Experienced Special Education Teachers' Knowledge and Use of

Culturally Responsive Practices

BY

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THESIS
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my ever-patient, ever-supportive, ever-loving husband Tedd. It is truly because of you that I have achieved this goal. I will be forever grateful for your belief in my ability to accomplish this task and for all of the encouragement and support you provided along the way. Angel and Gabby, thank you for being such wonderfully fun distractions.

This work is also dedicated to my mother and grandmother; I tried to make you proud and I know that you are smiling down on me.

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Summary

The increase in diversity of the school population and the push of federal mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the implementation of standards-based curriculum has increased the pressure on educators to meet the needs of all students but in particular CLD students with and without disabilities. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine experienced special education teachers knowledge and use of culturally responsive teaching practices with students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Nine experienced special education teachers teaching elementary grade students in large Midwestern city and suburban school districts engaged in two semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and one phone interview to describe their knowledge and use of culturally responsive practices in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Data were analyzed using the grounded theory orientation to qualitative inquiry and were framed by the commonalities across the research on culturally responsive teaching. When using grounded theory, data analysis involves coding data, constantly comparing the data to develop categories, and generating theory. All of these processes occur simultaneously from the start of data collection.

The questions for this study were: 1) What are experienced special education teachers knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching?, and 2) How do experienced special education teachers use their knowledge and understanding about culturally responsive teaching and their knowledge and understanding about their students to inform their planning and instruction? The study results are presented in two sections as they relate to the research questions and the discussion is organized around five common ideas or principles of culturally responsive teaching. Implications for future research and practice are also discussed.

Chapter I: Introduction

Student populations in public school classrooms across the nation are increasingly from backgrounds that are identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (Ford, 2012). Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of public school students in kindergarten through grade twelve who were White decreased from 67 to 54 percent, while the percentage of students from other racial and ethnic groups increased from 32 to 48 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Historically, students from diverse backgrounds have not performed as well in school as students who are more acculturated (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, Cutting, Leo, & D'Emilio, 2005). Due to this demographic shift, the number of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education classrooms has also risen (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011; Walker, 2012). According to the 2010 Status and Trends in Racial and Ethnic Groups the number of African American, American Indian/Alaskan and Hispanic children receiving special education services in kindergarten through grade twelve has surpassed that of both the White and Asian/Pacific Islander population of student in the United States (Aud, Fox & KewalRamani, 2010).

The shift in the student population across the United States has created classrooms that include students who are also linguistically diverse. Statistics indicate that the number of students in U.S. schools who speak English as a second language has considerably increased for more than a decade (Goldenberg, 2008). Students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) currently represent approximately 10% or more of the public school population (Kena et al., 2014). In 2008, Goldenberg reported that five states not normally characterized by their linguistically and/or ethnically diverse populations "each saw an increase in the English language

learner population of at least 300 percent between 1994-95 and 2004-05" (p. 10). According to

data gathered the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics,

"fifty-seven percent of ELL youths across the nation are U.S. born and up to 27 percent of all

ELL adolescents are members of the second generation and 30 percent are third generation"

(Kena et al, 2014). This indicates that many students educated entirely in U.S. schools still

cannot speak English well. ELL students in the U.S. come from over 400 different language

backgrounds, while 50% of these students were born in the U.S. the majority of these students

speak Spanish as their first language (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2007).

For the purposes of this study culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are

defined as those individuals who come from traditionally underrepresented ethnic/racial

backgrounds and/or linguistic minority groups (e.g. students who do not speak English as their

native language (Sullivan, 2011). These students may also be defined by socioeconomic status,

national origin, English proficiency, gender, and sexual orientation (Au and Blake, 2003).

Though the number of culturally and linguistically diverse students in U.S. schools has

grown dramatically over the last few years, the teaching force has remained primarily white,

middle-class, and female (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Lowenstein, 2009; Sleeter, 2001).

Few of these teachers have had formal training in how to teach students who are culturally

diverse including ELLs or how to modify coursework to address their unique and specific needs,

hence they are ill-prepared (Lucas, Villegas, & Gonzalez, 2008). This is particularly true for

teachers of CLD students with disabilities (Hoover, Klingner, Baca, & Patton, 2008; Klingner, &

Bianco, 2006).

Many culturally and linguistically diverse students enter school with experiences that are

quite different from those expected in today's classrooms and as stated previously, they are often

taught by teachers who are not members of their own backgrounds and/or communities (Ford, 2012; Harry & Klingner, 2006). On average the academic achievement of students who are culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse has not matched that of their White peers (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010). These students' diverse learning needs implicate the need for multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching practices to be implemented in all classrooms.

The increase in diversity of the school population and the push of federal mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the implementation of standards-based curriculum has increased the pressure on educators to meet the needs of all students but in particular CLD students with and without disabilities (Santamaria, 2009; Shealey, Alvarez McHatton, & Wilson, 2011). Under NCLB teachers, schools and districts are mandated to give significant consideration and attention to the educational outcomes of children who are typically overlooked or ignored, including students with disabilities and students of racial and ethnic subgroups and mandates that the educational needs of all students be addressed (PL107-110, 2001). Culturally and linguistically diverse learners who are enrolled in special education classrooms face additional challenges when taught by teachers who lack adequate training to meet their diverse educational and language needs. (Harry & Klingner, 2006). In a descriptive study of services to ELL students, Zehler and Fleishman (2003) reported that many ELL students with special needs were not receiving adequate services due to the paucity of qualified teachers (as cited in McCardle et al., 2005). The researchers found this to be particularly troublesome because at the time almost a quarter of all U.S. public school teachers were responsible for teaching at least one ELL special education student in their classroom during the 2001-2002 school year (McCardle et al., 2005). According to Aud et al (2010) less than a third of all teachers in the U.S. working

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with LEP or ELL students had received training for working with this population and furthermore, of those who had received training, less than 3% had earned a degree in either ESL or bilingual education. Samson and Collins (2012) reported that though there are teachers who have gained expertise in instructing ELLs, there are still many more teachers who have not acquired those skills. They content that all teachers should be prepared to work with ELLs because due to the shift in demographics, most if not all teachers can expect to have at least one student in their classroom who does not speak English fluently (Samson & Collins, 2012).

Culturally and linguistically diverse students face many challenges in the educational setting (Barnes, 2006) and because they don't perform well in the general school curriculum, many of them are relegated to receive special education services (Artiles, Kozeliski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010). Many CLD students are disproportionately represented in special education classrooms (Shealey, Alvarez McHatton, & Wilson, 2011). The disproportionate representation of students from certain racial and/or ethnic groups in special education has been a concern for more than 30 years. According to Coutinho and Oswald (2000), disproportionality refers to the over- or under-representation of a given population or group that is defined by the following characteristics; socioeconomic status, national origin, English proficiency, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity. More CLD students are served in special education than would be expected based on their percentage in the general school population. Artiles, Harry, Reschly, and Chinn, (2002), Patton (1998) and others (i.e. Kena, et al., 2014; Sullivan & Bal 2013) have documented that Afro American males and Hispanics are particularly overrepresented in those classrooms serving students with intellectual disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders. More specifically African American students are overrepresented in specific learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, intellectual or developmental

disabilities and speech and language disabilities, while Hispanic students are particularly overrepresented in the specific learning disabilities category (Aud et al., 2010).

Until recently it was thought that ELLs were overrepresented overall in special education categories. More recently gathered national data suggest that ELLs are underrepresented overall in special education classrooms (Aud et al., 2010; Sullivan & Bal, 2013; Zehler & Fleischman, 2003). Underrepresented means that a smaller percentage of ELLs are receiving services than expected based on the overall population they represent. To further complicate the matter, even though ELLs are underrepresented overall in special education classrooms, they tend to be overrepresented in certain special education categories like intellectual disabilities (McCardle et al., 2005, Sullivan, 2011).

The over-and under-representation of CLD students in special education classrooms highlights the need for more accurate identification and placement of students. There is also the concern regarding not only the shortage of special education teachers in general but also the shortage of properly qualified personnel for culturally and linguistically diverse students with and without disabilities especially in urban and rural settings (Samson & Collins, 2012; Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Flippin, 2004).

Researcher studying the area of disproportionality concedes that it is a multifaceted problem caused by a variety of factors (Artiles et al. 2010; Skiba et al., 2008; Sullivan, 2013). Factors contributing to the over-representation of CLD students in special education classrooms have been attributed to assessment bias, socio-economic variables, individual and school variables, and lack of teacher preparation in issues of cultural diversity (i.e. Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2003; Countinho et al., 2002; Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005; Sullivan, 2013; Valles, 1998).

Other factors affecting the ability of teachers to address diverse students' individual learning needs include teachers' understanding of their own personal ethnicity and culture; as well as knowledge of how culture influences teaching and learning (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2003; Banks & Banks, 2004; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 1995, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Shealy, Alvarez McHatton, and Wilson (2011) contend that in order to effectively address the intersection between race, culture and disability, "all educators, including those in special education, must understand the powerful influence of these factors on student learning". Gay (2000, 2002b) asserts that academic outcomes for students who are linguistically and culturally diverse would improve if educators made the effort to make sure that classroom instruction was conducted in a way that better connects students' home lives with the academic curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching practices provide avenues that connect students' prior learning with the acquisition of new knowledge while at the same time demonstrating an appreciation for students' cultures and languages (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Lee, 2004; Sleeter, 2011).

Instructional approaches to integrating cultural heritage and prior knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse students into the classroom curriculum have been the topic of many research studies (Nieto, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Gay, 2000). Among these, Culturally Responsive Teaching is an approach to teaching and learning that has been espoused to improve academic outcomes of students who are linguistically and culturally diverse (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lee, 2004; Sleeter, 2012). According to Gay (2002a, 2010) culturally responsive teachers diligently work toward developing the knowledge and skills that are necessary to possess in order to support linguistically and culturally diverse students in making academic gains, developing language and building sociocultural competence. As

previously stated, many studies have examined pre-service teachers' perceptions of their ability to work with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and implement culturally responsive instructional practices (Correa, Hudson, & Hayes, 2004; Frye, Button, Kelly & Button, 2010; Kea, Trent, & Davis, 2002; McSwain, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; Trent & Dixson, 2004; Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox, 1998). The results of these studies, however, indicate the need to examine how experienced special educators implement the concepts learned during the pre-service program in the classroom. In particular there is a need to explore, expand, and inform the knowledge base of practicing teachers in meeting the needs of students in the special education classroom who are linguistically and culturally diverse.

The purpose of this study was to examine experienced special education teachers knowledge, understanding, and use of culturally responsive teaching practices with students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds with disabilities. The research questions for this study were: 1) What are experienced special education teachers knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching?, and 2) How do experienced special education teachers use their knowledge and understanding about culturally responsive teaching and their knowledge and understanding about their students to inform their planning and instruction?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study explored the knowledge and understandings that experienced special education teachers possessed regarding providing culturally responsive instruction for students from traditionally marginalized cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The following review of the literature addresses theoretical perspectives and empirical studies relevant to the current study.

Multicultural Education

Due to the increasing number of CLD students entering the public school system, many teacher preparation programs have incorporated multicultural education into their coursework to better prepare teachers to work with CLD students (Alvarez McHatton et al, 2009). According to Banks (1993) "Multicultural education is a reform movement designed to bring about educational equity for all students, including those from different races, ethnic groups, social classes, exceptionality, and sexual orientation" (p.21). Multicultural education came out of the civil rights movement of the 1960's and 1970's (Banks & Banks, 2004). It was during this time that African Americans began to demand change in the country's schools, colleges, and universities. In response to these demands, colleges and universities incorporated Black studies and other ethnic studies in courses and programs. Unfortunately, the courses were offered in isolation and did not bring about expected positive change to the educational system. Thus, the concept of multicultural education was developed in teacher education programs. These efforts were supported and mandated by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and NCATE. In the late 1970's, NCATE put out a standard for multicultural education that read:

Multicultural education should include but not be limited to experiences which: (1) promote analytic and evaluative abilities to confront issues such as participatory

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democracy, racism, sexism, and the parity of power; (2) develop skills for values

clarification including the manifest and latent transmission of values; (3) examine

linguistic variations and diverse learning styles as a basis for the development of

appropriate teaching strategies (Banks, 1981, p. 20).

Multicultural education programs seek to increase pre-service teachers' cultural

awareness, sensitivity, and competence in teaching CLD students (Banks, et al., 2005). Another

goal of these programs and classes was to produce teachers who could create learning

environments that were unbiased for diverse students and who could work effectively with

students for who English was not their first language (Banks, 1981; Kea & Utley, 1998).

Multicultural education is viewed as more than just a set of skills and procedures that

teachers need to learn. Au and Blake (2003) and Sleeter (2001) state that multicultural education

provides future, novice, and experienced teachers with a process for learning to analyze their

own cultural perspective and identity, which can lead to better understanding of themselves and

others. The fundamental goal is for teachers to develop culturally responsive ways of interacting,

communicating, and sharing knowledge with their students and their families (Banks & Banks,

2007). Ford and Grantham (2003) purport that to become more culturally competent, teachers

should at the very least: a) examine their own attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about persons

from diverse backgrounds and acknowledge the ways in which these affect the educational

outcomes of CLD students; b) know and use appropriate and accurate information about CLD

groups to inform teaching and learning; c) learn to infuse multicultural materials into the

curriculum and instruction to maximize all aspects of student learning; and d) build partnerships

with families, communities, and organizations. Pre-service teachers are not expected to master

all of these skills by the time they complete their program but to have a strong base on which to

build upon as they continue to gain experience, knowledge and practice. According to Irvine (2003), practicing teachers who matriculated through a teacher preparation program that emphasized multicultural education were more affirming of their students' cultural backgrounds and ways of being.

In order to extend the knowledge base and understanding of multicultural education, Sonia Nieto (2005) conducted research with practicing teachers. In her explanation of multicultural education she outlined "seven basic principles". These principles were; "Multicultural education is antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, a process, and critical pedagogy" (p. 346).

As stated previously, students from certain ethnic and linguistic backgrounds continue to be overrepresented in special education classrooms. It was hoped that teachers who complete both general education and special education teacher preparation programs that have a major emphasis on multicultural education would not only be instrumental in reducing the number of CLD students referred to special education but also improve the educational outcomes of those students once they are placed in special education classrooms. Even though concerted efforts have been made through the implementation of multicultural curriculum in teacher preparation programs, many teachers are still entering diverse classrooms feeling unprepared to effectively teach all students (Hollins & Torres-Guzman, 2005).

Critical Race Theory

Much like multicultural education, Critical Race theory (CRT) aims to shake up the status quo (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Also like multicultural education, CRT emerged in the midst of the civil rights movement as part of the study and analysis of law with the aim of challenging the claims that the law was neutral and colorblind (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT purports that

thinking this way brings about and maintains racism by refuting the structural and deep seeded discrimination that exist in social institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The theory operates under the following assumptions; 1) racism is normal in the United States; 2) critiques liberalism and argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiary of civil rights movement; 3) argues against the slow "pace" of reform; 4) critiques legal victories and educational reforms; and 5) uses counter-storytelling as a tool for engagement (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

CRT has been applied to professional disciplines such as policy studies, education, and women's studies. According to Yosso (2002) and Smith-Maddox and Solorzano (2002) the following five themes support the use of CRT in the study of teacher preparation programs: (1) Race and racism is placed in the forefront, while at the same time recognizing how the interaction of race, sexuality, class, and gender might affect typically under-served individuals; 2) The challenge to traditional ways of thinking and being; (3) The commitment to the ideology that everyone deserves equal political, social, and educational opportunities, thus expressing a value for diversity and a willingness to fight injustice; (4) The focus on the lived experiences and knowledge of ethnically diverse individuals; and (5) The use of knowledge gleaned from various fields of study in order to gain a more thorough understanding of these experiences. According to Abrams and Moio (2009), the field of education has utilized CRT as a way to examine how teacher preparation programs are infusing cultural competence into their pre-service programs as it relates to multicultural teacher training (see for example Katsarou, 2009; Katsarou, Picower, and Stovall, 2010; Smith-Maddox and Solorzano, 2002). When used to analyze and critique teacher education programs, CRT brings to light the many ways in which teachers are not well prepared for the realities of their increasingly diverse student population (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Dixson & Rouseau, 2005; Katsarou, 2009). Researchers purport that

examination of teacher education programs through this lens can lead to substantial changes being made at the program level that would prepare all teachers to acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are necessary to teach diverse learners effectively (Dixson & Rouseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

CRT perspective has also been used to examine racism and the power of whiteness in K-12 classrooms (i.e. Bernal, 2002; Terry, 2013; Zembylas, 2010). CRT maintains that race should be at the center of educational research and strongly encourages researchers to examine school practices and policies that perpetuate racism both overtly and covertly. (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Chapman (2007) used CRT and Portraiture to evaluate the success and failure in an urban classroom of a White teacher using multicultural texts with a group of racially diverse students. The classroom was functioning under a court-ordered desegregation reform. The researchers examined teachers' interactions with diverse students. The data collected for this study included multiple interviews with the classroom teacher, focus groups with students and observations in the classroom. Chapman (2007) concluded that combining the use of portraiture with CRT analysis transformed how the teacher viewed the interactions between themselves and their students. Using this approach gave the teachers a clearer perspective of their interactions and allowed them to expand and improve their instructional practices.

One of the goals of CRT is to give "voice" to students who are culturally and linguistically diverse by telling their stories through counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is a way of exposing and critiquing conversations and situations that encourage and maintain racial stereotypes (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Fernandez (2002) used student narrative to examine the racist school practices exhibited toward a Latino high school student as well as to highlight the student's ability to overcome these obstacles. Using qualitative interview methods Fernandez

captured the high school experience of one Latino student. In his narrative, the student described the teachers at the school as being "predominantly White teachers [who were] out of touch with their students and did not seem to enjoy their jobs" (Fernandez, 2002, p.51).

Decuir and Dixson (2004) purport that it is of utmost importance for educational researchers to examine the role of race by studying the educational experiences of students of color. The researchers used CRT to examine the experiences of two African-American students enrolled in a majority white high school in an affluent neighborhood. The goal of the study was to examine the impact of racism on the students' academic experiences. In their research they explored and exposed various elements of CRT (Decuir and Dixson, 2004). The African-American students in the study discussed how, at a school that claimed to honor and celebrate diversity, they often felt left out and unimportant. In a different study using quantitative and qualitative methods, Moon, Jung, Bang, Kwon, and Suh (2009) investigated American teachers in five New York school districts, examining how they took culture into consideration in their teaching practices and how their perspectives regarding their Korean students' influenced their students' and parents' experiences at school. The teachers' interview responses highlighted a number of issues. Among them were the teachers' inability to recognize their students' cultures, their exclusion of racial differences and a resistance toward cultural sensitivity and the differing needs of Korean children and their families. The study suggested that it is vital for teachers to change their perspectives about teaching and learning in diverse classrooms in order to promote student success and parent satisfaction and engagement.

In effort to examine the ways in which consciousness of race affected the development of culturally responsive understanding in pre-service teachers, Gere, Buehler, Dallavis & Haviland (2009) employed the tenets of CRT. During a Teachers for Tomorrow (TFT) one-semester Study

Group course, the researchers used imaginative literature as a way to engage students in examining the tenets of culturally relevant practices (CRP). The study findings offer insight into the ways that new teachers struggle with being culturally responsive and offered strategies that teacher educators could use to assist pre-service students in their efforts to wrestle with issues of race.

Critical race theory is about challenging the dominant mind-set of society and building shared understanding of the strengths within diverse communities. The use of this framework in connection with Multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching has the potential to prepare teacher candidates and experienced teachers to examine longstanding attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and practices about themselves, their schools and how cycles of oppression are maintained and perpetuated. This perspective can also be effective in examining the impact of race and racism in k-12 schools by giving voice to students and others who might not otherwise be noticed.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRTeaching)

As an extension of the multicultural education framework, scholars and researchers concerned about the serious academic achievement gap that has persisted among ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse and low-income students, developed a theory of culturally responsive pedagogy. This theory gives guidance and structure to educators who are trying to make education more successful for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The theory is based on the principle that rather than being viewed as deficits, students' backgrounds and culture should be considered "assets that students can and should use in the service of their learning and that teachers of all backgrounds should develop skills to teach diverse students effectively" (Nieto, 2002, p.24).

Many researchers who are interested in finding ways to improve the outcomes of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have used different terminology when discussing this theory. It has been referred to in the literature as culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally compatible, culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. Though there are subtle differences in their meanings, these terms are often used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, the term culturally responsive teaching (CRTeaching) will be used throughout.

Dimensions of CRTeaching. In her study of eight experienced, successful teachers of African American students from a small school in North Carolina, Ladson-Billings (1994) attributed their success to Culturally Responsive Teaching. She defined the term as "An approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 17-18). After conducting further research she determined that there were three common traits these teachers possessed as part of their teaching philosophies: academic success, cultural competence, and critical or sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Ladson-Billings also maintained that these traits also encompass the following principles: possess positive views of students ability to achieve; the practice of active teaching methods; teacher as facilitator; inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students in every aspect of the curriculum; cultural sensitivity; acting as agents of change regarding the school and the curriculum; placing students at the center of instruction while providing various grouping opportunities; and the purposeful use of academic language in the instructional setting. She strongly emphasized that students' culture does matter in the teaching and learning environments.

In her review of the research and her work with national projects, Gay (2000) expanded

on previous research and described culturally responsive teaching as:

> "Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (p. 16)".

For Gay (2000) CRTeaching is an intricate approach to teaching and learning that includes the

following six components: Cultural validation; Comprehensive; Multidimensional; Empowering;

Transformative; and Emancipatory. According to Gay (2000), these components of CRteaching

are "simultaneously developed along with achievement, social consciousness and critique,

cultural affirmation, competence and exchange; community building and personal connections;

individual self-worth and abilities and an ethic of caring" (p. 43). Gay goes on to state that

CRTeaching is a framework that can be utilized by all teachers in providing instruction in all

subject areas with culturally diverse students with and without disabilities.

When exhibiting the validating component of CRTeaching teachers communicate the

importance of students' cultural background and heritage. In recognizing that students have a

natural connection to their cultural background, teachers look to build meaningful connections

between home and community in order to make school experiences more relevant. When

enacting this component, teachers use a variety of instructional techniques that connect with

students' different learning styles and ways of knowing (Banks, 2006). This component also

incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials across the curriculum while

supporting and encouraging students to know and praise their cultural backgrounds as well as

that of others (Gay, 2000). In order to be able to fully validate students' diversity, teachers must

possess knowledge of their culture and an understanding of how that culture might influence students' approach to the educational setting.

CRTeaching is comprehensive in that it encourages teaching to the whole child. Ladson-Billings (1994) purports that culturally responsive teachers tap into students' intellectual, social, emotional and political ways of learning by "utilizing cultural references to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes". In her work with a group of elementary teachers, Ladson-Billings (1994) observed that the teachers had a commitment to high expectations and social action. She saw skills being explicitly taught and observed interpersonal relations as teachers and students work together toward academic success. There is a shared responsibility toward this effort and students are held accountable to one another through a communal effort.

The multidimensional aspect of CRteaching is an approach to instruction that encourages aligning curriculum across disciplines. Teachers of language arts, music, art, social studies, math, science and other areas come together to teach a particular concept from the perspective of their own discipline. This form of teaching requires teachers to use a wide range of cultural knowledge, experiences, perspectives and contributions (Gay 2000, 2010) in the classroom to engage students.

CRteaching empowers students to believe they can succeed in school and enables them to cultivate a sense of personal integrity and academic success. When enacting this component, teachers hold high and appropriate expectations while providing the needed supports for students to be successful in the academic setting as well as outside of the classroom.

Gay (2000) also adds that CRteaching makes learning transformative for all students. It first addresses the need to change the educational system as a way of decreasing the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education classrooms

while at the same time increasing their level of academic success. CRTeaching is also transformative in that it encourages students to develop sociocultural consciousness. The development of sociocultural consciousness is beneficial for all students not just those students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Banks (1991) contends that being transformative helps "students to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political and economic action" (p. 131).

Finally, Gay (2000) states that CRteaching is emancipatory. This component does not conform to the thought that there is only one way of knowing but makes knowledge and contributions of different ethnic groups available to all students. According to Gay, this knowledge is authentic, permeates the learning environment, and is applicable to students' own cultural and social realities.

Research on CRTeaching in special education classrooms. Though started in general education as a way to combat the increased over-representation of CLD students in special education classrooms, CRTeaching is espoused as a means of improving the educational outcomes for all students. Much of the research on the use of culturally responsive teaching practices has been situated in general education classrooms. In the field of special education the focus has been on developing the theoretical aspects of CRTeaching and detailing the practical application (Shealey, Alvarez McHatton, & Wilson, 2011). Much of the CRTeaching research in special education has been conducted with pre-service teachers and has focused on teacher perceptions (e.g., Correa, Hudson, & Hayes, 2004; Frye, Button, Kelly & Button, 2010; Kea, Trent, & Davis, 2002). In an effort to discover the extent to which CRTeaching practices were being implemented in the special education classrooms, Shealey, Alvarez McHatton, Wilson

(2011) conducted a review of the literature published between1999-2009. Using specific

selection criteria the authors were able to uncover 8 empirical studies conducted with pre-service

and in-service special education teachers. The topic of many of the studies reviewed included the

areas of professional development and teacher preparation. Due to the paucity of research in this

area, the authors were unable to complete the purpose of the study, which was to examine

empirical research on the use and effectiveness of CRTeaching in special education classrooms.

A more recent study conducted by Kea & Trent (2013) sought to examine the extent to which

undergraduate special education teacher candidates were able to design and deliver culturally

responsive lesson plans in their student teaching settings after receiving intensive instruction on

how to do so. The 27 special education pre-service teachers were enrolled in a methods course

which included a 60 hour field placement and a 15-week student teaching internship. The

researchers collected data from students' lesson plans, field and student teaching observations.

The results from this study indicate that the pre-service teachers were able to infuse diversity into

a majority of their lesson plans at the proficient level while 52% infused diversity during the

filed-based observations. Analysis of the student teaching observations found that only 16% of

the pre-service teachers infused diversity into their lessons.

As reflected by the studies discussed above, there is a paucity of research on CRTeaching

situated in the special education classroom, thus the literature presented in the following section

is garnered from research conducted in general education classrooms.

Teacher Characteristics. Gay (2000) asserts that teacher-training programs have the

responsibility of preparing pre-service and in-service teachers to work effectively with students

from CLD backgrounds. She identified five important areas that need to be addressed when

preparing teachers to work with diverse students in the classroom. These include: the acquisition

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of accurate information about different cultures, exhibiting a "power of caring" for diverse cultural backgrounds as a means of building a safe and accepting learning community, dialoguing about cultural diversity with diverse individuals, and designing and providing instruction that is culturally responsive and relevant (Gay, 2000).

In an examination of teacher preparation programs and her research on novice teachers Ladson-Billings (2001) discovered three assertions essential to culturally responsive teachers: 1) focusing on individual students' academic achievement through setting clear goals and expectations and providing multiple forms of assessment, 2) attaining cultural competence, while also helping students' develop cultural competence, and 3) developing a sense of sociopolitical consciousness. Ladson-Billings (2001) acknowledges that attaining these skills and utilizing these practices is not easy but teacher education programs need to be more challenging and purposeful in coaching students in their development of these skills as teachers.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) expanded on the work of Gay (2001) and Ladson-Billings (2001) and identified six important characteristics of culturally responsive teachers that include building on what students already know, demonstrating a sociocultural consciousness, understanding how students construct knowledge, knowing and understanding about the lives of their students, seeing themselves as both responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change and affirming the views of their students. Villegas and Lucas (2002) posited that these qualities are interconnected and comprise the knowledge, skills and dispositions that should be woven throughout the teacher education curriculum. They insist that in any given classroom these practices are not performed in isolation or as an add-on but must be consistently supported and present within the specific learning environment. While these qualities are important for teachers of all students, it is critical that teacher educators engage their teacher candidates in deliberate

study in these areas and exploration of the diverse interactions between their students' previous knowledge, learning needs/styles, skill sets, and the content of the curriculum. Furthermore, the work of the above researchers is directly applicable to the approaches that need to be taken when serving students with disabilities in that each student needs to be understood and incorporated into the curriculum content, instructional approaches, and assessment procedures.

Many teachers who are responsible for improving the instruction of CLD students have the desire to implement culturally responsive instructional practices but often have a difficult time putting their knowledge into action (Garmon, 2004; Howard, 2003). This is sometimes due to the constraints of having to adhere to mandated standards-based curriculum and the lack of confidence in their abilities to execute culturally responsive practices (Siwatu, 2011). Teachers who possess the ability to plan and deliver culturally responsive instruction can improve the educational outcomes of all of their students but particularly CLD students with disabilities.

In culturally responsive teaching, teachers' build on students' language and background by making connections to extend their academic and literacy development (Gay, 2000). Both Ladson-Billings (1994) and Delpit (1995) stated that when students' real-life experiences were recognized and when curriculum was connected to their backgrounds, they were more interested in the material and better able to understand complex ideas. A lack of connection to their backgrounds can cause students to become disengaged with instructional activities. Making significant connections between the students' home culture and the school culture increases the opportunity for learning to take place (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2002).

Researchers suggest that culturally responsive educators express and exhibit high expectations for students through providing challenging academic curricula. But students can't meet the demands of the curriculum without the use of some kind of support from the teacher.

Research conducted in teachers' classrooms indicates that there are several categories of support exhibited by teachers in culturally responsive classrooms to assist their students in meeting their educational goals. Some of the supports used by teachers include modeling (Conrad, Gong, Sipp, & Wright, 2004; Jimenez & Gertsen, 1999; Leonard, Napp & Adeleke, 2009), and using students' strengths as instructional starting points (Brenner, 1998; Brown, 2003: Powell, 1997). The teachers in these studies frequently planned activities or a set of activities that allowed students to have positive initial encounters with the lesson content. In a study of the perceptions of Latino and White high school students, Garza (2009) found that many students viewed providing academic support in the classroom as a way to demonstrate care for them as individuals.

Creating and maintaining a cooperative environment in the classroom is another way teachers support students in meeting high expectations. The reviewed literature indicated activities like morning circle, teacher sharing of self, and classmate interviews that are aimed at creating a sense of belonging and community in the classroom (Brown, 2003; Howard, 2001a; Phuntsog, 2001). This sense of belonging and acceptance allows students to feel safe, hence enhancing their ability to concentrate on their academics. Overall, CRTeaching is concerned with cooperation, community and connectedness in the instructional environment. Dependence on one another and cooperation are principles of culturally responsive classrooms that go against the concept of competition and promotion of self that is often found in most general education classrooms.

Another way in which research indicate teachers can support CLD students in meeting high expectations is by having high behavioral expectations (Osborne, 1996). When conducting interviews with 13 K-12 teaches in an urban setting, Brown (2003, 2004) found that teachers

reported making classroom behavior rules explicit, and communicated their expectations for student behavior on a regular basis. The teachers in Brown's study consistently enforced the rules when they were violated and did not engage in long discussions or arguments with students regarding the consequences (Brown, 2004). Other researchers have found that teachers effectively practicing culturally responsive pedagogy dealt with problems as quickly as possible and called parents to the school to offer assistance when they were faced with similar issues (Howard, 2001b, Bergeron, 2008).

Ladson-Billings (1995b, 2001) and others (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) assert that the goal of culturally responsive teaching is not to have students achieve and acquire the norms of the dominant culture but to assist students in developing their own positive ethnic and cultural identities. Researchers found that teachers accomplished this by building on students' background knowledge and establishing relationships between school and home (Bergeron, 2008; Conrad et al., 2004; Souto-Manning, 2009; Hefflin, 2002). There are many ways for teachers to accomplish this task. Brown's (2004) study of 13 teachers' practices found that many of the teachers took time out of each day to communicate individually with many of their students about non-academic matters, including their lives outside of the classroom. Doing this allowed teachers to develop personal relationships with their students, gain knowledge of their students interests and activities, thus giving them the ability to better build stronger bridges between the students' knowledge base and the curriculum. These practices also indicated a level of concern and care that is important in building a solid foundation for positive relationships.

In a study of two high school teachers involved in efforts at enacting culturally relevant practices in ninth and tenth grade mathematics afterschool program that included students who were predominately black ELLs from Africa, Leonard, Napp, & Adeleke (2009) described the

teachers use of counting methods from their students' home culture to teach mathematics strategies and procedures in an effort to assist students in making connections to the curriculum. These teachers also attempted to build bridges for students by activating prior knowledge relating to a particular topic or using examples from the children's lives when teaching certain concepts.

Having the ability and desire to honor students' home language is another important characteristic of culturally responsive teachers. Many of the teachers involved in the reviewed studies worked hard to assist students in building connections between home and school by using the students' home language whether the language was familiar to them or not (Howard, 2001a; Powell, 1997). Besides allowing the students to feel validated in who they are, this strategy helps students grasp English concepts better and acquire language skills more rapidly, as well as provides translation and assists teachers in relating to students in a way that would build positive relationships (Baca & Cervantes, 2004).

Ladson-Billings (1995) states that teachers have to not only encourage academic success and cultural competence but they also need to help students understand and critically examine social injustices and inequalities around them. Delpit (1995) argues that acknowledging that there is a culture of power requires teachers to make sure students understand and are aware of the rules of the culture of power. Culturally responsive teachers bring to the forefront the dynamics of the larger society culture to those students who typically travel along the outskirts of it or are left out altogether (Gay, 2010). One of the ways in which teachers can build students social consciousness is by being explicit about the ways of the world and giving students the necessary tools to navigate and succeed in that world (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Another way for teachers to build the social consciousness of students is in sharing power in the classroom. This

is accomplished by giving students the opportunity to contribute to important classroom decisions regarding rules, assignments, and assessment possibilities (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2010; Gutierrez, 2000).

Culturally responsive teachers understand, values, and encourage parental participation in the classroom (Nieto, 2011, Obiaker, 2007). Encouraging the students' families and community members to participate in various school activities is an effective way of communicating to students that where they come from is important. In the reviewed research on culturally responsive teaching some teachers attempted to communicate this concept by visiting students' homes (Hyland, 2005). Though they were not always able to do so, the home visit was seen by teachers, as a way to make personal connections with the families of their students and build strong relationships. Though the home visit is a practice that many teachers are not able to accomplish due to time constraints and travel issues, inviting students' parents, siblings, extended family and community members to take part in various classroom activities is a way to make activities more relevant to students and to show students that they are an integral part of the classroom community (Ford, Howard, Harris III, & Tyson, 2000).

Instructional Practices Specific to English Language Learners

To provide effective, culturally responsive instruction for ELLs with disabilities, teachers need to work hard to create culturally responsive teaching and learning environments (Gay, 2000). The implementation of validated practices allows educators to appropriately address the learning needs of all students but particularly those who are struggling learners. Ortiz (1997) stated that " the best programs for English language learners with disabilities incorporate supportive culturally responsive learning environments and validated instructional practices" (p. 326) which include incorporating students' culture and language in the teaching and learning

process, communicating value and respect for students backgrounds, reinforcing students'

cultural identities, and teaching critical language, academic and social skills.

In a review of the literature, Klingner and Bianco (2006) studied several validated

approaches for developing reading comprehension for ELL students with learning disabilities. In

some studies graphic organizers facilitated the learning of key concepts and vocabulary for ELL

students with LD. Students experienced positive results when various organizers were used to

learn vocabulary as well as to increase reading comprehension. Klingner and Bianco (2006)

found that Modified Reciprocal Teaching, when adapted for middle school ELL students with

learning disabilities, was effective in activating the prior knowledge of students and assisting

them in connecting to new concepts and ideas. This strategy was helpful to students because it

gave them the chance to practice speaking, collaborate with each other and to communicate their

own ideas. Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) and Classwide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) were

also found to be effective strategies. CSR is a multi-component comprehension strategy that

promotes vocabulary and reading comprehension and cooperative learning (Klingner & Bianco,

2006). Using tutor-tutee dyads, this strategy gives students with disabilities increased

opportunities to respond, permitting more time to practice speaking English and to learn from

each other.

Grown out of work focused on CWPT, Peer-Assisted Learning (PALS) has been shown

to improve reading outcomes for students with and without disabilities and was found to have

potentially positive effects for English Language Learners by the Institute of Education Sciences

What Works Clearinghouse (2010). PALS is a reciprocal classwide peer-tutoring strategy that

includes three main activities, partner reading with retelling, paragraph shrinking, and prediction

relay. Saenz, Fuchs, and Fuchs (2005) conducted a study implementing PALS with 132 native

Spanish-speaking ELL students in grades 3-6 while another researcher used the same strategy with 76 first-grade Spanish-speaking ELLs with and without disabilities (Calhoon, Otaiba, Chihak, King & Avalos, 2007). In the first study, which took place in a transitional bilingual education classroom, general education teachers were randomly assigned to a PALS group or a control group. The strategy was implemented to the intervention group during the regular reading period 3 days a week for a period of fifteen weeks. The researchers' findings indicated not only did application of the PALS strategy improve the reading comprehension of ELL students with disabilities but also for all students across abilities. This is a good example of the assertion that strategies and approaches that are supportive and beneficial for students with disabilities and for those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, can also yield positive results for other students.

The second study (Calhoon et al., 2007) was conducted in a two-way bilingual immersion program. Students were randomly assigned to PALS or a comparison group. PALS students received thirty hours of peer-mediated early literacy intervention 3 days a week that included carefully scripted lessons, teacher presentations and feedback, and student practice. The results indicated that overall, PALS students' demonstrated significantly greater growth than comparison students on all but letter naming fluency processes. These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy in improving students' reading comprehension skills in English.

When working with ELLs with disabilities it is important for teachers and others involved in their education to distinguish between academic language skills and conversational language skills (Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008). Mastery of academic language is probably the single most important determinate of academic success for individual ELL students (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). Several factors can affect the process of acquiring

reading skills in a second language (L2). These include the individual students' reading proficiency in his/her first language (L1), the type of instruction, and the degree of overlap in the oral and written characteristics of the ELLs L1 and L2 (Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008). Researchers contend that acquiring these skills is not an easy task even for the best of teachers. Proficient use and control of academic language is vital to content-area learning (Klinger, Hoover, & Baca, 2008).

Academic vocabulary plays a prominent role as students read to learn concepts, ideas, and facts in content-area classrooms (Goldenberg, 2008). When making decisions regarding instruction and interventions teachers would be remise if they do not consider the importance of oral language development and the affect it may have on student's acquisition of reading skills (Baca & Cervantes, 2004). After reviewing research focused on studies of interventions conducted with students who were recommended by their teachers for interventions, Rivera, Moughamian, Lesaux and Francis (2009) provided six recommendations for interventions to improve reading and language development of ELLs. The recommendations included 1) delivering instruction within a response to intervention (RTI) model, 2) closely matching the students' needs with explicit and intensive instruction, 3) focusing on a combination of skills during early literacy using programs like Read Naturally and Reading Mastery, 4) using peer-assisted learning (PALS) in the early grades, 5) using instruction that builds vocabulary and background knowledge, and 6) using active instructional strategies such as summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting.

In a report prepared for the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, and Scarcella (2007) provided five recommendation for improving the reading achievement and English language development

of English learners in the elementary grades. These included providing intensive small-group instruction focusing on the five core reading elements (phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), providing high-quality vocabulary instruction throughout the day, providing curricula and supplemental curricula to accompany core reading, and mathematics to support the development of formal and/or academic English.

Lopez-Reyna's (1996) investigation into students' transition from teacher-directed instruction to a more student-centered setting supports the use of native language supports with English learners with disabilities. The study was conducted over the course of 15 months in a self-contained bilingual special education classroom of first through third graders. Lopez-Reyna concluded that the use of native language supports and more meaningful instruction assisted students in the development of reading and writing skills. Many students increased their involvement in activities and the quality of their contributions when they were allowed to use their primary language in connection with whole language instruction.

Sheltered instruction. In order to address the instructional needs of ELLs, sheltered instruction has been identified as an effective practice for assisting students in gaining access to content material while acquiring English skills. Sheltered instruction is a teaching approach that is characterized as the use of traditional teaching methods and second language learning principles to strengthen ELL's ability to learn and master academic content and promotes English language development (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013). When using this instructional method, teachers present materials and content in strategic ways using clear and understandable English alongside a variety of scaffolding techniques that make learning meaningful and promotes English language development.

According to Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, (2008), the model works best when used across general education content subjects that include ELLs and other students who struggle but is also very effective for students enrolled in isolated English as Second Language (ESL) courses. When incorporating the model into the instructional environment, teachers utilize research-based strategies and methods that have been proven to be effective with all students while also paying particular attention to methods specific to improving the educational outcomes for non-native English speakers (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2008). Some of the unique features of the sheltered instruction model include adapting academic content to the language proficiency level of the student; emphasizing key vocabulary; using a lot of supplementary materials; and modifying teacher speech in order to ensure student understanding (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2008). This" comprehensible input" also includes clear explanations of academic tasks and using a variety of instructional techniques.

Sheltered Instruction Protocol. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was developed as a way of regulating the use of sheltered instruction practices, and to improve the effectiveness of instruction by providing a guide for teachers in how to use effective practices systematically (Echevarria & Graves, 2007). The tool also provides a way for teachers to reflect on their practices to improve their teaching. Initially created as a research observation instrument, it was used as a rubric that allowed researchers to score teachers along a continuum of performance for each of the 30 features to determine how teachers of students who were ELLs were including the essential features of effective Sheltered Instruction in their lessons. As the research progressed, the protocol evolved into a lesson planning and delivery approach known as the SIOP model (Short & Echevarria, 1999).

The SIOP is comprised of 30 features, grouped into eight essential components that help make academic content more comprehensible for ELLs. The components are: Lesson Preparation, which involves incorporating language and content objectives, supplementary materials, adaptations and meaningful content; Building background knowledge; Comprehensible input, which involves using appropriate speech, clear explanations and a variety of techniques; Strategies, which involves explicitly providing students with techniques that will assist in information retrieval and providing support across the curriculum while encouraging critical, reflective and metacognitive thinking skills; Interaction; Practice/Application; Lesson delivery; and Review and assessment, which involves evaluating student learning, giving appropriate and timely feedback and assessing the teachers' summation of important lesson objectives and concepts (Echevarria, et al., 2008). It is expected that teachers using this model will integrate these features over the course of a week of instruction and not in every lesson.

Research with 440 middle school students demonstrated that SIOP could have significant positive outcomes for English language learners (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). This longitudinal study was conducted over the course of two years in one West Coast and two school East Coast public school districts. 346 of the students were selected for the intervention classes and 94 students were identified for the comparison group. The intervention teachers participated in 3-day staff development institutes on the SIOP model several times throughout the study. These teachers implemented the SIOP model, were videotaped and provided feedback three times per year. The comparison teachers were also videotaped but did not receive any training or feedback on their lessons. An expository writing prompt was used to measure students' academic literacy development. This assessment, the Illinois Measurement of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE), was used to measure ELL's English proficiency. Results indicated that students

whose teachers implemented the SIOP model performed slightly better than did the comparison group on a task that closely mirrored academic assignments that ELLs must perform in standards-based classrooms.

Though the research on the SIOP model is limited and does not consistently include students with disabilities, preliminary data from current research further indicates that the SIOP model is a promising approach to helping ELLs with and without disabilities develop language and literacy skills across the content areas (SIOP Institute, 2011). Some researchers have acknowledged that the model is beneficial for ELLs with learning and behavior disabilities. (Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Lopez-Reyna, 2002).

Study Rational

Due to the enactment of historical social events along with current political issues and the continued growth of a diverse population in the United States, there is a need for teachers to become more culturally competent and use culturally responsive teaching practices as a means of addressing the needs of all students with particular focus on those students who are culturally, linguistically and academically diverse and those with disabilities. Today's teachers (both general and special education) are challenged with meeting the academic needs of a student population that is increasingly culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse. Many teacher education programs have made a concerted effort to infuse multicultural education into their teacher preparation programs as a way to better prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs CLD students (Alvarez McHatton, Keller, Shircliffe, & Zalaquett, 2009; Siwatu, 2011). Though past and present research indicates the benefits of culturally responsive teaching for encouraging students' to develop pride in their culture, building student's self-esteem, affirming and building upon students' native language, and for facilitating new knowledge acquisition for

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diverse students, there has been very little research conducted on how these practices are utilized and understood by experienced special education teachers of students with disabilities who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine experienced special education teachers' knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching and to uncover how their knowledge informs their teaching. To address this purpose, the research questions for this study were:

1) What are experienced special education teachers knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching?

2) How do teachers use their knowledge and understandings about culturally responsive teaching and their knowledge and understanding about their students to inform their planning and instruction?

Summary

The theories and frameworks presented in this chapter contain commonalities in their descriptions of characteristics of culturally responsive teachers and the practices they need to incorporate into their day-to-day instruction in order to promote and improve the learning outcomes for their ethnically and linguistically diverse students. These commonalities include: a) being reflective regarding their own attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding culture and their affect on the educational outcomes of their students, b) develop a cultural knowledge base, which includes possessing affirming views of students from CLD backgrounds, and use the information to influence teaching and learning, c) infuse multicultural materials into the curriculum to maximize student learning, d) develop cultural competence and assist students in doing the same,

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e) have positive perspective on parents and families, while building partnerships f) utilize culturally mediated instruction which includes attending to first and second language needs, g) commitment to high expectations, and h) development of social political consciousness in order to transform the educational process and structure (Banks & Banks, 2004; Harris III, Brown, Ford, & Richardson, 2004; Gay, 2000, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994,1995b, 2001; Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The literature reviewed in this chapter outlined the theoretical framework of culturally responsive teaching and included a brief review of special education literature and a presentation of teacher characteristics and classroom practices. All of the special education teachers participating in the study had students who were also English language learners with disabilities as part of their caseload, hence, a review of best practices for English language learners was also provided.

<center>**Chapter III: Methodology**</center>

The purpose of this study was to examine the knowledge and understandings of experienced special education teachers, with regard to their culturally responsive teaching actions with students with disabilities who are culturally and linguistically diverse. To address this purpose the research questions were: What are experienced special education teachers' knowledge and understanding about culturally responsive teaching? and How do experienced special education teachers use their knowledge and understandings about culturally responsive teaching and their knowledge and understanding about their students to inform their planning and instruction? In order to examine the teachers' knowledge, understanding and use of culturally responsive practices, a qualitative research approach that included the use of three semi-structured interviews combined with field notes was used. This chapter outlines the research methods used and begins with an overview of qualitative methods. The next section of this chapter details the research design including participant selection and recruitment, as well as procedures for data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study design's trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an overarching concept that involves many forms of inquiry to help the researcher understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena in its natural setting with as few distractions as possible (Merriam, 1998). Researchers who choose qualitative methods are interested in how individuals make sense of their world and their experiences. The aim of this study was to learn about experienced special education teachers' understanding and use of culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms. Given the nature of the research questions the use of qualitative methods was deemed appropriate.

Semi-structured, open-ended face-to-face interviews were conducted with the teacher participants, as the primary means of data collection. According to Patton (1990), the qualitative interview allows the researcher to discover what's "in and on someone else's mind" (p. 278). Interviewing allows the researcher to enter into the other person's perspective, viewpoint and understanding regarding a particular experience or situation. According to Merriam (1998), these interviews can be defined as conversations with a purpose. Using these conversations as the means of gathering the participants' knowledge, understanding and use of culturally responsive practices aligned with the purpose of this study.

There are five orientations of qualitative inquiry commonly used in the study of educational phenomena of which grounded theory is one. Grounded theory, which was developed in the 1960's by Glasner and Strauss, is considered one of the first methodologically rigorous and systematic approaches to qualitative research (Saldaña, 2012). When using grounded theory, data analysis involves coding data, constantly comparing the data to develop categories, and generating theory. All of these processes occur simultaneously from the start of data collection. A more detailed description of the data analysis process is provided later in this chapter.

Participants

The purposeful or purposive sampling strategy is widely used among qualitative researchers (Patten, 2009) to select participants who fit into a broad category for a proposed study. Purposeful criterion sampling is used when there are a number of criteria to be applied in the selection of a sample. Purposeful sampling is different from convenience sampling because the researcher makes a conscious decision about who will and will not participate in the study rather than choosing individuals based on their availability alone. In order to differentiate

participants based on criteria or characteristics relevant to the topic of this study, purposeful criterion sampling was used to recruit participants.

Experienced special education teachers were chosen as participants for this study. Table 1 provides details regarding teacher demographics. Of the nine participants six were Anglo-American, one was Mexican-American, one was Middle Eastern and one was Asian/Filipino. All participants were females between the ages of 35 and 54. All of the participants had been teaching special education for 9 years or more, while 4 of the 9 had also previously taught in general education classrooms as well. The highest degree earned by all of the teachers was a Masters' degree. All but one of the participants who participated in this study taught in a public school system in a large Midwestern city. Another participant taught in a public school located in a suburban school district west of the same Midwestern city.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Participant	Age	Ethnicity/ Race	Highest Degree Earned	Certification/ Endorsement	Years Teaching	Years Teaching Special Education
Nedra	35	Middle Eastern	Master's Plus	Special Education National Board Special Bilingual Special Education Endorsement Reading	9	9
Maria	38	Latina	Master's Plus	Special Education Bilingual Special Education Endorsement	9	9
Toni	54	White	Master's Plus	Early Childhood Special Education National Board Special ESL Endorsement	9	9
Tammie	44	White	Master's Plus	Elementary Education Reading Specialist Special Education	20	9
Ophelia	54	White	Master's Plus	Elementary Education Special Education	30	21
Karen	53	White	Master's Plus	Special Education ESL Endorsement	20	15
Amelia	40	White/Filipino	Master's	Special Education	9	9
Christine	42	White	Master's Plus	Elementary Education Special Education ESL Endorsement	17	9
Maya	36	White	Master's Plus	Elementary Education Special Education ESL Endorsement	10	10

To be included in this study, participants had to have five or more years of experience teaching students with disabilities, have three or more years of experience teaching students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, spend more than 51% of the school day providing special education services to children with mild/moderate disabilities in a segregated or resource classroom (pullout) and have a current caseload that includes at least 50% of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. The study was further limited to participants teaching kindergarten through eighth grade. This exclusionary criterion was based on the understanding that the role of a high school teacher is very different from that of an elementary school teacher. Special education teachers teach in a variety of educational environments including co-teaching with or providing consultation to general education teachers, self-contained classrooms and/or resource (pull-out) room. The first two of these settings do not allow special education teachers to have sole decision-making ability. For this reason, teachers who met the above criteria and who provided the majority of their teaching in self-contained or resource settings were recruited for participation. See Table 2 for the teachers' classroom demographics.

Table 2

Teacher Classroom Demographics

Participant	Caseload	Setting/Model	Grades	Disability Categories	Ethnicity of Students
Nedra	15	Resource (Pull-out)	5	SLD[1], ASD[2], ADD[3],	9-H[11], 2-AA[12], 2-W[13], 1-O[14]
Maria	9	Self-Contained/Instructional	3-6	M-ID[5]	6-H, 2-AA, 1-W
Toni	10	Resource (Pull-out)	K-3	SLD, ADD/OHI[6]	6-H, 3-AA, 1-W
Tammie	15	Resource (Pull-out) Inclusive Supports	3-5	SLD, ASD	9-A, 2-AA, 2-H, 2-W
Ophelia	20	Resource (Pull-out)	1-4	SLD, ASD, ED[7]	6-H, 5-AA, 4-A, 5-W
Christine	12	Inclusive Supports Resource (Pull-out)	2	SLD, B/ED, ASD	4-H, 4-AA, 2-W, 2-O
Maya	10	Self-Contained/Instructional	5	SLD, ASD, ID[10]	3-H, 3-AA, 3-EE[15]
Karen	10	Self-Contained/Instructional	5-7	SLD, TBI[8], D/HH[9]	8-H, 1-W, 1-O
Amelia	15	Resource (Pull-out) Inclusive Supports Co-Teaching	5-7	SLD, ADD	5-H, 5-AA, 3-W, 2-O

Notes:

[1]Specific Learning Disabilites

[2]Autism Spectrum Disorder

[3]Attention Deficit Disorder

[4]Behavior/Emotional Disorder

[5]Mild Intellectual Disability

[6]Attention Deficit Disorder/Other Health Impairments

[7]Emotional Disorder

[8]Traumatic Brain Injury

[9]Deaf and Hard of Hearing

[10]Intellectual Disability

[11]Hispanic

[12]African American

[13]White

[14]Other

[15]Eastern European

Recruitment

Participants for this study were nominated by three clinical faculty members who were engaged in field teaching at a large Midwestern university. These clinical faculty members had extensive relationships with schools in Illinois that provided field experiences for student teaching and internship assignments. These faculty have long standing relationships with schools and specific teachers who are called upon to mentor pre-service teachers and they continuously

maintain relationships with former students who demonstrated exceptional knowledge and skill. They also had previously taught the seminar and provided field instruction for five of the nine study participants. As part of the mission of the College of Education, the field instructors are intentional about placing pre-service teachers in classrooms that reflect the demographics of the city and frequently visit those classrooms when supervising their students.

The three field instructors were provided an informational flyer (see Appendix A) which was sent to individuals they wished to nominate for participation via electronic mail. The flyer contained details regarding the study along with my contact information. In conjunction with the eligibility criteria listed on the flyer, the field instructors were asked to nominate individual teachers they felt exhibited the ability to educate students in a culturally responsive manner. They were asked to consider the following characteristics when considering nomination: 1) Does the teacher communicate high expectations and provide necessary supports for students to reach their goals?, 2) Does the teacher use culturally mediated instruction?, 3) Does the teacher possess and exhibit a positive perspective toward students' and families who are culturally and linguistically diverse?, and 4) Does the teacher demonstrate knowledge of the cultures represented in their classroom and adapt lesson to reflect different ways of communicating?.

Once a potential participant contacted me, a review of the eligibility criteria (see Appendix B) was conducted, as well as a review of the study procedures. If a potential participant contacted me via electronic mail, I requested a time and date convenient to the participant, to review the criteria checklist and the consent form and a follow-up call was made. If a potential participant contacted me via the telephone, the checklist and consent form were reviewed at that time. Once the participant eligibility was established and the study procedures had been reviewed, a date, time and location for the first interview was set-up.

Twelve of those nominated by the clinical instructors responded to the nomination. Of those, nine met all of the inclusionary criteria and were chosen to participate in the study. Every effort was made to recruit additional participants but due to strict eligibility criteria, I was only able to secure nine participants.

Setting

The interviews took place during the spring, summer and fall of 2013. Each face-to-face interview was conducted at a place and time that was most convenient for the participant. Of the 27 interviews conducted for this study, twelve took place in participants' classrooms before or after school, three were completed in participants' homes, two others were conducted in my office, and one took place in a local library. Nine interviews were conducted via telephone. During the interviews every effort was made to maximize privacy and minimize noise and interruptions.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data (Glesne, 2006). In order to examine the knowledge and understanding teachers had regarding the use of culturally responsive teaching and how this knowledge informs their classroom practices, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used as the primary means of data collection.

Interviews. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and via telephone and were audio-recorded. All of the participants completed two interviews. Three of the second interviews required scheduling a third meeting to complete because they were so long. Each interview was conducted with open-ended questions in an organized and timely manner. In an effort to put the participant at ease and to establish rapport, ample time was given prior to the beginning of each interview for small-talk and procedural review.

A list of questions was used to guide the first interview. Prior to use in the study, the questions were field tested with two (non-participant) special education teachers, experienced in working with a diverse population of students, and who were knowledgeable about the tenets of culturally responsive teaching. Interview questions were modified or deleted from the guide based on their recommendations. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C. Each interview began with the first question on the interview guide. Some of the main questions on the interview guide were a) What is your understanding of culturally responsive teaching?, b) What behaviors do you engage in that demonstrate your sense of culturally responsive teaching?, and c) As a mentor teacher what have you or would you teach a pre-service teacher about culturally responsive instruction?.

Follow-up questions and probes were also used during the interview to ensure a deep and detailed response to each question. Follow-up questions used during an interview may have asked the participant to give specific examples or clarify a particular statement. Follow-up question were also developed after the initial interview, transcription and analysis. These follow-up questions provided the basis for the second interview. Probing questions such as, a) Can you tell me more?, b) You said … what did you mean by that?, and c) What happened after that?

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to capture the "voice" of the participant. Once the interview was transcribed, each participant was asked to review transcripts of her interview for the purpose of member checking. Each participant was given the opportunity to expound on or subtract from it. Prior to the start of the second interview, the teachers were asked if they desired to make any changes or additions to their previous statements or answers. These request for changes were noted and implemented. Though all participants were given the opportunity to make modifications or clarifications to the interview

transcripts, only one of the nine participants made any changes. Some commented on their own

lack of fluency during their interviews but did not wish to make any modifications to the content.

The purpose of the second interview was two-fold. The first purpose was to ask for

clarification of points brought up during the initial interview and to gather additional information

on themes that may have surfaced during initial analysis. The second interview was guided by

questions formulated after initial analysis of the first set of interviews. These questions were

intended to give participants opportunity to expand upon previous responses as well as for the

investigator to explore emerging themes and patterns. The second purpose was to present the

participant with a brief video of a diverse classroom to view and discuss. The video was accessed

via from the Teaching Channel website ([https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/multi-](https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/multi-language-classroom)

[language-classroom](https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/multi-language-classroom)). The video showcased an award winning teacher working in a fourth grade

classroom of students who were linguistically and culturally diverse. The teacher was rated as a

most effective teacher by the LA times based on her students' progress on California standards

tests. The general education classroom consisted of twenty-two students from various cultural

and ethnic backgrounds, as well as students who were English language learners. The video clip

showed the teacher using and discussing various techniques to engage students in the educational

environment. For example, during a reading lesson the teacher demonstrated how she assists

students in making connections to the content by using their home language. The purpose of

viewing the video was to provide an opportunity for the teachers to reflect on and explore a

particular instructional scenario involving students who were culturally and linguistically

diverse. An unstructured guide was used during the viewing of the video (see Appendix C). Prior

to viewing the video clip, the teachers were instructed that they could stop the video any time to

comment on a teacher action or communication that they thought was significant or was related

to culturally responsive teaching. The second set of interviews were also transcribed verbatim and sent to the participant for member checking.

Finally, a third interview was conducted via telephone, consisting of only four questions (see Appendix D). The third interview attempted to gather additional information to tease out the focus of teachers' teaching and supportive actions with regard to disability in relation to cultural diversity. In this particular interview, teachers were asked to think about specific students and consider how the combination of the child's disability and culture inform their planning and instruction.

A total of 27 interviews were conducted for this study. The first set of interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes, ranging from 40 to 60 minutes. The second set of interviews lasted an average of 53 minutes ranging from 20 to 83 minutes. A follow-up interview was needed in order for three participants to complete the second interview. These interviews lasted an average of 23 minutes ranging from 20 to 30 minutes. Finally, the third interviews, conducted via phone, each lasted between 20 and 35 minutes.

Field notes. Shortly after each interview, field notes were written as a way to capture the essence of the conversation, to denote any distractions, and to document reminders of key points for later reflection during transcription and data analysis. These field notes assisted in recording the progress of the interviews as well as capturing my thoughts and feelings. For example, after an interview with Maria I wrote, "Maria seemed distracted during our time together. I should consider doing the next interview away from the school grounds." On another occasion I wrote, "I was worried that 7:00 at night was too late to conduct and interview but that went really well." A Contact Summary form (Miles & Huberman, 1984) was completed as soon as possible after each interview (see Appendix E). The Contact Summary form facilitated the recording of

information regarding the specific interview. Along with capturing the general atmosphere of the interview, the form allowed me to capture my immediate thoughts on any issues or themes that emerged and ideas or possible questions to be pursued during the second interview. The field notes and Contact Summary form together operated as a type of research journal.

Data Analysis

To guide the interpretation of the data, a Grounded Theory approach to data analysis was used. Strauss and Corbin (1998), suggest that grounded theory can be used to systematically conduct qualitative research to explain occurrences and to generate representative theory. This approach involves utilizing a series of coding cycles and memo writing to develop major categories in order to develop a theory based on the ideas and themes that emerge directly from the data rather than starting with a theory and analyzing data using that framework.

When using grounded theory, data collection, coding, and analysis happen at the same time with each of these activities informing the others. Performing these processes concurrently allows the researcher to navigate smoothly between thinking about the existing data and generating a plan for collecting new data (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013). Prior to data analysis, each audio recording was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview using the assistance of a computer program called Express Scribe. Furthermore, each interview was listened to on multiple occasions while reading the transcript to check for accuracy and completeness.

The first step used in the process of analysis was First Cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). This process involved the creation of codes that gave meaning to individual segments of the interview data. During this cycle each interview was coded line-by-line to promote a more trustworthy analysis (Charmaz, 2008). Each segment was examined at the sentence level and given a name.

The second step of analysis involved taking the initial set of codes and rearranging and grouping them into a smaller number of categories or themes. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2013) refer to this step as Second Cycle or Pattern Coding. During this second cycle, the interview transcripts were read again and the coded data were re-analyzed and ordered into categories that allowed me to draw connections between the different meanings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Some of the initial codes were discarded and/or collapsed while others became subcategories. After this process, I then linked the categories and subcategories to one another to explain their relationships based on what the study participants reported (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The repeated readings of the interview transcripts throughout the data collection and coding process afforded me the opportunity to accurately ascertain what the participants were reporting regarding their knowledge and use of culturally responsive practices.

Trustworthiness

Member checking was employed throughout data collection to ensure trustworthiness. Member checks were used to verify or extend the interview transcripts. Member checking involved having the participants review the transcripts of the first interview for accuracy and/or expansion. Each participant was given ample time to make adjustments or deletions to the transcript. Prior to the start of the second interview, each participant was again asked if there were any changes they would like to make to the first interview transcript. This procedure was repeated for the second and third interviews as well. During the coding process two education professionals were consulted and provided feedback on the accuracy of my coding system.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this study, I held to the regulations and research expectations of the institutional review board (IRB) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (see Appendix F).

Though my research was deemed to be exempt, I still abided by the specific requirements of my research study. Informed consent (Appendix G) was received from each participant prior to the first interview. The consent form detailed the study goals and procedures, assured participants of their rights throughout the project, and indicated any risks involved. The form also described the steps that would be taken to ensure participant anonymity. To ensure confidentiality each participant was assigned a code for the purpose of labeling the interview transcripts and pseudonyms were used in the reporting of the results.

This chapter presented the research methods utilized for this study. The chapter provided a detailed description of the procedures including discussions regarding the use of qualitative methods, participant selection and recruitment, and data collection and analysis. The chapter concluded with a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The next chapter describes the study findings.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews of nine experienced special education teachers of students with disabilities who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse. This chapter is comprised of two sections. The first section presents the themes that emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts as they relate to the first research question: What are experienced special education teachers' knowledge and understanding about culturally responsive teaching? This section also presents themes that surfaced regarding the teachers' acquisition and development of culturally responsive practices. The second section consists of the findings regarding the second research question: How do experienced special education teachers use their knowledge and understandings about culturally responsive teaching and their knowledge and understanding about their students to inform decision-making during planning and instruction? I present each theme with a description and then provide representative quotes to capture the nature of the teachers' understandings and knowledge in their own words. While the quotes are their actual words, they were selected to illustrate the various facets of each theme.

Research Questions One: What are special education teachers' knowledge and understanding about culturally responsive teaching?

In response to this research question the teachers' comments were centered on two primary themes. In the first theme, the respondents focused on their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive as it relates to understanding their students and their families and was clustered around three topics. In the second theme, the participants commented on how they developed their knowledge and skills regarding culturally responsive teaching.

Knowing and understanding the whole child, understanding the family, and building relationships. As the teachers shared their thoughts about what it meant to be culturally responsive, several common threads were highlighted in regards to their understanding of what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. Their comments focused on three general topics: the importance and need to understand the whole child, the need to understand the family, and the need to develop relationships that include trust and respect for the child and the family.

The first topic conveyed by the teachers' was focused on the importance of getting to know the whole child in order to learn how to be more responsive to that child's particular needs in the classroom. The participants seemed to recognize that children come to the educational setting with established ways of knowing and being and that it is important for the teacher to not only discern what those things are but to also figure out how this knowledge can facilitate learning in the special education classroom.

Throughout the study all of the teachers commented on knowing the child is a prerequisite for appropriate instruction. For example, Amelia, who taught 5-7 graders in both resource and inclusion settings, noted that being culturally responsive starts with knowing the child and having an understanding of where they are coming from. She also added that the child's cultural background and academics are interconnected, noting that possessing knowledge of the student can assist the teacher in finding ways to motivate them.

 I think you are teaching the student as the whole person and part of the whole person is
 their background. It's not like you are changing what you are teaching them because of
 their culture, but I think they are a whole package so, yeah, you want to teach them
 grammar and stuff like that, but you also want to use literature that's interesting to them,

that they care about and that will motivate them. I mean they are not going to learn anything unless they care so you have to use literature and materials that matter to them. She went on to share a time when she had to adjust a planned lesson on child labor when another teacher reminded her that one of the students was homeless and might have difficulty with the content.

> It was sort of a light bulb moment for me... Just to keep in mind where kids are coming from, is important, when you are teaching. And it's not that you should avoid teaching things, it's just to do it with some sensitivity.

Amelia also stated that being culturally responsive means being aware of a child's religious affiliation as well. "We have a couple students who are Jehovah's Witness so there are religious cultural backgrounds too that have to be taken into consideration…we have to be sensitive to that"

Tammie, a 3rd through 5th grade resource and inclusion teacher, told of how her first teaching assignment in a majority African American elementary school was a real eye opener for her. She commented on how the interactions she had with her students, along with the knowledge she gained about her students helped her to realize there was indeed a cultural disconnect between them.

> As I was listening to them talk about home life and families and interest in things like that I thought it was very, very different. Certain things for example, that they had never really left their community where they grew up…I think you have to tap into those experiences in order to teach kids.

Tammie went on to talk about making adjustments to her approach to teaching and the importance of trying to make some "real human connections" for her students.

When asked what she has communicated to student teachers that she has mentored regarding being culturally responsive, Tammie stressed the importance of getting to know as much as possible about her students and their community in order to make academic connections.

You know with the new student teacher I told her equally if not more important than knowing your curriculum is know your kids. Get to know their community, get to know their family, get to know as much about them as possible. We spend so much time as new teachers being tough on the kids, creating systems. I tell them they need to sit down and listen and get to know who their kids are. Spend time with them, spend time talking to them, eat lunch with them even if you don't have to… no matter your ethnicity or that of the kids, it is important to learn about where your students live and what they're coming to school with because they have experiences that may not be the same as you and me. They have experiences, they have a schema, and they have a wealth of knowledge right? We just have to figure out how to get to it to help them learn. You have to connect it to something.

Similarly, Toni, a kindergarten through 3rd grade resource teacher, commented that learning as much as you can about a student includes knowing about what's going on in their environment outside of school.

What kind of an environment they are coming from. Is it a nurturing one? Is it one where they are left on their own? Are there many siblings? Are there none? When they go home what do they have to do? Do they have to take care of their younger brothers and sisters and then they are exhausted when they go to bed so there is not time for academics.

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Ophelia, a 1ˢᵗ through 4ᵗʰ grade teacher in a resource setting, also articulated the need to attend to the child in totality and not just concentrate on the academics.

I'm teaching the child so whoever that child is or wherever that child comes from and whoever his parents are, wherever he lives or anything about him or her. So yeah. I don't want to dismiss academic needs but I don't really see it that way. Yeah that's important but I don't teach reading. I teach the child and I don't teach math. I teach Mike or Megan. So besides culture it's emotional, it's social…it's spiritual.

Maria, a teacher of students with moderate disabilities in a self-contained classroom, further articulated the need to understand the child's home situation to inform the extra supports she may provide during the school day.

Based on their background and what their home situation might be and what type of support they might have at home to complete some of their work. In the classroom I am able to provide what they need with what I know from them.

Finally, Nedra, a 5ᵗʰ grade resource teacher, commented that having a clear picture of who a child is and what their needs are leads to better communication with the general education teacher which can lead to more success for students in the general education classroom.

Another detail as far as understanding the whole child has to do with collaborating with the general education teacher. To help facilitate what is acceptable for the children and what is not. Being able to help teachers and figure out how do we further support the student in the classroom. I think that when you make the regular education teacher more aware also it helps the students become more successful in the classroom.

The second general topic regarding their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive revolved around the teachers' reference to the importance of getting

to know the parents of their students and being aware of family dynamics as an important aspect needed in order to gain a better understanding of the whole child and be more culturally responsive. The teachers noted that having knowledge of the students' family structure, belief system and available supports allowed them to make appropriate adjustments and modifications in the child's instructional program.

Maria commented that culturally responsive teaching involved taking the cultural background of the student and of the family and "use that as a guide with how you are going to work with the child and their family." She stated that making efforts to use her students' backgrounds as a way to help them academically had assisted her in better communicating with her parents. When planning her lessons, Maria took into consideration the knowledge she possessed regarding her students' home life.

> I also have to think about where he comes from because there are so many things going on in the child's family. The parents are also ill. He's got other siblings who have disabilities and are also on meds. So when I am thinking of that particular child I have to think of so many things that would affect his everything, participation, behavior, everything. If he had a bad day at home because his mom might be in the hospital or one of his brothers had a seizure, it stays with him and he brings it to school.

Maria also stated that when talking to her student teacher about being culturally responsive she stressed the importance of being open to parents in order to gain a better understanding of student behavior.

> Well, I always tell them not to judge the families, not [to] judge the parents. Because when I first started I remember saying things like, oh this parent doesn't care, look at this child and so on but then I learned about the parents situation and about the home life and

I gained an understanding. So I tell them not to judge the parent or the child because you

never know what's going on at home… learn where the parent and the child is coming

from in order to understand why things are happening or why a family acts a particular

way.

Nedra spoke about the need to connect and communicate with parents who are diverse in

order to ensure that the parents have complete understanding of their child's academic needs.

Her words inferred that families that were culturally or linguistically diverse needed particular

attention to confirm their understanding of their child's needs.

With my bilingual students and students that are culturally different, I try to connect to

parents more. I try to explain their rights to them with sped and using verbiage that they

are able to understand. They understand that their child is getting help but I think it is

really critical that they understand that their child does have a diagnosis just like we

would if they were part of this culture.

She went on to comment that being aware of the parents lack of understanding helped her to

empathize with the parents and made her work harder for her students.

Toni shared that though many of her parents are not involved in the school, she

understood that often it was due to their work schedules or the size of their household. She stated

that the family of one of her students had two children receiving special education services,

another in RTI and two younger children at home. She commented that for this particular family

"it's a hectic life for them" which could cause problems for the child in her classroom. The

problems usually manifested as behavior and motivation issues. These understandings played

into Toni's day-to-day planning as she considered homework expectations and/or parent's

available time to spend specifically with her child.

Amelia agreed that in addition to the child's culture affecting how they interfaced with the academic setting, the degree of support a student received from their parents could affect their interest and motivation in school as well as their ability to accomplish some tasks at home.

> In my experience there is a little more support, parental support in the Caucasian families and less with the African American and Hispanic families. I think, maybe that is cultural, you know in Hispanic families their focus is on family and being together and celebrating…I mean I don't want to say that school is not important to them but I think that there is a difference. It's not quite highlighted as much. They weren't sitting at home and doing homework. So I think that that makes a difference. I can't say that it's their ethnicity that makes the difference. It's their parents but that does also come from culture.

Amelia further commented on how being aware of the parents' educational background was important because it can affect how students performed in school due to parents inability to assist with homework. Having this information allows her to make the appropriate adjustments during the school day. While watching the video Amelia pointed out the significance of communicating with parents regarding academic expectations and building vocabulary in both languages.

Tammie conveyed that for her students, the parents' employment situations could also play a major role in a child's motivation in the classroom. She commented that because many of her parents work in factories or restaurants and some are often away from home for weeks at a time it makes things "very hard for both the child and their family" and she had to take this into consideration when preparing and delivering instruction.

When Tammie first started working at an elementary school with a student population that was mostly Asian, she realized right away that she had to get a grasp of the cultural norms and the family dynamics in order to be better able to build relationships with her students and

their families and create a sense of community. She exclaimed that her parents were hit with a "double whammy" because of the language barrier and the cultural differences in the educational setting and academic expectations. She felt that some of her families had a difficult time accepting their child's disability diagnosis. Armed with this knowledge she had to figure out how to support the child while respecting the family's perspective. One such parent would not allow her child to be removed from the general education classroom to receive special education supports. Tammie had to make other arrangements for him to receive the required special education minutes that were outlined in the students IEP.

> Especially kids with different abilities, especially special ed. kids. So that is something that we have to talk about all the time but yes there is that sense that you have to keep working harder and harder and get smarter and smarter. Do more, do more, do more and it is a divide between our Asian population of kids and the other kids. They don't really accept disability unless it is a physical disability that is visible. But this sense of pulling kids out of a classroom for resource, they don't want that. They want their kids in the general education room and they want them doing the general education work plus more.

She went on to share how she supported the child and the family by; providing an opportunity for the child to come before and/or afterschool to receive extra support, having the parent sit in the classroom as much as possible, and creating a network of parents of students with disabilities to assist in communicating with parents of students who are newly identified as needing special education services.

Christine, a 2nd grade teacher who provided supports in resource and inclusion settings, communicated that knowing the family dynamics and what's going on in the child's environment outside of school helps her to be more understanding.

If you go home to a really chaotic environment it might be difficult to do homework. You might have a family that can't afford to buy a lot of supplies or a family that is dealing with a lot of other things. You know we have a lot of kids here who are refugees and I imagine their families are just worried about where they are going to be living and where they are going to be getting food from… It has to be terrifying.

Christine went on to discuss how having knowledge of a new students' family dynamics and experiences in a refugee camp assisted her in knowing how to assist him in making the transition and helped her recognize the need to be patient, consistent, and thoughtful in her planning and instruction.

He lives with his aunt and uncle and it's just interesting hearing about his experiences in Nepal. There's kind of a religious war going on and he and his family lived in a camp for a long time and it definitely affects his behavior. He's a wild little guy but he is really settling in and he is really smart. Knowing those things and getting that information about the refugee camps and the kinds of experiences he would have had definitely helped us understand why he was doing some of the things he was doing and gave us some ideas of how to help him.

Karen, who taught students with mild/moderate disabilities in a self-contained classroom, talked about the importance of having an understanding of the family social structure and their views on formal education. She stated that in her experiences with the Hispanic community she perceived a male dominant social structure and believed that had an impact how children relate to and interact within the school system. She said that many of the young boys in her class were not motivated to attend to their schoolwork because they see the examples of their fathers or other siblings who have not completed their education.

Especially for our young men it is so much a part of their persona no matter what you say and do. So I mean if culturally the Hispanic boys whose dad is working so hard and they see dad did not graduate from grammar school and I guess I never will to. He's okay and he's making a living.

Karen went on to state that it could be tough for the teacher to counteract these ideas and expectations, "that's where you wished you could bring something magical in from their culture".

Finally, Maya, who taught 5th grade students in a self-contained classroom, commented on the importance of understanding family perspective and "where they are coming from" and respecting the fact that everyone had a different way of thinking about and doing things particularly when it comes to education.

The third topic the participants focused on when talking about their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching was centered on the importance of building relationships with families. The teachers' remarks regarding this topic focused on the need to show and develop respect for parents and students as well as the need to develop mutual trust. Teachers' also spoke of how this type of relationship is nurtured and developed by keeping the lines of communication open, acknowledging and respecting differences and exhibiting a sincere attitude of care. Throughout their comments there were themes of conveying love and care toward the student and of establishing trust with the family and individual students.

Karen was one of four participants who talked about the importance of conveying to the parents and students a sense of respect for the differences that culturally diverse families represent. She added that parents and students who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse need to "feel like they are in safe hands" and that the way teachers could do that is by "teaching

and showing respect for the culture because if there is somebody who is putting it down they are not going to be comfortable."

Maya told of a time when she had to discuss with her student teacher the need to be considerate of those cultural differences represented by the families.

The sensitivity piece about understanding that parents might think differently than what you were taught in school. So you need to understand that because your idea of what's best for their student is not necessarily what they think. Parent involvement or not, I just think that understanding that this is someone's child and they may be choosing to raise them in a way that may be different from me and I just have to understand and be supportive of the fact that that is what they are choosing to do. That's their idea of what is best for their child.

Ophelia commented on the importance of building trust with parents of a different culture.

I guess I would say that it would matter if it's a different culture. I would also say that I would want them to like me but I also want them to know that they can trust me with their child and I am going to do the best I can…if you don't really know me and if I'm different from someone else that we would find some common ground and if they know that I have their child's best interest in mind that goes a long way.

She went on to comment that one way she demonstrates this attitude is by keeping the lines of communication open and responding quickly to parents. This communicated to the parents that "they are important to me and their child is important to me".

Similarly, Toni spoke about the need to treat all students with respect regardless of their background.

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No matter what race or nationality you are, you treat children the same way. So if you are Portuguese or if you are Hispanic or if you are an English speaker you still treat them with respect and you give them love and you try to work with them.

Other participants commented on the need to exhibit an attitude of love and care as a way of building mutual trust when attempting to build relationships with parents and students of different cultures. For example, Nedra commented on the importance of students recognizing her as more than just a teacher but also someone who cared for them.

When you have that triangle [parent, teacher and child] that's very smooth in the trusting relationship, the student starts to see you as someone who cares about them and that's very critical that you are not just the teacher but that you care about them. I always tell my students, I know you don't like this but we care about you and this is what we are doing. There's no questions asked, there's no arguing, this is just the way things are going to happen in our classroom.

Nedra went on to state that showing love and care also meant being sensitive to how a child might react to a planned lesson.

… or if I bring this up the student might get upset because this happened in their life, so we might need to change our goal or I might need to talk to the student beforehand so they have time to process. We take that into consideration a lot around here. We have a lot of needs. The behaviors and other health impairments as well as the learning disabilities and we try to keep all that in perspective as we plan.

Maya commented that parents also want to know that the teacher gave their child emotional support as well as academic support.

That's so wonderful. I think parents want to hear that. They want to hear that you love and support their student because I would have to assume that being a mother now, I want somebody to love and take care of my child so that's what my job while I am there is to educate them and to care about them…Letting them know I care about them asking their input. I never want to sound condescending to a parent. I never want to make it sound like I know what's better for the student then they do so I think that is ultimately what I am doing with them.

As a way to make a connection and to get them to feel more comfortable about sharing more about themselves and their lives, Maya noted how she had been deliberate about sharing her own experiences and family life with her students.

So I hope that they feel comfortable like I am not interrogating them I just genuinely want to know what's going on. Like I said, I share a lot. I share a lot about the baby. They think it's the greatest thing in the world and so then they want to tell me about their siblings or cousins. It just kind of segues into a lot of conversation about what their family life is like. Really you learn a lot just by listening. I feel like I want them to be interested and invested in me as well as each other.

Toni also stated that when parents know that their child is emotionally supported as well as academically supported "it makes them feel more comfortable". She further commented that she sees building trust as the most important way to "get anything done". She said that a lack of a certain level of trust makes it more difficult to work with the child in any capacity.

For Maria, when teachers know and understand the student's life situation, they could become more than just a teacher to their students and their families.

So knowing the student and understanding their behavior, why one student is always

sleepy, why another one is trying to grab extra food. So when you find out what their

situation is you become not just a teacher, social worker, and counselor. I have given

shoes and clothes to some of the families that I know are not doing well.

When commenting on their thoughts about culturally responsive teaching, all of the

participants in one way or another highlighted learning about every aspect of the child as a way

to assist them in making academic gains as a major component. They commented on the

interconnectedness of the child's cultural background and academics and how the two "go hand

and hand." Participants also stated that having knowledge about their students facilitated their

ability to make connections as a means of making learning more meaningful. In one way or

another all of the participants described gaining an understanding of the family as being an

important aspect of being a culturally responsive teacher. Some remarked that their gained

knowledge allowed them to be more empathetic to the family and to use the information as a

guide to working with the family as well as how best to work with the child in the classroom.

The participants further expanded their understanding of culturally responsive teaching to

include the need to build relationships with their students' families by cultivating mutual respect

and trust.

The second major theme that emanated from the teachers' comments regarding their

knowledge and understanding of what it meant to be a culturally responsive teacher highlighted

the ways in which they had and continued to develop their knowledge and maintain their skills.

Developing culturally responsive practices. Throughout the study as the teachers talked

about their knowledge and understandings about CRTeaching, all of them talked about the

various ways in which they came to their understanding of what it means to be culturally

responsive and how they continued to grow their knowledge. Their comments hovered around three topics: learning through formal schooling, learning through personal experiences and learning from colleagues. Some of the teachers discussed specific coursework, class assignments and interactions with classmates as being instrumental in their acquisition of practices that are responsive to a diverse population of students. Teachers also highlighted their relationships with family members and friends, while others emphasized and communication with colleagues as the source of their growth in the area of cultural sensitivity. These topics will be highlighted in the following section supported by representative quotes.

In the first topic, many of the participants talked about gaining understanding and knowledge about being culturally responsive from their formal schooling. As indicated in the Table 1 located in the preceding chapter, all of the teachers had obtained advanced degrees or endorsements as a means of improving their own professional development. Seven of the nine participants attributed their growth as culturally responsive teachers to their advanced coursework. Maya stated that completing a bilingual special education endorsement assisted her in becoming more aware of the need to use culturally responsive practices in her classroom.

> I think through the program was a big catalyst for all of this… I guess the way I have learned is, learning about it in class and then observing it in school. We talked about sheltered instruction in class and then utilizing that when I was using the formal lesson plan model and seeing how beneficial that was to students.

Maya also attributed her growing understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive to interactions and discussions with her peers in her training program that were of different ethnic backgrounds. She stated, "They kind of gave me a different perspective of things I need to pay attention to."

Maria also communicated that her university coursework broadened her perspective about other cultures.

> I would have to say that a lot of it is through Metro City University. The classes that I did take, they were very good at pointing out how to be responsive. Not just with Hispanics but also with African Americans and they gave us a lot of examples with Asians as well. It just makes you think that there is a way to work with and learn about cultures and respecting that even if the culture is not yours. I have to say it was from my training and education at Metro City University.

Maria alluded to specific lectures and discussions that took place during some of her graduate coursework. Some of the assignments involved reading studies on the "issues of culture and why it's important", discussing the interplay of language and assessment, and a lecture on "culture and how students react differently to people from different ethnic backgrounds". Maria stated "That did open my eyes and changed my understanding."

Nedra expressed how taking advanced coursework not only improved her ability to work effectively with students who were diverse, but she felt that it also gave her more credibility with her peers.

> I think the program at Metro City University definitely helped support that allowing me to really get in and be able to say, you know what I do have my Bilingual Sped approval. I think once you have some type of degree or piece of paper that says that you are allowed to do this and that teachers say okay you have your certification. We trust you.
> Karen explained how taking ESL courses gave her a better understanding of how language develops and the context in which students learn. She also described how an assignment to read a book on children who lived in poverty was an eye opener for her.

Now since I have taken all these courses and a very interesting book was about teaching kids of poverty as opposed to racially. I remember it came at a time when I was…there was one 7th or 8th grade boy and he was tough and he was an adopted son of an African American family. Very different…just reading about the difference…it was very interesting and it really struck home.

Karen went on to talk about how the information in the book helped her to figure out some better ways of working with that particular student. "It gave me straws[1] to reach for. He was still tough but it gave me some understanding of how he thinks."

While most teachers at least partially attributed their understanding of culturally responsive practices to formal university training, Tammie and Ophelia both spoke of receiving some coursework specific to teaching students from diverse ethnic and/or racial backgrounds during there undergraduate schooling but stated that the discussions and assignments did not prepare them to be culturally responsive teachers. In both case they seemed to connect theory to practice only once they were in their own classrooms. For example, Tammie stated,

You know I came in during that whole multicultural thing, so they were like you should have books for those kids, kids of different colors or different races. If it was Hispanic, African American or whatever it was. I don't know if it got to the essence of understanding the culture of kids before I taught them. Sure it is ok to put those books in my classroom library but how does that help me understand who they are as [African American] kids?

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[1] Reference to idiom "Grasping at straws"

In speaking about her first teaching assignment at a majority African American elementary school she admitted, "There is so much I didn't know or understand that came from a cultural perspective".

Ophelia also commented that she did not get much instruction during her teacher education program regarding how to teach in a culturally responsive manner. Any instruction she did receive, left little to no impression on her.

I do remember taking one class, I'm not sure if it was undergrad or graduate school. But I do remember talking about different cultures but it obviously wasn't very meaningful for me because I don't remember it. I guess I do remember one example but I didn't really get it.

Personal experiences including relationships with family members and college acquaintances were the focal point of the second topic regarding how the teachers acquired their knowledge and understandings of cultural responsiveness. Several teachers spoke of how these interactions helped to broaden their perspective and assisted them in becoming more culturally aware and sensitive to others. Maria, who is Mexican American, shared how growing up as an English language learner herself helped her in gaining an understanding of how to be culturally responsive.

I remember in high school about how I felt more comfortable with teachers who were Hispanic. I don't know what it was. A lot of them were pretty good, not all of them. But I remember being more at ease for some reason. I don't know what it was but I felt like they would understand me or they wouldn't judge me as much as someone who didn't know where I came from. That was the beginning and then later on I found really nice teachers who were not Hispanic but who I think were very culturally responsive at that

time and made you feel welcomed and just were positive in most things. I think at the

beginning I did have that fear or even just the language barrier and having an accent and

not being comfortable to say what I wanted to say because of that language. And it also

had to do with who was in front of the classroom, would I feel accepted if I

mispronounced something. That's what I remember from my experience from school as

an ELL.

Maria spoke of a time when one of her students was being made fun of because of her heavy

accent and how she used her own experience as an example for the class; not only did the

bullying stop, but Maria and the student developed a relationship that they still maintain. Maria

also believed that her background helped her to relate better to parents. A lot of her students'

parents were first generation immigrants to the United States and she felt that she was able to

relate to them in a way that made her more understanding and helpful to both her students and

their families.

Nedra articulated how her experiences growing up helped her to be more sensitive to

students who are different from the mainstream. She talked about how spending her formative

years in a predominately white neighborhood concerned about how she talked, what she ate and

her various interactions with others made her feel different from her peers.

I also think my background comes in being a first generation Middle Eastern lady. I did

grow up in a primarily Arabic speaking household. And so when I went to school I also

did struggle with procedure and I also struggled with vocabulary… but I think when I

was younger I really struggled with fitting in. That's kind of where my understanding of

the differences sparked but when I got into education I definitely took my experience

from my childhood into consideration for my students.

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In contrast, a couple of the teachers did not draw connections between their cross-culture experiences and knowing how to teach in a culturally responsive way. Karen described her experiences as a host for AFS (formerly American Field Service) students when her own children were in high school. Over the course of five or six years her family hosted "20 something kids".

> We used to have a lot of exchange students from other countries and it was very interesting. And then I became part of this group where we were sending out kids from poorer homes and we had to interview them to make sure they could socially handle being out of the country and I had to interview them in their homes. It was an eye opener when I saw how they lived. For me it was such a cultural difference…It just gave me a completely different perspective on a completely different culture…and when you are exposed to that it just opens your eyes.

Karen also shared a story regarding a friendship she developed with an African American classmate during graduate school. Karen stated that this particular classmate would talk about how she felt like she was being used as a "token" and their conversations gave her broader perspective and another point of view. She characterized her various experiences as "much more interesting and it helps you understand". And concluded that "even if I hadn't had that I don't think I would treat these kids any differently."

Even though she had grown up having friends of different ethnicities and cultures, Tammie did not feel these experiences gave her much of an advantage when she first started teaching.

> …but I think in terms of being culturally responsive as a teacher it has been a process. I think that having a friend from a different culture, going to their house and sleepovers

and such is a different sort of a thing than trying to figure out how to teach a kid. That

was more of a process for me.

Tammie admitted that when she first started teaching her mostly African American students she

thought she was an authority but quickly learned that though she and her students had grown up

in the same city "within miles of each other" the experiences and backgrounds of her students

were quite different from her own.

Though a bit reluctant to do so at first, Ophelia spoke about the diverse cultures that

make up her family dynamics. She explained that her sons were married to women from different

cultures. One was of Mexican American heritage, while the other was from India. Ophelia went

on to say that her "friend" was "black or African American. I change what I call him" and that

his children's mother was Puerto Rican and the children spoke Spanish fluently. Ophelia went on

to state that she and her friend "have a lot of discussions about dialectical speech and ways of

relating to each other, which is interesting." These conversations had prompted her to discern the

best way of communicating with some of her students. Ophelia believed these relationships had

made her more appreciative of differences and that these experiences not only enriched her life

but also gave her a different point of view because "I didn't grow up that way."

The final topic regarding how the teachers developed their culturally responsive skills

and practices revolved around school and classroom interactions with colleagues that aided the

teachers in becoming more culturally aware. Some of these interactions involved consulting with

colleagues, including para-educators, regarding appropriate strategies, lesson planning

considerations, and general support. For example, Tammie told of a relationship she developed

with another teacher during her first years as a teacher. During her first few months at the new

school, Tammie realized that she was experiencing cultural dissonance between herself and her

mostly African American student population. "I thought we are city kids and we had some

commonalities but I found very early on in my teaching that…I thought we all live in the city

and we all share these things but really we had not." She went on to discuss that collaborating

with the teacher next door assisted her in becoming more aware and recognizing the need to

make some adjustments.

> You know I think one of the things was the teacher who ended up being next door to me.
> We became friends and it became part of our conversations. And I think it was our desire
> to want our kids, to truly want them to learn. I think it has so much to do with the fact
> that we spent so much time, between myself and the other teacher, trying to create a
> cohesive community and trying to create a safe community where they were not fighting
> or calling each other names.

Her colleague had grown up in the suburbs but had experience teaching African American

students and was able to give Tammie some suggestions and support in working with the

students on her caseload. Tammie went on to say that this work was not easy. "But we were just

trying to develop this community where we were all learners together. It was hard. It was a lot of

work".

Tammie went on to discuss key relationships with colleagues that she had developed

during her current teaching position at a majority Asian-serving elementary school. She spoke of

a para-educator who helped her in understanding the importance of language among the students

from different regions.

> One of the para-professionals was telling me that it's almost putting them down when
> you speak to them only in Mandarin as opposed to…you know if I just came in and spoke
> Mandarin to a kid….they would think that I was putting them down kind of. It is a

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cultural thing because they were not exposed to Mandarin. So she said that that could

maybe be part of it. So, we have to figure out what language and what they understand

and who can speak to them and then we try to hook them up with a couple of kids.

She also credited another colleague for assisting her in learning about the Chinese culture and the

experiences her students might be bringing to the classroom. Tammie and the bilingual teacher

had become friends when they were both involved in a mentoring program. Tammie stated

"Through the process of getting to know her…I learned a lot through her". Tammie went on to

say "she's very open", with "no pretense" and noting that she had given her a great deal of

understanding of the Chinese culture that she was then able to utilize in her classroom.

Similar to Tammie, Maya commented on the importance of building relationships and

having conversations with colleagues whose culture is representative of the culture of the

students they are teaching.

"I think through working with other teachers who are of a different culture than myself,

getting to talk to other teachers who they themselves might be Latino or whatever race.

They kind of gave a different perspective of what needs attention."

Consistent with comments made by Maya and Tammie, Ophelia spoke about how having

relationships and conversations with colleagues have assisted her in recognizing and respecting

cultural differences. She told of a time when remarks made to her by a colleague who was

Japanese helped her gain a better understanding of her interaction with a Japanese parent.

Christine commented that though she had gained some skills from her ESL program

regarding attending to her students' language needs, it was the "wonderful ESL teachers" she has

worked with for so many years that had helped her most by serving as "good role models. I still

go to all the people I know when I have a question about something or need some help."

Most of the teachers referenced the role of para-educators in assisting them in the classroom. They usually spoke of the para-educator in regard to language issues in the classroom. Karen credited her classroom aides as being the source of a lot of her knowledge about working with students and parents of a particular culture specifically around the issue of language.

> There are so many nuances when you are working with a culture who doesn't speak the language or you don't speak the language. Aides have really helped me to be more aware. You know bilingual aides that let you know that what you just said was not appropriate. They help you know when you are speaking in a way that might be insulting to the kids and it helps to have somebody who can assist you with that.

Though she felt very comfortable relating to her Hispanic students and parents because they share the same ethnic background, Maria commented that she learned to turn to other colleagues when she had concerns regarding some of her African American students. She commented "it is important to find colleagues you feel comfortable with and know who you can go to when you need help".

Ophelia stated that she believed individuals have to first be open, welcoming and curious about others cultures. She typically asked her colleagues who are of the same culture as her children about family experiences, expectations and values. Seeking out information in this way kept her from making inaccurate assumptions.

Throughout the study the teachers discussed the various ways in which they were able to gain an understanding of what it meant to be culturally responsive in the educational setting. They commented on the impact their academic coursework had on expanding their knowledge base and introducing them to ideas they had not previously considered. They shared personal

experiences that had given them a sense of appreciation for people of different backgrounds and cultures, though not necessarily the ability to transfer those experiences into their teaching practices. The teachers' also attributed their ability to be culturally responsive to the assistance and guidance they received from their colleagues.

Research Question Two: How do teachers use their knowledge and understandings about culturally responsive teaching and knowledge and understanding about students to inform their planning and instruction?

The enactment of culturally responsive practices in the classroom serves as a representation of a teacher's knowledge and understanding of the construct. In the following, findings are presented regarding the ways in which the participants used their knowledge about their students and their knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching to provide instruction. Three topics emerged from their responses. One topic addressed the ways in which the participants promoted and encouraged students' success in the classroom including emotional support. A second topic encompassed the participants' ideas about tapping into their students' cultural knowledge, assisting them in making connections to the material and building bridges. The third topic involved the ways in which the teachers respect and encourage their students' home language while building language and vocabulary skills. Each topic is presented below and includes representative quotes for illustration.

In the first topic, when commenting on the ways in which they use culturally responsive practices in their classrooms, many of the teachers spoke about the importance of finding methods and strategies to motivate and encourage their students to be more academically successful in the special education classroom. These methods included recognizing and praising

student success as a way of encouraging greater levels of confidence, teaching students to have a voice and giving students opportunities to showcase what they knew.

Ophelia commented that keeping her students motivated in the classroom was sometimes a challenge, as it was in most classrooms, but that it is even more important when working with students with disabilities. She stated, "being a cheerleader and celebrating success" was a technique she found worked with her students.

> Well one thing when kids say 'this is hard', I say 'I know and you can do hard things'. I guess being encouraging and a cheerleader and celebrating success and just by the words I would use. And I also know that kids love to hear - if I go over by my assistant Susan and I know Blake's listening, I'll say 'Susan, Blake just went up another reading level'. He hears it and it's just really an effective way of - like we are moving on to the next level and he is going to do it. I do that a lot because it means a lot to kids that wow this person thinks I'm good and wants to go share it with somebody else.

Ophelia further commented that she had to take ownership of her students' learning and work extra hard to build upon that success because if her students failed "I feel it would be like my failure."

Maya echoed the statement made by Ophelia. She stated that students with disabilities need to have more successful academic experiences, no matter how small, in order to keep them engaged and motivated.

> Then there are definitely days when they are not so motivated to learn and in addition to that I think that trying to make them successful as much as possible is motivating for them you know. I think we all feel like you can only fail so many times at something then you don't want to do it anymore.

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Maria reflected on interactions and experiences she had in early schooling that prompted her, as an English learner herself, to strive for success in the classroom. She commented that when students are learning a new language or learning customs that are different from their own, encouragement, openness and acceptance are mainly what is needed in order for them to make progress. These were the ways in which she had been pushed to be a better student and she practiced these same methods with her own students.

Tammie shared that girls in the Asian community were brought up to be "seen and not heard", noting that when attending school in their native country, they were taught, "don't look at adults and don't speak". Because of this she said that she went out of her way to give the girls in her classroom tools that they could use to build their self-esteem and confidence.

> Doing some girl empowerment things you know trying to empower our girls just a little bit. We have a track team and I tried to encourage our girls to join or other sports teams so they can get a little bit more empowered that way. I also encouraged the kids at times to choose their partners or I choose for them and that sometimes can be tricky. It's tricky in any classroom but then really I do have to spend time really modeling how to work in a group. How to have a voice. How to have a say. How to collaborate and get your point across in a positive way, or being able to concede to someone else's point.

She continued by expressing that this could be difficult because such behaviors were a part of the girls' cultural norm and though her desire was for them to be successful in her class and beyond, it could be hard to realize the effect a teacher may have on a student.

Tammie also stated that she made an effort to make her students feel appreciated and motivated by allowing them to teach her words from their native language. She stated: "So then I

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was just trying to let them feel acknowledged and feel that they are appreciated. That the knowledge that they have, and I don't, is appreciated".

Both Maya and Tammie spoke extensively about the importance of setting up and maintaining a good classroom community that exudes an atmosphere of safety and acceptance. This allows students to feel comfortable with who they were and how they fit into the classroom community thus, "building a foundation for success".

In the second topic, when talking about the ways in which they use culturally responsive practices participants commented on the academic components of teaching that they use in order to improve the academic outcomes of their students. Many described their efforts at connecting their students' previous experience to the content of their lessons. Their comments ranged from, a focus on heroes and holidays, to integrating ethnic content, to incorporating their students' lived experiences into the lessons.

Maria noted that taking advantage of holidays provided an opportune time to acknowledge her students' backgrounds in addition to teaching them about cultures that were different from their own.

> I think that, just acknowledging where they come from or when we have the opportunity
>
> to explore the different backgrounds and cultures such as during the holidays we talk
>
> about Christmas and "Posadas" which is something that a lot of the Hispanic people
>
> celebrate. So we do talk about that and incorporate that in our lesson plans.

Maria continued by stating that holidays gave her a chance to talk to her students about the traditions of other cultures as well, "Our para is from India and so we talk about her celebration too and we have posters [of others] cultures". She went on to say that she had her students' explore their family's place of origin, food customs, and home life and used their experiences as

examples when teaching, as a way to help her students make relevant connections and build interest in the material.

Again reflecting on her early career teaching at an elementary school where the majority of her students were African Americans, Tammie described how she had to make adjustments to the literature she had available to her students in order to provide materials that were culturally relevant to them.

"I tried to find more books with people in it who look like them that they could relate to in a different way instead of reading like Blueberries for Sal…They had never been to Michigan right? They didn't know where Michigan was let alone have you ever been blueberry picking".

Tammie's comments conveyed her understanding that seeing oneself in the characters, authors and illustrations of books may be a key to engaging students in learning and experiencing more school success.

Tammie then went on to talk about her current population of students and how she used their frequent trips back to their homeland to bolster their interest in social studies and reading.

Even though a lot of our kids are below the poverty line what's interesting is they've all been back and forth to China so they understand international travel in a different way than maybe another community of kids wouldn't because they haven't traveled back and forth to China. So we tap into that when we are talking about social studies and the world. A lot of them also come through New York and they have family in New York so this whole immigrant concept when we are teaching social studies and talking about Columbus and coming to America and what that is like and so we tried to tap into that.

Similarly, Ophelia spoke about using literature as a way to make connections for her students. She commented that she tried to move away from the usual people who are highlighted, like Martin Luther King, as well as the usual materials and utilized biographies that feature people of various races. Ophelia stated that though she may not always do it consciously, she attempted to choose literature with central characters with whom her students could relate. When speaking about a particular child she said:

If I have a child who is African American, I choose books whose characters are Black. This child that I am thinking of is probably not going to be reading a steady diet of books about white kids, who live in the suburbs. I want him to have some characters in books who look familiar to him or who he might be able to relate to in a certain way and sort of pique his interest and get him interested in reading and learning more about language and just about reading.

Ophelia went on to talk about another time when she chose literature that assisted another student in making connections with the material.

In the fall we did a Cinderella unit from all the different cultures and you know the Korean Cinderella. We did do the Chinese Cinderella but she [a student] chose that. There were a lot of other ones too...she expressed interest in the Chinese Cinderella story so we did that. But then the little girl who is Filipino was very interested in a different Cinderella story because in her family they eat a lot of fish. Fish and rice is what they eat. At least that is what she talks about. And she was very interested in that and she was relating to it.

Amelia articulated that she often took advantage of the opportunity for students to bring in their own knowledge and share with the class. She relayed a specific example regarding a

student who was able to contribute to a unit on Native Americans by sharing his ancestry. She also spoke of incorporating information regarding various cultures. For example, incorporating the experiences of Mexican families and their children during a unit on the Civil Rights Movement instead of focusing solely on the African American experience. She also stressed the importance of utilizing these types of practices as a way for students to interact with the material on a personal level.

> You want to teach them grammar and stuff like that but you also want to use literature that's interesting to them that they care about and that will motivate them. I mean they are not going to learn anything unless they care so you have to use literature and materials that matter to them.

> Maya stated that she believed that "--with any lesson or any unit that we are talking about or anything that we are starting in school we always begin with what do you know about this topic?" In this way she is able to get her students to share what they know with others and get them more interested in the subject matter. This also gave her an opportunity to discern the types of activities and content she needed to provide in order to "fill in the gaps".

> Nedra described how she "walks through" her lessons to determine whether or not they are relevant to her students or to determine if the topic might cause an adverse reaction for particular students.

> Primarily when you look at literacy, reading and writing, you look at the vocabulary, you look at the topic that the students are going to be addressing and you look at your clientele, your students and you determine if they are going to have any connections or be able to bring input to the lesson. Or will this lesson bring up a bad memory or something from their past that might upset them? So you try to develop those lessons and walk

through them so that they are forming positive connections for them and that they are able to feel connected to the lesson. I definitely think you have to think about who your students are and every lesson needs to be tweaked a bit to be sure that you are meeting their needs.

Nedra went on to note that she felt her school curriculum is "very culturally diverse" and did a good job of helping students make connections. She also stated that she felt that the curriculum provided her with tools that made it easier for her to tailor her lessons for individual students' needs.

Karen expressed the importance of getting students to connect with the material and tried to accomplish this by "having them relate something to real life…what they know" but also recognized that doing so could be a challenge.

Of course it's who they are and you are just trying to connect where we, the educators, want them to go with where they see themselves going and the only way to do that is to get them connected to where they came from but that's the challenge.

Karen described her attempts in making a connection for students as "feeble" then talked about how she liked to choose authors of similar backgrounds to pique the students' interest.

I think that literature is probably the biggest way to connect with these kids. Its other people's life experiences that you could bring...you know everybody gets Martin Luther King. But there are so many other good authors that could be brought in. And nobody brings in, you know, Medgar Evers. If they could just read some of the experiences these guys went through as they tried to get through [life] it might bring something to them. Kids should hear this stuff because that mom in that story is everybody's mom and that dad is everybody's dad. They really should taste every culture.

Toni echoed Karen's comments when she spoke about helping students make connections with the material by bringing in relevant examples from their culture. She also stated that it was important to relate the academic content to events and topics that students understood from their cultural perspective.

The third topic that characterized the teachers' comments as they reflected on the culturally responsive practices that they used in the classroom was in regard to considering the home language while building oral language and vocabulary skills. All of the participants had taught students with disabilities who spoke languages other than English as part of their teaching caseload. The teachers noted that when working with this population of students, it was critical for them to incorporate and use strategies that would not only affirm and support students in their native language, but would also guide them in improving their language and vocabulary skills.

The participants spoke specifically about the importance of recognizing and using their students' home language in the educational setting. In her description of culturally responsive teaching, Tammie highlighted her need to get a grasp of the language spoken by her students because though they were all from China they spoke different dialects. Once she obtained the needed information regarding her students' native dialect she was able to better communicate with the child and their family, thus improving the child's likelihood for success in the classroom.

> The first thing for us is to figure out what language they speak. Because there is more
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> than one dialect so we have to get over that hump. The language taught in China is
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> Mandarin, the language of the educated. And then there is Cantonese, which is a more
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> rural dialect. Then there is Taishanese and that's what most of our kids speak because
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> they come from these village communities. So we figure out what they know because the

people who speak only Mandarin don't really understand Cantonese or Taishanese. It's very hard for them to communicate across those barriers. So Mandarin is the official language of the educated, so they teach Mandarin and speak and read Mandarin. The majority of the population, like our kids, either speak Cantonese or Taishanese and those two can cross. It is really hard. So if we have a kid who has only spoken Taishanese his whole life and we spoke to him in Cantonese he could understand you well enough. But if you went straight Mandarin there would be a lot of things that would be hard for them.

Having the knowledge of which dialect a particular child spoke allowed her to be able to pair students with classmates who spoke the same language so that they could have conversations about the topic or material. To deepen her students' vocabulary and language skills, Tammie stated that she often has students work in pairs or trios on particular project-based activities in order to encourage interactions that will facilitate much needed conversation.

Nedra commented on the need to differentiate between a child's dominant language and home language.

My caseload this year is primarily Hispanic. We do have a few families that predominately speak Spanish at home. Most of their children do not necessarily speak Spanish but when they go home they need to listen to their parents and understand how they communicate and then also follow those directions in Spanish but then they do usually communicate with their parents in English.

Nedra further commented about the need to be even more cautious when considering the dominant language of students with disabilities who were also bilingual. Nedra conveyed her understanding that it could sometimes take too long to determine if a child was not progressing due to a disability or because they hadn't mastered their native language.

Maya shared how she used to be reluctant to allow students to speak their native language in class but changed her disposition, after completing coursework in bilingual special education. She now perceived it as way of affirming the child and the family heritage in addition to increasing the likelihood that the student would develop increased understanding and achievement in the areas of vocabulary and literacy development.

But I think now that I have become more cognizant about the different languages and letting students speak in that language, trying to help each other in that language. I think before I was a little reluctant. You know a lot of teachers at school are like "no Spanish in class, no Polish in class" because they want to know what the students are talking about. But having now taken those classes, we should be letting them; we should be embracing it not restricting it for the development of academic language and vocabulary.

When talking about the tools they use for language and vocabulary development both Maya and Nedra made specific reference to using the Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) to effectively teach their students. Maya stated:

I took the sheltered instruction stuff that we do for lessons...I try my best to provide visuals for everything that I am doing. We build vocabulary, we use the background knowledge on things, and I reteach when I need to about lessons that students didn't understand or haven't grasped.

When asked if she used the SIOP model in all her lessons, Maya stated that she didn't but that she thought of it as a good teaching approach and "I try with everything I do to keep it in mind." Maya also spoke of using Spanish cognates as a tool for building her students' English vocabulary.

If a word comes up in a story we do like the Spanish cognates for some of the vocabulary for the ones that have it. So for kids who speak Spanish, they might not be able to retrieve the word but if I say the cognate then they realize they do know the word. We just help with language support and that's Spanish or Polish or whatever and even the English speakers, just having those words available to match.

Maya spoke of strategies she used with a particular student, which included using visuals, breaking directions into discrete steps and using a translator to check for understanding.

As noted earlier, Nedra also spoke about using SIOP with her students. Similar to Maya she stated that she did not use it on a regular basis but used the basic principles to guide her lessons. She also discussed the problems some of her students had with word retrieval when trying to communicate in English and that these problems could get in the way of the educational process. She stated that because of this she worked hard at "trying to teach the correct vocabulary and the correct grammar". She said she also spent a significant amount of time working on getting her students to understand the difference between the words they used at home and the language they used at school.

Karen also conveyed that allowing the students to use their own language not only made them feel valued and important, but also "using some Spanish and showing them that you have some Spanish and you can explain some simple things in Spanish" is a way of showing respect and bolstered their motivation to participate in the academic setting.

Karen also noted the need for teachers to assist students in connecting words in their native language to English words, particularly when students were working with textbooks. Her knowledge of Latin also assisted her in this endeavor.

You look at the science unit that the textbook presents and even though it is written for

that grade level, often the definitions have to be modified. You really have to try to put it

in simpler English and get the idea across. Try to find it in Spanish equivalent and put

that down, get them a picture and then build. And often you try to find those Latin roots

that will connect to Spanish and English to help them bridge. You know like cognates

and even Latin root words because when you think of Latin - it doesn't work all the time

obviously but if you can make the bridge for them, it helps. So you are always trying to

modify the language so they get it and sometimes that means saying it a couple different

ways.

Christine stated that she utilized ESL strategies with all of her students with disabilities,

whether they are bilingual or not because, "I find that ESL and special ed[ucation] strategies are

very similar". She went on to say that she tried to increase her students' vocabulary by using

visuals and word association. She also stressed the need to constantly check for understanding.

You know their spoken conversational English is pretty good and they can take a note

like this home to their parents and read it aloud fluently and explain it, but their

vocabulary is really hard for some of them. [I] have to spend a lot more time showing

them a lot more of what words mean. Even the words like 'more' or 'less'. Showing a lot

more visuals. Just trying to get them to associate the English word with the word that

they are probably familiar with in their own language. A lot of visuals, a lot of

differentiation, and a lot of just trying to explain. Being careful about vocabulary. Giving

a little extra vocabulary instruction.

Christine also commented on using guided reading groups as a way for her students to receive

"extra help with a particular grammar skill".

Maria and Nedra were the only teachers in the study who were bilingual. Though Nedra had not had much opportunity to use her native language when instructing her students, Maria, a native Spanish speaker had. She remarked on how she used her knowledge of the language to instruct students in the classroom.

> Because most of my students are ELLs, I talk to them in English but when they don't respond well to me than I use Spanish. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. -- some of them who used to talk to me just in Spanish are using English more too. Like I said they have a lot of speech impediments, but they try.

She went on to share her interactions with one particular student who would not respond or listen to the para-educator because the aide only spoke English. By talking to the student in Spanish and allowing the student to respond in Spanish, Maria was able to not only discern the student's level of comprehension but to also give the student practice in vocabulary and grammatical structures through her practice of English.

Amelia commented that to assist students who are ELLs with learning disabilities in the area of vocabulary development she simplified the text by "taking it down to the bare minimum, front loading the vocabulary and being very explicit about the vocabulary". She also communicated that she provided readable literature books and used a lot of visuals.

Summary

This chapter has presented the themes and topics that emerged during analysis of data that were collected via in depth interviews with nine experienced special education teachers of students who were culturally and/or linguistically diverse. In relation to their understanding and knowledge about culturally responsive teaching, the teachers' spoke about the importance of knowing and understandings the child and their family as well as the importance of building

relationships based on mutual trust and respect. The teachers' also commented on the role of formal education, personal experiences, and interactions with colleagues in their acquisition and development of culturally responsive practices and skills. As it relates to their use of the acquired knowledge and skills the teachers' reported using various strategies to promote learner success including, making relevant connections and building bridges for students and respecting their students' home language while building language and vocabulary skills. The next chapter, Chapter Five presents an interpretation of the findings of the study, the study implications and limitations as well as offer suggestions for future research.

Chapter V: Discussion

The ability of teacher to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students has been a problem in the United States for many years. Culturally responsive teaching has been espoused as an approach to teaching that would ensure the success of all students. While there is a plethora of research on the use of culturally responsive teaching practices in the general education classroom, there is a scarcity of such research in special education settings. The purpose of this study was to examine experienced special education teachers understanding and use of culturally responsive teaching practices with students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds with disabilities. The research questions for this study were: 1) What are experienced special education teachers knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching?, and 2) How do experienced special education teachers use their knowledge and understanding about culturally responsive teaching and their knowledge and understanding about their students to inform decision-making during planning and instruction?

Chapter I outlined the need for CRTeaching, presented an overview of its' basic principles and highlighted the need to examine the understanding and use of these practices by experienced special education teachers. Chapter II presented the foundations of CRTeaching and provided a review of relevant literature regarding teacher characteristics and use of CRTeaching practices in general and special education classrooms. This chapter concluded with a brief overview of recommended instructional practices specific to English language learners. Chapter III provided details regarding the study design and methods, including an explanation of the data collection procedures and data analysis. Study results were described in Chapter IV. In this chapter, Chapter V, I provide a discussion of the findings of the study, connecting it to previous

research. This is followed by a description of the study implications and concludes with a discussion of the limitations and suggestions for future research.

The teachers' comments regarding their understanding of culturally responsive teaching and the ways in which they use their understanding and knowledge in connection with what they know about their students to inform classroom instruction were clustered around the two research questions designed to access their interpretations. The findings revealed that the participants' descriptions of their knowledge and understandings and their application were well aligned with what previous research has characterized culturally responsive teaching.

As discussed in Chapter II, several commonalities across the research on culturally responsive teaching were identified. These common ideas or principles included : a) being reflective regarding their own attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding culture and their affect on the educational outcomes of their students, b) develop a cultural knowledge base, which includes possessing affirming views of students from CLD backgrounds, and use the information to influence teaching and learning, c) infuse multicultural materials into the curriculum to maximize student learning, d) develop cultural competence and assist students in doing the same, e) have positive perspective on parents and families, while building partnerships f) utilize culturally mediated instruction which includes attending to first and second language needs, g) commitment to high expectations, and h) development of social political consciousness in order to transform the educational process and structure. In the following, the results are discussed as they relate to these principles. In order to structure the discussion, some of the principles have been combined.

Personal Reflection and Affirming Attitudes

Teachers who are committed to changing the ways in which ethnically and linguistically diverse students are educated in their special education classrooms must first recognize the need to transform themselves and then take action to do so (Ladson-Billings, 2001). One of the critical features of CRTeaching is the willingness and ability of teachers to examine and acknowledge their own cultural beliefs and attitudes, combined with understanding how their biases might influence their approach to the educational setting, while respecting the cultural expressions of their students that are different from their own (Gay, 2000, 2010; Howard, 2006). This "cultural self-awareness" is accomplished through purposeful reflection, introspection and intentional discussions with others (this element is discussed later in this section) (Gay, 2010). These experiences provides a way of thinking about the world in which students from diverse cultures reside and can assist the teacher in developing increased knowledge and sensitivity regarding the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

Though many of the teachers in the study reflected on their own cultural background and upbringing, three in particular expressed a more reflective stance in their comments. Even though Tammie had graduated from a teacher preparation program that emphasized multicultural education, she entered her first teaching assignment thinking that because they had grown up in the same city, she would not have any issues relating to her African American students. She reported that she quickly realized she not only had to readjust her way of thinking but also make major modification to her instructional delivery and content in order to make better connections for her students. Tammie also recognized that doing this was a long and difficult process but a worthwhile endeavor as the end result was greater understanding on her part and increased academic connections and progress on the part of her students.

Both Nedra and Maria acknowledged that reflecting on their backgrounds and experiences as ethnically diverse learners assisted them in being more aware and sensitive to their students who were ethnically and linguistically diverse. Nedra identified herself as Middle Eastern and believed that her formative educational experiences in a predominately White neighborhood laid the foundation for the ways in which she related to and taught her CLD students. Her own experiences gave her greater understanding of the types of academic support and encouragement her students needed not only to progress academically but also personally. She was willing to practice self-reflection, listen to her students and make the necessary changes to build relationships and improve her students' academic outcomes.

Like Nedra, Maria also grew up in a neighborhood that was culturally different from her family origins and spoke about how her experiences influenced her approach to teaching. She spoke about how reflecting on the ways in which she encountered cultural discontinuity in the academic setting gave her a deeper understanding of the biases and assumptions that her students might have encountered.

Though many of the other six teachers reflected briefly on their own backgrounds and upbringing during the interviews, none talked about their own cultural grounding in detail. The teachers' comments indicate they recognized that their backgrounds and upbringing were different from that of their students but did not discuss how their cultural frame might have influenced their interactions with students as well as affect their instructional approach. Howard (2003) asserts that culturally responsive teachers need to practice critical reflection on a consistent basis. This reflection includes honestly confronting themselves regarding how their personal background experiences, understanding about different cultures and behavior affect

their teaching and their student's learning. Though all of the teachers for this study practiced reflection, most of these reflections did not go beyond the basic level.

The ability of teachers to deeply reflect on and acknowledge the impact of their own and their students' cultures on the educational process is the first step in obtaining a positive disposition toward those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Nieto (2002, 2011) contend that culturally responsive teachers have affirming views of students who are ethnically diverse and see their backgrounds as resources for teaching and learning rather than problems to fix or overcome. Villegas and Lucas suggest that these attitudes take place on a continuum with a deficit perspective and an affirming perspective on opposite ends. When the teachers' commented on their understanding of CRTeaching, they all provided examples that reflected an affirming attitude toward their students. There comments landed in various places on the continuum. Many of the teachers spoke about the various experiences, knowledge and schema their students' brought to the classroom and how they tried to meet the challenge of connecting to it and highlighting it in the classroom. Maya, Tammie, Nedra, and Maria all spoke about using discussions about diversity and difference as a way of communicating to students that everyone has different talents and gifts that are welcomed and needed in the classroom. The teachers were able to incorporate diversity into their classrooms and discuss differences while applauding them.

Culturally responsive teachers, who are affirming of diversity, work hard to create an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance and care (Gay 2010, Nieto, 2002, 2011). Maya and Tammie spoke repeatedly about their efforts at creating and maintaining classroom communities that fostered such an atmosphere. There comments indicated that they provided ample opportunities for their students to showcase their personal cultural histories and share them with the class.

Other examples of teachers affirming students' cultural identities were in regard to language. Ortiz (1997) contends that incorporating students' language in the teaching and learning process is one way to communicate value and respect to students. All of the teachers had students in their classrooms for which English was not their first language. Some of the teachers went out of their way to learn and use at least a few words in their students' native language. Toni expressed regret at not knowing more words in her students' native language but communicated that she had learned a few basic words. Tammie admitted that she had picked up enough of her students' language to understand a few "choice" words and to communicate some basic information to her parents who were Chinese immigrants. Maria, a native Spanish speaker, often used Spanish with her students' as a way to extend their understanding and to assist them gaining more access to the academic material. Toward the end of the study Christine communicated that she had a new student enrolled in her classroom who spoke Urdu and she was taking lessons from a teacher in her building on some basic words for the purpose of being able to communicate with the student.

Most of the teachers encouraged their students to use their home languages during lessons and when communicating to each other. This practice is compatible with the literature on culturally responsive teaching that supports teachers' use of students' native language to increase the academic achievement of CLD students in the classroom (Karathanos, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001). The teachers' comments indicate they understood the importance of taking direct action to acknowledge and honor their students' home language in some way. Maya showed growth in her affirming attitude in regard to her students' native language when she developed a deeper understanding if it's importance after completing coursework for a bilingual special education endorsement. She stated, "Now I let them use their language whenever I can and I've

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asked them to teach me so that I am able to use it with them." Teachers also expressed the need to go beyond just honoring and affirming their students' first language and spoke of the necessity to allow students to use their native language with the teacher and their peers in order for them to gain understanding and have more success in the academic setting.

Finally, though not directly spoken, there was evidence of constant personal reflection and affirming attitudes toward learning differences. I did not specifically probe for this dimension of diversity, and none of the teachers referred to disability in these terms. They all alluded to their daily and weekly planning for the diverse educational needs of the individual students as it relates to their students' IEP goals and in doing so were attending to the specific needs in regard to their students' individual disability diagnosis. By speaking of their students individual learning needs the teachers demonstrated their understanding of various learning styles and their desire to improve teacher effectiveness for diverse learners.

Infusing Multicultural Content and Attending to First and Second Language Needs

Closely related to the ability to embrace diversity within the population of students in the special education classroom is the willingness of teachers to plan content that is truly authentic and relevant to the lives of their students. The research on multicultural education indicate culturally responsive teachers are able to and interested in reorganizing the curriculum in a way that allows their students to see themselves and thus make stronger connections (Banks, 2001). These teachers go out of their way to integrate non-traditional content into the instructional process on a daily basis and work to build effective classroom libraries that as a way to engage students and to increase literacy.

Though she referred to her attempts as feeble, Karen spoke about consciously choosing authors from similar backgrounds as her students in order to pique their interest. She stressed the

importance of going beyond the authors that are typically highlighted (like Martin Luther King) and intentionally including those lessor-known authors. She further believed that it was important for students to be exposed to textbooks and materials that highlighted individuals from all walks of life in order to give students the opportunity to reach beyond themselves to gain a better understanding of others.

Toni, Ophelia and Amelia also called attention to their efforts at making the curriculum relevant by providing literature and other examples that would assist students in making deeper connections with a given topic as well as expose them to various cultures. Their comments seemed to communicate their use of instruction that supports multicultural information. Banks referred to this strategy "as content integration" and saw it as an important dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1993).

The teachers expressed an understanding regarding the impact of integrating multicultural content into their curriculum. They mainly used this strategy in the literature content area as a way to support students' awareness of their own and other culture and to promote academic engagement with the content. These efforts are in line with those recommended in the literature (for example, Catapano, Fleming, & Alias, 2009; Hall, Hedrik, & Williams, 2014). Children with disabilities often exhibit a lack of motivation in regard to learning. The teachers participating in this study used these types of books as a way to generate interest and motivation in their students and to make the material more accessible in order to improve their students' educational outcomes and reach their IEP goals.

Several researchers have stressed that the mastery of academic language is one of the most important determinates of academic success for ELL students (Francis, et. al., 2006, Klingner, Hoover, & Baca, 2008). Though many of the teachers' classrooms consisted of

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students who were learning English as their second language, very few of the teachers made statements regarding attending to their students first and second language needs. Two of the teachers' talked about using Spanish cognates and Latin roots as a way to support their students' acquisition and understanding of academic language. Karen found using cognates particularly useful when students were learning from textbooks.

Tammie was the only teacher to talk about the need to not only get a grasp of the language needs of her students but to also take into consideration the different dialects of her Chinese students. She felt that having the correct information provided many opportunities for her to better communicate with her students and their parents thus leading to more opportunities for academic success. She recognized that language is not uniform and can vary based on a child's cultural background and geographical location (Artiles, et al., 2005; Taliaferro, 2012).

Students who are English language learners often encounter problems during assessment for special education (Zetlin, et. al, 2011). Two of the main issues during the process involve the inability of the team to distinguish between a disability and typical second language learning development and the evaluation of language dominance and proficiency against language disability (Klingner & Artiles, 2003). Of all the teachers, Nedra and Maria spoke about the need to differentiate between her students' dominant language and their home language. Their comments revealed an understanding and awareness of the significance of possessing this knowledge as teachers of students who are English language learners with disabilities. Maria further commented that this knowledge is even more important if the student also has a disability in the area of language or communication.

Possessing Cultural Competence and High Expectations

According to Ladson-Billings (1995a) culturally competent teachers posses an understanding of the intricacies of culture and understand its role in the education process. The goal of teachers who embrace this concept is to assist students in developing positive perspective of their own and other cultures. Villegas and Lucas (2002) contend that culturally responsive teachers "must know their students well and have the skills to transform what they know about the students into appropriate classroom practices". The comments from participating teachers highlighted their understanding that culture is about more than just differences. Many of the participating teachers took appropriate steps to learn about the culture of their students, their preferred learning styles, and to build links between the students lived experiences at home and school. The teachers' comments indicate they viewed their students' culture from a strength-based perspective. They used that knowledge in their planning and instruction as a way to connect new material to existing knowledge and though not explicitly stated, to assist students in attaining their individual academic goals.

All of the teachers in this study expressed their understanding of the need to learn as much as possible about a child's culture including their experiences, customs, and traditions. Early in her teaching career, Tammie learned not to make assumptions about her students' experiences. When reading a book about a little girl going blueberry picking, she recognized that her students had not had that experience and probably had never seen a blueberry. This brought to light the differences between her and her students. When she moved to a new school in a predominately Asian community, she recognized the need to learn as much as possible about her students in order to avoid making assumptions about their experiences and background knowledge. Although the blueberry picking example was a benign sort of example, it served to

trigger Tammie's awareness and was one indication of her growth in the area of cultural competence.

Many of the teachers in this study indicated that they went out of their way to learn about their students' cultures. For many of them the student was the first source of information. Teachers were intentional in their communication with students in an effort to gain information. Teachers often viewed parents as the second source of information but stressed that this could be difficult with parents who were not fluent in English. When met with this obstacle, teachers then turned to their aides or other colleagues who shared the same racial or linguistic background of the student.

Geneva Gay (2010) stated that culturally competent teachers sincerely care for their students and are unrelenting in their expectations of high academic achievement. The participating teachers talked extensively on the subject of the need to build relationships and exhibit an attitude of love and care toward their students and their families. Many of the teachers attributed their ability to relate to and understand their students' cultures to their efforts at building caring relationships which is a vital practice according to the research on culturally responsive teaching (Bergeron, 2008; Brown, 2004). The teachers in this study saw these relationships as imperative when teaching students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Tammie exhibited the characteristic of care when she discussed her efforts to instill her female student with a sense of empowerment and self-confidence. Two of the teachers stated that when "teaching to the whole child" academics sometimes had to take the back seat. Many of the teachers expressed an understanding that building relationships with students extended beyond the classroom into their homes and communities. Some even spoke about becoming more than just a teacher to their students and their families. The teachers seemed to understand that when

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students feel connected to their teachers and their classrooms, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged at school and thus, exhibit more academic success. These findings are consistent with past research (Howard, 2001; Murray, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Holding students to high expectations is another way in which teachers demonstrate their understanding of cultural responsiveness. Only a few of the participants conveyed their understanding of this characteristic through various statements. They expressed a desire to challenge their students as well as the expectation that their students would perform to the best of their ability. Ophelia commented that finding appropriate ways to motive students is even more vital when working with CLD students with disabilities. She commented on the need for teachers to be cheerleaders for their students and find every opportunity to celebrate student success. Several of the participants expressed the ability to take ownership of their students' learning by seeing their students' failure as their own personal failure as well. This is indicative of teachers who expect and work hard to achieve the best for their students. Many of the teachers also reported using various teaching methods and providing different supports as a way to motivate students in the classroom and keep them encouraged. These methods also assist students in gaining access to the material.

Using cultural references as a tool for academic motivation was a strategy practiced by all of the teachers. When teachers consistently and frequently recognize their students' culture and heritage, the greater the chances of academic improvement (Gay, 2002a, 2010). Possessing high learning goals means that teachers have to provide the proper supports for students. The teachers communicated they take steps to make learning tasks culturally relevant and meaningful for their students' but talked less about the ways in which they challenge the students academically.

Perspective on Parents and Families

It is well known that parental and family involvement is a key aspect of students learning and engagement. Often for parents of children from diverse backgrounds the school setting may be seen as an uninviting and intimidating place. These parents typically face challenges that are compounded by difference in language, culture and traditions (Nieto, 2011). The addition of a disability diagnosis can further complicate the matter. The findings from this current study indicate all of the participating teachers understood the need to consider the family perspective in the educational process.

With the exception of Christine, many of the teachers reported a general lack of parental involvement in their classrooms. Most teachers attributed this lack of involvement to the parents' busy lives. According to the teachers, parents were unable to attend school events and/or conferences because they worked long hours, held multiple jobs or had to travel long distances. Teachers also repeated these reasons for when they talked about parents' lack of support of their students' academic endeavors. However, they did not discuss the parents' lack of support in a derogatory way. They used this knowledge as a way of discerning the types of supports their students would need in the classroom due to family constraints.

The theme of mutual respect and trust was interwoven throughout the teachers' comments regarding parents. The teachers' expressed the desire to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Teachers' understood that one way of cultivating this trust was by being consistent, open and available to their parents. By developing these types of relationships with parents and families, teachers are able to enhance the home-school connection, which is of particular importance for families from diverse backgrounds. Positive relationships with parents can also greatly enhance the teacher-student relationship in the special education classroom.

Tammie expressed an understanding that some parents resist the disability diagnosis for their child because they may have a different way of thinking about disability. Sonia Nieto (2011) refers to this as being in "disagreement" rather than "denial". Tammie spoke about meeting with the student before and after school in order to provide him with the needed supports. Furthermore, she connected the students' mother with other parents of students with disabilities as well as community agencies in order to provide her a supportive network that would help her to understand the educational and institutional view of her child's disability. Nedra and Maria also spoke of assisting parents in gaining understanding of their child's disability diagnosis and educational needs.

Teachers also exhibited an attitude of openness with their parents. They worked to communicate with parents in ways that would enhance the educational process. They expressed their understanding of the need to dialogue with and involve parents of their students in the classroom community but felt frustrated when parents seemed not to be interested. The teachers made efforts to stay free of judgment when working and thinking about their students' families.

Teachers also spoke of using their relationship with the parents' as a way to gain knowledge about their students' home life in order to be better able to supply the necessary supports, to ascertain their expectations for their child and to ensure they have proper understanding of their child's disability diagnosis and needs, thus building a stronger home-school connection. Overall the teachers held positive perspectives regarding their students' parents.

Learning How to be Culturally Responsive

Becoming culturally responsive is not a process that happens overnight. It is a process that takes place over the course of time and one that is influenced by many factors. As the

teachers talked about their knowledge and understanding regarding culturally responsive teaching, many of them commented on the ways in which they developed their perspectives. This is a topic that is not researched or discussed much in the literature.

Many teachers accredited their teacher preparation training for their development of culturally responsive practices. Coursework, assignments, and/or class discussions they participated in during their academic pursuits contributed to their understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Teachers also touted the benefits of being able to have open discussions with classmates of different cultures. These discussions afforded them the opportunity to examine issues of race and culture in a safe environment. Many teachers alluded to gaining broader perspective and deeper understanding of themselves and others during this time.

Most, but not all of the teachers thought their university coursework properly prepared them to teach students who were culturally different from them. One teacher expressed frustration with what she thought was inadequate instruction in that area while another commented that she really didn't get the point of many of her university lessons on multicultural education and did not see its influence on her teaching. The findings, in general, indicate that teachers attribute the combination of the coursework and their continued experience in classrooms and interactions with students who were ethnically and linguistically diverse for some of their knowledge and growth.

Merely learning about strategies and instruction that is beneficial for all students does not necessarily render one culturally responsive. Neither does simply learning about culturally or linguistically diverse people. Relationships with others were also mentioned by the teachers as a way in which their knowledge was enhanced. Many spoke about personal relationships with colleagues, friends and family members from different ethnic backgrounds that had an impact on

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their understanding and in some instances helped them to get "unstuck". Some of these interactions caused teachers to confront some of their understandings and assumptions. Ophelia, Tammie, and Karen spoke about turning to their para-educators for information that goes beyond that of just language, regarding students of similar cultures. Para-educators often serve as "cultural brokers" in the classroom (Monzo & Rueda, 2003; Rueda, Monzo & Higareda, 2004). Tammie in particular spoke of the need to find and connect with "your go to" person. For her this has often been the para-educator. Still others turned to their colleagues for assistance. These may be individuals who shared similar backgrounds or experiences as the students or individuals who were experienced with a certain population of students. Cultivating these types of relationships further develops cultural competence.

Gay (2010) suggests that it is important for teachers who desire to become more culturally responsive to engage in dialogues with their professional peers regarding their expectations and interactions in their classrooms. These conversations should take place with individuals who are ethnically and/or linguistically diverse and challenge the teachers' current ways of thinking. The reported actions of the participating teachers in this study are indicative of their understanding of the need for such dialogue.

All of the teachers took the appropriate actions in order to acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills needed to be effective teachers of students with disabilities who were culturally and linguistically diverse. They pursued advanced coursework, sought out colleagues, and reflected on their own personal relationships and interactions with individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. The findings indicate the teachers viewed culturally responsive teaching as something that is of value and worth pursuing.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations in the areas of sample size, researcher effect, and methodology. A purposeful sample of experienced special education teachers of students who were culturally and linguistically diverse were utilized for this study. My initial goal was to recruit 12 – 15 special education teachers in order to gain deep knowledge of their understanding and use of culturally responsive teaching practices. Though repeated attempts were made to secure more participants, I was able to secure the nine participants presented in this study. Though each participant was interviewed three times and the data received was rich and detailed, the small sample size of nine participants may have influenced the themes and categories that emerged and therefore generalizations cannot be made to other experienced special education teachers.

The research questions guiding this study sought to examine experienced special education teachers' personal understandings of culturally responsive teaching and how these understanding are used in the classroom. The data were gathered through face-to-face interviews and self-report. By relying on self-reported information there is a risk of participants telling the researcher what they think they want to hear. As an African American female, the researcher may have caused potential research affect on the participants' responses. Throughout the study, every effort was made to encourage participants' to respond based on their own experiences, thoughts, ideas and understandings. Attentiveness to possible bias led to the authentication of each interview transcript through the process of member checking.

Though every effort was made to secure participants who taught in classrooms that were more heterogeneous, the populations of many of the classrooms were slightly less so. This could have impacted the teachers' understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices. While all

of the teachers' classrooms consisted of students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, Hispanic students were predominately represented. Because of this, the participants often referred to this population of students when responding to the questions. This may be considered a limitation by some. A final limitation of the study was the lack of classroom observations to support the participants' self-reports of culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. While this was not part of the design it might have complemented the study results.

Implications and Future Research

Despite these limitations, the findings from this study have implications for teacher preparation programs and professional development for in service teachers. For more than thirty years teacher preparation programs have worked to increase pre-service teachers' ability to appropriately meet the needs of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. These attempts are manifested in various forms and on various levels. Many of the participating teachers attributed their knowledge and understanding of culturally responsive teaching to their pre-service programs and advanced coursework, while others recalled minimal or ineffective pre-service experiences. This indicates the power of professional development at this level and highlights the need for teacher education programs to provide more intensive instruction and infusion of multicultural education and culturally responsive principles in their coursework, with particular attention to addressing the needs of English language learners with and without disabilities. These topics should be infused throughout the teacher preparation program and be intensive.

Teacher preparation programs also need to include opportunities for individuals to examine their own cultural perspective and the implications for classroom practices. Possessing a clear understanding of your own culture and the impact it has on teaching and learning is an

important characteristic of teachers of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Very few of the participating teachers demonstrated an understanding of the importance of this aspect of being culturally responsive. Gaining this understanding at a deeper level can be a difficult process for both pre-service and in-service teachers but would assist them in becoming more adept at meeting the needs of students with disabilities who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Pre-service and in-service teachers need a platform in which to be able to discuss the important issues of race and diversity along with the theories and practice of teaching in a culturally responsive way. In order to make an impact on a teachers' way of thinking and being, these discussions need to be meaningful, deep, and frequent.

Many of the participating teachers were very familiar with culturally responsive teaching principles and spoke knowledgeably about its' purpose and their practice while others were less able to do so. Section 9101 of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) defines "high-quality" professional development activities as those that are multifaceted and developed through collaboration between teachers, principals and school administrators. Though all of the teachers worked in schools that catered to an ethnically and linguistically diverse population of students, Christine was the only teacher to have any professional development at her school regarding cultural responsiveness. She noted that it took place many years previously and was "replaced by the next big idea". Ophelia expressed frustration that her school offered no support or guidance in this area. These comments among others indicate the need for schools to be more intentional in not only providing professional development in this area but also providing opportunities for teachers to develop collegial relationships that foster growth as culturally responsive teachers. This professional development would include a variety of topics regarding culturally responsive

teaching and afford teachers the opportunity to work in small groups, reflect and explore applications in their classrooms.

This study yields several possibilities for additional research in the area of culturally responsive teaching for students with disabilities who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Although numerous studies have been conducted to examine culturally responsive teaching in teachers' classroom, very few of these have been situated in special education classrooms. The extent to which the participating teachers' comments regarding their understanding and use of culturally responsive teaching practices are actualized in the classroom could not be validated by their self-report. Future studies should include a combination of extensive classroom observations and interviews using stimulated recall or case-based vignettes to elicit more thorough responses. Utilizing classroom video-recordings of teacher actions along with stimulated recall has the potential to tease out more of the intricate nature of thinking about and delivering instruction in special education classrooms with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Similarly, future research on culturally responsive teaching principles and practices would explore the growth and development of novice special educators as they work with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds across time. Studies conducted regarding special education teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach culturally diverse children in a culturally responsive way expose their lack of confidence in this area (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2003; Chu & Garcia, 2014; Siwatu, 2007). The teachers participating in this study spoke of possessing feelings of inadequacy during their early career while fewer of them spoke with strong confidence of their growth as culturally responsive teachers. A longitudinal study that followed special education teachers from pre-service through the first few years of teaching

would provide insight into the myriad of ways teachers navigate these principles and practices throughout various stages in their professional careers.

Although all of the teachers were able to articulate their understanding and use of culturally responsive practices in their classrooms, they were less able to articulate their thought processes when taking the students disability into consideration along with their cultural background and needs during the instructional planning process. A more thorough examination of the intersection of culture and disability in special education classrooms is warranted. This future research would examine the teachers' planning process from conception to implementation and could provide insight into the deeper processes teachers are not readily able to articulate. This examination would also offer insight into the complex nature of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities using culturally responsive teaching practices.

Finally, this study focused on experienced special education teachers who taught in the elementary grades. Special education teachers who teach in secondary school settings would be another area for future research. For these teachers the educational environment is a unique setting that would offer a different perspective on how culturally responsive teaching is understood and enacted in special education classroom that include students from CLD backgrounds. Each of these prospective areas of future research would offer valuable knowledge and insight to special educators, schools and administrators in regard to providing the appropriate services to meet the needs of diverse students with disabilities.

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

"Culturally Responsive Teaching"

You have been nominated to participate in a research study being conducted by Peggy Snowden. Peggy Snowden is a doctoral student from the University of Illinois at Chicago's Department of Special Education. She is conducting a study with special education teachers of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

This study will focus on looking at the nature of special education teachers' knowledge and use of culturally responsive practices with culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

Participating in the study will involve two semi-structured interviews. The interviews will last approximately 90 minutes each.

Please consider sharing your time and expertise. You may contact the researcher, Peggy Snowden, if you have questions and need more information

Peggy Snowden, M.Ed. at (312) 355.4410 (w) or (708) 704.2214 (c)

*Thank you very much for considering taking a part in this much needed research.

This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Norma Lopez-Reyna,
Special Education Department (312) 413-8761 and has been approved by the University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board.

Appendix B

Eligibility Script

Thank you for considering participating in this study of special education teachers' knowledge and use of Culturally Responsive Teaching for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This study is taking place at the University of Illinois at Chicago (METRO CITY UNIVRSITY).

You have been nominated to participate in my study. I am attempting to recruit up to 20 special education teachers.

To determine your eligibility to participate, I need to ask you a couple questions.

Have you been teaching special education students for five years or more?

Do you spend more than 51% of the school day providing special education services to children with mild disabilities in a segregated or resource classroom (pullout)?

Do you have a current caseload that includes at least 50% of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse?

If the individual responds no to any of the questions:
Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions? Thank you. Goodbye.

If the individual responds yes to all of the questions:
You fit the eligibility criteria. Would you like to hear more about the study?

If the individual responds no:
Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions? Thank you.
Goodbye.

If the individual responds yes:
Let me tell you a little more about the activities involved in the study. The purpose of the study is to examine the knowledge, perspectives and understandings of teachers with regard to their culturally responsive teaching practices. To do this, I am first asking to set up a time to meet with you go over the consent form. During this meeting we will set up a time for the initial interview. The second interview will include viewing a video clip of a teacher during instruction to a classroom of students who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse. Both interviews are expected to take 60-90 minutes each.

Do you have any questions?

Is it ok for me to send you a consent form and for us to set up a tentative date for our first meeting?

> **If the individual responds no:** Thank you very much for your time. Do
> you have any questions? Thanks. Goodbye.

If the individual responds yes:
Thank you. Let's schedule a tentative date for the initial meeting. I will send the consent form to you via email and collect it from you at the start of our meeting. What is a convenient day, time and location for us to meet?

Confirm address. Confirm meeting time. Confirm email address.

Thank you. I look forward to meeting you on ____(date)___ at ___(time)___at ____location_____. I will call you two days before our scheduled meeting to confirm. Please call me at (312) 355.4410 or (708) 704.2214 if you have any questions or would like to reschedule our meeting. Do you have any questions? Thank you. Goodbye.

First Interview Guide

The purpose of this interview is for me to understand your knowledge and use of culturally responsive instruction with culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities. You can ask any questions that you'd like to at any time during our interview. Please DO NOT say the last names of the students you work with. Also, please do not say the name of your district or school. If you do say this information, it will not be included in the transcript of this interview. Again, you can ask questions at anytime.

1. What is your understanding of culturally responsive teaching?

2. How do you come to this understanding? (probe personal experience, upbringing and education)

3. What behaviors do you engage in that demonstrate your sense of Culturally Responsive Teaching?

4. How do you build relationships with families?

5. Tell of a time when it was necessary to modify, adjust and/or change a lesson due to a child's culture, language, or disability.

6. What strategies or techniques do you use to accommodate the variety of learning styles present in your classroom?

6. As a mentor teacher what have you or would you teach a pre-service teacher about culturally responsive instruction?

Appendix C (continued)

Second Interview Guide

The purpose of this interview is for you and I to review what you said the last time we talked.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your participation at any time. If you

choose to continue, I'll summarize the information that you shared with me and ask you some

questions to clarify points that were unclear to me or things that I'd like to know more about.

You can tell me if I didn't get something right from your perspective. You can also tell me

about things you might have thought more about since the last time we talked. Like before, you

can ask any questions that you'd like to at any time during our interview. We will also view a

15-minute video downloaded from a public access website. During the viewing please pause

the video any time you notice a teacher action or communication that relates to culturally

responsive instruction. Again, you can ask questions at anytime.

Initial Questions:

During our first interview you said…please tell me more.

Tell me more about…

What did you think about…?

Video viewing questions:

What are your general thoughts about the teacher and her teaching practices?

What was the most significant comment or action in the video?

Does anything in the video connect to or make you think about your own teaching?

Any final thoughts or comments?

Third Interview Guide

Greetings

I have now completed all of the transcriptions of all of the interviews with you and 8 other teachers and have read and reread everything to see what topics and themes come out and may be shared by all, or most, of you. While I've been doing this, I hope you have had time to reflect a little on some of what we talked about during our interviews.

I would like to share the main ideas of what I have found and then ask you if there is more you would like to add. I may also ask you a few new questions so that I can get a better understanding of some of the topics that seemed to be there but were not fully articulated.

I am going to ask you about 3 general areas.

ONE
Regarding the topic of CRTeaching, in general, you all seemed to talk about 3 general ideas. They were the idea of understanding the whole child, understanding the family, and building a relationship with the students and their families. So, can you just talk to me a bit more about this topic?

TWO
You all shared a lot about how you acquired your knowledge, understandings, and skills about CRTeaching. For example, several of you talked about what you learned during your university program.
Will you please share more of your thoughts on this topic; just anything that relates to acquiring knowledge, skills, and understandings about culturally responsive teaching?

THREE
The third main area that you all talked about was how you used your knowledge and skills about your students when you are planning and actually teaching. I have a couple of specific questions for you regarding this area.

First, I'd like for you to think of a student in your class, who is both culturally different and has some type of challenging behaviors that you need to attend to as you plan and teach.

Do you have someone in mind? Tell me a little bit about this student.

What I want you to do is consider both that _____ has _____ (behavior) and is from a _____ cultural (or linguistic) background. How do you take what you know about _____'s [culture & language] and his/her [behavior challenges] into consideration as you are planning for and then teaching?

In other words, how does the combination of _____'s culture and special needs affect or inform your planning & instruction?

Now, I'm going to ask you to do this one more time, but this time I want you to think of a student who is both culturally different and has a cognitive disorder or a severe learning disability.

Do you have someone in mind? Tell me a little bit about this student.

So, again, considering both that _____ has _____ [cognitive/LD] and is from a _____ cultural (or linguistic) background. <u>How do you use what you know</u> about _____'s [culture & language] and his/her [learning needs as you are planning for and then teaching?
In other words, how does the combination of _____'s culture and special needs affect or inform your planning & instruction?

I'm done with what I had planned for this interview.
Is there anything more you would like to add to?
Any final thoughts or comments?

Thank you. .. …

Appendix E

Contact Summary Form

Contact Summary Form

Date_____

Participant _____

Interview Site_____

Researchers' personal thoughts and ideas about the interview.

What were the main issues or themes that struck me in this interview**?**

What does the teacher know about CRT?

What are the teacher's perceptions toward CRTeaching?

What new (or remaining) information do I want to focus on for the next interview?

How does the teacher's comments compare to that of other teachers interviewed?

List the information I failed to get in this interview.

Appendix F

IRB Approval

Exemption Granted
March 22, 2013

Peggy Snowden, M.Ed
Special Education
1640 W Roosevelt Rd., #651
M/C 947
Chicago, IL 60608
Phone: (312) 355-4410 / Fax: (312) 996-1427

RE: **Research Protocol # 2013-0283**
     "Experienced Special Education Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Culturally Responsive Practices"

Sponsor: None

Dear Ms. Snowden:

Your Claim of Exemption was reviewed on March 22, 2013 and it was determined that your research protocol meets the criteria for exemption as defined in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects [(45 CFR 46.101(b)]. You may now begin your research.

Exemption Period: **March 22, 2013 – March 22, 2016**
Performance Site: METRO CITY UNIVRSITY
Subject Population: Adult (18+ years) subjects only
Number of Subjects: 10

The specific exemption category under 45 CFR 46.101(b) is:
(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

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Appendix F (continued)

You are reminded that investigators whose research involving human subjects is determined to be exempt from the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects still have responsibilities for the ethical conduct of the research under state law and METRO CITY UNIVRSITY policy. Please be aware of the following METRO CITY UNIVRSITY policies and responsibilities for investigators:

1. <u>Amendments</u> You are responsible for reporting any amendments to your research protocol that may affect the determination of the exemption and may result in your research no longer being eligible for the exemption that has been granted.

2. <u>Record Keeping</u> You are responsible for maintaining a copy all research related records in a secure location in the event future verification is necessary, at a minimum these documents include: the research protocol, the claim of exemption application, all questionnaires, survey instruments, interview questions and/or data collection instruments associated with this research protocol, recruiting or advertising materials, any consent forms or information sheets given to subjects, or any other pertinent documents.

3. <u>Final Report</u> When you have completed work on your research protocol, you should submit a final report to the Office for Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

4. <u>Information for Human Subjects</u> METRO CITY UNIVRSITY Policy requires investigators to provide information about the research protocol to subjects and to obtain their permission prior to their participating in the research. The information about the research protocol should be presented to subjects in writing or orally from a written script. <u>When appropriate</u>, the following information must be provided to all research subjects participating in exempt studies:
   a. The researchers affiliation; METRO CITY UNIVRSITY, JBVMAC or other institutions,
   b. The purpose of the research,
   c. The extent of the subject's involvement and an explanation of the procedures to be followed,
   d. Whether the information being collected will be used for any purposes other than the proposed research,
   e. A description of the procedures to protect the privacy of subjects and the confidentiality of the research information and data,
   f. Description of any reasonable foreseeable risks,
   g. Description of anticipated benefit,
   h. A statement that participation is voluntary and subjects can refuse to participate or can stop at any time,
   i. A statement that the researcher is available to answer any questions that the subject may have and which includes the name and phone number of the investigator(s).
   j. A statement that the METRO CITY UNIVRSITY IRB/OPRS or JBVMAC Patient Advocate Office is available if there are questions about subject's rights, which includes the appropriate phone numbers.

Please be sure to:

→Use your research protocol number (listed above) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact me at (312) 355-2908 or the OPRS office at (312) 996-1711. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Hoehne
Assistant Director
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

cc: Elizabeth Talbott, Special Education, M/C 147
        Norma Lopez-Reyna, Special Education, M/C 947

Appendix G

Informed Consent

University of Illinois at Chicago
Research Information and Consent for:
Experienced Special Education Teachers' Understanding and Use of Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Peggy A. Snowden, M.Ed., Doctoral Student
Department and Institution: Special Education, College of Education University of Illinois at Chicago
Address and Contact Information: 1640 West Roosevelt Rd., Chicago, IL 60608
Phone: 312.355.4410   **E-mail:** psnowd1@Metro City Univrsity.edu
Faculty Sponsor: Norma Lopez-Reyna, Ph.D., 312.413.8761

<u>Why am I being asked?</u>
You are being asked to be a subject in a research study about how teachers understand and use culturally responsive practices with culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities to improve student outcomes.

You are a special education professional in an Illinois public school currently providing special education to children with disabilities who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse. You also have been teaching students with disabilities for five years or more, spend more than 51% of the school day providing special education services to children with mild disabilities in a segregated or resource classroom (pullout), and have a caseload that includes at least 50% of students who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Illinois at Chicago, your principal or school district. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.**

A maximum of 20 subjects may be involved in this research at METRO CITY UNIVRSITY.

What is the purpose of this research?

The main purpose of this study is to discover how special education teachers use their knowledge and understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching and their knowledge of their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and cognitive processing to plan, provide, and evaluate classroom instruction.

Peggy Snowden is doing this study as part of the degree requirements for a doctorate in Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Information gained from this study will be used to gain a better understanding of the knowledge, understandings and use of culturally responsive practices in classrooms of special education teachers whose students include culturally and/or linguistically diverse learners with disabilities.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in this research study, you would be asked to do the following:

- Read this entire document.
- Sign and date the document
- Arrange and participate in an initial interview. It is anticipated that each interview will last 60-90 minutes.
- Arrange and participate in a second interview that involves viewing a 15-minute public access video clip of a teacher delivering instruction to culturally and linguistically diverse students.
- Read transcriptions of the audio recordings for accuracy.
- The principal investigator may contact you during analysis of data to discuss results.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There may be risks from the study that are not known at this time. You may experience the following:

- You may feel obligated to participate because your former clinical supervisor or your current Principal nominated you.
- You may feel uncomfortable being audio recorded during the interview.
- You may feel uncomfortable with the length of the interview. Each interview is anticipated to last 60-90 minutes.
- You may feel uncomfortable answering some questions and discussing your teaching.
- Others may find out that you are participating in the study.

Even if you sign this consent form you may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, if you feel too uncomfortable to continue.

Will I be told about new information that may affect my decision to participate?
During the course of the study, you will be informed of any significant new research information (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research or new alternatives to participation, that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the research. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue participating in this research may be re-obtained.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?
You may not directly benefit from participation in the research. By participating in the study you may gain a better understanding and awareness of your culturally responsive teaching practices. The information gathered from this study may help inform the practice for future teachers who instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

What other options are there?
Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the option to not participate in this study. **You do not have to sign this form.**

What about privacy and confidentiality?
The people who will know that you are a research participant are Peggy Snowden and her advisor, Dr. Lopez-Reyna. Otherwise information about you will only be disclosed to others with your written permission, or if required by law or necessary to protect your rights (i.e. when the METRO CITY UNIVRSITY institutional Review Board monitors the research and consent process).

Audio recordings will be kept on a password protected travel drive that will be locked in a file cabinet in a locked office at the University and will be destroyed 4 years after all of the data has been analyzed. Transcripts of the recorded interview will be assigned a code and will not contain your actual name or any other identifiers. These transcripts will be shared with you to insure accuracy and will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office at the University. All audio recordings will be used solely for research purposes and will only be heard by Mrs. Snowden, her advisor Dr. Lopez-Reyna and one undergraduate student. All data will be destroyed 4 years after data collection has ended.

There will be a list of participants' names that will include the accompanying pseudonym and participant ID number. This list will be stored separate from the other data in a locked cabinet in a locked office at the University. This list will be destroyed as soon as data collection has ended.

Any study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you, will be placed in a locked file cabinet in a locked office and will be looked at and/or copied for checking up on the research by: Mrs. Snowden and Dr. Lopez-Reyna. When the results of the research are

published or discussed during presentations and conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity or the identity of your school.

What are the costs for participating in this research?
There are no costs to you for participating in this research.
Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
You can choose whether or not to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. There are no consequences for withdrawing. You have the right to leave this study at any time without penalty.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
Peggy Snowden is conducting the research under the guidance of her advisor, Dr. Lopez-Reyna. You may contact them if you have any questions about this study or your part in it. Peggy Snowden can be reached at 312.355.4410 and Dr. Lopez-Reyna can be reached at 312.413.8761.

What are my rights as a research subject?
 If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at Metro City Univrsityirb@Metro City Univrsity.edu.

Remember:
Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

Signature of Subject or Legally Authorized Representative

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I have been given a copy of this signed and dated form.

Signature	Date

Printed Name

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date (must be same as above)

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

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- Manage production, review, and dissemination of 12 Program Improvement Modules for use by special education and related service faculty across the nation
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Cornerstone Academy High School, Chicago, IL
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- Selected, planned and taught curriculum for academically struggling students with and without disabilities, in reading and English ages 15-19
- Provided academic and non-academic advising to students

College Preparation/Tutoring Coordinator, 1990 – 1994
Young Life, Chicago, IL
- Organized tutoring program for students in grades 8-12
- Planned and organized college preparation program for students in grades 6-12
- Recruited, supervised and managed a cadre of volunteers
- Created and organized materials, planned instruction, and implemented tutoring program
- Advised students on a wide range of topics including academics, social emotional issues, college preparation, and career exploration

Teacher, 1986 – 1990
St. Joseph Elementary, Chicago, IL
- Planned and implemented kindergarten curriculum (1986-1988)
- Planned and implemented first grade curriculum (1988-1990)

PUBLICATIONS

Fee, R.W., Fee, J.M., **Snowden, P. A**., Stuart, & N.M., Baumgartner, D. (2012). The University of Guam special education program: Preparing special education teachers in a very diverse culture. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *2*(3), 102-114. ISSN 2158-592X

Lopez-Reyna, N.A., **Snowden, P. A.**, Stuart, N.M., Baumgartner, D., & Maiorano, M.J., (2012). Critical features of program improvement: Lessons from five minority serving universities. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *2*(3), 143-156. ISSN 2158-592X

Bay, M, Lopez-Reyna, N.A., **Snowden, P. A.,** & Zazycki, D. (2011). Advancing culturally responsive personnel preparation: A technical assistance model. In E.D. McCray, P. Alvarez McHatton, & C.L. Beverly (Eds.), *Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions for Culturally Competent and Interculturally Sensitive Leaders in Education. (*Monograph). Diversity Caucus of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Lopez-Reyna, N.A., Bay, M., Zazycki, D. & **Snowden, P. A.** (2011). Advancing culturally responsive personnel Preparation in special education: Barriers and supports for change. In E.D. McCray, P. Alvarez McHatton, & C.L. Beverly (Eds.), *Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions for Culturally Competent and Interculturally Sensitive Leaders in Education. (*Monograph). Diversity Caucus of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Baumgartner, D., Bay, Mary, Lopez-Reyna, N.A., **Snowden, P.A.,** & Maiorano, M.J. (2013). Culturally Responsive Practice in a Teacher Educators Classroom. Manuscript submitted for publication.

PRESENTATIONS

Snowden, P. A. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching.* Presented as a Guest Lecturer at University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Snowden, P. A. (2009). *Culturally Responsive Teaching.* Presented as a Guest Lecturer at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

Ozga, J. & **Snowden, P. A.** (2009). *Bilingual/ESL Special Education Certification: What and How.* Presented at the Illinois Resource Center 32nd Annual Conference, Oak Brook, IL.

Snowden, P. A. & Stuart, N. (2008). *Preparing Teachers Who Are Responsive to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity.* Presented at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Annual Conference, Boston, MA.

Snowden, P. A. & Stuart, N. (2008). *Preparing Teachers Who Are Responsive to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity.* Poster Presented at the DDEL Student Research Showcase, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Annual Conference, Boston, MA.

Snowden, P. A. (2006). *Culturally Responsive Practices of Special Education Teachers.* Poster presented at the DDEL Student Research Showcase, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Annual Conference, Salt Lake City, UT.

SERVICE AND AWARDS

- **Editor,** Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning, 2011 – Present
- **School Board Member**, Cornerstone Academy, Chicago, IL, 2008 – Present
- **Committee President**, Work Study Program, Cornerstone Academy, Chicago, IL 2009 – Present
- **Proposal Reviewer,** Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners Division (DDEL), CEC Annual Conference, 2005 – Present
- **Advisory Board Member,** Teacher Leaders for Children (TLC): Bilingual Special Educators (OSEP funded personnel preparation grant), University of Illinois at Chicago, 2007 – 2010
- **School Board President,** Cornerstone Academy, Chicago, IL, 2004 – 2008
- **Albin & Young Scholarship**, Department of Special Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2010

PROFESSIONAL AFFLIATIONS

- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners Division (DDEL)