give back to the community, as important aspect of culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Dawn explained how she likes to come to school as “dressed down” as possible. Ladson-Billings (1994) pointed out that teachers need to convey to students the importance of personal appearance (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In minority communities, personal appearance is extremely important (Foster, 1986). Dawn’s dress may have unknowingly been conveying to her students and parents a poor impression of not only herself, but of them as well. Again this indicated a lack of understanding of the nature of the community and potentially the needs of the students.

The novice White teachers in this study had difficulty confronting their own social domination. According to Trepagnier (2006), White teachers have probably progressed through their entire college training, without having any opportunities to confront the long-held assumptions they may have formed about race. “As White children grow up, they rarely discover the truth about racial inequality”(Tregagnier, 2006, p. 68). Sadly, well-meaning White people are often most guilty of forms of indirect institutional racism (Trepagnier, 2006). Such indirect forms of racism appeared in the interviews with the novice teachers, who acknowledged that they saw children, not color. Research has shown that teachers must see color in order to see their students at all, or attempt to understand their needs (Pollock, 2004). Dawn’s inability to see color may be an example of an ethnocentric teaching philosophy that has blinded teachers to their stereotypical cultural beliefs (Phuntsog, 1999). In advocating an antithesis of colorblindness, Beachum, Dentith, McCray, and Boyle (2008) believed that open discourse which is honest and cognizant of racial privilege will ensure that all educators

openly accept the importance that race plays in developing our identities and shaping our experiences.

It is imperative that educators no longer be ‘colorblind’ or ‘colormute’ to these social and cultural issues (Barlett & Brayboy, 2005; Pollock, 2004). Beachum, Dentith, McCray, and Boyle (2008) espoused the abandonment of a colorblind perspective in schools as key to the promotion of a healthy organization. As Ladson-Billings (1994) cautioned, when efforts at colorblindness abound, an unconscious from of racism persists. Nieto (2004) stated that some think “to be colorblind, is to be fair, impartial, and objective because to see differences, in this line of reasoning, is to see defects and inferiority” (p. 145). Instead, Nieto (2004) cautioned, that such reasoning can result in a failure to acknowledge differences, thereby “accepting the dominant culture as the norm” (p. 145).

In addition to citing the challenges of teaching those who are different from ourselves, Delpit (1995) cautioned that not every student comes to school with the experiences which will lead to success in an educational system that gives power to those with the most cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Nieto (2009) espoused that teachers must confront their own unearned privileges and how those privileges may have generated many preconceptions they bring to the community in which they teach. The inability that the novice teachers had in confronting their own social dominance and positionality made it difficult for them to build appropriate bridges to the community and utilize the parents as a means of supporting student success (Delpit, 1995). Their inability at bridge-building pointed to the significance of novice teachers being equipped in their

teacher training to communicate effectively with increasingly diverse students and their parents (Delpit, 1995).

Despite the fact that Carl had grown up in the predominantly white side of the same county where he taught, he seemed to have little preparation for understanding the school community. Carl took his formal teacher training, tried to apply it to his memories of what he knew of the African-American side of the county while growing up, and tried to construct new meaning. For Carl, what resulted was a newer, situated, holistic framing of knowledge and learning-to-teach (Olsen, 2008, p. 28). Carl had been exposed to a new set of experiences and his formerly held beliefs were being shaped and re-shaped by the new experiences he was having with his African-American students. In truth, all of the novice teachers were engaging in a new learning of one type or another. Olsen (2008) identified these as confirmatory, disconfirmatory, or appropriating learning experiences. In order for teachers to be responsive to students with needs born out of their existence in single parent homes, in poverty, or from being' at risk, " Carl and Gillette 92006) reminded teachers that they must interrogate their own beliefs and be unafraid to deal with any of the "isms' that educators commonly use to label students. Therefore, having a better understanding of the socio-economic status of the students in the school community would be helpful to the teachers in giving them insight into the academic and nonacademic needs that could present themselves routinely in the classroom.

Research Question Two

In what ways do the novice, White teachers believe their awareness of their students' multicultural needs influence classroom practices and ultimately the experiences they provide for their students?

Many of the activities the teachers created for their students were simply designed to have the students see the contributions of African Americans to society. For example, students were given an assignment to go to the computer lab and research famous Black Americans, and write a report to present to the class. While this was a worthwhile activity, it served as merely an add-on that was completely disconnected from the everyday lives of the students. As Nieto (2004) has theorized, multicultural education must emphasize more "than simple lessons on getting along or units on ethnic festivals" (p. 345). According to Neito (2004), multicultural education should cause educators to examine all of our history, both the aspects we can be proud of, and the aspects which were exclusionary as well. Students should not have our history presented to them in some "sanitized" manner that leaves them afraid to identify racism when they see it. It was imperative that students have multicultural experiences that promote social justice. As Nieto (1996) asserted, multicultural education embodies opportunities for students to bring about social justice, allowing students to reflect on contradictions in society and empowering them to collectively bring about change where needed. This reflective action lies at the heart of social justice and schools can never "be separated from social justice" (Nieto, 1996, p. 317). The focus on social justice is parallel to the dimension of multicultural education that Banks (1997) regarded as "empowering school culture" (p. 23).

Classroom discussions should promote students discussions regarding status, poverty, discrimination, and societal concerns. Nieto (2002) espoused that multicultural education is a process enabled by teachers who are able to show sensitivity and understanding to their students. Therefore, Nieto (2002) noted "no one ever stops

becoming a multicultural person, and knowledge is never complete" (p. 42). Banks (1991) identified such a token view of diversity issues by the term a "holidays and heroes" approach to multicultural education. Indeed, our classrooms must not view diversity as though it is devoid of a social or political context (Nieto, 2002).

While Alex's students read about Rosa Parks and discussed her as a historical figure, his students would have also benefitted from discussing more about how she must have felt at the time, what historical acts and activities led to her action, and the extent that she contributed to the Civil Rights movement. Further, according to Howard and Aleman (2008), teachers must be encouraged to develop teaching practices that move multicultural education "from one centered primarily on content infusionto a more comprehensive and complex field of study "(p. 164). Banks (1995) indicated that teachers' practices must embody "(a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture" (p. 4). Cochran-smith (1995) stressed "this kind of examination inevitably begins with our own histories as human beings and as educators." (p. 500).

It is interesting that Beth stated that she was entering teaching to give back to the community. Whether she realized it or not, her attitude of feeling like these children were "needy" in some way may have her treat them as though their cultural diversity was something to be overcome (Villegas, 2007). Villegas (2007) espoused that "there is evidence that those beliefs are influenced by unexamined racial/ethnic biases" (p. 374). Beth, like many other White teachers, appeared to be guilty of failing to examine her cultural biases.

The teachers in this study have showed sensitivity to the cultural needs of their students that is limited by their ability to interrogate their own whiteness. Sleeter (1992) espoused that most of what White teachers bring to the classroom is knowledge about the social world which involved their own vested interests. Further, Sleeter (1992), using a term first constructed by Joyce King (1991), explained that White teachers must confront what she espoused to be dysconscious racism, leading the White teachers to a distorted way of thinking. This dysconscious racism tends to perpetuate racism in our classrooms rather than reverse it (Sleeter, 1992). Dawn's belief that she was color-blind in the classroom was definitely indicative of this dysconscious racism.

In her classroom, Dawn worked at "mining," or pulling knowledge out of her students, rather than seeing her teaching as a form of banking (Ladson-Billing, 1994). Unwittingly, Dawn may be guilty of creating in her classroom a group-based system of categorization. As Ladson-Billings (1994) espoused, Dawn's students would have been more likely to demonstrate competence had she treated them as competent. Dawn stated that having parents who worked two or three jobs meant that many of her students did not have support at home for their homework or adults who could read to them in their early years. In addition, Dawn seemed to convey in her responses to interview questions that she was not certain the students would ever be able to make up for the fact that they were behind in their reading ability. However, Ladson-Billings (1994) acknowledges that teachers and students must work together to dispel "a belief that failure is inevitable for some students" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 44).

Dawn stated emphatically that the teacher must follow through to do exactly what he/she says will happen as a consequence in the classroom. According to her, if the

teacher does not, the teacher will be diminished in the eyes of the students. Dawn's classroom practices demonstrated a lack of understanding of cultural responsiveness. While it is important for teachers to be able to set firm limitations on classroom behavioral expectations for their students, it is also important that teachers teach the whole child and meet the students where they are culturally, socially, and intellectually (Hackett, 2003). Often Dawn's actions typified a teacher trying to overcome aspects of the child's culture, rather than using the child's culture as a building block to greater understanding. Often it seemed that she has pre-determined societal categories that the students fit into (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It would have been more advantageous for Dawn in meeting the needs of her students, if she had been able to "establish educational goals and secure families' support in developing learning plans "(McKinley, 2010, p. 49).

When asked what was most valuable to her with managing her learning community, Dawn stated it was what she termed her ability "to determine the child's currency." She found out who to call that the child would most respond to at home. What Beth and Dawn were sorely lacking was a meaningful collaboration with parents (McKinley, 2010). The teachers in this study did not properly utilize the students' families in identifying the needs of the students. McKinley (2010) indicated that White teachers need to recognize that African American families know the most about their students and would offer great insight in assisting the teachers in establishing student success. Perhaps if Beth had been able to establish stronger lines of communication with her special needs students' parents, she might have used them to help identify what they felt were the educational goals and aims most needed for their special needs children. Educators must recognize the value of experiences and traditions which students from

nondominant groups might bring to the learning community (Nieto, 1999; 2002). Creating bridges to the community are ways to join hands with the community, which can pay big rewards when the teacher has discipline issues with a student or needs an extra pair of hands for a classroom art activity or project.

Hubbard and Hands (2011) espoused how “forging family-school-community relationships” has a significant role in generating educational outcomes for students who attend urban schools. The research with the novice White teachers demonstrated the important role that improving the engagement of families and communities with the school could have played. Ladson-Billings (1994) noted that the notion that all students can succeed, may at times sound trite, but she acknowledged in the classroom it must “ be more than a slogan” (p. 44). In addition, culturally responsive teachers must acknowledge the knowledge the students possess from their personal heritage, even if it is in the form of folktales and home remedies handed down from their grandparents. Teachers must show respect for their students’ experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1994). When the teachers make connections to the family that engages them in supporting students learning, “teachers learn about the lived experiences of their students and uses this information in selecting learning resources and adapting instruction” (Hawley & Irvine, 2011, p. 31).

Carl related how the students often do not seem to care, perhaps because of the lack of sense of community. According to Carl, students do not care if you take away their physical education time. He wondered if it is a response to the low socio-economics and the fact that many of these students have very little at home. An interesting aspect of African American motivation in the classroom is explained by Shade (1987). Shade (1987) speculated that the level of engagement of African American students on

classroom tasks is tied to affiliation within the classroom environment. It is important that culturally responsive teachers communicate that they are interested in the success of their students and are committed to developing caring relationships with them (McKinley, 2010; Hawley & Irvine, 2011).Perhaps Carl's lack of lack of awareness caused him to lack the ability to properly motivate his students.

Beth speaks of being firm with the students, while maintaining that "I am careful to be sure the students do not view me as racist." Rather than firmness, Howard (2006) suggested that cross-cultural instruction should be typified by rigor, "being relentless in our belief in our students' capacity to learn, and being equally vigilant in improving our capacity to teach" (p. 129). Delpit (1995) has theorized that when African American students do not see their teacher as exhibiting personal power and care in classroom interactions, the community may view them as uncaring and ineffective.

During the observations examples of equity pedagogy were lacking. In addition to the novice white teachers needing to allow the students to have opportunities to recognize the contributions of famous African Americans in history, they also needed to provide them opportunities to call upon the richness of their own personal heritage. James Banks (1997) theorized that multicultural education should promote decision-making skills. Through the multicultural curriculum, students should be prepared to understand reality through a multitude of perspectives (Nieto, 2002). It is also imperative the teachers convey to the students that coming to school to teach them has great importance locally and nationally, since all learners are part of a global identity. It should be the goal of the novice White teachers to lead their students on "a lifelong learning journey to study reasons there are 'haves' and 'have nots' in U.S. society" (Pewewardy, 1999, p.94).

As teachers work with children, it is important that they realize the effect of the messages they promote. Dawn stated that she let the students know that she was there for them and that she was willing to help them. Part of "helping them," in her mind, was teaching them the value they should attach to certain things in their lives, like houses, cars, and an education. Rather than engaging in moral pronouncements, Villegas (2002) suggested that culturally responsive teachers should provide more opportunities to validate the students' experiences that they are able to share in the classroom environment. Dewey (2004) indicates that teachers must possess open-mindedness, meaning the "accessibility of mind to any and every consideration that will throw light upon the situation that needs to be cleared up, and that will help determine the consequences of acting this way or that" (p. 169). Thus, for Dewey (2004), in the culturally responsive classroom, teachers must be able to see the consequences of their actions. They must not rob students of the possibility of sharing their rich cultural heritage or of using their experiences to construct new meaning. There was little or no consideration given to these multi-cultural experiences during my observations.

During the classroom observations and discussion, Alex encouraged the students to be respectful to one another. He told them that they can disagree without having an argument. Alex explained during our discussion that many students become combative when disagreements arise during classroom exchanges. The ability to disagree in a respectful manner seems to be result of their immaturity and under-developed social skills. The teachers' ability to understand students' academic and non-academic needs is directly tied to their understanding of the community's culture. Bourdieu (1986) has noted that middle class students have cultural capital, typified by such variables as

speech, dress, etiquette, and social interactions, achieve for these students added value in an educational system that favor the middle class and often excludes students of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005). Thus, cultural capital has a major influence on the expectations and attitudes of teachers concerning students from disenfranchised diverse backgrounds (White-Clark, 2005). Alex, as well as other teachers, must be keenly aware of cultural capital issues and the way they affect how students are viewed and thus how they are treated.

Some of the teachers did not create an environment where success could be achieved and needs met. Some teachers were guilty of stifling the intellectual and academic success of their students by failing to believe in their ability to achieve success. Unwittingly, they conveyed to their students lower expectations for their success through placing students in pre-determined societal categories. This was evidenced by Dawn's responses to some of the interview questions where she conveyed the notion that she did not think her students would ever be able to overcome their lower performance in reading. Further, Dawn failed to capitalize on the reciprocal nature of her instruction by listening to her students and learning from them in areas where they could contribute in the classroom environment. She taught as though they were empty vessels, with "their only purpose being to come to school to learn what she wants to teach" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 53).

In examining the experiences the novice teachers provided their students, it is evident that all of the teachers could have benefitted from an awareness of what Delpit (1995) described as the desire on the part of students of color for acceptance and

emotional closeness. The activities in the novices' classrooms did not always convey to the students an acceptance that the teachers were willing to meet them where they were and take them where they needed to be. The teachers were often overcome with the poor performance of their students and focused on deficits rather than potential. Nieto (2002) cautioned that teachers must be aware that cultural differences may affect classroom practices. Dawn's actions typified a teacher trying to overcome aspects of the child's culture, rather than using the child's culture as a building block to greater understanding. Dawn showed little understanding of discrimination and inadvertently set lower expectations for her students. In addition, there was evidence that the teacher saw their role as trying to overcome aspects of the child's culture, rather than using the child's culture as a building block to greater understanding.

The importance of White teachers recognizing that African American families know the most about their students and would offer great insight in assisting the teachers in establishing student success. (McKinley, 2010) was not recognized by the teachers and was exemplified by their admitted lack of understanding of the community. As stated by Nieto (1999; 2002) educators must recognize the value of the experiences and traditions which students from nondominant groups might bring to the learning community (Nieto, 1999; 2002). As McKinley(2010) stated, culturally responsive educators "achieved cultural congruence by scaffolding instruction to students' backgrounds with concrete examples and models from students' home lives, home culture, and language" (p. 98). More of such scaffolding was needed by the novice teachers in this study.

Race and Poverty in Rural Setting

Generally, all the teachers revealed through their responses to interviews, a lack of understanding of the low socio-economic environment of the students, and how there was a complete disconnect between the home environment and the school environment. Many challenges, which were identified in the literature review, as relating to cross-cultural teaching in urban environments, were applicable as well in this rural setting. The importance of establishing caring relationships with students and building trust with parents is obviously highly regarded in both settings.

The novices' classroom practices demonstrated a lack of understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive and a lack of recognition that the diversity of their classrooms could generate rich educational experiences. It is highly likely that Dawn's students would have demonstrated more academic competence had they been treated as though they were academically competent. The study revealed that there is still much that needs to be done to fully prepare novice White teachers for cultural responsiveness, especially in areas of low socio-economic conditions. Children living in lower socio-economic conditions will often miss more school because of a lack of health care, play in more crime ridden neighborhoods, and experience fewer adult role models in professional careers (Rothstein, 2008). In addition, children living in lower socio-economic conditions will often experience a loss of continuity in schooling because of frequent moves (Rothstein, 2008).

While Rothstein (2008) acknowledges that each of these socio-economic factors has only a minor role to play in a child's academic success, taken together, these factors combine, creating a cumulative effect of academic deficits. Beth was recognizing, for what may have been the initial time, the "why" and "how" of the fact that she had more

easily established relationships with the parents of her White students than the parents of her African-American students. In addition, Beth was realizing that an understanding of the community is the master key to unlocking any troubled relationships. Educators are in a unique position for speaking up and addressing the negative impact of deprivation on learning potential, such as was evident in this rural community (Rothstein, 2008). The novice teachers were encountering and having difficulty meeting the challenges of many of the inequities inherent in a rural environment. They experienced firsthand the ever-growing number of disparities in social and economic opportunity available to their students (Rothstein, 2008). Since these disparities are more prevalent among African American children than White children in our nation, reform is needed from not only within the educational community, but also from "health, housing, and labor experts" (Rothstein, 2008, p. 11).

Differentiation of Cultural Responsiveness Among the Novice Teachers

Alex was the only teacher who seemed genuinely interested in teaching the "whole child". He demonstrated a desire to get to know his students on a personal level. His ability to relate to his students in an emotional way resulted in students confiding in him regarding their personal problems. In addition, a child in his class nominated him to receive recognition for his teaching performance. The students appeared to see him as a caring educator, because this was mentioned by the student who nominated him for teaching excellence.

He effectively used his puppet George, a pirate, and a treasure chest in the classroom, which contained prizes students could win. He used motivational tools such as having a secret student of the day. Everyone in class could win a piece of candy if the

secret student did not violate any major class rules. No one knew who this student was until the end of the day, when it was revealed by George, the pirate puppet.

Alex effectively reached his students in ways that Beth and Carl did not. Near the holidays, Alex contacted businesses about donating all sorts of toys to his classroom, which he gave as motivational gifts to students in the weeks leading up to winter break. Many of the students were as excited about receiving these gifts as the ones that they would receive from their family at home. In addition, Alex stated that he felt that the administration of his school was conveying to the teachers that they should do whatever was necessary to have the students succeed. This "whatever it takes" approach was demonstrated during every one of my observations in Alex's classroom.

While all the novice teachers in the study professed a desire to help children as well as a personal background that developed in them a commitment to the academic and non-academic needs of their students, what was lacking in part was the ability to create an environment where students could be met where they were and taken to where they needed to be. Out of all the teachers, Alex and Carl seemed most attuned to meeting student needs, through the manner in which they grouped students and allowed them to interact during class activities.

By reaching out to grandparent volunteers, Alex made some efforts at building bridges to the community. Those grandparent volunteers were able to visit classrooms and see firsthand that teachers were putting the needs of the students first. More importantly, the novices were making needed connections to the students' families. Alex seemed especially capable of community "bridge-building" by having parent or grandparent volunteers come to his classroom to assist by reading to students

(or by having students read to them). Dawn made efforts at bridge-building when she made contacts with other adults to learn who the student would most respond to at home. However, all of the teachers could have benefitted from an awareness of what Delpit (1995) described as the desire on the part of students of color for acceptance and emotional closeness.

Recommendations

1. Consistent with Olsen's (2008) recommendation, it is of utmost importance that novice White teachers be given opportunities to engage in cultural identity work. Until such honest and reflective conversations occur, the beginning teachers will not fully "acknowledge the power their past have on their views of students, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation" (p. 160).
2. More work needs to be done in the area of teacher preparation in culturally responsive teaching practices. Novice teachers need to be given opportunities for the professional and complex conversations that can help them to confront their own social dominance and the power of their pasts (Olsen, 2008).
3. There should be an orientation to the community of the new teachers, emphasizing potential student and parent issues, with on-going professional development occurring throughout the school year.
4. Consistent with a recommendation from (Ladson-Billings, 1994), novice White teachers need to be carefully placed with an experienced teacher who can assist them in developing caring relationships and in setting high expectations for their students. Having the new teacher reflecting, journaling, and perhaps meeting on a weekly basis to "debrief" with experienced teachers

concerning any potential pitfalls they may be experiencing in their cross-cultural teaching might help alleviate issues of trust arising throughout the school year.

5. Rather than simply acknowledging that poorer students often attend schools with less qualified teachers and whose opportunities perpetuate “the culture of classism” (Gorski, 2008, p. 35) school districts must commit to hire well qualified teachers to teach in low income schools.
6. Preservice teachers need to receive specialized training in working with students in rural districts in an effort to prepare teachers for some of the challenges inherent in working in such environments, which might include lower socio-economics.
7. Districts must provide their teachers assessment instruments not unlike those used by the Proving the Possible (PTP) educators in the Seattle Public Schools (McKinley, 2010). Research indicates “ that well-executed evaluation based on observations of teacher behavior can increase teacher effectiveness” (Hawley & Irvine , 2011, p. 30).
8. Teachers in low income rural schools need to be provided the opportunity to gain a greater awareness of their school community. These novices had few if any opportunities to interact with the students and parents outside of the school day, since few of the novice teachers lived within the school community.
9. Educators need to join in advocating for improving the social and economic conditions of many of the children in our nation’s schools.

Effectively using the “footprint” of students’ cultural identities and supporting the cultural dispositions brought to school may be the key to successfully improving the performance of African-American students in our schools. With the correct opportunities for staff development and the guidance and support of effective administrative leaders, novice teachers should progress in their understanding of teaching those whose backgrounds may be quite different from their own. But to do so they must be willing to confront their own social and cultural capital, and to free themselves to do the hard work of cross-cultural teaching. In order to achieve proficiency in cross-cultural teaching, novices must free themselves from the past failures of other White teachers and be open to presenting students opportunities to share and learn from each other in a less racially “sanitized” manner. The novices will need to be amenable to learning from their students from day one and let the experiences of their students be the order of the day, so that the multi-cultural “artifacts” found in classrooms will no longer simply be strewn posters and books on famous Black Americans, but rather evidences of a woven tapestry of events and experiences the students have been willing to share because of the value these experiences hold from their own rich, personal heritage.

Recommendations for Future Research

Question One: Do novice White teachers who work in schools where comprehensive induction programs exist, demonstrate greater levels of cultural responsiveness? Perhaps more research needs to be tied to induction programs for novice White teachers in which the teachers may have opportunities to visit in the neighborhoods and communities where the students they teach live or attend weekly worship services.

Questions Two: Do novice White teachers, who were given preservice opportunities to confront their own whiteness and to create a variety of multicultural educational activities for their students, demonstrate greater levels of cultural responsiveness?

Question Three: Do novice, White teachers who engage in reflective journaling and ‘debriefing’, demonstrate greater levels of community bridge-building and greater cultural responsiveness?

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Georgia State University

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Informed Consent

Title: Investigating Novice White Teachers in African American Classrooms: A Phenomenological Investigation of Cultural Responsiveness

Principal Investigator: Dr. Carlos R. McCray, PI

Debbie Barrineau, Student PI

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore to what extent novice white teachers have an awareness of the challenges and demands involved in cross-cultural instruction with students whose life experiences are different from their own. You are invited to participate because you are a novice white teacher, teaching in a classroom with predominantly African-American students. A total of 4 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation for each teacher will require approximately three hours of interviews and approximately one to two totals hour of classroom observation. The novice teachers will be observed in two separate blocks of classroom instruction, for approximately thirty minutes to an hour.

- *You are being invited to participate in a study.*
- *You are being invited to participate because you are a first year teacher in a school with a diverse student population.*
- *The purpose of the study will be to learn how novice white teachers are prepared for the challenges and demands of cross-culturally teaching African-American students.*
- *You will be interviewed three times and observed in your classroom twice.*
- *The research will involve only about four participants.*

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed three times for approximately one

hour. In addition, I will observe you in your classroom twice for approximately thirty minutes to an hour , as you engage in teaching activities. You wll be asked to respond to questions concerning your experiences during your early years of teaching. The interviews will be conducted in the school's media center conference room or a convenient off-campus location. The interviews will take place during October, November, and December, 2009.

III. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may benefit you personally. Reflecting on your years of teaching as a novice may allow you an opportunity to consider how you may have been better prepared to meet the needs of the African-American students that you instruct. Overall, we hope to gain information about how to better support novice white teachers and their African American students. The information obtained may benefit those who instruct pre-service teachers.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. In no way should you feel that you are being coerced to participate. Your participation has no bearing on your teaching performance evaluation.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. We will use your initials rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a password protected computer. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally. I will destroy any audiotapes I make once they are transcribed. If, in answering questions, you allude to other staff or faculty members of your school, they will not be identified by name when the interviews are transcribed. If the administration of the school should desire to have information released to them, every effort will be made to maintain the anonymity of the subjects of the study and to insure the confidentiality of their answers to interview

questions. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board and/or the Office Human Research Protection (OHRP)).

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Dr. Carlos R.McCray (epscrm@langate.gsu.edu) (404) 413-8267, or Debbie Barrineau (dbarrineau@gmail.com) (770-887-8151) if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below. If you are willing to participate in this study and be audio taped or photographed, please sign below.

_____ _____

Participant Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

APPENDIX B

Georgia State University

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Interview Schedule

Title: Investigating Novice White Teachers in African American Classrooms: A Phenomenological Investigation of Cultural Responsiveness

Principal Investigator: Dr. Carlos R. McCray

Student Principal Investigator: Debra J. Barrineau

I. Interview One: Interview prior to first classroom observation.

These individual interviews with the novice teachers will be approximately an hour. They will take place outside of their classroom.

The interview will consist of four questions. These questions will be:

1. Describe your educational experiences and professional background.
2. As a novice white teacher, how capable do you feel that you are in relating to students whose life experiences are very different from your own?
3. What are the challenges and demands of teaching cross-culturally?
4. How have your life experiences prepared you for teaching cross-culturally?

I will probe and ask more questions as it relates to my topic. By this, I mean that I will take answers the novice teachers provide and use them to generate additional questions that may encourage the teachers to elaborate and expand their answers.

II. Observation One

I will observe in each novice teacher's classroom for approximately 30 minutes to an hour. The students will be uninvolved bystanders during the observation, in which the teachers will be the primary focus.

III. Interview Two

A follow-up interview will take place with the teachers away from their classrooms. This interview will be approximately one hour.

1. How successful do you feel that you are in relating to your African American students?

2. How successful do you feel in meeting their needs, both academic and non-academic?
3. During the classroom observation, can you think of specific evidences of your meeting student needs?
4. How is your awareness of student needs reflected in the experiences you provide your students?
5. How do your actions demonstrate an understanding of meeting the cross-cultural needs of African American students?

I will probe answers the teachers provide me, to explore what evidences the teachers can illicit that demonstrates their awareness of any of the components of cross-cultural instruction with African American students. I will see how their self-reporting compares to my actual observation of classroom practices.

IV. Observation Two

A subsequent observation will be conducted with each of the teachers as a means of determining how the teachers' actions are supported by their own self-reporting in the interview. I will observe the novices a second time to determine the level of expectation they set for their students and the tone with which they engage students and provide support. Again, the students will be uninvolved bystanders in the observation process. This observation will last thirty minutes to an hour.

V. Interview Three

The third interview will take place with the teachers away from their classrooms. The third interview will be approximately one hour in length.

1. How do you feel you could have been better prepared for cross-cultural instruction?
2. In what ways could you have been better prepared to meet the academic and non-academic needs of your African American students?
3. What professional development would provide, or could have provided, you the greatest support in helping you relate to your African American students?
4. Explain with examples.
5. From your experiences in the classroom thus far, what do you consider to be key components of effective teaching with African American students?
6. What makes you an effective educator of African American students?

7. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths in the cross-cultural classroom?
8. In what area of your practice to you see the greatest need for improvement?

I will continue to probe the responses of the novice teachers and ask them further questions when needed, in order to have them elaborate on their answers and to give more in-depth responses.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. What is it like to be a novice teacher?
2. What is your background and how did you come to be in a cross-cultural teaching environment?
3. What are some of the factors that lead you to this type of career?
4. As a novice White teacher in a classroom with predominantly African American students, to what extent do you feel that you are able to relate to your students?
5. How do you feel about teaching students whose life experiences are very different from your own?
6. What are some of the demands and challenges of teaching cross-culturally?
7. Can you think of things you have learned in the first half of the year that will help you in the second half of this school year?
8. Are there experiences in your own personal history that make you feel more or less prepared to teach cross-culturally?
9. In what way did your preservice training enable you to (a) identify specific needs of your African –American students and (2) provide experiences to effectively meet those needs?
10. What are the academic needs of your students?

11. What are the non-academic needs of your students?

12. How can you go about meeting their needs?

13. What would you consider to be key components to effective teaching in a classroom with predominantly African American students?

14. How do you feel you could you have been better prepared for cross-cultural instruction?

15. In what ways could you have been better prepared to meet the academic and non-academic needs of your African American students?

16. What professional development would provide, or could have provided you the greatest support in helping you relate to your African American students?

17. As you reflect on this year, what do you feel are the benefits to the students of having you as a teacher?

18. From you experiences thus far, what do you consider to be key components of effective teaching with African American students?

19. What makes you an effective educator of African American students?

20. How can you help the students experience more success?

21. Explain how meeting their needs may have to take precedence over your plans for the day.

22. What are some things that the students are leaving here with that they didn't have before arriving in your classroom?

23. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths in the cross-cultural classroom?

24. In what area of your practice do you see the greatest need for improvement?