


Spring 5-2017

# Exploring Secondary Teachers' Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Diverse Rural School District

Diane Z. Onorato

Follow this and additional works at: <http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), and the [Secondary Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Onorato, Diane Z., "Exploring Secondary Teachers' Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Diverse Rural School District" (2017). *Theses and Dissertations (All)*. 1463.  
<http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/1463>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact [cclouser@iup.edu](mailto:cclouser@iup.edu), [sara.parme@iup.edu](mailto:sara.parme@iup.edu).

EXPLORING SECONDARY TEACHERS' USE OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE  
TEACHING IN A DIVERSE RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Diane Z. Onorato

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2017

© 2017 Diane Z. Onorato  
All Rights Reserved

Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Diane Z. Onorato

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

March 23, 2017

Signature on file

Valeri R. Helterbran, Ed.D.  
Professor of Professional Studies in Education,  
Retired, Advisor

March 23, 2017

Signature on file

Mark G. Twiest, Ph.D.  
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

March 23, 2017

Signature on file

Shirley A. Johnson, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor of Professional Studies in  
Education

ACCEPTED

Signature on file

Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.  
Dean  
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Exploring Secondary Teachers' Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Diverse Rural School District

Author: Diane Z. Onorato

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Valeri R. Helterbran

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Mark G. Twiest  
Dr. Shirley A. Johnson

This study explored how rural, secondary public school teachers, viewed by their administrators as caring and responsive to students' cultures, perceived they used, valued, and developed efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences. The rural minority-majority Florida site was of interest because the intersection of a majority of students from diverse linguistic, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds with students minoritized by ruralness in a Title I district was a little researched and lesser understood area of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Gay (2010)'s eighteen pillars of progress for CRT framed the study, and Edmonson and Butler (2010)'s emergent philosophy of radical democracy for rural educators was used to interpret interaction of the rural context with CRT. A basic, qualitative, interpretive methodology involved semi-structured interviews of twelve middle and high school teachers from four academic and several elective content areas, triangulated with a demographic survey, document review, and member-checking.

The complete interview protocol aligned with CRT principles, and redacted transcripts and field notes were manually coded and organized into six thematic categories: Definition and value of CRT; funds of knowledge and informed instruction; caring and high expectations; teaching and learning; critical awareness and advocacy; and teachers' growth. Teachers provided more elaborative data when addressing topics of knowledge about students' cultures, their community, and creating a classroom climate of caring and respect than about scaffolding with

cultural or rural knowledge, cultural communication styles, learning preferences, critical advocacy, and CRT growth. Data were more detailed, and more closely aligned with pillars of CRT when principles applicable to both CRT and mainstream ideas of effective teaching were discussed; however, when principles more specifically concerned students of color or the use of the local ruralness as a scaffold for new learning, the richness of data and alignment with CRT were average or weak. All data including discrepant data were reported, and data may have been gathered close to the point of redundancy. Professional development articulating and adding aspects of local culture to CRT in a community of practice model over an extended period of time was recommended.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank you all and acknowledge your assistance with gratitude:

Jeff

For your *First Letter to the Corinthians* kind of love and steadfast support throughout this journey

Dr. Helterbran

For being one of the giants on whose shoulders I stood; for your wisdom, guidance, and assurance as you managed the production of this little essay with a careful and critical eye and rapid-turnaround; and for the inspiration contained on the plaque you gave us on our first day of class and that has sustained me as I worked through many a night: “The heights by great men reached and kept/ Were not attained by sudden fight,/ But they, while their companions slept,/ Were toiling upward in the night” (Longfellow)

Dr. Mark Twiest and Dr. Shirley Johnson

For your insight and the guidance you offered me, with gratitude for your time and wisdom, I thank you.

Angela

For my daughter who was the most impacted by my absence over the past five years who nonetheless grew into a strong and capable young woman; thank you for your willingness to help and to be she-who-was-most-aptly-named.

Stephanie (and Charley)

For your unwavering faith in Mom who was going to be Doctor Mom, and now Doctor Grandma by the time we get to meet Stella Rae

Christianne (and Tony)

For never letting me feel more awful than I already felt about my not being there as much as I wanted to be—Kaylianne, Giovanni, and Baby Three will have a milk-and-cookies grandma again.

Jonathan

For inspiring me to work hard enough to be “doctor” before you, the next Dr. Onorato-to-be, Godspeed!

Uncle Mike

For your unwavering confidence that I could, I should, and I would overcome and become whatever I chose to be, with love and gratitude

Wendy, Good-Jeff, Kate, and Chris

For love and understanding how I could only be half-a-sistah and supporting me while on this journey

Alison, Claudia, Esther, Iris, and Laura (alpha, not importance order)

For encouraging me to apply for this last leg of graduate school; for helping me become a better teacher and a better person; and for friendship: the visits, texts, phone calls that always seemed to happen when I needed them most, and more, I thank you.

Becky and Miles

For helping me understand how we hold each other’s hands so we don’t fall off the shoulders of the giants on which we are standing—you understand with me the path we have traveled to this, our new beginning.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter |  | Page |
|---------|--|------|
| ONE     | INTRODUCTION .....   | 1    |
|         | Background of the Problem .....                              | 2    |
|         | Demographics of the United States.....                       | 2    |
|         | Demographics of Teaching Profession .....                    | 4    |
|         | Demographics of Rural United States.....                     | 5    |
|         | Research and Policy in Rural United States .....             | 6    |
|         | Schooling in Rural United States.....                        | 8    |
|         | Culturally Responsive Teaching in Diverse Rural Schools..... | 10   |
|         | Statement of the Problem.....                                | 14   |
|         | Theoretical Framework.....                                   | 15   |
|         | Culturally Responsive Teaching.....                          | 15   |
|         | Framework of Rural Educator’s Philosophies .....             | 17   |
|         | Purpose of the Study .....                                   | 19   |
|         | Research Questions.....                                      | 19   |
|         | Methodology.....   | 19   |
|         | Significance of the Study .....                              | 20   |
|         | Limitations .....  | 22   |
|         | The Participants .....                                       | 22   |
|         | The Rural Setting .....                                      | 23   |
|         | The Researcher.....  | 23   |
|         | Definition of Terms.....                                     | 24   |
|         | Summary.....   | 28   |
| TWO     | LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                      | 29   |
|         | Intersection of Culture and Schooling .....                  | 29   |
|         | Definition of Culture.....                                   | 29   |
|         | School Culture in the United States .....                    | 31   |
|         | Schools as the “Great Equalizer” .....                       | 32   |
|         | Deficit Perspectives in Schooling .....                      | 34   |
|         | Third Space and Funds of Knowledge.....                      | 37   |
|         | Value of Bridges and Scaffolds .....                         | 39   |
|         | Culturally Responsive Teaching .....                         | 39   |
|         | Conceptual Research in Culturally Responsive Teaching.....   | 41   |
|         | Motivation for Using Culturally Responsive Teaching .....    | 44   |
|         | Resistance to Culturally Responsive Teaching.....            | 45   |
|         | Misunderstandings of Culturally Responsive Teaching .....    | 47   |
|         | Culturally Responsive Teaching in Practice .....             | 48   |
|         | CRT in the Fine Arts Classroom.....                          | 49   |
|         | CRT in the Social Studies Classroom.....                     | 49   |



| Chapter  | Page      |
|--|-----------|
| CRT in the English-Language Arts Classroom .....                     | 52        |
| CRT in the Math Classroom .....                                      | 53        |
| CRT in the Emergent Bilingual Classroom .....                        | 55        |
| CRT in the Physical Education Classroom .....                        | 55        |
| Operationalizing Culturally Responsive Teaching .....                | 56        |
| The Culture of Academic Caring .....                                 | 60        |
| Caring Research and Students of African-American Parentage .....     | 62        |
| Caring Research and Students of Hispanic or Latino(a) Ethnicity .... | 63        |
| Caring Research and Girls from Rural Homes .....                     | 66        |
| Developing the Capacity for CRT .....                                | 67        |
| Pre-Service Teachers .....   | 68        |
| Beginning Teachers .....   | 71        |
| In-Service Teachers .....  | 72        |
| The Rural Context of this Study .....                                | 77        |
| The State of Rural Florida.....                                      | 77        |
| Use of Rural Context in Schooling .....                              | 79        |
| Development of Rural CRT Program .....                               | 80        |
| Outmigration of Successful Students.....                             | 82        |
| Literature Summary .....   | 86        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>THREE</b> <b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....                                | <b>87</b> |
| <br>   |           |
| Research Design.....   | 88        |
| Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study .....                           | 89        |
| The Rural Site .....   | 90        |
| Sample Size.....   | 93        |
| Rapport.....   | 94        |
| Informed Consent.....  | 94        |
| Data Collection .....  | 97        |
| Selecting Participants.....  | 97        |
| Peer Review Panel for Interview Protocol.....                        | 99        |
| Contacting Potential Participants .....                              | 100       |
| Semi-Structured Interviews and Deliverables .....                    | 101       |
| Data Analysis .....  | 103       |
| Alignment of the Interview Protocol .....                            | 104       |
| Coding.....  | 105       |
| Data Presentation .....  | 107       |
| Trustworthiness of Data Analysis .....                               | 107       |
| Triangulation.....   | 107       |
| Memoing and Note Taking .....  | 108       |
| Member Checking.....   | 108       |
| Peer Debriefing .....  | 108       |
| Rich Description .....   | 109       |
| Saturation .....   | 109       |

| Chapter   | Page       |
|---|------------|
| Discrepant Data.....  | 109        |
| Ethics.....   | 110        |
| Summary.....  | 110        |
| <b>FOUR</b>   |            |
| <b>FINDINGS.....</b>  | <b>112</b> |
| Description of Participants.....                              | 112        |
| Gender and Ethnicity or Race.....                             | 113        |
| Satisfaction With Coursework in Diversity Topics.....         | 114        |
| Participants' Age, Experience, and Certification Areas.....   | 114        |
| Participants' Home and Preferred Teaching Locale.....         | 117        |
| Organizing Interview Data for Presentation.....               | 119        |
| Data Collection at the Interview.....                         | 119        |
| Procedure for Coding Data.....                                | 120        |
| Data Presentation by Thematic Categories.....                 | 121        |
| Category 1: CRT Definition and Importance.....                | 123        |
| Category 2: Funds of Knowledge and Informed Instruction.....  | 145        |
| Category 3: Caring and High Expectations.....                 | 161        |
| Category 4: Teaching and Learning.....                        | 182        |
| Category 5: Critical Awareness and Advocacy.....              | 204        |
| Category 6: Teacher's CRT Growth and Advocacy.....            | 215        |
| Document and Artifact Review.....                             | 229        |
| Summary.....  | 230        |
| <b>FIVE</b>   |            |
| <b>DISCUSSION.....</b>  | <b>232</b> |
| Theoretical Frameworks.....                                   | 232        |
| Culturally Responsive Teaching.....                           | 235        |
| Radical Democratic Philosophy of Rural Educators.....         | 235        |
| Use of Theoretical Frameworks to Analyze Data.....            | 236        |
| Data Analysis for Research Question 1.....                    | 237        |
| Category #1: CRT Definition and Importance.....               | 237        |
| Category #2: Funds of Knowledge and Informed Instruction..... | 244        |
| Summary of Data for Research Question #1.....                 | 251        |
| Data Analysis for Research Question 2.....                    | 252        |
| Category #3: Caring and High Expectations.....                | 252        |
| Category #4: Teaching and Learning.....                       | 257        |
| Summary of Data for Research Question #2.....                 | 262        |
| Data Analysis for Research Question 3.....                    | 263        |
| Category #5: Critical Awareness and Advocacy.....             | 264        |
| Category #6: Teacher's CRT Growth and Advocacy.....           | 272        |
| Summary of Data for Research Question #3.....                 | 279        |
| Implications.....   | 281        |
| Recommendations.....  | 287        |

| Chapter   | Page |
|---|------|
| Curriculum Development.....   | 288  |
| Professional Development .....  | 289  |
| Future Research .....   | 290  |
| Summary.....  | 292  |
| REFERENCES .....  | 294  |
| APPENDICES .....  | 316  |
| Appendix A - Informed Consent and Site Approval<br>from Superintendent.....   | 315  |
| Appendix B - Interview Protocol for Principals .....                          | 318  |
| Appendix C - Demographic Survey of Teacher Participants.....                  | 319  |
| Appendix D - Participant's Letter of Informed Consent .....                   | 321  |
| Appendix E - Informed Consent Participant Signature Form.....                 | 323  |
| Appendix F - Short Interview Protocol Pre-View for Participants.....          | 324  |
| Appendix G - Complete Semi-Structured Interview<br>Protocol With Probes ..... | 325  |
| Appendix H - First Cycle Coding: Simple List .....                            | 327  |
| Appendix I - Three Groups of Simple Codes .....                               | 328  |
| Appendix J - Second Cycle Coding: Thematic<br>Categorization of Codes.....    | 329  |
| Appendix K - Alignment of Research Questions and<br>Protocol With Codes.....  | 330  |
| Appendix L - Findings from Demographic Survey of<br>Teacher Participants..... | 333  |
| Appendix M - Alignment of Research Questions to<br>Protocol and Pillars ..... | 334  |
| Appendix N - Alignment of CRT Pillars With<br>Protocol and Themes.....        | 338  |

## LIST OF TABLES

| Table   | Page |
|---|------|
| 1 United States Racial and Ethnic Demographics as Percentage of the Total Population.....   | 3    |
| 2 Percent of White Teachers in the Total Population of Teachers From 1987-2012 (NCES, 2013b).....   | 4    |
| 3 Geneva Gay (2010)’s 18 Pillars of Culturally Responsive Teaching (pp. 248-250) .....  | 16   |
| 4 Framework of Conceptual Philosophies of Rural Educators: What Does it Mean to be a Teacher in a Rural Community? (Adapted from Edmondson & Butler, 2010, pp. 156-165) ..... | 18   |
| 5 Definitions of Cultural Responsiveness From Researchers in the Field .....  | 40   |
| 6 Demographics of School District From U.S. Census Florida “Quick Facts” .....  | 92   |
| 7 The Participants .....  | 94   |
| 8 Alignment of Interview Protocol With Research Questions.....  | 104  |
| 9 Participants by Gender, Ethnicity or Race, and Second Language (Florida DoE, 2015) .....  | 114  |
| 10 Participants by Age, Certification Area, and Years of Teaching Experience .....  | 116  |
| 11 Participants’ Childhood Locale and Geographic Region and Preferred Employment Locale .....   | 119  |
| 12 Framework of Philosophy of Radical Democratic for Rural Educators .....  | 236  |
| 13 Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 1, 3, 5, and 8 (Gay, 2010) .....   | 238  |
| 14 Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 11, 12, 14, and 15 (Gay, 2010).....  | 245  |
| 15 Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 6, 7, and 13 (Gay, 2010).....  | 252  |
| 16 Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 5, 6, 7, 10, and 14 (Gay, 2010).....   | 257  |
| 17 Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 9 and 16 (Gay, 2010).....  | 264  |
| 18 Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 2, 4, 17 and 18 (Gay, 2010).....   | 272  |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure  | Page |
|---|------|
| 1 This word frequency image of most frequently appearing words in leading and seminal CRT researchers’ definitions of culturally responsive teaching is an author-created image using features of Wordle.net.....         | 41   |
| 2 This author-created flow chart depicts the multi-step process of the research design of this study.....   | 99   |
| 3 This pie chart graphically depicted the age ranges of participants. ....  | 115  |
| 4 This pie chart illustrated the years of experience of participants.....   | 115  |
| 5 This pie chart demonstrated the distribution of participating teachers’ areas of content expertise and certification .....  | 116  |
| 6 This bar graph showed the frequency of participants’ places of origin and types of neighborhood school preference of participating teachers. ....   | 117  |
| 7 This image created by the researcher using Wordle.net illustrated the most frequently occurring words in the participants’ definitions of CRT .....   | 124  |
| 8 This graphic created by the researcher using Wordle.net illustrated the most frequently used words by participants regarding what teachers need to know about their students’ lives at home .....                       | 132  |
| 9 The researcher used Wordle.net to create this graphic of the most frequently used words the participants used to talk about what they valued to inform their instruction .....  | 145  |
| 10 This researcher-created image from Wordle.net illustrated the most frequently used words participants used to describe what caring looked like in their classrooms .....   | 162  |
| 11 This researcher-created illustration using Wordle.net showed the most frequently used words in participants’ explanations of their use of CRT and learning .....   | 183  |
| 12 This author-created figure using Wordle.net illustrated the most frequently used words when participants discussed observed incidents of racism .....  | 205  |
| 13 This image from Wordle.net created by the researcher showed in largest font the most frequently appearing words when teacher participants spoke about their growth experiences as culturally responsive teachers ..... | 216  |

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

When leading my students through a rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King, Jr., (1963)'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," we lingered, discussing the rhetorical power and meaning of his statement "justice too long delayed is justice denied" (p. 5). At this time, one of my observant students who learned well our lessons on documenting sources noted the in-text citation of this source as "the distinguished jurist of yesterday" (King, 1963, p. 5) and the absence of a works cited or reference page. Our search for the identity of the jurist cited in King's text led to Shapiro (2010) who cited a suggestion from one of his readers that a similar source was first published by George Dillwyn (1815) in his *Occasional reflections, offered principally for the use of schools*. After obtaining Dillwyn's book which was older than any my students could remember holding, they found the passage suggested as King's source. Halfway down a yellowed and foxed page in this two-hundred-year-old, pocket-sized volume was the statement "Justice delayed is little better than justice denied" (Dillwyn, 1815, p. 13).

The discovery of this aphorism on justice in a book dedicated to educators over two centuries ago prompted reflection on the state of justice in the educational system in the United States. For a large segment of the population, justice in the form of educational equity has been delayed for centuries, from the early years of public education when Dillwyn (1815) wrote his little book, through the turbulent 1960s when King (1963) penned his letter from jail, to today when injustice has been evidenced both nationally and internationally by the pernicious achievement gap. This gap has existed so long that delayed justice has become denied justice. Ladson-Billings (2006a) argued the gap should be renamed as an achievement debt that "leaves more than its children behind" (p. 10). Bass and Gersti-Pepin (2011) furthered the metaphor from

debt to educational bankruptcy, calling for schools to declare bankruptcy and start over. While an argument was made by the U.S. Department of Education (2015, December) that the gap had statistically narrowed and graduation rates risen over the past decade, the study also showed that socio-economic and racial or ethnic barriers continued to exist. Research on successful teachers of students from non-majority and less-affluent backgrounds resulted in the rise of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010) which embraced cultural differences as assets, not deficits.

### **Background of the Problem**

#### **Demographics of the United States**

The demographic composition of the United States has been slowly shifting away from a majority-White population distribution. United States Census (2010) reported that the population identifying as White-alone accounted for 87.9% of the total in 1900, 75.1% in 2000, and 72.4% in 2010. United States Census data from 1900 to 2000 revealed that the ratio of non-White to White population doubled over the century, with the number of non-Whites doubling from 1 out of 8 one hundred years ago to 1 out of 4 recently, and Hispanics more than doubling (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002, p. 71). Most of the growth of the non-White groups began in the 1970s when the White population decreased by 0.2% of the total population from 1900-1970 compared to a decline of 12.3% between 1970 and 2000 (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002).

Over the upcoming decades, the percentage of non-White population in the United States was projected to continue to increase. Table 1 synthesized supporting data from the U.S. Census (2010), Colby and Ortman (2015), and Hobbs and Stoops (2002) to document this decline of the percentage of White population since the 1900, with a rapid decrease starting in 1970, continuing to the status of majority-minority around 2040 with the pattern holding until at least 2060.

Table 1

*United States Racial and Ethnic Demographics as Percentage of the Total Population*

| <b>Census</b> | <b>White only</b> | <b>Black or African-American</b> | <b>Not White or Black</b>                |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>2014</b>   | 62.2              | 13.2                             | 17.4 Hispanic<br>5.4 Asian<br>1.4 Native |
| <b>2010</b>   | 72.4              | 12.6                             | 16.3 Hispanic<br>4.8 Asian<br>0.9 Native |
| <b>2000</b>   | 75.1              | 12.3                             | 12.5 Hispanic<br>3.6 Asian<br>0.9 Native |
| <b>1990</b>   | 80.3              | 12.1                             | 7.7                                      |
| <b>1980</b>   | 83.1              | 11.7                             | 5.2                                      |
| <b>1970</b>   | 87.5              | 11.1                             | 1.4                                      |
| <b>1960</b>   | 88.6              | 10.5                             | 0.9                                      |
| <b>1950</b>   | 89.5              | 10.0                             | 0.5                                      |
| <b>1940</b>   | 89.8              | 9.8                              | 0.4                                      |
| <b>1930</b>   | 89.8              | 9.7                              | 0.5                                      |
| <b>1920</b>   | 89.7              | 9.9                              | 0.4                                      |
| <b>1910</b>   | 88.9              | 10.7                             | 0.4                                      |
| <b>1900</b>   | 87.9              | 11.6                             | 0.5                                      |

(Census, 2010; Colby & Ortman, 2015, and Hobbs & Stoops, 2002)

By the year 2044, the United States was predicted to become a majority-minority nation in which Whites fell to less than 50% of the national population, and non-White population increased and accounted for a little more than 56% of the population (Colby & Ortman, 2015). This trend was anticipated to continue until 2060 when the non-Hispanic White population decreased from the current 53.7% to 32.9%, and Hispanics outnumbered all other groups, increasing from 23.9% to 38% of the total U.S. population (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Also, the



White child population in the United States was expected to decrease from 52% of population in 2014 to 35.6% in 2060, with majority-minority crossover point likely to occur in 2020 when the percentage of White children to the total population was estimated to fall to less than 50% of the total number of children (Colby & Ortman, 2015). In short, the crossover minority-majority point was predicted to be 2020 for school-aged children and 2044 for adults (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

### **Demographics of Teaching Profession**

The projected increase in the percentage of non-White population of the United States will naturally be reflected in the schools where crossover happens before it happens with the adult population. Examining the data from the National Center for Education Statistics on teacher characteristics since 1987 revealed that the percentage of teachers identifying as White have numbered between approximately 87% and 82% of the total number of teachers, down 5% over the past 25 years (NCES, 2013b). Table 2 documented this increase of approximately 5% in the number of teachers not identifying as White over the past 25 years.

Table 2

*Percent of White Teachers in the Total Population of Teachers From 1987-2012 (NCES, 2013b)*

| <b>School Years</b>         | <b>Percentage of White Teachers</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1987-88                     | 86.9                                |
| 1990-91                     | 86.5                                |
| 1993-94                     | 86.5                                |
| 1999-2000                   | 84.3                                |
| 2003-2004                   | 83.1                                |
| 2007-2008                   | 83.1                                |
| 2011-2012                   | 81.9                                |
| % change over past 25 years | -5%                                 |

Using these trends to predict the future demographics of the teaching profession, NCES (2013b) estimated the number of non-White teachers to account for 10% more of the teaching force over the next 50 years and 30% of the total by the year 2060. Over this same period of time, the White population in the United States was expected to decline to 43.6% in 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Even as far into the future as the year 2060, a disproportionate representation of White teachers was projected to continue to be working in the nation's schools. With the numbers of students of color increasing at a rate faster than the employment of teachers of color, Delpit (2006) recommended asking teachers of color how to facilitate recruiting and retaining teachers of color in the educational system. However, Gay (2010) argued that diversification of the teaching force alone was not a guarantee of positive change for children in the classrooms. Sleeter (2001) found White pre-service teachers surveyed understood they will be working with students from backgrounds that were different than theirs, but they reported knowing little about the cultural backgrounds of these future students. Gove, Volk, Still, Huang, and Thomas-Alexander (2011) reported resistance from some of their White pre-service teachers regarding completing their student teaching internships in urban schools with much diversity.

### **Demographics of Rural United States**

Another significant change evident in the Census from 2010 was shifting demographic patterns for the rural United States. Approximately 15% of the U.S. population and 72% of the land of the United States was classified as rural (Cromartie, 2013). For the 2000-2010 decade, the percent increase for Whites in rural areas was less than 1.7% while the Hispanic population increased over 45% and Asians over 33%; furthermore, the number of majority-minority rural communities increased more than two-fold throughout the United States rather than being isolated to a few states as had been the trend up to the 1990s (Dabson, et al., 2012). Cromartie

(2013) noted that between 2010 and 2012, for the first time, the rural population in the United States declined. This was attributed to the housing crisis and recession impacting areas with recreation- and construction-based economies and causing people who were construction and service workers to migrate away from rural areas due to financial need.

In some ways, the socio-economic conditions of the urban poor and rural poor were similar (Edmondson & Butler, 2010). Dabson and colleagues (2012) reported that over a period of twenty or more years, a lack of investment in rural areas contributed to rural depopulation, underemployment, infrastructure decay, social service disappearance, and high levels of rural poverty. However, the issues of rural people who have little economic power differed from their city-dwelling counterparts due to the rural phenomenon of geographic isolation and resulting lack of bonding and bridging capital. People in rural areas may have no knowledge of or may live too far away from access to social services for which they qualified; the emotional asset of an urban neighborhood and community was replaced with rural remoteness; and the population of rural undocumented workers and families had the compounded problem of geographic isolation, language barriers, and a continuous supply of competition for their jobs (Lichter, 2012). Lichter (2012) noted that this dramatic change in rural United States occurred largely without the notice of the media, politicians, policymakers, and researchers.

### **Research and Policy in Rural United States**

In addition to the lack of political, economic, and research attention by elected and powerful policymakers who look at the world with what Reed (2010) calls “metropolitan-colored glasses” (p. 20), increasing poverty, the loss of the middle class, and the outmigration of socially mobile and high academic achievers (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) impacted rural areas in ways that were sometimes misunderstood by urban elites. Scholars have been calling for the inclusion of

rural America in the conversation and writing of public policy to provide resources for these areas (Dabson, et al., 2012; Lichter, 2012; Reed, 2010). Howley and Howley (2014) explained that a lack of theoretical and empirical research on rural contexts was the result of a cognitive dissonance with and marginalization by a dominant urban-focused culture. To explain, gathering meaningful data demanded the rural researcher to develop a relationship of trust so as to engage authentically with the participants in a study; therefore, qualitative research and small studies over longer periods of time were preferred for rural research (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett, 2014). So, the gold standard of quantitative objectivity and large sample sizes lauded by urban-centered researchers doubly marginalized quality rural research by methodology and population. Also, rural research often produced findings that challenged the urban-centered narrative that in order to be successful, people had to move to the city (Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Corbett, 2009).

To this point, Howley and Howley (2014), advised against accepting the deficit perspective regarding rural contexts, finding that some rural people willingly chose without what some called *ambition* to live their lives in rural areas in what some called living in *poverty* because they felt pride in their heritage, lifestyles, or morality; joy in living on their family property; or support and contentment from their communities. Noting that many people found out that they were poor only when they went to school, they argued the construct of poverty was socially constructed as a deficiency by urban elitists and suggested rural researchers consider using positive language like *personal fulfillment* and *living well* instead of focusing on *poverty* (Howley & Howley, 2010). Roberts (2014) noted also that a rural standpoint in research is problematic both because of the varied definitions of rural and the necessity of treating each rural area differently, but it is rich in opportunity to explore and demonstrate the importance of place, the rural environment, as an asset for the stakeholders in research. Howley, Howley, and Yahn

(2014) challenged researchers to define, find, and report on the uniquely rural in rural research.

Ever since the early 1800s, Western culture has promoted urbanization, and the cultural norm has become “that to be rural is to be sub-par, that the condition of living in a rural locale creates deficiencies of various kinds—an educational deficiency in particular” (Theobald & Wood, 2010, p. 17). Schafft and Youngblood (2010) noted that for over one hundred years the rural school has been viewed as poorly equipped and poorly staffed to prepare students for an urban globalized world. Because one-third of the schools and one-fourth of the students in the United States were recently classified as rural (Parsley & Barton, 2015), the impact of marginalizing rural research, social policy, and distribution of assets was significant.

### **Schooling in Rural United States**

This context of being on the wrong side of the urban-rural binary frames rural schooling. Corbett (2010) noted that the language of the institution of rural schools often did not align with the dominant cultural discourse which did not value the funds of knowledge of the community which the school served (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Furthermore, when rural schools achieved the purpose of educating students according to national standards, certifying by test scores and grades they were competitive in career or higher education, schools served to depopulate rural areas and promote the narrative of globalization and urbanization (Corbett, 2010). During the presentation of Carr and Kefalas (2009)’s findings to the school principal in their study, the principal agreed that the role of a school was to provide the means for students to leave their community, thereby assisting the community in committing suicide since students who were successful in urban colleges rarely returned to lead and to develop the town; and those who lacked skills or resilience were the ones who stayed in town or who failed in attempts to get out and returned to the community. Rural communities paid the price of stagnation and decay.

Beyond the role schools played in the outmigration of community members, schools are vitally important parts of rural communities. Tieken (2014)'s ethnography of two rural schools described two rural communities whose heart was the local school and about whom parents said, "without these schools ... these towns would 'shut down,' 'disappear,' 'dry up,' and 'blow away'" (p. 135). The fear-inducing entity of the State which could at any time downgrade, change, or remove their local school depending on high-stakes test scores and local tax coffers, loomed darkly over the entire community. Tieken (2014) developed the point that like urban and suburban schools, rural schools can stratify or unite a community by either building bridges or walls. This construction of bridges or walls caused more significant consequences in the rural community than in an urban area because in a small community, a single school could impact a greater percentage of the total population. The local school was often a hub of artistic displays or performances, community social gatherings, and intellectual or patriotic engagement in the town.

Tieken's ethnography also revealed that the story of rural schools teetering on the brink of extinction was no longer mono-cultural; instead the story of rural schools was ripe with diversity, "an untold story about the rural that exists beyond the lily-white assumptions" (2014, p. 139). As Parsley and Barton (2015) observed, "the archetypal little red schoolhouse no longer represents the reality of the rural school" (p. 191). Rurality today challenges rustic and pastoral stereotypes. Racist language was found to be part of the identity formation of some rural people.

Furthermore, resources were found to limit a school's opportunity to hire articulate teachers who could help situate some rural students' use of racist language as their rejection of urbanity and desire for power as a minoritized group themselves, and then teach students alternate ways of framing their thinking as bicultural educated rural citizens who loved their ruralness but did not advocate racism (Groenke & Nesper, 2010). Lichter (2012) suggested that

rural school districts may not be prepared with the resources, cultural sensitivity, or experienced teachers to serve their changing population of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students. Kandel and Cromartie (2004) concluded that despite rural communities' readiness for an influx of non-majority populations, in order to become or remain relevant, cultural change and growth of the community by immigration must happen for most rural communities because the demographically aging and fading rural areas need the work, strength, and engagement of their newcomers in order to survive and to thrive.

So, given the achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006a), the overrepresentation of Whiteness in the teacher college pipeline (Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011), and absence or non-inclusion of rural perspectives in the educational research and policymaking sector (Howley & Howley, 2014; Parsley & Barton, 2015), unprecedented demographic shifts of linguistically and ethnically diverse young families with school-age children into rural areas (Cromartie, 2013; Lichter, 2012) challenges already challenged rural schools and widens the achievement gap which may threaten their very existence in the current culture of accountability (Tieken, 2014).

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching in Diverse Rural Schools**

Even if none of the projected demographic changes occurred over the next forty years, it would still be a rare situation in which the culture of all children in any classroom matched the culture of their teacher (Gay, 2010), even if the classroom appeared visually homogeneous (Reed, 2010). In order to reach each and teach all students whose visible or invisible cultural backgrounds may vary from the teacher's background and from the dominant culture of the school, multicultural researchers since the 1970s have suggested that teachers work with an inclusive, understanding, accepting, and nurturing position with respect to the cultures of the students, using funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), setting high

expectations, and building community to allow all students to succeed academically and learn to think critically (Au, 2001; Banks, 2007; Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Gollnick & Chin, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2009, 2013; Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011). Hilty (1999) argued for southern rural educators to develop and implement CRT purposefully for their schools.

The constructs of multicultural education (Banks, 2007; Nieto, 2009), culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 2009), or culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011) could be used by rural educators as a methodology to educate equitably the children from culturally diverse and low-income families who traditionally have been underserved by the schools, as evidenced by the achievement gap (Nieto, 2013; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2015). Addressing the problem of the underserved students in our schools, Gay (2010) argued, “A very different pedagogical paradigm is needed to improve the performance of underachieving students from various ethnic groups—one that teaches *to* and *through* their personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments” (p. 26). Gay (2010) made the argument that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) made mainstream education accessible to marginalized students by recognizing culture as a conduit for teaching and learning.

The use of culture as a bridge to connect the curriculum of the school to the student whose culture does not align with that of the school, has appeared widely in the literature under a variety of terms. Nieto (2013) explained that culturally responsive pedagogy has been denoted in the literature since mid-1990’s as *culturally competent*, *culturally connected*, *culturally relevant*, *culturally responsive*, *culturally sustaining*, and *centering pedagogy* (p. 137). In addition to terms found in Nieto (2013), Gay (2010) included, *culturally centered*, *culturally congruent*, *culturally contextualized*, *culturally mediated*, *culturally reflective*, *culturally sensitive*, and *culturally synchronized* (p. 31). Each iteration has nuanced differences, but in essence they all



argued that effective teachers must know about and involve students' lived-experiences, and cultures into their teaching and their curriculum (Nieto, 2013). Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) happens in individual classrooms with teachers scaffolding their curriculum with students' funds of prior knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and acting as warm demanders (Kleinfeld, 1975) with high expectations of all students (Gay, 2010).

Individual teachers can make a difference with CRT. Gay (2010) argued that while macro-level systemic changes in the political and policy realms must happen in order to sustain and advance the cause of educational equity and support the teacher's efforts in the classroom, micro-level or individual classroom teacher interventions could also be effective in causing positive change for individual students. An example of such a micro-level intervention in a teacher's own classroom is implementing CRT, which was positively connected to achievement and engagement of historically marginalized students (Gay, 2010; Okoye-Johnson, 2011). A culturally responsive teacher seeks to engage students and effect higher levels of learning by accessing the prior knowledge, values, and communication styles that students have from their home and community and constructively integrating that with new knowledge from the mainstream culture of the school (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In a culturally responsive classroom, learning became more meaningful to students, and their engagement and achievement increased (Au, 2001) along with their awareness and ability to critique social injustices and develop a capacity for collaboration and shared responsibility for growth (Gay, 2010).

Although CRT research was found to be marginalized (Sleeter, 2012), CRT has been theorized within the dominant context of urbanity (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006a; Nieto, 2013). Western acceptance of the marginalization of ruralness has dated to the founding of our nation, and the strengthening of the urban narrative has caused outmigration and

depopulation of the rural community (Bartholomaeus, Halsey & Corbett, 2014; Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Corbett, 2009; Theobald & Wood, 2010). Reed (2010) claimed rural culture has been neglected in the dominant culture's conversations and concerns for so long that rurality itself has become a marginalized culture that should be recognized by scholars of multiculturalism. Reed warned, "Multicultural education will not find a place in rural education unless rural is found in multiculturalism" (2010, p. 20). Rural schools in areas where the majority-minority crossover (Colby & Ortman, 2015) has already occurred were marginalized at the socio-economic-cultural intersection of both ruralness and race or ethnicity.

Ideally, culturally responsive teachers in rural areas where there exists a majority-minority crossover would critically recognize and reject the deficit perspectives toward ruralness (Theobald & Wood, 2010), non-White cultures, living simply, and not speaking English at home. Accordingly, responsive rural teachers help students reach the high academic standards framed by the mainstream culture of the school by infusing into the current standards-based curriculum (Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011) the funds of knowledge held by their students (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) who originated from multiple non-majority cultures, that is non-White, non-urban, sometimes bilingual, and not-affluent cultures. Recognizing this as the ideal philosophy of educators in diverse rural schools implies the existence of other belief systems as well. In their analysis of rural educational philosophies, Edmondson and Butler (2010) outlined four dominant beliefs; namely, conservative, liberal, neo-conservative and neo-liberal; and the fifth, a critical and alternative philosophy of participatory democracy which integrated rural context into the curriculum to teach students to see beyond deficit thinking about ruralness so they were inspired to work to sustain their community, to find the source of injustices that affected the community, and then to build it into a vibrant place for all (Edmondson & Butler, 2010).

## **Statement of the Problem**

In today's age of teacher accountability, reaching and teaching all students with a moral and political goal of raising achievement levels and narrowing achievement gaps on standardized high-stakes exams ultimately becomes the task of the classroom teacher working with a specific group of students (Cuban, 2013). The problem of teachers addressing persistent and pernicious gaps within the context of the classroom which becomes increasingly complex in settings where multiple underserved marginalized populations intersect with the mainstream culture of the school, for example, the intersection of a rural culture with majority percentages of students of color from non-affluent family backgrounds in which English is not their first language. The problem this study addressed was exploring how rural secondary teachers used, valued, and grew in their ability to use contextual and cultural knowledge to support learning opportunities and provide educational equity in schools with high levels of community poverty and large percentages of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds.

Teachers' use of their knowledge of students' home cultures, including their ruralness, to provide a scaffold that would allow their students to see themselves in their learning, achieve high academic standards, and challenge injustices critically is a tenet of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010). CRT helps students who are outside the dominant mainstream culture of a school navigate and succeed within the mainstream culture of a school (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2012). Ladson-Billings (2009) found that on the surface, CRT looked different in different classrooms, but the teachers' core philosophy and sociocultural consciousness of social justice remained consistent. Therefore, given this premise that CRT was context-dependent, if rural teachers were culturally responsive, using rural culture as a scaffold to help students attain mainstream academic objectives and critically question injustices, their

philosophies should align with CRT theory while their classroom practices and students' cultural knowledge differed. While CRT has been researched largely in urban and suburban settings, the intersection of CRT with rural context has not been widely studied in the empirical research or considered in the conceptual literature. This study sought to understand teachers' growth in using both the rural context and funds of knowledge of diverse students, in rural secondary schools with high percentages of students of marginalized cultures.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Data provided in this study revealed how teachers perceived they used and valued the rural context and the cultural backgrounds of their students from diverse backgrounds in their teaching and how they grew in their ability to be culturally responsive in a rural setting. The data were framed using Gay (2010)'s principles of CRT in order to understand if the teachers used knowledge of students' cultures to help them learn course content. Edmondson and Butler (2010)'s framework of teaching philosophies in rural schools, including the radical democratic perspective were used to determine if teachers aligned with the dominant perspective valuing urbanicity or if they aligned more with radical democracy (RD) and helped students understand and break down the mainstream deficit-perspectives surrounding rural communities (Theobald & Wood, 2010). RD teachers accessed students' sense of place (Ellis, 2005), supported their rural identity, and worked to sustain the local community (Corbett, 2009). So both CRT and RD were used to understand the findings in this study.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The operational definition for culturally responsive teaching for this study was "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay,

2010, p. 31). Gay (2010) presented a list of eighteen operational principles or pillars of CRT to be used as benchmarks to assist with the assessment of successful individual or institutional implementation of CRT. Table 3 summarized these eighteen tenets (Gay, 2010, pp. 248-250). Gay (2010) said using all eighteen principles all the time is the goal, but using some is better than none. Use of this pedagogy also required dispositional attitudes of receptiveness, courage, caring, and efficacy; additionally, the continuing use of reflection was important for growth.

Table 3

*Geneva Gay (2010)'s 18 Pillars of Culturally Responsive Teaching* (pp. 248-250)

---

**Culturally Responsive Teaching:**

---

1. Is integral to all classes and all skills taught
  2. Enhances learning for all, not some, students
  3. Happens systematically, continuously, and purposefully, not just sometimes
  4. Cultivates success for all aspects of a person without negatively affecting cultural identity
  5. Integrates context, culture, and lived-experience of students of color into curriculum
  6. Creates a classroom culture of academic success, collaboration, reciprocity, community
  7. Reflects students' differing perspectives and cultures in all inter-related areas of curriculum, school and classroom climate, instruction, and communication styles.
  8. Uses both general group and particular individual student cultural patterns
  9. Provides accurate information about contributions of members of ethnic groups, discussion of moral or ethical issues, power and privilege or distribution and deconstruction of academic racism and hegemony
  10. Teaches students of color informal, unstated, implicit rules or behaviors needed to succeed
  11. Uses multiple assessments like cultural preferences, participation, communication styles
  12. Empowers students with tools for continuous self-assessment
  13. Demands with genuine caring and appropriate amounts of assistance that students achieve high levels of academic success
  14. Scaffolds learning between school culture and content and students' funds of knowledge
  15. Help students imagine a different life, create goals, and pursue a path to their dreams
  16. Develop intolerance for oppression and moral courage to address injustice and promote justice
  17. Requires professional development to improve cultural knowledge, teaching skills, reflection, and self-monitoring of classroom situations for students of color
  18. Uses school or teacher resources of time, funds & imagination for student success
- 

When using the pillars to consider the growth of or success as culturally responsive educators, Gay (2010) argued that the effectiveness of the classroom level implementation of CRT, “needs to be determined *within context*. Otherwise some of their positive results may be

overlooked” (p. 237). Gay (2010) added that at whatever level CRT can be implemented by the teacher, even at the beginning levels, it can and will make a difference in achievement of students who have been academically marginalized (Gay, 2010). For Gay (2010), CRT was not a program or a curricular add-on, nor was it inconsistent with teaching in a standards-based culture; it was a philosophy and practice of teaching with authentic caring, high expectations, cultural understanding, educational equity and justice at heart.

### **Framework of Rural Educator’s Philosophies**

Educators’ philosophies were formed from their experiences in school, especially teacher education, and through the media, regulations passed by legislators, their district leadership, and their own cultures (Edmondson & Butler, 2010). Data gathered regarding rural secondary teachers’ philosophies may have aligned with Gay (2010)’s principles, or it was also possible participants expressed a philosophy that did not feature CRT or that strongly integrated and supported the rural area instead. So, an additional theoretical framework was used to probe the intersection of ruralness with the teacher’s philosophy (Edmondson & Butler, 2010).

With the cautionary that individual beliefs may not lie purely in one classification, and rural districts are not homogenous, Edmondson and Butler (2010) proposed a conceptualization of rural educators that included four dominant political philosophies and an emergent radical alternative fifth philosophy of rural teaching in which schooling became instrumental in producing citizens of rural communities who can deconstruct the deficit perspective of ruralness and who are prepared to help sustain their community by returning after graduating college or working a job, or building a career or business. The details of Edmondson and Butler (2010)’s framework were outlined in Table 4 and were used to find the level of interaction of the rural culture or aspects of the rural context with the goals, beliefs, values, and actions of the teachers.

Table 4

*Framework of Conceptual Philosophies of Rural Educators: What Does it Mean to be a Teacher in a Rural Community? (Adapted from Edmondson & Butler, 2010, pp. 156-65)*

|                            | <b>Radical Democratic</b>  | <b>Liberal</b>   | <b>Neoliberal</b>   | <b>Neo-conservative</b>  | <b>Conservative</b>  |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Leaders</b>             | Miles Horton<br>Paolo Freire   | Robert F. Kennedy  | Bill Clinton, T. Friedman   | B. Bennett, Irving Kristol, D. Cheney  |  |
| <b>Goals</b>               | Work for rural social change through participatory democracy   | Increase access to education, equity; preserve individual freedom  | To use education as an equalizer that allows all to compete in globalized economy   | To build moral character to help marginalized overcome challenges  | To control what is taught; to maintain or return to the way things used to be  |
| <b>Beliefs</b>             | Build coalitions; redistribute resources; high-stakes tests not relevant; teacher should design the curriculum   | Education is a basic right; logic makes progress possible; oppression and discrimination keeps some in generational poverty  | Free market makes jobs available if people are qualified by a good education and job training   | Decoding and phonics instruction to build reading ability; value of hard work, delayed gratification; grit. Moral deficiencies are at the roots of poverty   | Bell curve; predetermined intelligence; intelligence testing; standardized tests as indicators of knowledge  |
| <b>Values</b>              | Freedom; equality; cultural values of community; individuals' identity; civic engagement   | Equality and fraternity; affirmative action; multicultural education   | Education leads to economic growth; standardize all schools so all students perform at the same standards.  | No one to be denied opportunity because of race, class, but values order, character education, and community is important.   | Rule of law; property rights; value of precedent; principles of organized religion   |
| <b>Role of the Teacher</b> | Help students participate in public life to make decisions about resources; see, appreciate and communicate all community members' perspectives; foster citizens that can sustain and grow rural areas | Use data and research to inform practice and meet each students' need as demonstrated by data so each student can learn to his or her full potential; help students grow to fully participate as a citizen in a democracy. | Help others to be more like the dominant group; provide students with the skills to compete in global market; prepare students to leave rural areas for more economic opportunity and better education. | Demonstrate stakeholders' proficiency and achievement with standardized tests which show who has worked hard and achieved objectives; teachers should encourage tolerance of diversity but strive for unity. | Maintain <i>status quo</i> ; help students appreciate local customs and life style and "accept their position in a rural community as part of a larger societal design" (p. 159) |
| <b>Negative Effects</b>    | Power of dominant groups hard to resist in community that has suffered generations of despair and silencing  | Students don't learn to value and sustain rural communities; focus on data or science and best practices not context or culture.   | Federal level decisions control the classroom; scripted or pre-packaged curriculum equalizes opportunity.   | Does not recognize the value that non-majority viewpoints bring to the group   | Change is not possible; the design is to continue things as they are.  |

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions framed this study:

1. What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?
2. What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?
3. What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was exploring perceptions of teachers in a rural community affected by multiple areas of marginalization from the typical mainstream culture of the school. These teachers were identified by educational leaders as being culturally responsive and caring teachers. Because the goal was understanding the meaning these teachers made of CRT philosophy in their rural setting, a basic interpretive qualitative research design was selected (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, artifact analysis, and demographic information about participants provided data for the study. The interview allowed the researcher



to understand what contextual and cultural knowledge about their students that secondary level rural teachers valued and used in their teaching, how they gathered students' background information, how they created a culture of success, and teachers' philosophy about integrating it into their pedagogy. Interview responses and deliverables volunteered by the participants and purged of identifying information illustrated how this contextual and cultural knowledge was used. The process by which participants learned and grew in their efficacy to use cultural and contextual knowledge of students' lived-experiences also was gathered in the interview data.

The high school and middle school were purposefully selected for their demographic and geographic location as a rural district with high levels of ethnic, racial, and socio-economic diversity as measured by participation in the United States Title I Program, high percentages of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch status, majority-minority racial and ethnic demographics, and geographic location 35 miles or more from urban centers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013a). Twelve participants were purposefully selected from recommendations of teachers from one high and one middle school principal, and maximum variability of age, gender, race, ethnicity, content area, and teaching experience was sought from within the suggestions made by principals (Guest, Bruce, and Johnson, 2006; Seidman, 2013).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was anchored in a little researched area of culturally responsive teaching, exploring the impact of a rural context with much socio-cultural diversity on the use of CRT. It was grounded in Gay (2010)'s 18 Pillars of CRT, Ladson-Billings (2006)'s observation that CRT was presented differently in different contexts, and Edmondson & Butler (2010)'s philosophical classification system of philosophies held by rural educators. The section which follows articulates those who could benefit from reading or participating in the study.

As Freire (2005) stated, teaching is a political act because it determines who is the winner and who is the loser when schools decide what is taught and how it is taught. This study is significant in that it illuminated participants' perceptions of the political positioning of sustaining rural communities and teaching with cultural responsiveness in a diverse rural school which strives for improvement in a culture of accountability-based standardized testing.

An aspect of this study that added to its significance was its potential for both the researcher and the participants to grow through reflection and professional conversation in their understanding of how they use, value, and grow in efficacy using rural contextual and cultural knowledge of students' backgrounds (Gay, 2010). The district in which this study was situated has not provided any professional development in CRT, and teachers who were recognized as being successful in reaching all students were most likely relying on either their pre-service teaching training, or their own instincts or learning.

This study would allow a reader or teacher educator who is interested in rural education to discover the perspectives of twelve rural teachers and how the rural context interacts with the curriculum taught in their classes or the role of the school in the community. It will also potentially expose areas needing improvement.

With its provision of rich detail focused on describing the use of CRT pedagogy as well as teacher's perceptions of the value and their efficacy to use CRT, this study will help a reader or a teacher educator who is interested in CRT to understand how in-service teachers perceive they use students' culture in a rural context with a majority of students of color. Teachers who are not working in rural areas but desire to improve their knowledge about how CRT can look in another environment with high levels of cultural diversity and family poverty may also read this study and reflect on ways that context affects CRT.

Another target audience for this study would be educators or teacher educators who are working in rural areas and want to improve their culturally responsive teaching strategies or reflect on what other teachers were doing as culturally responsive teachers.

Educational leaders in rural districts who are wondering what they could do to enhance their current teachers' effectiveness and mentor their new teachers to become more culturally responsive may read this study to understand better what CRT could look like in action with a diverse student group in a minority-majority area. Educational leaders in rural districts may take a particular interest in reflecting on the role schools play in the retention or outmigration of talented young people from communities which could benefit from their vigorous engagement. Professional development CRT programs that may help rural communities, teachers, and learners could arise from reflecting on growth opportunities revealed by the data contained herein.

### **Limitations**

Limited generalizability is a limitation of this basic qualitative interpretive study which explored only a dozen teachers' perceptions of their own practices in rural Florida (Merriam, 2009; Grbich, 2013). The findings do not generalize to any other area of the state or nation. No causal conclusions could be made in this non-experimental qualitative study.

### **The Participants**

Limitations of this study may be connected to the selection and participation of the interviewees. Participants were identified by principals or colleagues and were those who were willing to be interviewed. People who were referred may not have actually used rural context or culturally responsive principles in their teaching, and others who were not mentioned or contacted may have used rural context and culturally responsive tenets in their teaching. Also, because the interviews involved perceptions, and interviewees knew the subject of the interview

was culturally responsive teaching, it could be that social desirability effect impacted their responses, and they said what they thought the interviewer was hoping to hear.

### **The Rural Setting**

The rural context may also have contributed to the limitations of this study. Because this study occurred in a small town, and although participants were assured otherwise, as noted in the methodology chapter and informed consent statements, interviewees may have feared they would be identifiable or something negative or damaging may happen to them as a result of their participation, and they may not have been open during the interview. Or people who would have added data relevant to the use of CRT in a rural context may not have agreed to be interviewed. The researcher made every attempt possible to mitigate this fear and to insure confidentiality with pseudonyms and by disassociating data from participants' demographic descriptions.

### **The Researcher**

Actions and states of being of the researcher could also have impacted or limited the validity of the findings. Because this was a qualitative study with a large data set from a long interview conducted by the researcher, the researcher was part of the study, and while care was taken to assure accurate reporting of evidence, the connectedness of the researcher to the data set could impact the findings (Creswell, 2014). Also, the researcher may have not captured all relevant data in the coding of raw data into themes, or other researchers may have drawn other conclusions based on their worldviews and lived-experiences. Finally, since the researcher was doing doctoral research in a small town in which she was relatively unknown and not many people have doctoral or advanced college degrees, and because she was a veteran English teacher in an area of significant teacher turn over and new teacher hires, she may have intimidated participants despite her efforts to be approachable and unassuming.

## Definition of Terms

1. **ACHIEVEMENT GAP:** The achievement gap was defined by the United States Department of Education (2004) as the difference between standardized test scores of students who were White or non-White ethnicities and races or who were from high and low family income levels. The gap existed ever since data from the first standardized test scores were disaggregated (Coleman, et al., 1966).
2. **CAUCASIAN OR WHITE:** this population was identified as *White* on U.S. Census, so when data were derived from government publications and when *White* was used in the original research from which the information derived, the term *White* will be used; when information pertains to cultural norms originating in Europe, *Caucasian* was used. The United States Census (2010) identified *White* as including people who identify origin as European, Middle Eastern, or North African.
3. **CONTEXT/CONTEXTUAL:** Context was defined as related conditions and surroundings. For example, cultural context referred to cultural conditions and surroundings; rural context was the situation and conditions of being a person from a rural area or a rural setting.
4. **CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING:** This constructivist pedagogy “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). Culturally relevant teachers were not colorblind or assimilationists; instead, they recognized that nobody was the same as anyone else and equity was not sameness. Teachers who were culturally responsive believed all students can succeed and approached teaching like mining instead of like banking (Freire, 2005). They helped students make connections to their community inside and outside the classroom and to their own cultural identity.

5. **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING (CRT):** Nieto (2013) explained that culturally responsive pedagogy was derived from the work of Ladson-Billings, Gay, Irvine, and Irizarri. It was not a program or a set of practices; instead, it was a way of thinking and working that respected, affirmed, valued, and gave voice to students' cultures while expanding their world and embracing high standards and quality education. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in this study was the terminology used in the literature derived from Geneva Gay's work, and it was operationalized by 18 pillars as articulated in the second edition of her seminal text (Gay, 2010).
6. **DEMOCRATIC OR DEMOCRACY (EDUCATION):** In a democracy, teaching was a resource for the public good, grounded in respect for human rights and recognizing power structures in play in a society (Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011). John Dewey (2004) defined democracy as "a society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms ... is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (p. 95).
7. **DIVERSITY:** Nieto (2013) defined diversity in terms of visible and invisible differences from the mainstream culture. Visible differences were those of race, gender, first language, and ethnicity while invisible differences included religion, ability, social class, sexual orientation (Nieto, 2013). Nieto (2013) also included age, physical appearance, political orientation, and regional or geographic home were considered as other aspects of diversity (p. 20). The definition of diversity provided by Faltar (2011) added academic ability, developmental readiness, attitudes, thinking styles, learning styles, and multiple intelligences to the list. Also, living in a rural area was considered an aspect of diversity in

this study due to the dominance of urban culture (Reed, 2010; Theobald, 2016).

8. EQUITY PEDAGOGY: As practitioners of equity pedagogy, teachers changed their teaching styles and the way they scaffolded lessons so students who were not from the dominant culture learned with equity. For example, using cooperative groups helped students who were African-American achieve (Banks, 2007a)
9. FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: This term was derived from an ethnography of the connections found between the classroom and Mexican-American families. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) defined funds of knowledge as knowledge developed by an individual that allows that individual to act appropriately in one's culture. Researchers found that using this knowledge as a scaffold for new learning experiences in the classroom enhances learning.
10. HISPANIC OR LATINO(A OR X): The United States Census 2010 identified *Hispanic* and *Latino(a)* as an ethnicity rather than a race. This researcher took the lead of Nieto (2013) who chose to use both *Latino(a)* and *Hispanic*, noting that government publications used *Hispanic* but most scholars used *Latino(a)*. This study used *Hispanic* when the data were derived from government publications or when used directly by a participant and *Latino(a)* when reference was to research literature. *Latinx* is a gender-neutral alternative to *Latino(a)*.
11. MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: James Banks began theorizing about multicultural perspectives in education in the mid-1960s. Banks (2007b)'s definition that Nieto (2009) recommended due to its stability over time defined multicultural education as a process and reform movement with the objective of changing the curriculum and pedagogy so that both genders of all diverse language, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups had an equal opportunity for academic success (Banks, 2007).

12. **RURAL:** United States Census defined rural as territory, people, and their residences not contained in classification of urban. Difficulties maintaining a consistent definition of rural for research purposes were illustrated by U.S. Department of Agriculture report that stated 15% of the population were classified as rural (Cromartie, 2013), and U.S. Census report (2010) found 19.3% of the population was in a rural center. Koziol, et al. (2015) articulated statistical difficulties and problems that arose from an inconsistent definition of rural.
13. **RURALNESS:** Reed (2010, p. 16) referred to the history, values, and culture of rural people of the majority population as “ruralness,” arguing apparently homogeneous rural culture was not homogeneous. Urban hegemony was biased against ruralness (Theobald, 2016).
14. **TEACHING EFFICACY:** Based in Bandura (1977)’s work, teaching efficacy was a teacher’s belief that she or he was able to do what was necessary to help students learn intended content or attain a learning outcome. In 1998, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy operationally defined teaching efficacy and developed and validated a widely used quantitative survey with a 5 point Likert-type scale to measure a teacher’s feelings of efficacy.
15. **TITLE I SCHOOL:** The designation as a Title I school derived from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which provided funds to local schools based on the numbers of students from families who are designated as low-income designated for use in ways that would narrow the achievement gap for children from different socio-economic backgrounds.
16. **URBAN:** The United States Census (2010) defined urban carefully because rural was defined as the opposite of urban. An urban area is one which has a population over 50,000 with 1,000 people/sq. mi. density at the urban center. They defined an urban cluster as having between 2,501 and 49,999 people.



## Summary

The persistent presence of the achievement gap as measured by high-stakes, standards-based achievement tests, demographic imbalance of teachers of color to increasing numbers of students of color, and the rural minority-majority crossover of children of color in rural Florida were situations that created the context of this study. Culturally responsive teaching, a philosophical mindset of maintaining high expectations for all learners while scaffolding new instruction with an affirmative integration of the lived experience of students from diverse socio-economic-linguistic-cultural backgrounds, has been demonstrated by two decades of research to improve learning outcomes, motivation, and students' critical awareness of the world. The nexus of the context and CRT prompted this study. The purpose of this study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in using contextual or cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experience.

The next chapter provided the research base on which this study was grounded. Literature was reviewed on the topics of culture and the culture of schools in the United States, culturally responsive teaching in theory and practice, authentic academic caring, developing the capacity for the work of CRT in the content area classrooms, and the state of schooling in rural Florida. The methodology for this study's basic interpretive qualitative design which involved 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews, artifact analysis, and a qualitative questionnaire containing demographic information which was described in Chapter Three provided richly detailed data. The data which were presented and analyzed in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five contained the researcher's conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences.

This qualitative study was grounded in research on the rural context in education and conceptual and empirical literature related to culturally responsive teaching. This chapter was divided into seven sections reflecting these broad categories: culture and the culture of schools; CRT theory, practice, and operationalization; teachers' interpersonal and academic caring; developing the capacity for CRT; and the rural context of this study. This literature will frame the qualitative methodology employed in data gathering and the ensuing analysis of teachers' perceptions from the data derived by interviews and deliverables.

#### **Intersection of Culture and Schooling**

The influence of culture is initiated at birth by the family and continues throughout one's life through one's associations. Cultural differences negatively affect education when the culture of the school operates on a different set of cultural principles than that of all the members of the school group; at this point, culture becomes a border of privilege and power allowing only certain members access (Erickson, 2010). This study of teachers' use of students' cultures as scaffolds for their growth and learning begins with a consideration of the denotation of culture.

#### **Definition of Culture**

Since the end of the 1800s, definitions of culture changed to reflect the mainstream social philosophy of the times. A seminal definition provided by Edward Tylor (1870) defined culture

as traits shared by a large group including all aspects of visible and invisible socialization. Erickson (2010) explained that the beginning of culture studies in the United States was in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when scholars started using the word *culture* instead of the word *race*, shifting the deficit perspective associated with *race* which was immutable, genetic, and biological as the source of the deficit to *culture*, which was more fluid and mutable associated with environment and nurturing. After several generations of definitions of culture gradually moving away from terms that were collectivist, timeless, patterned, and racist, Avruch (1998) provided us with a highly individualistic definition of *culture* as a way of life that was both adaptive and learned from social interactions including one's peers, families, and forefathers. With this definition, which was our operational definition for this study, culture was viewed as changeable and inclusive of occupational, social, religious, and regional groups with whom one associates. So, individuals were part of several cultures at once, and culture was not shared visibly, evenly, or inwardly: "Thus no population can be accurately characterized as a single culture or by a single cultural descriptor" (Avruch, 1998, p. 18).

Erickson (2010) observed that essentializing and trivializing culture happened when people focused on a small or shallow aspect of culture, single cultural descriptors, or stereotypes instead of focusing on individuals. Ladson-Billings (2006b) found that culture was often misunderstood as something that non-majority socio-cultural groups have. When Ladson-Billings (2006b) delivered a speech on the culture of poverty, she focused on a "poverty of culture" (p. 109), which is what she called the problem of her White teacher education students who claimed they had no culture. Ladson-Billings (2006b) claimed that her teacher candidates had such a misunderstanding of *culture* that they blamed their inability to manage classroom communications with males who were African-American on culture, but they could not articulate

what *culture* was or what the cultural problem was beyond the deficit-based excuse of a culture clash. Her prescription for the problem of White teacher candidates blaming problems of schools on non-engaged parents of color was for the students to step outside their own communities and interact like anthropologists with the non-White community (Ladson-Billings, 2006b).

### **School Culture in the United States**

In order to understand the discontinuities between the culture of students who are from non-mainstream backgrounds and the school, we will examine the literature on the historical culture of the school. Any understanding of the historical origin of educational philosophy is not a surface endeavor. Theobald (2016) examined the roots of current differences in perspectives in the United States regarding the purpose of schools. Theobald (2016) found that the political debate about the purpose of the institution of Western schools originated with the Greeks in 400 BCE around the time when the ownership of land shifted to small farmers. Similar to classic Roman schools, Greek schools described in Plato's *Republic* were purposed for preparing the leaders of the Republic. According to Theobald (2016), schooling was not a concern for feudal England until the 1640's. At this time, the philosophical debate about the purpose of schooling emerged. One group argued school was a utilitarian institution which viewed the minds of children as blank slates which should be prepared for the economic world of work. The other group viewed the school as a democratic institution modeled after Classical Greece and Rome purposed for preparing children to function socially as well-rounded citizens. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the debate crossed the Atlantic into the American colonies with Thomas Jefferson advocating for free public schools of the democratic liberal arts tradition for all White children, and with Hamilton and Madison leading the opposition arguing that schooling was for the purpose of learning the basics so successful citizens may be economically prosperous (Theobald, 2016).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, concurrent with the publication of Dillwyn (1815)'s reflections mentioned in the introduction, the churches' contentious struggle for influence over the people was occurring. The numbers of Calvinists, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Catholics grew with the waves of immigrants to the nation. Growing population propelled Massachusetts to open the first common school with the Jeffersonian purpose of learning a common curriculum of the 3R's as the measure of a literate and thinking protector of democracy (Theobald, 2016). In his twelfth annual report as the first education commissioner of Massachusetts, Horace Mann, stated: "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men,—the balance wheel of the social machinery" (1848). In this report, Mann (1848) argued for non-sectarian, democratic, and equitable public education and well-trained teachers for children of all cultural and social backgrounds. Massachusetts' common school model became adopted nationwide (Joseph, et al., 2000).

### **Schools as the "Great Equalizer"**

A series of desegregation cases challenged the customary separate but equal premise for these early public schools. Nieto (2009) chronicled several: two which were unsuccessful, namely *Roberts v. Boston* (1850), and *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930); and two which successfully provided precedent needed for the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954): *Alvarez v. Owen* (1931) and *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947) which ordered the end of segregated schools to which Mexican-American students were being assigned based on their surnames (Martin, 1997). With integrated schools and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), an opportunity for American schools to become "the great equalizer" (Mann, 1848) had been provided for by the highest level of the justice system.

Or so it seemed to the general population of the United States, until *The Coleman Report* (1966) was published, providing empirical evidence of national and significant educational inequities. Students whose culture aligned with the dominant mainstream culture of the school were more likely to have proficient skills as measured by achievement tests, but the report quantitatively demonstrated wide achievement gaps across geographic, racial, and economic sectors of the population. Coleman and colleagues (1966) noted in their report that the degree of segregation and available resources of the school, the aspirations and educational efficacy of the students, and the verbal skills of the teachers were factors impacting educational equity. Furthermore, they stated, “For each [racial, ethnic, and geographical] group [of students], by far the largest part of the variation in student achievement lies within the same school, and not between schools” (Coleman, et al., 1966, p. 297). This statement, rather than the report’s premise of arguing for integrated schools, led to the idea which resonated with people looking for a way to blame the victim (Ryan, 1976), suggesting that the source of the greatest educational inequity was the students’ racial or ethnic and socio-economic background extant within a single school (Ladson-Billings, 2006) rather than in the educational system itself.

Ryan (1976) penned a counterargument to *The Coleman Report* (1966), in which “blaming the victim” was articulated as “justifying inequality by finding deficits in the victims of inequality” (p. xiii). Ryan (1976) argued that switching deficit-thinking from blaming genetics and nature to blaming the environment and family nurturing was still blaming the victim: in one way the blame was internal and scientific, in the other it was external and social. Ryan (1976) countered the closing argument of the Coleman Report (1966) with the statement that problem of blame was not in the “culturally deprived children as with culturally depriving schools. And the task is not to revise, and amend, and repair deficient children. . . .Only by changing the nature of

the educational experience can we change its product” (p. 61), and this change must involve core beliefs of all stakeholders.

*The Coleman Report* was followed by fifty years of rigorous research reports which demonstrated a persistent achievement gap with strong racial, geographic, and economic variables: *A Nation at Risk* (1983), *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1984), *Goals 2000* (1994), *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001) and *Race to the Top* and *Common Core* (2009). Although Ferguson and the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University (2015) have statistically demonstrated slow progress toward narrowing the gap, the public school system is far from being “the great equalizer” envisioned by Horace Mann (1848). The achievement gap has now been reframed and elaborated over a half century of research into a taxonomy of gaps. Based on the U.S. Department of Education (2015)’s national report card, justice in the form of educational equity continues to be delayed and denied to a significant number of students who are from culturally, linguistically, socially, ethnically, and racially diverse backgrounds.

### **Deficit Perspectives in Schooling**

A teacher’s blindness to one’s own deficit-thinking and negative stereotyping can unknowingly cause harm to non-majority groups. García and Guerra (2004) found that inequities were caused by educators who did not recognize that they are part of the problem because of their deficit beliefs about children who come from homes that were not White middle-class family homes. Educators who were blaming families for children taking longer to learn the substance of schooling did not understand that when children come from homes which have different unwritten rules of behavior, they spend much time learning the new behaviors and less time with the curricular content (García & Guerra, 2004). Deficit-minded blaming of the families were often held by teachers who viewed themselves as supportive of equal access to learning.

**Deep-rooted beliefs.** Nelson and Guerra (2014) found that beliefs have a stronger effect on teacher behavior than knowledge, and people cling to their beliefs despite evidence to the contrary. they noted that ironically none of the twenty-nine Title I school improvement models promoted since *Nation at Risk* (1983) first alarmed the Federal Department of Education with statistics about the average-at-best performance of the nation's schools was focused on educator beliefs and knowledge (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). In their grounded theory study, 111 teachers and administrators wrote responses to nine scenario descriptions of culturally-based classroom disruptions. After scaling the responses on a continuum of *no cultural awareness* to *culturally responsive*, they found 55% of the teachers and 44% of administrators had any level of cultural awareness at all; the rest had deficit perspectives about children of color (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Those who demonstrated no cultural awareness in this study explained the culture clashes in the study as teacher's errors in clarity, experience, or knowledge and suggested generic teaching practices as solutions. Nelson and Guerra (2014) suggested professional development to reframe deficit thinking patterns and increase understanding of cultural clashes.

Teacher beliefs like those exposed in Nelson and Guerra (2014)'s study were the subject of Kumar, Karabenick, and Burgoon (2015)'s study of the relationship between White teachers' explicit attitudes, implicit beliefs, and stated intentions when they spontaneously made high stress, snap decisions. Recognizing the stress and hastiness with which teachers make many instructional decisions, they studied the way a sample of 241 teachers from twelve Midwestern middle schools which experienced a recent immigration of students from Eastern Europe and the Middle East made immediate decisions in stressful situations involving students who were White and non-White and who appeared less affluent. Kumar, Karabenick, and Burgoon (2015) found a clear difference between the explicit actions and implicit attitudes, and concluded that a teacher's



explicit desire to maintain respect in a culture clash did mediate action for White students only. Teachers with explicit negative cultural beliefs used no culturally responsive practices to mediate a culture-based clash. For teachers supporting mastery-learning philosophies, an explicitly stated desire to promote respect in a culture clash was mediated by both their explicit and implicit beliefs. For teachers supporting performance-focused learning, the opposite was true. The researchers concluded that reflection and multiple counter-stereotypical interventions were needed to change unconscious racial-based biases.

The inability to cause our explicit desire for respect and equity to mitigate implicit or explicit racist attitudes was also found to be problematic for educational leaders. In a study of three White principals' thoughts and actions when promoting teachers to leadership positions, Knaus (2014) found that in each instance, all three principals identified one White and one African- American teacher as potential future leaders. In each case, the White teacher was younger and the African-American was older. When selecting the teacher for an administrative position, each principal used the reasoning that the White teacher was better at teaching the national standards; none of the principals used CRT as a criteria for their selection. One African- American teacher went so far as to argue that her CRT practices were actually holding her back from promotion even though she was an inspiration to her students. Gutierrez (2002) and Sleeter (2012) warned that if gains against the dominant establishment happen for anyone who is in a minoritized culture, those who experienced the success should be prepared for backlash counterassaults from those in power who feel threatened by the progress of the less powerful.

**Surface and deep multiculturalism.** Empirical research has revealed that including multicultural curriculum did have an effect on reducing racist attitudes in students. Five dimensions of multicultural education were outlined in Banks (2007a)'s work on multicultural

education: integrating multicultural content; constructing new knowledge; teaching for social justice; reducing prejudice; and improving equity school wide. In a review of the effect of using a multicultural education intervention program on the racial attitudes of students from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, Okoye-Johnson (2011) found that in thirty studies, exposure to multicultural curriculum at the lower levels of Banks (2007a)'s five dimensions did help reduce students' racial attitudes. In a meta-analysis of twenty-one curricular intervention studies, the reduction in racism was even more significant at the higher levels of Banks's five dimensions. Reduction in racist attitudes revealed stronger effects being felt among students who were between nine and sixteen, likely because younger students were not as aware of racism.

Teaching for social justice in situations regarding race, ethnicity, and gender caused discomfort in White teachers, and this discomfort resulted in keeping class discussion at a surface level. In a study of ESL adult learners, Johnson and Chang (2012) found that many teachers relied on teaching the surface culture of ethnic holidays and iconic heroes because of the tensions they felt when subjects related to religion, race, and deep culture surfaced in class. They found that teaching about gender is still absent in ten out of twelve classes studied, and in the other two instances, when a gender issue did arise, it was when an Asian male accused a female drivers' license officer of prejudice for not passing him on his drivers' exam or when a mother instead of the father missed class which both attended to take care of their child. In both instances, the discomfort of the situation prohibited instructors from addressing inequities.

### **Third Space and Funds of Knowledge**

In addition to experiencing discomfort with sensitive topics connected to racism, power, and privilege, teachers who attempted to use a culturally aware approach in their teaching may have had a simplistic essentialized understanding of culture as it relates to CRT. A simplistic

understanding of CRT involved separating culture from learning or adding learning about culture to the curriculum. Instead, CRT should use cultural knowledge students bring to school with them as a platform from which academically challenging learning can occur. With CRT, culture was a vehicle to motivate student learning and connect it to something that students understand or bring to school with them. Another simplistic understanding resulted in essentializing culture, which Sleeter (2011) defined as “assuming a fairly fixed and homogeneous conception of the culture of a minoritized group, with an assumption that students who are members of that group identify with that conception of who they are” (p. 14). Responsive teachers should get to know students and shape pedagogy around who the students are rather than essentializing or simplifying culture to the holidays, heroes, and home-cooking approach.

Instead of essentializing culture, Erickson (2010), who provided us with our operational definition of culture for this study, advised teachers to get to know about students as individuals and get to know about their families in particular, suggesting the strategy of students writing critical autobiographies sharing with teachers of some of the funds of knowledge students bring to the classroom. Accessing funds of knowledge gained outside the classroom; that is, the ways of knowing, participating with and communicating to others; were found to be a powerful way to connect new knowledge to something the student already knew and valued as part of their own culture (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). MacDonald, Miller, Murray, Herrera, and Spears (2013) found that assigning academic biographies allowed teachers to use the content shared by students to teach with cultural responsiveness. When getting to know their individual students, teachers can use their classrooms to create third spaces, or safe places and bridges between a mainstream school culture and a non-mainstream home culture. In creating this third space, the teacher supports the student who navigates between both cultures (Erickson, 2010).

## **Value of Bridges and Scaffolds**

Woodrum (2009) provided examples of rural students in New Mexico who navigated between mainstream school culture and minority home cultures where a majority-minority situation existed for the 36% of the population who were White. At the time of Woodrum (2009)'s publication, over half of the working-class Hispanics in New Mexico schools dropped out before graduation. Hispanic students successful in navigating New Mexico schools had assimilated (Woodrum, 2009). Also, Native families were concerned that their children were losing their cultural grounding in their communities. So, both cultures were losing their home culture because of the dominant cultural force of the school, and neither was succeeding in the school culture of standardized state-mandated tests (Woodrum, 2009). In this case, school success and school failure was culturally constructed (Erickson, 2010). The ruralness of the New Mexico's socio-culturally diverse setting did not change the cultural role of the school: the school was aligned with the dominant non-rural, non-inclusive perspective (Woodrum, 2009).

Culture clashes like these illustrated that the culture of the school and the culture of the student harmonized as long as the student was White, assimilated to the same values as the school, or was middle class or higher. Creating a third space in class allowed students of color whose culture did not align easily with school culture to be more successful. Similarly, teachers' use of cultural elements from lived experience of their marginalized students bridged students' background knowledge to school knowledge; however, Ladson-Billings (2009) argued that CRT was not a bridge; instead, CRT brings together one culture with the other culture.

## **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

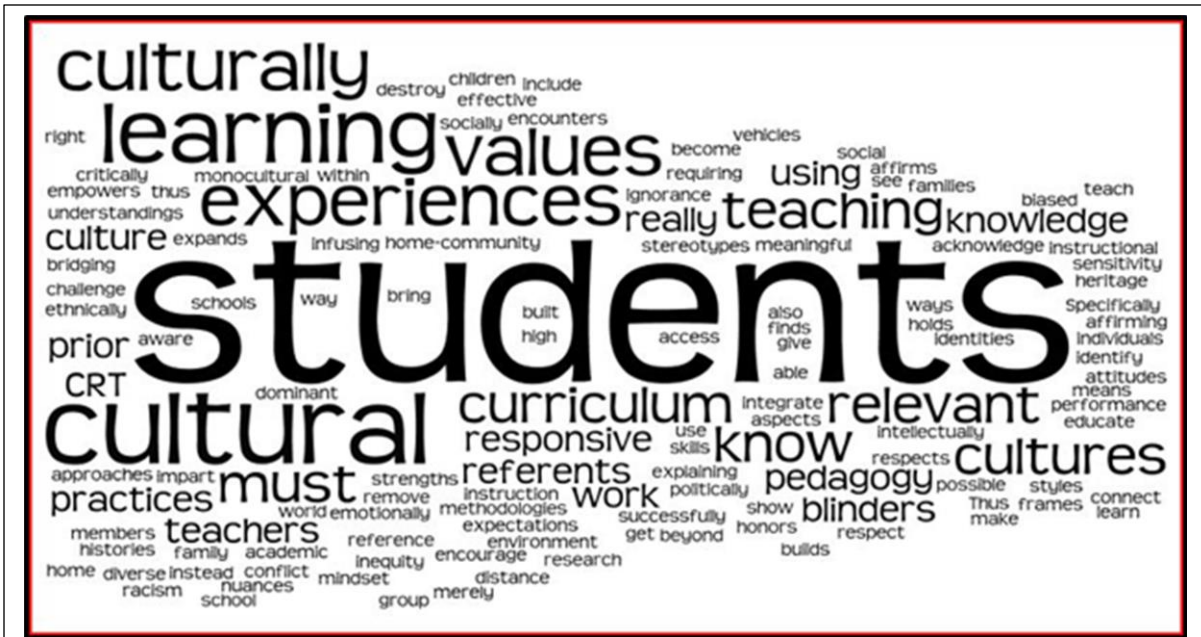
Because culture shapes all aspects of our lives, and school clearly has its own culture (Joseph, Bravmann, Windschitl, Mikel, & Green, 2000), researchers have turned to studying the

disconnection that exists between the mainstream culture of the school and the cultures of those who have historically not been served by the school, as evidenced by the gaps, for answers to the problem of changing the educational system so it serves all students (Ryan, 1976). Their findings and voices have provided educators with various elaborations of CRT, some of which include seminal and recent scholars' definitions listed alphabetically on Table 5. No hierarchy should be assumed based on the presentation of these definitions of CRT. For a visualization of the most frequently appearing words in this collection of quotes, see Figure 1 which follows.

Table 5

*Definitions of Cultural Responsiveness From Researchers in the Field*

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Au (2001)                   | “Culturally responsive instruction builds on the strengths students bring from home cultures instead of ...requiring that students learn through approaches that conflict with their cultural values” (p. 3).  |
| Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) | “Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy is a way for schools to acknowledge the home-community culture of the students, and through sensitivity to cultural nuances integrate these cultural experiences, values, and understandings into the teaching and learning environment” (p. 67).  |
| Delpit (2006)               | “If we are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the blinders built of stereotypes, monocultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism. We must work to destroy those blinders so that it is possible to really see, to really know the students we must teach” (p. 182).   |
| Gay (2010)                  | CRT is “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31).  |
| Ladson-Billings (2006)      | “Specifically, culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right” (p. 20).                                      |
| Nieto (2013)                | “CRT is a mindset that respects and honors students’ cultures, experiences, and histories and finds ways to include them in the curriculum. It affirms identities and expands their world...holds high expectations. It means learning about family practices and values and infusing those practices and values into the curriculum” (p. 53)  |
| Sleeter (2012)              | “These teachers get to know their students as individuals and as group members, show respect for students and their cultures (thus affirming their identity and heritage), and connect meaningful academic teaching and learning with students’ prior experiences. Some also encourage students (and their families) to become more critically aware and able to challenge inequity within and beyond school” (p. 5) |
| Villegas & Lucas (2002)     | “[culturally responsive teachers] use what they know about their students to give them access to their learning” (p. 27)   |



*Figure 1.* This word frequency image of most frequently appearing words in leading and seminal CRT researchers' definitions of culturally responsive teaching is an author-created image using features of Wordle.net. The font of the most frequently used words was larger, demonstrating visually that the most commonly repeated words were: students, cultural, culturally, responsive, learning, experiences, prior knowledge, curriculum, values, and referents. In smaller type, words of interest were sensitivity, infusing home-community, access, bridging, blinders, and challenge.

### **Conceptual Research in Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Ladson-Billings was the first one to use the term culturally relevant in 1995 (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In an ethnographic study of eight successful African-American teachers, Ladson-Billings (2009) found that culturally relevant teaching resulted in students' attaining high academic goals, maintaining their own cultural heritage, and developing a critical stance against injustices. Culturally relevant teachers used active teaching methods, small groups, and student-centered discussion. The role of the teacher was a facilitator who connected the curriculum to students' cultures. The antithesis of being a culturally relevant educator was to be a cultural assimilationist; for example, to be a relevant teacher viewed teaching as art based in an interconnected, supportive, and success-directed community of learners—in contrast, an assimilationist viewed oneself as a technician putting canonical knowledge into individuals for

the purpose of success measured by one's ability to escape the community where those who by design inevitably failed remained (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Sleeter and Cornbleth (2011) explained that CRT was good for all students, even students who were middle class White students whose culture was the dominant culture of the public school. They noted that what has been touted as *best practice* or *good teaching* generally is what worked with the mainstream cultural group; this was not to say it was best for students of color.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) recognized that all students learn differently and these variations may connect to family background, language, or cultural identity. They found that culturally responsive teachers had a set of skills that allowed them to reach all students: a socio-cultural understanding of privilege; maintenance of high expectations for all students; removal of barriers to educational equity; expertise in using inquiry-based, student-centered constructivist teaching; and strong knowledge of students outside the classroom (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Gay (2010)'s work was addressed in the theoretical framework for this study. Gay (2010) argued that the level of academic achievement that a student was able to achieve was directly related to the level of cultural responsiveness of the teacher's pedagogy. She also argued that race was such a powerful construct that it must be addressed in school and not be permitted to carry privilege. Gay (2010)'s findings were that actual classroom practices of culturally responsive teachers differed on the details of their use of students' culture, but they were similar in their beliefs about the effects of culture on learning. Furthermore, Gay (2010) found that viewing human differences as assets yielded increases in students' engagement, effort, and achievement; the converse was also true. Teaching should be grounded in positive language like success, confidence, and ability instead of disadvantage, poverty, or failure (Gay, 2010).

Nieto (2013) found that culturally responsive teachers who thrive, articulated as a continuum between joy and quiet fulfillment, were resilient. The disposition of a thriving CRT including loving students and subjects taught, persevering with humor and humility as they worked long hours, spent their own money, and fulfilled multiple roles including parent and nurse, all the while believing all children can learn and working to make that happen (Nieto, 2013). For Nieto (2013), CRT included critical self-reflection, valuing of language and culture, demanding excellent work from all, honoring families, and committing to lifelong learning.

Au (2001) was concerned about students of diverse backgrounds being required to reach higher levels of literacies required by standardized tests. Au (2001) explained that a sense of community and family in the classroom, fostered by the teacher, was relatable to students whose cultures valued extended families. Also, the use of texts should represent cultures of all students, not just the majority or the minority (Au, 2001). All educators need to erase the narrative of failure and change the talk to success stories and a culture of excellence and ability (Au, 2001).

Delpit (2006) recognized that literacy is political and cultural because we use language that is framed by a set of values as standard and non-standard discourse. She addressed the question if teaching Standard English and the traditional canon were acting in essence as an agent of oppression. To this question, Delpit (2006) responded that students whose home discourse was not the dominant discourse needed to learn to use both cultures' discourse, and as teachers, we should acknowledge and validate the home culture without limiting the students' potential within the dominant culture. While openly acknowledging oppression associated with use of language, the teacher's role within the social fabric of the United States was to bring the dominant discourse within reach and give it new meaning. CRT required teaching the power and privilege associated with dominant discourse but preparing students to engage fully in it.



Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) used Critical Race Theory as their framework to review the conceptual literature in the field of culturally responsive teaching, using the term culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) for their synthesized model. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) coded the literature and found thirty-five themes which they organized into five categories to create a framework in order to derive a testable theoretical model that would be inclusive of decades of scholarship. The five themes which synthesized the most widely known theoretical work included these constructs -1- relationships between student and teacher; -2- teaching the whole child, bringing home and school together; -3- developmentally appropriate learning opportunities, teaching styles and psychological support; -4- equal access and high expectations for all; -5- identity development and affirmation. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) argued similar to Gay (2010) that a combination of as many as possible of the thirty-five CRP indicators is best for students, but having a few of them is better than not having any at all.

### **Motivation for Using Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) explained the model for motivation to practice CRT was not a behaviorally-derived model with sticks-and-carrots; rather, it was internally motivated. From the outside, internal motivation looks like engagement, but they explained people have to want to be engaged. Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (1995)'s model to motivate students to engage with CRT contains four conditions grounded in the idea that students had to see value in what they did: -1- create an inclusive classroom setting, -2- maintain a positive attitude toward learning -3- create challenging and relevant learning experiences, -4- encourage students to try hard with confidence. The cautionary is that if or when teachers hesitated or doubted themselves and returned to a more comfortable traditional external motivation, the model ceased to work.

## **Resistance to Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Regarding teachers who were frustrated, caught between their position as the intermediary between the dominant culture and students who were not buying what they were selling, Delpit (2006) insisted that not-teaching is not a response to the student who is choosing not-learning in order to maintain his or her cultural identity. Teachers should teach those who are choosing not-learning more rather than less, but they should teach against not-learning in culturally responsive ways. Children of color should not be invisible, shamed, or silenced (Delpit, 2006). Delpit (2006) also argued teachers “must not take courses that tell them how to treat their students as multicultural clients... They must also learn about the brilliance the students bring with them ‘in their blood’” (p. 182).

Gay (2010) noted two reasons teachers resisted using CRT were they doubted that it works or they did not believe they could implement it without discomfort. Gay (2010) countered that the pedagogy was developed gradually, purposefully, and reflectively; and it was also compatible with the national standards; teachers were encouraged to supplement teaching materials with those that reflect historical truths rather than mainstream distortions, and to challenge students’ critical thinking skills in addressing inaccuracies or omissions (Gay, 2010).

Gordon (2001) wrote that those who were not fluent in CRT thought the inclusion of aspects of student’s culture into the curriculum was done by excluding other pieces of the curriculum. Ladson-Billings (2006) responded that CRT is not a way of fitting students from non-dominant groups into the dominant culture of school: CRT affirms their culture.

Sleeter (2011) also noted the need for CRT advocates to be aware of the potential political reaction against CRT in an era of increasingly prescribed curriculum. Sleeter (2011) argued that CRT can best survive backlash from neoliberals who advocated standardization and

repercussions of uninformed school leaders was with a strengthened research agenda connecting CRT practice with achievement and with knowledgeable educators who explain their practices.

To illustrate tensions regarding an official scaled-up adoption of CRT, Sleeter (2011) wrote about her participation on a California Department of Education project, working with twenty-five experts to draft California's professional development response to the racial and ethnic achievement gap, but the project was terminated before its completion. The researcher found that the success of the project scaling up CRT professional development was inhibited by how little consensus existed on how CRT looked in practice, its value in a standards-based teaching climate, and its connection to student achievement. The researcher argued that obstacles to adoption of CRT in a high-stakes testing environment may be a mistaken and simplistic understanding of CRT, gaps in the research literature, and political threat of potentially empowering people who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Sleeter (2011) conducted a review of research linking CRT to student learning, and found the research base for CRT was thin but growing steadily and centered on core aspects of CRT. Because of the limited research, Sleeter (2011) found advocating for a large scale-up of CRT was a hard sell to policymakers: "Although there is quite a bit of research on culturally responsive pedagogy, far too little systematically documents its impact on student learning, and clarifies what practices most strongly impact on students, and in what contexts" (p. 16). Sleeter (2012) observed that ironically, CRT was theorized to impact the achievement levels that the neoliberals addressed with packaged and scripted curriculum, but CRT had the potential to succeed where the scripts are not. Sleeter (2012) found that CRT was often trivialized and essentialized, hence misunderstandings arouse as to what CRT is. She also found "while research on the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy is thin, it is quite promising" (p. 563). She found studies on

engagement, learning, teacher education, professional development, and operationalizing CRT. Sleeter (2012) found a possible reason for the thin research base: teachers who wanted to use CRT said they had less time to research and develop responsive lessons to enhance the required curriculum because of the pressure of teaching to the test and their administrators' policing of their adherence to pacing guides and scripted curriculum.

### **Misunderstandings of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

In the same way that good teachers teach for understanding but are cognizant of likely or potential misunderstandings (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), the theorists of CRT also explained what CRT was not. Au (2001) presented and then provided clarification for three misunderstandings about CRT: -1- that it has only emotional rather than intellectual benefits because it served to make students feel more comfortable; -2- students won't learn how to learn in the mainstream cultural pattern by teachers who use non-mainstream methodology; and -3- cultural considerations are not necessary since the testing culture ushered in an assimilationist philosophy of school as a meritocracy.

A simplified misconception of CRT was the idea that discovering the culture of the students alone will provide justice and equity in the classroom. Educators needed to understand "racism and other forms of oppression that underlie disparities in education outcomes" (Sleeter, 2011, p. 15). Sleeter (2011) argued that schooling was fraught with systemic inequities and institutionalized unequal power distributions that limited opportunities for children of color and those who spoke languages other than English. Sleeter (2011) additionally noted that anti-racist critical race theorists have also counter-argued CRT, considering it misguided in its emphasis on culture because addressing culture moves the focus away from the larger and more toxic problem of racism.

Nieto (2013) argued against the misunderstanding that CRT provided a set of best practices that teachers used with students from particular ethnic or racial background; instead, she explained CRT was a mindset or a philosophy, a culture of teaching. Teaching is a caring profession, and using CRT could allow teachers to bring back the feelings part of teaching, of personal connections and relationships that were snuffed out of teaching as an effect of NCLB (Nieto, 2013). Sleeter and Cornbleth (2011) also argued strongly that “there simply is no ‘one best way’ of teaching all things to all students in all times and places” (p. 2).

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching in Practice**

Keeping in mind Nieto (2013)’s affirmation of CRT as a mindset and philosophy and Ladson-Billings (2006)’s note that CRT looked different in different teachers’ classrooms, the following review of the literature offered examples of cultural responsiveness in praxis in different content area classrooms. Morrison, Robbins, and Rose (2008) found wide variation in how culturally responsive curriculum was used by teachers in forty-five classrooms. In order to operationalize their findings, they identified twelve actions the teachers used, and aligned those codes into three broad categories: high academic expectations with support like scaffolds; cultural competence in reshaping the curriculum; using student prior cultural knowledge; and teaching awareness of power and privilege. They concluded that none of the teachers used all twelve competencies, but each teacher used a few of them. So, aligning with this study’s findings, this section offered reports on research conducted on teachers’ implementation of CRT in various classroom settings and situations. Some of the findings reveal troubles teachers had, and others revealed successes, but all of these studies aligned with the voices of CRT theory who said teachers who practiced CRT were on a continuum of growth and discovery, aided by reflective practice and professional development or peer collaboration.

### **CRT in the Fine Arts Classroom**

The value of CRT has been studied in the music classroom. Wiens (2015) studied how music teachers used CRT as a way to connect to students' backgrounds and build social relationships around music, exploring with their students the place of music and song in cultures. Wiens (2015) encouraged teachers to reflect on home and how they grew up as a first step to becoming culturally responsive, then gathering information from students about their backgrounds, and connecting what they were learning in class to their prior experiences. Data were presented in vignettes that illustrated aspects of CRT in the music classroom (Wiens, 2015).

Shaw (2015) studied how four urban chorus teachers used CRT in their classrooms. Shaw (2015) observed teachers using five essential components in Gay's framework: knowledge base about diversity; use of multicultural curriculum; showing caring and building community; response to diversity in instructional delivery and communication. The teachers used contextual knowledge for selecting the music, designing their lessons, engaging the audience of their performances, and recruiting students. Teacher education classes did not prepare teachers with the cultural knowledge they applied in the lessons Shaw (2015) observed. Instead, Shaw (2015) found the perception that teacher education could be a better place for the development of the appropriate disposition and for learning how to obtain and use context knowledge when they begin teaching. Shaw (2015) suggested that professional development provided by the schools for their own teachers could be a better place for learning how to use culturally responsive practices in the particular contexts of a particular school.

### **CRT in the Social Studies Classroom**

Cammarota and Romero (2006) proposed the construct of critically conscious intellectualism combining teaching for social justice with authentic caring and critical awareness

as a solution to the problem of Latino(a)s feeling silenced in schooling. Cammarota and Romero (2006) used an experimental methodology to develop a social studies curriculum for twenty high schoolers in a low socio-economic area of Tucson where the academic achievement was problematic. The curriculum aligned with the state standards but also included lessons intended to raise awareness of racism and injustice. The students' final project was to argue against a state law enforcing English as the only language in district schools. The researchers reported successful attainment of learning objectives as well as growth in students' critical awareness.

Document-based studies are often part of the history and social studies curriculum because they give students experience with the original substance of which history is written. At times documents are also used in the English Language Arts classroom and on standardized high-stakes tests. Swartz (2012) produced a qualitative document study of the presence of cultural responsiveness in state and federally provided high school level teaching materials. Swartz (2012) found that between 81 and 82% of the seventy-four documents represented in the national archives and document based questions on such exams as the NAEP, Iowa Test of Educational Development, and New York State Regents assessment support curricula were not culturally responsive, although they appeared on the surface to be representative of diverse populations. For example, an article on the Navajo code talkers in WWII was presented from the perspective of White officials who supported the use of the Navajo language known only by the Navajo to pass war messages which would be unintelligible should they be intercepted by the enemy, rather than the perspective and voice of the Navajo talkers themselves being presented. Another type of non-culturally responsive material was documents and photographs presenting African-Americans as passive victims of racial injustice who were saved by interventions from the President of the United States, rather than presenting the image from the perspective of the

African-Americans and including evidence of their feelings, actions, and role as change agents. Evidence of non-culturally responsive sources were also found in the samples of acceptable student responses; for instance, in a sample response to a photograph, the Native people were described as hostile to White settlers for not consenting to European settlement of their lands, rather than a student sample written from the perspective of the Native person in the picture. The document studies did not engage students in critical thinking activities from the perspectives of the non-White actors. Swartz (2012) used six principles of CRT as themes to analyze the curricular content: (a) inclusion of diverse perspectives; (b) authentic representation of perspectives; (c) presenting accurate historical occurrences; (d) undistorted indigenous voice; (e) critical thinking about power; and (f) emphasis on human collective. Cultural responsiveness was found in fourteen out of the seventy-four texts, and the first three codes were found in all those documents. Indigenous voice and critical thinking were the least frequently represented. In conclusion, the researcher noted that just because something looked like it was responsive and inclusive, close examination may reveal that it spoke from the perspective of the hegemony.

In a mixed methods study to find if African-American students preferred culturally relevant or non-culturally relevant American History lessons, Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) developed and taught 45 students a six-week unit in urban Colorado. They used an experimental group and a control group. In the culturally relevant history lesson, they infused group work, movement, technology, discussion, music, oral tradition, a history game, and a field trip to the American Research Library and Tortilla Factory. In the mainstream non-culturally relevant lessons, no cultural lens, images, or history was added to the lessons. They found that curriculum integration was complex and required much content knowledge, but students preferred the integrated and creative lessons, and they made more learning gains in the process.



## **CRT in the English-Language Arts Classroom**

Over time, teachers grow into competence and learn deep content knowledge like that which was displayed by Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011). Saunders (2012)'s case study of a White novice English teacher showed how the teacher learned to follow her instincts and not accept the figured worlds of a southwestern United States urban high school. Saunders (2012) found that the teacher's commitment to social justice immediately allowed her to see the figured hierarchical worlds of the honors and regular tracks of high school English. The novice teacher observed that in the honors track, high expectations were held for all students; the reverse was true for the non-honors track. The student teacher assigned a group project finding media which aligned with themes in *The Crucible*, a play which is in the traditional eleventh grade canon, and her evaluation of the project was conducted with a student-created rubric. Saunders (2012) reported students accessed funds of knowledge in finding relevant media, demonstrated their strengths in use of media, and spoke with their own voices in their presentations. The researcher observed that the student teacher missed opportunities to help students examine unearned privilege and injustice, and she became uncomfortable and could not moderate conversations and comments related to power and race which erupted from students (Saunders, 2012). However, she did learn how to navigate the district pacing guide and add CRT within the course content with the guidance of her cooperating teacher who showed the student teacher that even under a high-stakes standardized-testing mandate, CRT was successfully employed.

In another study of methods to incorporate CRT and a critical stance into a standards-based English curriculum, Morell (2005) infused culturally responsive media into the ages-old English canon. Morell (2005) integrated hip-hop music with canonical poetry and found through interviews and observational data that students were more motivated and gained appreciation for

classical poetry as social criticism and satire and realized that their music had the same purpose. They also integrated a court trial with a text from the literary canon that some teachers called too inaccessible for the students; Morrell (2005) reported greater productivity in students' written work on the topic than when the court trial was not included in the lesson. In another lesson, the researcher assigned students to investigate the portrayal of non-White youth as violent and lawless using media and literature. Morell (2005) concluded using CRT principles to bring students' cultures into their work with established English canon empowered students with greater analytical and critical skills as well as improved their engagement in traditional literature.

Using the words from interviews with eight elementary teachers who were mandated to use scripted curricula in a school under State direction to improve test scores, Evans, Lester, and Broemmel (2010) presented their study data in the postmodern form of a three-act play. The play captures the dilemma and tensions revealed their interviews. The actors represented the voices of the participants, authors of the scripted curriculum program, researchers, and an advocate for educational equity. The researcher's purpose was to present their narrative findings not as an analysis of power and politics, but as layered and messy lived-experiences. The teacher voices were sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing with the mandated scripts. The authors' concluded with questions designed to pull together the polyvocal presentation and invite readers to join the conversation and reimagine curriculum which serves the students instead of the policymakers and which values the perspectives of teachers and students.

### **CRT in the Math Classroom**

In response to a challenge from math teachers that math did not lend itself to CRT, Bonner (2014) studied three successful math teachers who had different teaching styles with their predominantly African-American students. One teacher required students to keep a math

journal as one of their tools for learning. Students would start journaling and chanting as they learned the concepts that they put in their journal. She used movement, song, and choral response chanting in the tradition of the African-American church. Another teacher used differentiated learning centers where students rotated around the room, and a third used a high tech classroom design with centers including prerecorded teacher-made lessons on a classroom computer, exercises on the white board, and small group work while she served as a facilitator. In this grounded theory study, Bonner (2014) developed a theoretical framework for application of CRT in math classrooms which began with getting to know the students.

Gutiérrez (2002) noted that for many Latino(a)s, speaking Spanish was part of their cultural identity, but not all Latino(s)s were proficient in Spanish, nor was math a culture-free and universal language. Using student interviews, classroom observations, and interviews of three male Calculus teachers, two of whom identified as White veteran teachers and the third as a Puerto Rican beginning teacher, Gutiérrez (2002) examined their implementation of CRT. The teachers recognized that students' speaking to each other in their first language while solving problems in small groups may help students learn their mathematics. Gutiérrez (2002) observed that students helped each other understand math problems, easily moving between speaking in English and Spanish, and remembering to speak in English when working with a non-Spanish speaker. The three math teachers, two of whom were not fluent in Spanish, viewed use of language as an asset to make math class more productive. The collaborative grouping was a culturally responsive way for the non-White students to interact and learn. Teachers maintained the English-dominant use of language in that the teachers only taught in English; interestingly, the bilingual math teacher said he didn't know the technical Calculus words in Spanish, having had all his instruction in math in English. Gutiérrez (2002) suggested teachers' being aware of

who was Spanish or English dominant, allowing code-switching when students were working with each other and mediating the language of a challenging textbook. Gutiérrez (2002) concluded effective teachers of Latino(s)s do not have to be bilingual or be trained in language acquisition; students in these classrooms became more productive and competent in higher level mathematics when using Spanish to access difficult concepts in collaborative learning groups.

### **CRT in the Emergent Bilingual Classroom**

Orosco and O'Connor (2014) reported on a descriptive case study of a bilingual special education teacher's CRT practice in an urban ELL classroom. While the researchers noted that teachers did not need to be culturally the same as their students in order to be culturally responsive, they reported that this ELL teacher was bilingual and used her knowledge of what many of her students' family experiences would be when she was teaching reading. She balanced speaking in English and Spanish and infused conversation about foods, cooking, and family interactions with her teaching of a story. She moved between modeling metacognition and questioning to build both higher and lower order thinking skills, and she used her knowledge that students who receive services in special education and ELL need to learn to self-monitor their comprehension as they read. The researchers reported that students were developing their capacity to speak and problem-solve in their first language while developing their capacity for literacy in English. The complete classroom dialogue of the teacher's lesson was provided as the data set and demonstrated use of CRT and accessing prior knowledge into the lesson content.

### **CRT in the Physical Education Classroom**

Culp, Chepyator-Thompson (2011) surveyed thirty-one physical education teachers in urban schools to discover their use of CRT strategies. These teachers responded that they modeled and explained physical education skills as well as practiced consistent following of the

rules so no hidden agenda or unwritten rules existed. They also used student leaders and cooperative learning so students could learn from each other. Hands-on activities also were responsive to students who liked movement instead of reading. Culp, Chepyator-Thompson (2011) found that the coursework in the participants' university teacher preparation program was not useful to them because the focus was on African-American groups and other diverse groups were part of their school population.

### **Operationalizing Culturally Responsive Teaching**

When analyzing reasons for the marginalization of CRT in the conversation about scaling up professional development of CRT to the State level, Sleeter (2012) found that the research base was not as substantive as policymakers wanted to see, noting that quantitative measures and large scale studies were missing in the research base. This section reviewed some of the literature on researchers' struggle to develop reliable and valid scaled instruments capturing aspects and attempting to operationalize CRT.

Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, and Bradshaw (2015) noted that instruments in CRT measured perceptions of attitudes, awareness, and efficacy, so they developed an instrument to measure a teacher's CRT in classroom observations. This was perhaps a logical starting point because teachers who were responding in culturally affirmative ways did so largely in the classroom where most of their time was spent. The researchers observed 142 teachers in six K-8 schools in Maryland and asked the teachers to provide self-reported CRT data. Findings showed that teachers' self-reports on three different scales were on the high end of the scale while observers rated them on the low end of the scale. Findings were that an observation added another important dimension on determining the actual presence of CRT strategies. Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, and Bradshaw (2015) also suggested eliminating bias from social desirability

effects in self-reporting measures and developing instruments to measure CRT that use multiple data reporting sources.

A popular tool for teacher observations and evaluations is The Danielson Framework for Teacher Effectiveness. Gist (2014) noted tension between the tenets of CRT and this popular framework, arguing the illogic of the use of the Danielson framework to replace outdated evaluation instruments when the framework itself was devoid of indicators for CRT pedagogy that teacher education was instructed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to use to prepare new teachers (NCATE, 2008). Gist (2014) called for research that will tease out appropriate indicators for observation instruments that may better provide evidence of a teacher's use of the strategy theorized to improve educational equity. Such an instrument may be Applin (2007)'s CRT assessment instrument which focused on building home and school connections, appealing to learning styles, using affirmative intercultural communication, routinely using multicultural materials, learning of students' backgrounds with strategies like personal autobiographies and surveys, and using cultural backgrounds in teaching.

Over the last decade, K. O. Siwatu has published research focused on developing quantitative measurement scales for CRT which have been used in many empirical CRT studies in CRT literature. One of the instruments developed by Siwatu (2007) was the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE), with 40 Likert scale items to determine teachers' efficacy beliefs about their ability to use CRT. Self-efficacy is a theoretical social-cognitive learning construct elaborated through research by Bandura (1977, 1997), in part to explain the relationship between a learner's belief that the learner can be successful and act itself being successful: the greater the belief, the greater the motivation, and the more energy the learner will expend and the more persistent the learner will be in attaining the desired end. The

other tool developed by Siwatu (2007) was the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy Scale (CRTOE), which had twenty-six Likert scale items designed to measure the level of beliefs a teacher had regarding the likeliness that the use of CRT will produce beneficial results (Siwatu, 2007). Siwatu (2009) used the CRTSE and CRTOE scales to measure the relationship of preservice teachers' belief that they were able to use CRT in their classrooms and their belief that doing the work of using CRT in their classrooms will produce positive outcomes for their students. A positive relationship existed between the self-efficacy teachers had and the outcomes they expected from the use of CRT.

Frye, Button, Kelly, and Button (2010) reported on their use of Siwatu (2007)'s self-efficacy and outcomes-expectancy scales to demonstrate the efforts of teacher educators' attempts to infuse CRT into a teaching methods course for elementary level literacy. Pre- and post-tests demonstrated perceptions of growth in the pre-service teachers. Both undergraduates and graduate participants demonstrated increases, but graduates rated themselves higher than the undergraduates on the post-test. Researchers found the surveys helpful for students' self-assessment and to demonstrate growth over the course of a semester college class.

Siwatu and Starker (2010) used a mixed methods study to determine 84 Midwestern pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy and preparedness to handle a conflict involving an African-American student. In their survey, 79% of participants were female, and 90% were White. They completed the CRTSE to rate their CRT self-efficacy and then wrote a response to two case studies involving conflicts with non-White students. Siwatu and Starker (2010)'s case study revealed pre-service teachers were average in their ability to handle a conflict involving a culture clash. They found that as participants' efficacy scale score increased, so too did their confidence level for handling the conflict. Also, the number of teacher education courses taken by

candidates did not correlate with either efficacy or confidence to resolve a culturally-based conflict. An item-analysis of responses to the survey revealed pre-service teachers were the most efficacious in doing teaching tasks that did not necessarily connect only to students from non-White cultural backgrounds and less efficacious in tasks requiring working with English language learners or when integrating culturally responsive curriculum or activities. The CRTSE survey included both items that were specific to cultural differences and some items that could be relevant to teaching students who were not of color (Siwatu & Starker, 2010).

In an explanatory mixed method study that explored findings from Siwatu and Starker (2010) which raised questions about the meaning of the findings on the CRTSE survey, Siwatu (2011) measured the CRTSE beliefs of 192 pre-service teachers, and selected eight of the ninety-three who volunteered to participate in a nine question face-to-face semi-structured interview. The participants whose responses ranked in the higher and lower quartiles revealed that student teachers were the most efficacious about general teaching practices and the least efficacious about CRT-specific principles; for example, CRT-specific items included such items as greeting students in another language, managing a home-school cultural disconnect, or explaining how high-stakes tests may be culturally biased. From the interviews, Siwatu (2011) found that students who scored the highest scores had exposure to CRT in teaching classes where students had the most opportunities to learn about diversity. One student noted feelings of preparation resulted from doing a project to develop ways to learn about a student's background through a student interest survey and a letter for parents of their future students. Through the interviews, Siwatu (2011) found that CRT efficacy scores on this instrument may be increased by students learning about items on the survey that could occur in all-White classes or from items that do not necessarily require integration of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



These mixed methods studies which provided qualitative elaboration of survey items on quantitative measurement tools revealed ways that quantitative instruments (Frye, Button, Kelly, & Button, 2010; Siwatu, 2007; Siwatu, 2009) may not be revealing what the researcher sought to find (Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu & Starker, 2010). While researchers have been developing other quantitative measures and checklists, CRT has been a difficult concept to reduce to numbers. It may be that an ecological approach to evaluating teachers' use of CRT would be useful in the same way that it was useful for identifying students of color for Response-to-Intervention (RTI) or testing for special education support. McKenna (2013) observed that a disproportionate number of African-American students were in special education programs, possibly due to lack of an objective definition of emotional and behavioral disorders, deficit-thinking, or culture clashes. McKenna (2013) recommended an ecological testing approach which gathered multiple types of data including reflective journaling over an extended time to avoid over-referring children who were African-American to RTI models.

### **The Culture of Academic Caring**

Schools can be cold and lonely places for some students, especially if they would like to have a friend and had none, or if they felt different than others and that was uncomfortable, or if they thought all their teachers were just there for a paycheck. Delpit (2006) explained the importance of caring as the foundation for CRT and the differences in caring across cultures, but mentioned the cross-cultural caveat for a teacher was that expressions and demonstrations of caring be authentic, or the opportunity to connect with students will be broken.

Noddings (1988) challenged teachers to develop natural and caring relationships with students by first gaining students' trust and then listening empathically and responding differentially to students. Noddings (2005) called for teachers to use a reflective practice of

critical self-analysis to consider successful and unsuccessful caring actions with the goal of improving a caring attitude. In Noddings (2005)'s theory of caring, caring is reciprocal, confirming, grows, and extends over time while acting on behalf of the whole person or student.

An academic and demanding stance for caring was one of Gay (2010)'s Eighteen Pillars of Progress for CRT. For Gay (2010), caring was warm and demanding; caring teachers worked and motivated students to work to attain established and supported goals; they remained positive and looked for assets, not deficits; and they developed authentic relationships with students based on trust and respect. Gay (2010) encouraged reflective practice as a tool for growth as a caring warm-demander. Elish-Piper, Matthews, and Risko (2013) reminded readers of the principle of the connection between the heart and the head and between cognition and emotion. They argued that employing CRT was an act of caring and a starting point from which teachers built a community of collaboration and discussion where learning happens for all.

In a reflexive study that modeled the importance of reflective practice and chronicled the growth of the researcher from a self-described color-blind and unknowing White male to a humbled and responsive teacher, Eslinger (2014) reminded readers that caring is not the same thing as knowing students' cultural backgrounds. Knowing required a realization that other perspectives existed, reflection on racism and privilege, learning about the context of the school, and collaboration about teaching (Eslinger, 2014).

Researchers interested in cultural attitudes toward caring have found that caring can look different from different cultural perspectives. In studies of effective teachers among the Eskimo, Kleinfeld (1975) coined the term warm-demanders to define a type of strong, strict, but personal and warm caring unique to some cultures. Ware (2006) explained warm-demanders were often documented in African-American educational research as structured, tough, unyielding, firm,

direct, and disciplined but effective because the students believed that the warm demander was on their side, helping them learn. The upcoming sections reviewed studies that investigated caring teachers and students who were rural, Hispanic or Latino(a), and African-American.

### **Caring Research and Students of African-American Parentage**

In a study of perspectives of African-American urban elementary children, Howards (2001) documented the children's appreciation of teachers who cared, created a family community in class, and made learning fun. Recognizing the strength of literature on warm-demanders in research on students who were African-American, Howards (2001) found some, but not all, of the children in the study equated *hollering* and *yelling* with caring; the children expected authoritarian nurturing and to be corrected rather than ignored or sweet-talked. Howards (2001) added that the characteristics mentioned by the children were not grounded in the race of the teacher; instead, CRT was operationalized as a way of being.

Authentic caring for African-American elementary children was also revealed in Bondy, Ross, Galligane, and Hambacher (2007)'s study. These researchers observed how three urban elementary teachers, who were deemed successful by virtue of their evaluations and who had less than five years of experience, warmly but firmly established the groundwork during the first two hours on the first day of school in a school in which 90% of the students were African-American and had high levels of family poverty. One teacher was African-American, one was Asian-American, and one White, and each had different deliveries and styles. However, all three teachers focused on introductions and relationship-building, rules and procedures, and repeatedly demanded appropriate behaviors while encouraging and expecting successful learning to happen in class. The common feature across all three successful teachers was a tone of calmness, efficiency, order, respect, and cooperation. Effective CRT strategies in this study were not

differentiated to the race of the teacher. Bondy, Ross, Galligane, and Hambacher (2007) suggested new teachers remove naïve niceness from their repertoire of classroom behaviors and substitute respectful, calm orderliness instead.

Brockenbrough (2014) studied the relationship-building actions of White female teachers of students who were African-American, and introduced the framework of “further-mothering,” differentiated respectfully from the construct of “other mothering” in that “further-mothers” were denoted as White women who nurture African-American youth who were not their own children, and “other-mothers” were African-American women who nurtured African-American youth. Brockenbrough (2014) proposed five thematic characteristics held by further-mothers which emerged from the study suggesting potential development in further research. Further-mothers were aware of Whiteness and White privilege, understood the layers of oppression affecting people of color, and infused African-American culture into the curriculum as an asset. They showed genuine care without a savior- or deficit-perspective. These attributes aligned with CRT (Gay, 2010). The young person who was mothered gave the appellation of further-mother to the White woman, not she to herself. This study added to our understanding of another framework for caring beyond warm-demanding.

### **Caring Research and Students of Hispanic or Latino(a) Ethnicity**

In a three-year ethnographic study of Mexican-Americans living in Houston, Valenzuela (1999) found that schooling was subtractive for a majority of Mexican-Americans who were not on the college track, stripping them of their culture as well as their opportunities for greater successes in life. These findings aligned with the conclusions of Woodrum (2009) noted in the section in this lit review (see p. 39) who explored the situation around a high school dropout rate in New Mexico. Valenzuela (1999) found that what was called *laziness* and *apathy* in the

students who were non-college-bound, non-immigrant, and Mexican-American was the manifestation of their reaction to *schooling*, not their idea of *education* because *schooling* was a subtractive force in their lives. *Schooling* essentially divided Mexican-Americans from each other and from their families. The college-bound students were not affected by these subtractive forces because by their being accepted into the college-bound academic world, and they accepted assimilation. The non-college-bound insulted by the college-bound by calling them “geeks.” Valenzuela (1999) interpreted this as an even greater insult than if they were called “White” because the students who were non-college-bound felt even more negative about school than they did about Whiteness. Recent immigrants were not affected by subtractive forces, for they were still adjusting from moving to the United States and were still affected by stories of their parents about their country of origin and belief that going to school was a privilege.

Valenzuela (1999) found that teachers’ lack of caring about students related directly to young people’s rejection of schooling. To understand the impact of their thinking that teachers did not care required Valenzuela (1999) to explore the cultural differences between the meaning of the word *education* in English and Spanish. *Educación* in Spanish includes both the families’ and school’s teaching of the basis of culture to the children, which was personal, moral, and social responsibility. With the origin of education understood as being actions of a family whose position was to teach the child, the child makes the association of education with being cared about before the child can demonstrate he cares. So, because caring and respect was embedded in the cultural understanding of *educación*, if Mexican-American students decided their teachers did not care, it invalidated their basic cultural understanding of *educación* and, by association, invalidated their culture. Valenzuela (1999) suggested that teachers’ authentic caring could reverse the subtractive experience of schooling for the non-college-bound-non-immigrant

student. Authentic caring involved supporting student learning by knowing the students, listening to their concerns, valuing their funds of knowledge, respecting their potential, and helping them learn what was important for their success (Valenzuela, 1999).

When studying journal writings of a group of Latino(a)s when they were in eighth grade and again in eleventh grade, Quiroz (2001) found connections to the theme of silencing increased over time, with the most profound effects in their final writings at the end of eleventh grade. In eighth grade, students internalized what Quiroz (2001) called silencing and frustration with academic difficulties, but by eleventh grade, students understood “school sponsored silencing” (p. 328) and teachers’ lack of concern for their academic success. By eleventh grade, students lost belief in the possibility for success and were largely disengaged in school. Quiroz (2001) concluded that the eleventh graders felt they “had no voice, at least in matters related to their schooling. They spoke through their narratives but no one listened” (p. 328).

Garza (2009)’s grounded theory study developed themes from interviews with students who were White and Latino(a)s to find similarities or differences in what caring looked like to each group. Garza (2009) studied forty-nine Latino(a)s’ and forty-four White high school students’ perceptions of caring and found that contrary to Nodding’s theoretical framework, caring was not reciprocal. To the students in Garza (2009)’s study, teachers viewed as caring scaffolded learning, acted with kindness, were available, made personal connections, and provided emotional support in class. Garza (2009) noted that these were all one-way actions. Latino(a)s referred most often to scaffolding and academic support; Whites appreciated kindness and scaffolding most. Latino(a)s commented on kindness last; Whites mentioned emotional support in class last (Garza, 2009). Cultural differences existed in actions perceived as caring.

In another study which focused only on perceptions of Latinas regarding teachers' caring, students' perceptions of whether or not teachers cared was directly related to the young girls' classroom productivity, and not all teachers were perceived as caring. Cooper (2012) studied the changes in motivation and student-teacher connections of five Latina high schoolers as they moved through classes during the day. Cooper (2012) found where they felt safe, they were productive, and the converse was also true. In classes where teachers affirmed the identities of the girls, where they felt like they were good at doing the work of the class, or where teachers focused on productivity; motivation was high, and students were positive. Each student had classes in which they were engaged and not engaged, depending on their perceptions of the teacher's level of affirmation and assistance (Cooper, 2012).

Chun and Dickson (2011) used a survey to measure the correlation of students' perceptions of CRT, their parents' involvement in their lives, sense of school community, and achievement. Findings showed that for Hispanic middle schoolers, CRT, school connectedness, and parents' involvement indirectly and positively affected the students' sense of academic achievement. The researchers provided quantitative research support for CRT as a means of validating students' cultures and languages and a sense of community for Hispanic youth.

### **Caring Research and Girls from Rural Homes**

Similar to findings about the relationship between perceptions of caring and school performance for the participants in Cooper (2012), Garza (2009), Quiroz (2001), and Valenzuela (1999); in Seaton (2007), rural girls' perceptions of their teachers as disconnected and uncaring was also found to impact them in ways that ultimately impacted their learning. Seaton (2007) used in-depth interviews of eight rural middle school girls over an extended period of time to understand ethnographically the impact of perceptions of teachers' caring for rural girls who,

because of their isolation or because of trust issues in a small talkative town, may not have supportive adults with whom they could develop a caring relationship. Girls talked about their lived-experiences and ways that they perceived teachers cared about students. Four of the girls identified themselves as the Girl Scout group: Three were from White lower-middle class and two-parent families, and one was biracial and living with her White grandmother; the researcher characterized all as kind and giving. The other four were White girls who self-identified as the Fashion Group: two were twins who lived with both parents, one lived with her father and his girlfriend, and the fourth lived with a foster mother. The researcher reported that the Fashion Girls spoke about injustices and frustration easily. Both the Girl Scouts and Fashion Girls were not able to connect authentically with any teachers. Seaton (2007) offered suggestions for teachers that this study suggested could have made a difference in perceptions of care in these rural girls. The researcher's suggestions were resist prejudging, model respect, find ways to connect, guard confidentiality, and maintain contact with parents. Seaton (2007) noted that when contacting parents, opening the conversation can be difficult in small, close-knit rural areas where, especially if people were stressed, "the language of care can be mistranslated" (p. 13).

### **Developing the Capacity for CRT**

The NCATE (2008) Standard 4a requires teacher education candidates to be aware of and effectively connect lessons to the cultural background of all students in their classes. Candidates must be able to create a classroom climate that valued diversity, to communicate with families of diverse backgrounds, and to hold non-deficit perspectives of all students while demonstrating a conviction that all students can learn. These ethical principles follow new teachers into the classroom where their daily enactment affects the lives and futures of students.



## **Pre-Service Teachers**

In a seminal article on preparing culturally responsive future teachers, Gay (2001) described the wide variety of cultures that were explored in the research basis for the theory of CRT. Gay (2001) isolated five elements of CRT to be examined in teacher education: (a) cultural knowledge; (b) multicultural lessons; (c) building community; (d) using intercultural communication patterns; and (e) instructional use of culture (Gay, 2001). Gay (2001) also suggested pre-service teachers learn to demonstrate multicultural awareness in lesson plans and on classroom walls. Gay (2001) also reminded teacher educators that teachers need to be skilled in communication that does not silence non-White voices, and they need to be warm demanders of excellence, facilitators of constructivist learning, and responsive to the students in the room.

Fitchett, Starker, and Good (2010)'s study of pre-service teachers learning to implement CRT in their internship illustrated the difficulty of inexperienced teachers stepping into a class without much experience in mastering the content of their discipline or navigating relationships with large classrooms full of high schoolers. The researchers presented a model for pre-service teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching in their planning and practice. Their findings were framed by principles of CRT which were pre-planned rather than a "haphazard, nonchalant attempt to connect to culturally diverse students" (Fitchett, Starker, & Good, 2010, p. 4). The first step of their three step model was to review the curriculum for places in which CRT lesson could be infused. Secondly, reflect on information about students' backgrounds derived from surveys, experience, or autobiographies. Finally, implement constructivist, inquiry-based, collaborative lessons that address multiple learning preferences and avoid superficial treatment of culture. Some student teachers reported resistance from cooperating teachers or supervisors who enforced prescribed curriculum and adherence to the textbook, and other students lacked

content knowledge deep enough to allow for adaptations of lessons to the students.

Ladson-Billings (2006b) was not the only teacher educator who had White students who said they have no culture (see p. 30), for Causey, Thomas, and Armento (2000) addressed the same problem in a document-based narrative study of changes in twenty-four student teachers' perceptions about diversity after spending three weeks as an intern in an urban setting and four weeks in class preparing for and debriefing from the experience. Students wrote autobiographical narratives and were immersed in urban education literature before their urban school assignment. Causey, Thomas, and Armento (2000) noted much change in most students, two in particular who were followed for three years after their graduation. One of the teachers was older than the typical pre-service teacher and had expressed much growth after writing her autobiography which revealed a middle-class deficit perspective about urban children. The other teacher was younger and expressed a willingness to learn and revealed no bias in her autobiography. Three years later, the teacher who was older had reverted to her original biases and stereotypes. The teacher who was younger was working in a suburban school, not an urban school, and remained committed to social justice perspectives. Causey, Thomas, and Armento (2000) found that one course in social justice in education was probably not enough to reduce ingrained beliefs; extended coursework and continuing professional development support was recommended for after teachers start working in the field.

Cobb (2005) expressed disappointment with findings in a study of twenty-seven pre-service teachers who were taking a literacy course as part of their teacher preparation program in which they served as reading tutors in two elementary schools serving students from diverse populations. The participants tutored thirty students for one academic school year within a professional development school program. Most of the tutors spent the year feeling inadequate

and (or) frustrated in their efforts to effect change in the children's reading skills, and the researcher expressed disappointment that the tutors did not progress to the stage in which they recognized their own cultural bias and deficit thinking about their tutees, which Cobb (2005) speculated likely negatively impacted their interaction and instruction. Fourteen of the twenty-seven tutors demonstrated culturally responsive teaching at one point during the school year. Cobb (2005) accepted some responsibility for the lack of change in the interns, stating that beginning teachers who have trouble translating theory and classroom exercises into practice may need more modeling, case studies, and demonstrations of culturally responsive teaching than the pure constructivist classroom design established by the professor allowed.

On the other hand, McCollough and Ramirez (2012) reported much growth in pre-service teachers who worked on a project of creating culturally responsive family science learning experiences. Pre-service teachers who were sponsored by their university planned science lessons which were open to the community around a school, and then they taught the lessons which the researchers reported were beneficial to all. The families reported enjoying time together interacting in an educational way with their children. McCollough and Ramirez (2012) also reported growth in the efficacy of the pre-service teachers who, after seeing family interactions and meeting the community in a third space of the family science events, felt better prepared to interact with children from non-White cultural backgrounds. McCollough and Ramirez (2012) concluded that student teachers improved in efficacy, cultural responsiveness, and stereotype reduction.

In their work with pre-service teachers, Modla and Wake (2007) used literature circles with multicultural literature to provide a cultural knowledge base that future teachers may be able to access when they went out in the field working in areas with students who were culturally

different than themselves. Modla and Wake (2007) required student teachers to write an autobiographical reflection on their cultural experiences with literacy in order to improve their sensitivity toward students whose home language was not the language of the school and who often struggled with literacy. Then Modla and Wake (2007) assigned multicultural literature to provide a third space for students to discuss their own lived-experiences, develop understanding of other perspectives, and to break down the students' typical color-blind first responses. Through an experience with multicultural literature, Modla and Wake (2007) reported that students learned to distinguish misbehavior from cultural clash, recognize mismatches between home and school culture, and understand tension between home-school literacy experiences for some students. Modla and Wake (2007) also realized teacher-centered, transmission-based literacy classes were not culturally responsive, and this experiment also modeled a CRT lesson.

### **Beginning Teachers**

A study by Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) demonstrated that even those who were fluent in CRT were pressured by tensions related to standardized-testing to abandon CRT strategies even when they wanted to implement them. Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) conducted a cross-case analysis of the impact of high-stakes tests and teacher evaluations on seventeen novice teachers of color who attempted to use CRT in schools with high percentages of students from low income and non-White family cultural backgrounds. The researchers found that for the teachers whose schools were identified by the government as needing improvement, the emphasis on state tests caused too much fear for them to choose to infuse the curriculum with CRT. These teachers expressed pressure to follow the pacing guide and provide direct instruction because their schools' response to low test scores was a narrowed curricular focus on the test. Five teachers whose schools were not under government assistance to improve low test scores

reported having some opportunity to implement CRT, and they reported that CRT strategies were well received by their students. Internalizing the discourse of the culture of accountability over the discourse of CRT that these teachers learned in their teacher education program caused tension in all teachers. Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) concluded the new teachers of color were in a “double-bind” (p. 25) of identifying with their students who were of the same cultural background and wanting to use CRT principles but having to be accountable to policymakers and their school leadership. The novice teachers of color felt they were in an impossible situation, and Achinstein and Ogawa (2012) said their study revealed more about current institutional conditions than it did about the teachers.

### **In-Service Teachers**

Professional development in CRT can extend the work of teacher education or provide a growth opportunity for teachers who were alternately certified or who had no experience with CRT in their teacher education college program. Sleeter (2012) encouraged researchers to think beyond the borders of the United States when looking at CRT research because other nations have similar achievement gaps between students from the non-dominant and dominant cultural groups. New Zealand has sponsored research on in-service teachers’ professional development of CRT for the purpose of reducing the achievement gap affecting the Indigenous Māori people of New Zealand. The program *Te Kotahitanga*, which started in 2001 was designed around a collection of narratives related by the Māori to researchers to illustrate what they had experienced as effective teaching. The narratives were used to develop an Effective Teaching Profile which has established the standards for the professional development program and evaluations of teachers’ progress as they worked through the program (Hynds, Sleeter, Hindle, Savage, Penetito, & Meyer, 2011). This research review of New Zealand’s *Te Kotahitanga*

program which follows established precedent of the way an expansive CRT professional development program might scale up.

In the third stage of *Te Kotahitanga* CRT program sponsored by the New Zealand government, Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (2009) reported on a mixed methods study developed to determine the effect the professional development which had been in place in the schools since 2001. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (2009) operationalized the CRT professional development program with a survey instrument that was used to measure teacher growth in CRT practices. The data included 236 teacher surveys, student interviews, and videotaped teacher interviews. Overall, the findings demonstrated the program was effective and found academic improvement among the Māori students. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (2009) reported that teachers were transitioning from transmission to interactive classroom discourse, individual to cooperative learning, and expressing more positive attitudes toward the Māori. Triangulation with classroom observation and interviews from the Māori students confirmed the teachers' reports.

Two years later, in a follow-up study for the *Te Kotahitanga* program, Hynds, Sleeter, Hindle, Savage, Penetito, and Meyer (2011) surveyed 150 secondary teachers in twenty-two schools to determine their progress. Findings indicated teachers were working harder, getting to know their students better, and eliminating deficit thinking. Teachers were also changing the way they taught their classes by infusing Māori culture with their curriculum, using cooperative learning, and changing to more discursive instead of transmission-based lessons. The researchers found problems as well. Some teachers were frustrated by a lack of participation and effort to change by some of the teachers. Some teachers perceived that using CRT lowered standards in their classes, and others felt they were losing control of their classes by using a more discursive

and collaborative methodology. Classroom observations revealed three out of four teachers had medium to high levels of implementation of CRT, and schools which had only been doing the program for two years had higher scores than those schools which had been working for four years. In control comparison schools, only 5% of teachers had any awareness of CRT, so the findings indicated that progress was happening. Hynds, Sleeter, Hindle, Savage, Penetito, and Meyer (2011) suggested that more cultural knowledge linkages must be added between the home community and the school community.

Savage, Hindle, Meyer, Hynds, Penetito, and Sleeter (2011) focused on the students' perceptions of changes in their school experience since the beginning of the program. The student interviews were conducted as focus groups with the guiding questions of what it meant to be Māori at their school, ways teachers were integrating aspects of the Māori culture in their learning, and how they knew their teachers cared about them. The researchers said the students in focus groups were overall appreciative of changes made by their teachers. Students responded that teachers taught Māori myths and legends, used Māori language in small ways in class, incorporated Māori history into lessons, allowed them to make choices about their learning projects, and developed authentic caring relationships with students who were Māori. However, students who were Māori also explained how they still experienced discrimination, while students who were European experienced unearned privilege.

In conclusion, Savage, et al. (2011) warned that care must be taken to eliminate deficit language to explain the purpose of the professional development program because students' perceptions of the purpose was remediating Māori deficiencies and underachievement. The dimension that teachers understood the most easily was developing caring relationships and the most challenging was varying instructional strategies to include student-directed activities and

managing the interactions in the classroom. Savage, et al. (2011) suggested developing a system of collegial mentorship with the high-performing helping the low-performing teachers. The researchers also noted that teacher growth in cultural responsiveness alone is not likely to produce significant improvements on the negative impacts of schooling on students from minority groups without the involvement of all other stakeholders.

In a second survey of Phase 3 of *Te Kotahitanga*, Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter, and Clapman (2012) found Māori experienced growth on several levels as a result of the professional development program. Students who had been in schools in which the teachers had been in training the longest experienced gains that were 250% more than the control group. This number sounds high because the scores were so low to start with that even small gains were huge. Also, 75% of the teachers were either moderately or highly implementing the strategies on the Effective Teaching Profile. Students and teachers maintained academic growth consistently for three years. Conclusions were that *Te Kotahitanga* was making a difference for the Māori.

Bishop (2012) summarized seven years of CRT professional development centered on improving academic outcomes for the Māori of New Zealand where they have been marginalized since the 1950s. The program was based in narratives about positive learning experiences from Māori people from which an Effective Teaching Profile to guide the program was developed. Continuing education included observations, feedback, coaching, and examination of student performance data. Bishop (2012) found student gains in achievement were related to gains in teacher performance as measured by the program evaluation profile. Some of the problems noted by Bishop (2012) were convincing teachers that CRT for Māori was not a curricular add-on of saying Māori words occasionally but rather creating a welcoming environment in a discursive, power-sharing, community-based classroom. The schools varied in successful implementation of



the program depending on the support of the administration and willingness of teachers to do the work of changing. Finally, Bishop (2012) noted that even with the support of the government, researchers, and mentors, researchers were still unable to attain the gold standard of a causal experiment or to get a full sample of students for comparison in order to declare quantitatively the level of success of the program. Bishop (2012) concluded that even with the program being changed to be more prescriptive and less organic, based in a community of practice with the cooperating teachers, some gold-standard research implementation problems may have been eliminated, but then the teacher and student ownership aspects of the program would have been destroyed.

Another research project in New Zealand was the sustained professional development of one teacher who immersed herself for three months in Māori culture in order to better understand her theater students. In a reflexive qualitative study of Māori culture, Baskerville (2009) worked on a theater project with the Māori. Baskerville (2009) applied what she learned of Māori rituals, communication styles, beliefs, and justice system when she returned to her classroom. Upon her return, Baskerville (2009) established a family-like community including such protocol as a shared-talking and a horizontal-learning relationship between instructor and student. They held classroom discussion to resolve conflicts by discussion of the impacts problems have on all members of the class, used reflection and sharing to close a class or a course, and improved communication with family and community. While this total-immersion program would not be possible for all teachers, Baskerville (2009) provided evidence that change and growth in cross-cultural understanding can occur and teachers can learn to “privilege the silent voices in the classroom” (p. 466) and take responsibility for the learning and achievement of all students.

## **The Rural Context of this Study**

Arguably, anyone who has traveled to Florida or seen iconic pictures of her palm trees, white sand beaches, retirement communities, sunny metropolitan areas, and theme parks would understand the assets enjoyed by this state. However, beyond familiar imagery and oceanfront mansions lies a very different Florida, rural Florida, where the condition of rural education and the need for revision of the public policy narrative was found to be very serious. The site of this study remains undisclosed, and pains were taken to offer pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants and the setting of the study, but to offer understanding of this context which was critical to the study, its site was a rural Florida area with some of most critical economic indicators in the state. The research review which follows provided evidence of this claim.

### **The State of Rural Florida**

The Rural School and Community Trust (RSCT) was a non-profit organization that analyzed national educational statistics to inform policymakers on the condition of rural education in the United States. Using data from the most recent U.S. Census report (2010), the RSCT (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014) found that nearly ten million children go to rural schools; this was one out of every five enrolled in public school in the United States, with 60% of these children concentrated in eight states. The researchers organized their findings according to five indicators, each of which was addressed in this review that follows. Because this study occurred in a remote Florida town (NCES, 2015) which was described in Chapter Three, only data for the state of Florida were selected for inclusion in this review.

Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014)'s first indicator calculated the importance it was to the state policymakers to address rural education in the state based on the number of people and the funds allocated to each area. The premise of this indicator was that in states with

higher numbers of urban dwellers, policymakers may pay more attention and allocate more funds to the cities and less to the urban areas. Florida was ninth from the bottom of states whose rural population was of importance to the overall educational policymakers in terms of the overall percentages of numbers of rural districts, schools, students, and funds allocated to rural education (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). A low importance indicator may not be critical to the rural areas if they were doing well according to other indicators which follow.

On the second indicator studied by Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) was the need for policymakers to address diversity issues, calculated as the percent of rural students who speak a language other than English at home; the percent minority population; and the number of times a student has changed addresses in the past year. Florida was named as number one in the nation. Because Florida was first in need for diversity issues and forty-first in importance indicated by the actions of the policymakers, this indicated that the focus of policy-makers had been on urban or suburban schools, and rural students had been left behind.

Rural Florida public policy also fared poorly on the other indicators as well. Complicated by the high levels of rural socioeconomic challenges, as measured by high school drop-out rates, median household income, adult unemployment, Title I funding eligibility, and percent of free and reduced lunch, Florida ranked twelfth in urgency of need of policymakers' attention (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). Furthermore, the rural schools in Florida had the seventh worst graduation rate in the United States.

Considering rural Florida's ranking among all fifty states in Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014), and synthesizing Florida's ranking on all five of the indicators of need for policymakers to address the needs of the rural student, overall Florida was found to be the worst state in the nation for creating policy to serve her children and her people who live in rural areas.

## Use of Rural Context in Schooling

The philosophical stance of radical democracy with goals of reimagining and remaking rural education (Edmondson & Butler, 2010) called for replacing the deficit-perspective associated with ruralness (Theobald, 2016) with an asset-focused, place-based, and rural-centered educational philosophy. The rural context was completely embedded in this teaching philosophy, and curriculum was created by teachers who were mindful of the local context.

**Place-based teaching.** *Place* as in place-based research was defined by Ellis (2005) as “a source of comfort, security, belonging, identity and meaning” (p. 3). People developed their identity and sense of belonging through their idea of place where they belong, and place-based teaching was theorized to improve students’ awareness and valuing of their place of belonging (Ellis, 2005). In rural education, place-based teaching was argued as appropriate methodology to address the problem of outmigration and deficit-thinking about rural communities (Corbett, 2010; Howley & Howley, 2010; Theobald, 1997; Theobald & Wood, 2010).

The use of place-based methodology was inquiry-based or problem-centered like constructivist CRT. Ajayi (2014) conducted an action research study investigating the use of collaborative reflection to design and execute place-based teaching with twenty-three pre-service teacher participants in elementary language arts classes. Participants first learned about their rural community for their internship placement and then developed project-based, collaborative learning projects that used the resources of the community in the projects. Ajayi (2014) reported that teachers appreciated the hands-on experience designing and facilitating group projects in which every student was engaged and contributed.

However, place-based teaching methodology was not as useful in a study of perceptions of high school math teachers. Showalter (2013) studied teachers’ use of place-based math

teaching in a rural area framed on six types of place-based learning experiences in the literature: cultural and economic investigations, environmental and public policy education, problem solving with local issues, and critical pedagogy. Using long interviews of fifteen math teachers and a grounded theory approach, Showalter (2013) found most teachers did not know how to apply place-based math teaching beyond mentioning rural place in example problems or writing it into their tests. Ten teachers were experiencing tension because most felt that math teaching in a rural area should be different because of the rural context, and even when they tried various strategies, they were unsatisfied. Three teachers felt they were doing enough, and two felt they should not use place-based strategies at all. All teachers expressed tensions over course loads, standards-based curriculum, and lack of planning time, and most could not understand how to incorporate place-based methodology at more than a surface level for higher course levels of algebra to calculus.

**Multiculturalism.** Reed (2010) argued that multicultural education in rural contexts supported students in valuing the rural place, embracing its diverse culture without attempting to change or mainstream it, and helping rural students understand how their community is part of and affected by the global community. Reed (2010) also argued that multiculturalism should be broadened to include rural perspectives in order for it to be relevant to the rural community.

### **Development of Rural CRT Program**

In the next two studies, the researchers systematically implemented CRT, an offshoot of multicultural teaching (Nieto, 2009), among the Nunavut in the Canadian Arctic, one of the least densely populated and most rural areas of the world. Lewthwaite, et al. (2014) and Boon and Lewthwaite (2015) explored the use of CRT among the Yukon First Nation (YFN), the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The Yukon attended schools framed after the dominant culture, so

school processes and language caused cultural dissonance (Lewthwaite, Owen, Doiron, Renaud, & McMillan, 2014). The YFN recently endorsed the implementation of CRT as the basic platform of their school. This study was a participatory action study conducted by researchers to learn what the YFN determined were the best ways to teach their young people.

For Phase 1 of Lewthwaite, et al. (2014), to determine which teaching practices were most effective according to the YFN people, the researchers conducted fifty-two interviews, nine of which were with teachers. They found fifty-two practices which they organized into eight themes. Then thirty-three teaching indicators were drawn from the original list from the community itself and organized into a checklist of classroom CRT actions. Researchers noted that many of the practices aligned with dominant-culture teaching practices frequently found in research, but several were unique to the YFN; for example, the YFN wanted extended wait time and no “over talking” (p. 8). The interviewees’ stories told to Lewthwaite, et al. (2014) were published in a small booklet to inform eight categories and used for professional development.

In Phase 2 of Lewthwaite, et al., (2014), three teachers from grades four to eight formed a professional learning community (PLC) with the researcher. The teachers were observed using the checklist created from Phase 1. The PLC read the stories published from Phase 1 and discussed how to adjust teaching behaviors to align with the needs expressed in the story. The researchers created a rubric to measure teachers’ progress, including attention, attitude, self-image, problem-solving, effort, and then conducted an interview to debrief Phase 2. The YFN expressed pleasure that teachers’ professional development and classroom evaluation focused on the needs of their community, that their stories were valued as teacher development tools, and that their children were viewed as assets in the classroom. The teachers were pleased with their growth and their growing relationships with their YFN students (Lewthwaite, et al., 2014).

The second professional development program using CRT in a rural community occurred among Indigenous Australian people. Boon and Lewthwaite (2015) used similar strategies developed by Lewthwaite, et al., (2014) to develop an Indigenous teacher evaluation tool by interviewing forty-three Australian Indigenous high school students and twenty-seven parents. They generated a Likert-scale of eighty-three items related to teacher caring, valuing students' culture, responsive literacy teaching, clear expectations, feedback, varied teaching and behavior management strategies, and school support of community involvement. The instrument was piloted on 141 elementary and secondary teachers and reduced to sixty-two items. Variability existed in the responses between the elementary and high school teachers with the secondary level teachers scoring lower on the scales. High school teachers scored highest for caring and clarity, and elementary teachers scored highest for literacy teaching and behavior management.

### **Outmigration of Successful Students**

As in the two Lewthwaite studies reviewed above, community expectations of the school were also part of Farmer, et al. (2006), who studied what adult members of a community perceived as a successful African-American high school graduate. Farmer, et al. (2006) sought to understand how the adults in the community viewed or influenced the students' career path, motivation, and decision-making. The study used phone interviews and focus groups in two rural Southern communities with high levels of poverty. Because the researchers had been working in the community for several years, they knew precautions were necessary to get useful data not clouded by having interviewers who were not from the community. To improve outcomes, interviews of 100 randomly selected participants, drawn from a pool of 360 parents of eleventh and twelfth graders, were conducted by Caucasian staff that participants would know were not from their town. Accordingly, the focus groups were conducted by African-American

community members who would be better trusted by the participants in the focus group. Findings reported by Farmer, et al. (2006) concerned the theme of outmigration. Both groups from both towns told researchers that the lack of employment opportunities in town was real not only for young people but also themselves. Some even said that their child's opportunity to leave town for gainful employment was going to be their opportunity to leave as well. Participants viewed supporting the child's academic success was a way for the family to move out of the community to another area where the whole family may be offered more opportunity to have a job. Success for graduates was defined by participants as going to college or training, living on their own, home ownership, and still being involved with the family. Barriers to success that were mentioned included understanding how to navigate college entry; the attraction of drugs, early parenthood, and gangs; limited resources like not having a car; and racism and school segregation. Farmer, et al. (2006) noted the lack of returning college graduates who would inspire hope and provide rejuvenation to fading small towns.

The hollowing out of small towns was detailed in Carr and Kefalas (2009)'s ethnographic study. The researchers lived in a small Iowa town for eighteen months to interview local high school graduates about their decisions about where they will establish themselves as adults. Those interviewed fell into groups which the researchers called stayers, achievers, returners and seekers. Carr and Kefalas (2009) described the four groups as follows. The *stayers* were those who were not encouraged or privileged by the community and who often had jobs in high school which negatively impacted their grades and earned them almost the same wages as coworkers who were elder members of the community. Some of the stayers started families early, sometimes negatively impacting their economic potential. The *achievers* were those who were privileged by the community and the school which was not a meritocracy, and although they



received much support from the community, they often went away to college and did not return, contributing to the demise of the town. The *seekers* romanticized about getting out of town and seeing the world with the military, often lacking economic and emotional privilege of the achievers. The final category of *returners* was subdivided by the researchers as *boomerangs* and *high flyers*. The boomerangs often could not culturally adapt to outmigration and returned to live defeated, raising children alongside the stayers. The high flyers returned to their hometowns to work as successful, competent, skilled, and affluent community members. Carr and Kefalas (2009) reported that high flyers were the target of an unsuccessful but well-funded campaign of the Iowa governor to convince high flyers to return to Iowa hometowns.

In closing for their research study, the authors reported findings from 300 graduates surveyed and 100 graduates interviewed to the local school board of a district that recently consolidated schools due to shrinking enrollment and tax coffers. Carr and Kefalas (2009) reported what each of the four groups had to say to the school district about their preparation for life. The leavers wanted to have been better prepared academically and socially, and the stayers and returners wanted to have had less emphasis on academics and more technical and career preparation for actual jobs. The principal agreed that the work they were doing teaching was effectively helping the town commit suicide, but couldn't imagine doing anything less.

Carr and Kefalas (2009) concluded that while nurturing the high flyers and achievers shouldn't change, they also argued that small towns must nurture all of their human capital with more accessibility of community colleges, dual enrollment credits, and technology or technical schools for all students. They suggested community leaders and government policymakers should organize incentives for business to allow for economic growth and employment opportunities that would entice graduates to stay in town after graduation. Carr and Kefalas

(2009) also called for management of immigration to improve working conditions for those who were newcomers to the nation, and so some of the stayers who struggled for work may be interested in jobs currently being done for substandard wages by undocumented immigrants.

Corbett (2009) wrote about the struggles of a small coastal fishing town on the Canadian coast which was also being “hollowed out” like the Iowa town in Carr and Kefalas (2009) and considered the role of the school in the hollowing out of the coastal village. Like Valenzuela (1999), Corbett (2009) also explored the origin of the word *education* and wrote: “*educere*, one Latin derivative of the word education, is sometimes said to be best translated as: ‘to lead out.’ There it is: education is not about where you are, it is about where you are headed” (p. 7). Corbett (2009) also found a disconnection between the needs and values of the rural coastal setting and the values of its school. Corbett (2009)’s solutions to the problem of schools being in the business of providing the most talented or privileged of the community’s youth with an equitable education that allows admission to college, which in turn removes them usually for life from the community, included establishing place-based education and entrepreneurship in the rural high school, offering return-to-community relief for college-debtors, and transforming rural schools into laboratories where green technology could be piloted and grown into local industry.

To end this section, Howley, Howley, and Pendarvis (2003) provided insight about the role of educators in reinforcing the community in which they taught. These researchers noted that rural inhabitants were typically negatively stereotyped by metropolitan inhabitants, and they argued that rural teachers often reinforced this urban-dominant belief about living in a rural area: “Teachers often reinforce these responses instead of countering them by honoring the rich complexity of rural life, the value of local knowledge, and the importance of developing intellect” (Howley, Howley, & Pendarvis, 2003, p. 82). They cautioned teachers that if they did

not respect the lifestyles of the rural children, they were likely to cause a lack of motivation and even rejection of learning in the children who took their identity from and value the locale.

### **Literature Summary**

The education gap has been present for so long that scholars made the case of reframing it as an educational debt or educational bankruptcy (Bass & Gersti-Pepin, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Based on CRT research, one variable causing this inequity may be the dissonant clash of the mainstream culture of the school and students' cultures which do not mirror the culture of the school. Recently, culture was redefined as individualistic and mutable, with people belonging to many cultural groups simultaneously (Avruch, 1998). Using students' funds of cultural and prior knowledge as a scaffold for presenting new knowledge was the basis of CRT (Au, 2001; Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Nieto, 2013; Sleeter, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). CRT was found to be a school reform effort and an act of defense against educational inequity to improve learning outcomes and students' ability to think critically about social justice. Academic and interpersonal caring was a central tenet of CRT (Gay, 2010), and cultural differences in the connection of caring to academic achievement was reviewed. Research was reviewed that described CRT in praxis in a variety of secondary classrooms as well as the development of capacity for CRT. The State of rural Florida was featured in the literature review, research revealed rural Florida to be the most in need of public policy attention of all fifty states. The next chapter articulated the methodology framing this exploration of rural Florida teachers' use of CRT. Chapter Four used pseudonyms when presenting data from the interview transcripts, field notes, demographic survey, and document review. Chapter Five discussed the findings and made recommendations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences.

The research review revealed that this study had potential to add to our understanding of the way middle and high school teachers perceived a rural context and students' cultural backgrounds interacted with the principles of CRT (Gay, 2010). When considering appropriate methodology for this study, some findings in the literature review were relevant. First, researchers worked to create quantitative instruments for measuring cultural responsiveness. Efficacy scales and outcome expectancy scales were developed, but recent studies revealed scores may not be directly measuring cultural competence; instead, a multi-modal system not reliant on either a checklist or self-reported instrument may be the best direction of future research (Siwatu, 2007, 2009, 2011; Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Also, context was found to be critical when evaluating use of CRT (Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings (2009) found that CRT looked different when in practice in different classrooms. Furthermore, Gay (2010) recommended reflective practices when considering one's cultural responsiveness. Qualitative methodology that provided for exploration of teachers' individual use of CRT in the context of their own classrooms with the benefit of reflection prior to gathering data, therefore, was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to explore the complexities of teacher's beliefs, use, and efficacy regarding use of marginalized student cultures of ruralness and diverse racial, linguistic, ethnic, and economic backgrounds with CRT in a rural setting.

The theoretical framework of the study was guided by Gay (2010)'s eighteen pillars for progress of CRT and Edmondson and Butler (2010)'s framework of five educational philosophies in rural schools including an emerging radical democratic perspective of educators who nurture students to grow into citizens who will value rural culture and work to sustain or improve the rural community.

The research methodology for this study was centered on semi-structured interviews, a demographic questionnaire, and selected artifacts. Participants were selected first purposefully by brief interviews with secondary rural school principals and then by snowball methodology from referrals of the participants, should the sample size drop below six certified teachers from each of two schools (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Interviews lasting between 45 and 60 minutes were conducted with twelve secondary teachers who were known to their administrator as caring and relatable to students and responsive to the cultures of their students. In this interview-dominated design, the researcher's perspectives were a part of the data, so efforts were made to increase trustworthiness and transparency through triangulation of data sources and rich description of the findings (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Demographic data from the questionnaire (Appendix C) and documents voluntarily provided to the researcher as evidence of CRT, with all identifying names redacted by the teacher were also part of the data.

### **Research Design**

The following research questions framed this study:

1. What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?
2. What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to

improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?

3. What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?

### **Basic Interpretive Qualitative Study**

Since the stated purpose of this project was to explore the teachers' growth, knowledge used, value attributed, and use made of cultural and rural contexts in their pedagogy, basic interpretive qualitative methodology was a logical methodology to employ (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Employing qualitative methodology in a rural setting involved increased efforts to establish trust and relatability with the participants, especially in situations in which participants were not convinced their anonymity could be protected or mutual benefit awarded (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett, 2014; Farmer, Dadisman, Latendresse, Thompson, Irvin, & Zhang, 2006). To illustrate this point, Halsey shared a story of an Aboriginal man who resisted participating in their study and said, "We're sick of being researched. You fellas get a Ph.D. and we get nothing" (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett, 2014, p. 60). To gather better data, researchers in rural contexts needed to establish their positions as a visible and trustworthy supporter of the community, for "doing research in rural areas is enabled when a researcher can establish some rural background experience or connection" (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett, 2014, p. 60).

Sharing stories and experiences or working over extended periods of time to make connections and build relationships helped get better data because participants felt like researchers were working with and for them rather than doing research to them (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett 2014). This qualitative researcher's position in the rural setting at the time of

this interpretive interview-based study was that of having established trust from being an insider who retained the distance of being an outsider; that is, a high school teacher working in the same geographic area but with no authority over or any personal connection to participants before this study began. The insider-outsider position was an ideal position from which to gather rich and thoughtful data in a rural setting.

### **The Rural Site**

The proposed site was purposefully selected because of its majority-minority status and diversity in race, ethnicity, English language learning, and family economic level. This rural district had high percentages of students of color and family poverty as measured by numbers of students who ate free or reduced school lunches or the schools' classification as a Title I district.

Secondary teachers were also purposefully selected for the basic qualitative study because it was perceived as more challenging for secondary level teachers to implement CRT in a content area (Bonner, 2014; Culp, Chepyator-Thompson, 2011; Gutiérrez, 2002; Saunders, 2012). To explain, due to the numbers of students that a secondary level teacher taught being approximately 150-180 students as opposed to approximately twenty in elementary school, logic and pragmatism dictated that it could be more difficult for secondary level teachers to know the cultural backgrounds of all of their students, a prerequisite for CRT (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Nieto, 2012; Sleeter, 2011).

Also, with the secondary teachers' traditional class period of fifty minute periods for content delivery, in the age of high-stakes tests in a culture in which schools feared increased scrutiny or even closure based on content area test performance, and in which teachers of this state have no tenure protections, the pressure to use a transmission-based teaching philosophy rather than CRT increased (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Cuban, 2013; Hynds, Sleeter, Hindle,

Savage, Penetito, & Meyer, 2011; Savage, Hindle, Meyer, Hynds, Penetito, & Sleeter, 2011).

Researchers found that the usefulness of rural research was being impacted by the lack of clarity in defining what *rural* was and the need to articulate and focus on the ruralness of rural places in research or what makes rural research *rural* (Coladarci, 2007; Howley, Howley, & Yahn, 2014). In an attempt to situate this study appropriately in the body of rural research, *rural* in this study was contextualized as follows. The schools in this study were in a town with a population under 5000 and categorized by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013a) as a *remote town* more than thirty-five miles from an area classified as urbanized with big box stores and a small four-year college. A large four-year university was over an hour away.

According to the school district website and school board member's website disseminating information to constituents when the data were gathered for this study, the schools in the district were all Title I schools, and because over 83% of their families qualified for free or reduced breakfast and lunch, 100% of students in the district received two free meals a day; 400 of the children in the district were reported homeless and over 1500 were classified as migrant. Also, 70% of students did not complete a FAFSA, indicating their non-intent to pursue higher education; but the graduation rate rose to 76.8% in 2015.

One of the largest schools in the district was consistently on the notorious bottom 5% of schools in the state; both schools in this study were given a grade of C by the Florida Department of Education (2015). The demographics of the school district displayed on Table 6 were gathered from the U.S. Census website containing quick facts about the state of Florida further outlined the parameters by which this site has been called *rural*.



Table 6

*Demographics of School District From U.S. Census Florida “Quick Facts”*

| <b>Indicator</b>  | <b>This District</b> | <b>Florida</b> |
|---|----------------------|----------------|
| <b>2009-2013</b>  |                      |                |
| People per square mile, 2010                                  | 34                   | 350.6          |
| Median value of owner-occupied housing, 2009-13               | \$81,400             | \$160,200      |
| <b>2009-2013</b>  |                      |                |
| Language other than English spoken at home, percent of age 5+ | 44.8%                | 27.4%          |
| Foreign born persons  | 24.9%                | 19.4%          |
| High school graduate or higher, % persons age 25+             | 64.4%                | 86.1%          |
| Bachelor's degree or higher, % persons age 25+                | 9.9%                 | 26.4%          |
| <b>Percent of Population in 2013</b>                          |                      |                |
| Female persons  | 47.8%                | 51.1%          |
| Persons under 5 years   | 7.9%                 | 5.5%           |
| Persons under 18 years  | 28.3%                | 20.6%          |
| Persons 65 years and over                                     | 12.7%                | 18.7%          |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino                           | 34.5%                | 56.4%          |
| Hispanic or Latino  | 50.3%                | 23.6%          |
| Black or African American alone                               | 13.4%                | 16.7%          |
| Asian alone   | 1.1%                 | 2.7%           |
| Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander alone                | 0.2%                 | 0.1%           |
| American Indian & Alaska Native alone                         | 2.2%                 | 0.5%           |
| Two or More Races   | 1.1%                 | 1.9%           |

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research from the University of Gainesville (BEBR, 2014), this district was also rated one of the lowest in population change; instead of growth or status quo, the county experienced outmigration, and fell from 34 people per square mile in 2010 (see Table 6) to the lowest ranking for population density in that study at less than 33 people per square mile. This population change aligned closely with the observations of Cromartie (2013) regarding the devastating economic blow of the rural working class who were in the construction and recreation industries but also the trickle-down effect of those businesses who served the people who were impacted by the weakened economy.

In 2014, this school district was second only to Miami-Dade County in the percentage of

Hispanic population at 53.2%, and Black population was 13.2% (BEER, 2014). Despite the reduction in population density, the non-White population increased, indicating the outmigration was primarily White. The district in which this school was situated was also the youngest county in Florida, with only 28.8% of the population under 17 and only 12.3% of the population over age 65 (BEER, 2014). For this district, the majority-minority and youth-age crossover happened long before the U.S. Census (2010) projected date of 2044 for all ages and 2020 for children.

In fact, very recently, a reporter in a large Tampa newspaper, unnamed in this text in order to protect the identity of the community, reported that the unemployment rate in this area is twice that of the State of Florida. The report stated the county had the highest number of citrus bearing acres in the state and the most modernized agriculture-based processing plant of its type in the world, but the economy of the area was suffering because 70% of the state's orange trees were destroyed by a currently incurable disease called greening, and the price of the area's main agricultural product has dropped significantly due to the impact of Mexican products on the market. Economically, it seemed like the rest of Florida left this district behind.

### **Sample Size**

Before seeking participants or gathering any data, the researcher received IRB approval from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and written site approval from the district school superintendent to interview two secondary school administrators, and twelve certified middle and high school teachers (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Seidman, 2013). Guest, Bruce, and Johnson (2006) found that twelve was sufficient for data saturation with a homogenous pool of interview participants. Therefore, as displayed on Table 7, the researcher chose six as the targeted sample size for both the high school and the middle school with the condition others may be added to achieve the point of saturation (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Table 7

*The Participants*

|                           | <b>Administrators</b> | <b>Teachers</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Middle School</b>      | 1                     | 5-7             |
| <b>High School</b>        | 1                     | 5-7             |
| <b>Total Participants</b> | 2                     | 12              |

**Rapport**

Due to the researcher's age, education, and experience, she may be intimidating to some participants. However, her experience could also be viewed as an asset, for she has taught middle school, high school and college English for over thirty years, so she is very familiar with the classroom experience on many levels. The researcher will try to establish rapport early in the interview process (Seidman, 2013) and trustworthiness in the data analysis (Creswell, 2014) which previously cited research demonstrated as essential to gathering authentic data in a rural community.

**Informed Consent**

The risks of participation in a qualitative semi-structured interview and document analysis study were articulated in the process of informed consent (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013). First, participants were invited to participate in the study whose purpose and duration was explained. Any possible dangers involved emotional or physical discomfort in thinking or talking about students' racial, ethnic, or language backgrounds or reflecting on their own use of cultural responsiveness. The participants were told that the interviews would last up to sixty minutes, depending on the availability and interest of the participant. The explicit statement was made that participation was voluntary and participants' ability to withdraw from the study was without penalty.

Benefits of participation in the study were in reflection and knowledge gained about the participant's use of CRT in their particular class and contribution to research findings in the field of CRT in rural settings. The participant was encouraged to ask questions about the study to clarify understanding, and the letter of informed consent was read aloud (see Appendix E) before the participant signed the form (Seidman, 2013).

Because of the setting of this study being in a rural district in which identity protection and trust may be an issue, confidentiality of all participants was highly guarded in every phase of the data gathering, transcription, and analysis:

1. After the initial notification of selection by the building administrator, no electronic documents of transcripts or data were disseminated to the participant using school email system. Phone calls or face-to-face communication and hard copy letters hand-delivered by researcher or carried by the U.S. Postal Service were used to mail documents instead of emails.
2. Audio-recordings of the conversation in the interview were made with the approval of the interviewee for the purpose of accurately representing the responses of the participant. These interview recordings were listened to only by the researcher and potentially the doctoral committee chairperson or committee member from a university in Pennsylvania, in the event that the researcher required assistance with the transcript. The researcher was also the transcriptionist, so the researcher was the one who saw the documents or listened to recorded interview conversation which potentially had identifying information recorded on it before such was erased. Transcripts of the interview were written with a word processor in files saved on a small portable flash drive, coded by hand by the researcher, and recordings were transcribed and destroyed after member checking of

content was completed. Transcripts were redacted of all names of teachers, content areas, principals, the superintendent, the district, and the schools.

3. Numeric and alphabetic pseudonyms that did not align with the participants' or schools' actual names were used throughout the process to guard participants' confidentiality. Efforts to protect confidentiality were attempted.
4. Quotes appeared in the data, but they were not connected with demographic description or subject area taught, because of the limited numbers of teachers in each school and the entire district who taught some elective subjects. The text of quotes was presented and discussed in a way that was intended not to be connected with participants, and identifiers were redacted in a way as not to affect the content of the quote (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013).
5. Participants had the right to review and withhold interview data after the interview occurred (Seidman, 2013). Descriptions were developed in the research report narrative and were disassociated with the demographic description of participants (Creswell, 2014), and drafts of the transcript were presented to the participants for review. If the participant did not respond within one week of receiving the paper copy of the transcript delivered by hand from the researcher, tacit agreement with the accuracy and forfeiture of the right to withhold content was assumed.
6. Data obtained from the study will be released in a dissertation published electronically. It also may become part of a book, article, or conference presentation at a future date.

Both the participant and the researcher signed two copies of the consent form which contained all of the items of informed consent and disclosures as well as complete contact information for the researcher (Seidman, 2013). The researcher kept an audit file (Merriam,

2009) of signed consent forms, demographic questionnaires, documents, field notes, electronic files saved as pdfs on a flash drive, and transcripts of interviews in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home for the three years after publication of the study as required by Federal law.

### **Data Collection**

Before seeking participants or gathering any data, the researcher received written site approval (see Appendix A) from the school district superintendent, IRB approval from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and input from the dissertation committee.

### **Selecting Participants**

After receiving IRB approval from IUP and site approval by the superintendent, the researcher and principal scheduled an interview at a mutually agreeable time and place, and the principal was provided the Interview Protocol for Principals (see Appendix B). The interview was designed to last twenty minutes or less.

The purpose of the principals' interviews, which took between fifteen and twenty minutes, was to explain the purpose of the study to be conducted with the teachers as approved by the district superintendent and to create a list of eight or more potential teacher participants. Selected teachers were known to their principals as being relatable to their students, acting as caring warm-demanders with high expectations for all, and using information about diverse students' cultures in their teaching.

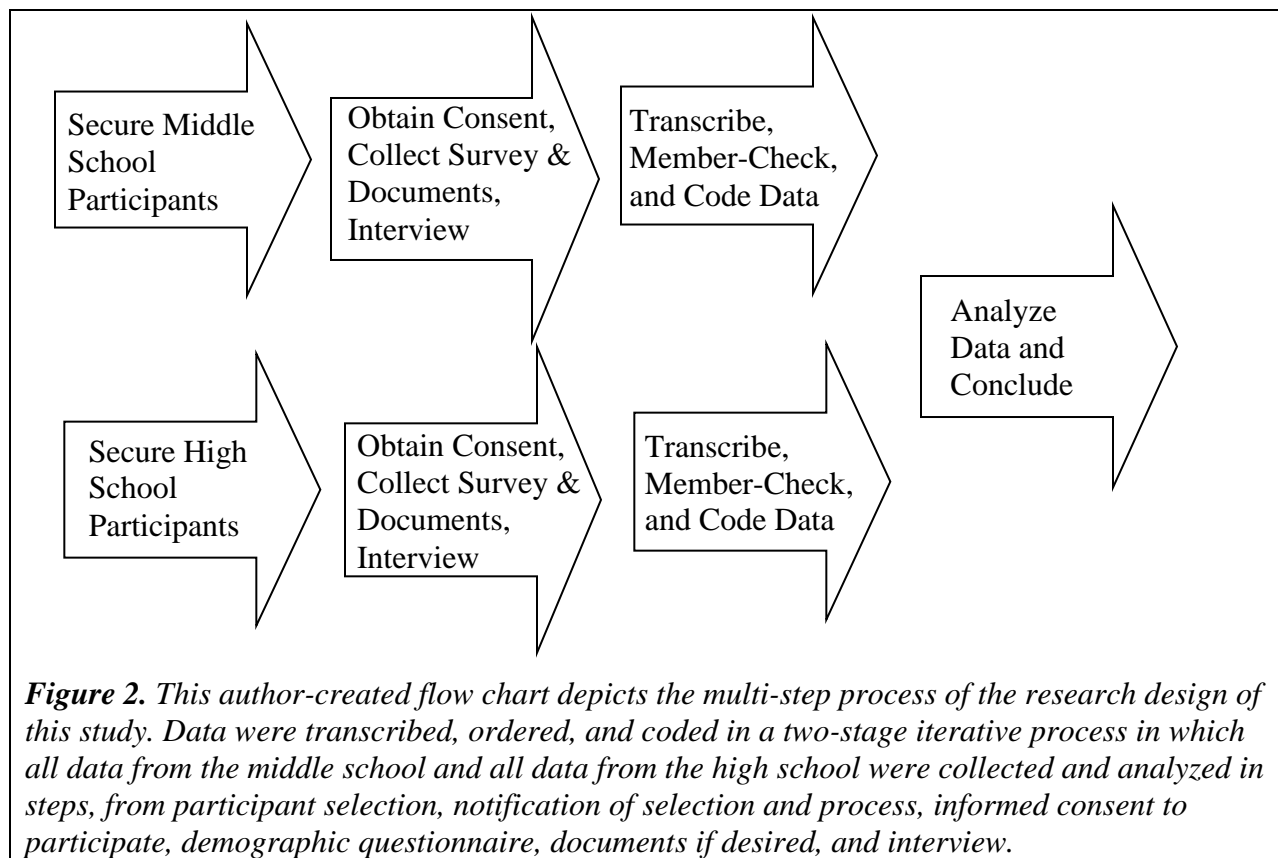
In the brief interview with the principal, the researcher explained the study's purpose, benefits, and anticipated minimal risk. The researcher clearly stated the freedom of the participating principal to withdraw at any time from the brief interview to select potential participants (Brenner, 2006). The principal could withdraw from the study by contacting the researcher by phone, email, or in person; if the interview was underway, the participant could

simply exit the interview. In the event that a participant withdrew from the study, all data associated with the participant were destroyed and none of the data were included in the study.

The researcher interviewed one high school and one middle school administrator, six certified high school teachers, and six certified middle school teachers (Seidman, 2013). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that twelve participants were sufficient for data saturation with a homogenous pool of interview participants. Therefore, the researcher chose six each as the targeted sample size for both the high school and the middle school with the understanding that more participants would be added using snowball sampling from the teacher participants if necessary to achieve the point of saturation and redundancy (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

The principal selected participants purposefully using a list of staff members the researcher printed off the school website that was open for public access to assure no teacher was excluded from consideration. The principal checked the list to be assured it was current. The principal was asked to select eight to ten teachers. The researcher consulted with the principal to select participants from the group of potential participants with the goal of achieving desirable factors of maximum variability of race, ethnicity, gender, content area specialization, and teaching experience, though not necessarily in that order (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). More than six potential participants from each of the two schools were desired in the event someone declined to participate in the study. The researcher made notes and memos about the process of achieving maximum variability among participants.

The data in this study were gathered primarily from semi-structured interviews and document analyses with all identifying information redacted by the participant. The process of identifying participants and gathering data was shown in Figure 2.



### Peer Review Panel for Interview Protocol

Before the actual interviews were held, a peer review panel was used, consisting of three uninvolved educational experts, all of whom were teachers, two with advanced degrees. The purpose of the panel was to review the interview questions to determine if the questions were easily understood (Brenner, 2006). Each member of the panel was asked to respond as if each were being interviewed in the actual study. In order to test the quality and operation of the recording device, the peer review panel's responses to the interview protocol were recorded, including a final question not on the protocol asking for feedback about the experience. Feedback was used to improve the questions and to determine if some of their responses were likely to align with one of the two theoretical frameworks used in the study. None of the data from the peer review panel were retained, and none of it became part of the study.



## **Contacting Potential Participants**

After twelve initial participants were selected and listed for potential participation by the principal and the researcher, candidates were contacted by email to alert them of their selection by their principal, to inquire about their interest in participating in the study, and for a phone number and best time to call to talk about the study and schedule a 45-60 minute interview at a mutually agreed upon time and place.. The researcher hand-delivered to participants' school mailbox an unmarked envelope containing the letter and signature page of informed consent, the demographic questionnaire, and interview protocol (see Appendix C, D, E & F). If the potential participant did not reply after one week and one reminder email, the non-responding potential participant was no longer contacted and was disallowed for participation.

When the researcher and the participant spoke to schedule the interview, the researcher took the opportunity to address questions about the research purpose, benefits, anticipated minimal risk and the freedom of the researcher to withdraw from the study at any time (Brenner, 2006). The researcher answered any questions the participant posed. Additionally, the researcher asked questions about or made suggestions regarding possible documents that the participant might have elected to bring to the interview and voluntarily contributed as data for the study, e.g. handouts for class, lesson plans, letters for parents, reading lists, student work, or project assignments. The participant was asked to redact any identifying information from documents before giving them to the researcher.

The ten-item demographic survey (see Appendix C), which was given to the participants in the envelope with the letter of informed consent (Appendix D & E) and the interview protocol (Appendix F), was designed to gather demographic data, and completing it should have taken five minutes or less. The survey was submitted to the researcher at the time of the interview. The

interviewer had extra copies at the interview in the event that the participant forgot or misplaced it. No data were accepted by the researcher until the participant submitted the signed letter of informed consent.

The study design called for interviews to be conducted with twelve secondary teachers, who were identified by their administrators as caring and relatable to students and responsive to the cultures of the students in their teaching. Therefore, participants from the original list of eight to ten from each school who were not invited on the first round may have been invited when it became clear more were going to be needed to make twelve.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews and Deliverables**

During the first few minutes of the interview, the researcher read the signature page for the letter of informed consent to the participant (Appendix D), confirming that the participant read the letter of requirements. The letter articulated the purpose of the study, potential benefits, risks from participation, and indicated that at any time for any reason or no reason, the participant was free to withdraw from the study by contacting the researcher by phone, email, or in person; if the interview were underway, the participant simply exited the interview and none of the data would be included in the study (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The package also included a short version of the Interview Protocol (see Appendix F) for reflection prior to the interview and in an effort to achieve a measure of transparency and to develop interview conditions in which the participant would feel as relaxed as possible and free of coercion.

No documents or data were accepted by the researcher until the signature page of the letter of informed consent had been received by the researcher (see Appendix E). After the participant signed two copies of the letter of informed consent, one copy was given to the participant and the other was kept for the researcher's audit trail (Merriam, 2009). Extra copies

of the letters of informed consent were available at the interview site in the event the participant did not bring them to the interview (see Appendix D & E).

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher received the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C) and collected any deliverables volunteered by the participants to explain how they used context in teaching. Demographic data and documents were voluntarily provided to the researcher as evidence of CRT as per the informed consent process. In this interview-dominated design, the researcher's perspectives were a part of the data, so efforts were made to increase trustworthiness and transparency through triangulation of data sources and rich description of the findings as described above (Creswell, 2014; Grbich, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Using the interview protocol (see Appendix G), semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted and audio-recorded with the permission of the participant (Seidman, 2013). If permission were obtained, the interview was recorded on a small, table-top digital recording device that had no access to cloud or public digital data storage. The recording contained no personally identifying information and was transcribed by the researcher shortly after the interview to capture nuances of the memos and field notes (Seidman, 2013).

If the participant declined permission to record the interview, the researcher was prepared to make notes and memos about the subjects discussed in the interview (Grbich, 2013).

The interview transcript was used to create a draft using teacher numbers as pseudonyms so data were disassociated from particular participants, protecting their privacy and confidentiality, wiping evidence of gender, ethnicity, race, or content area certification (Creswell, 2014). Pseudonyms were also used for the superintendent, principals, teachers, schools, and the district. The materials shared in the member check were the raw data from the interview presented as an account that was close to the version the researcher intended to use in

the research report (Creswell, 2014) and field notes taken by the interviewer during and shortly after the interview.

Upon completion of drafting the transcript, the researcher sent the participant the draft via hand delivery or the U.S. Postal Service, and the participant had the opportunity to member-check these materials. This process of member-checking provided an opportunity for the participant to approve the interview text and therefore improve the validity and accuracy of understanding or to delete or add anything else that occurred to the participant after the interview (Merriam, 2009). No contact from the participant after the draft was mailed was received as tacit agreement with the accuracy of the text. The participant also had the opportunity to request a summary of the findings of the completed research project, per the letter of informed consent (see Appendix D).

The recording of the actual interview was deleted from the recording device used by the researcher after the participant accepted the draft as valid, and the transcript of the interview, without identifying information on the transcript will be protected by the researcher, kept in a locking file drawer in the researcher's home office, for three years after the survey was conducted, per Federal guidelines (Creswell, 2014).

### **Data Analysis**

Explaining findings of how CRT would look, how teachers would value cultural referents in their teaching, and how teachers grew to be responsive to students' cultures required thick, rich description of the findings, narration of the researcher's observations, and descriptions of documents or artifacts that illustrated cultural responsiveness. Since the researcher had an insider-outsider position, multiple steps to insure trustworthiness of the data were used. Any discrepant data were reported, and peer-debriefing, reflective journaling, memoing, and

triangulation (Merriam, 2009) were used as strategies to improve validity and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014).

### **Alignment of the Interview Protocol**

The complete interview protocol (see Appendix G) was designed to align with research questions and to probe rural teachers’ responses regarding knowledge they valued and used, behaviors they perceived improved the learning experience and community, and their beliefs about their growth as culturally responsive teachers of rural students from diverse backgrounds. The alignment of the three research questions and the complete interview protocol were displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

#### *Alignment of Interview Protocol With Research Questions*

| <b>Research Questions</b>  | <b>Interview Questions and Probes</b>   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Research Question 1:</b><br/>What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?</li> <li>• How important do you feel it is to use in your teaching aspects of or knowledge of students home cultures or life experiences in our town? 1-10 (elaborate)</li> <li>• What is important for teachers to know about our students’ lives outside of school?</li> <li>• What are some things you do to learn about students’ home lives and what students know about and value?</li> <li>• Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about their goals for the future?</li> <li>• What kinds of progress checks do you use to inform instruction?</li> <li>• What ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?</li> <li>• Do you take into consideration students’ learning preferences? If so, how?</li> <li>• What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students?</li> <li>• What would surprise a new teacher in our district?</li> <li>• In what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you were teaching in an urban area?</li> </ul> |

---

**Research Question 2:**

What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?

- What would an observer see in your classroom that would show that you care about your students?
- How would you describe your classroom climate?
- How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?
- How do you develop and implement classroom rules and procedures?
- Are there unwritten rules in your class?
- What would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?
- Do you use collaborative learning structures in class?
- How often on average do you use collaborative structures?
- Do you use (un)structured group assignments?
- How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?
- What are some successful activities or strategies you have done to help students learn your course content?
- What activities are students' favorite or least favorite?
- Do you use projects? How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects?
- Can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class?
- Can you tell about a time you used a student's (s') prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?

---

**Research Question 3:**

What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?

- How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10 (elaborate)
  - How culturally responsive do you feel? 1-10 (elaborate)
  - How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise? 1-10 (elaborate)
  - Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?
  - Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?
  - What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today?
  - What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?
  - How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?
- 

## Coding

After the researcher made a final edit of the transcript, redacting all identifying information except the pseudonym of the participant, the researcher created one-inch margins and spaced between paragraphs to allow for coding and memoing (Saldaña, 2013). Following Saldaña (2013)'s suggestion for novice qualitative researchers, the researcher made the decision

to code manually and on hard copy which had been typed in Microsoft Word. The researcher added coding memos to the comments panel, in pen on the transcript, and in the journal.

Saldaña (2013) defined code as a symbolic term generated by the researcher to capture the essence of salient attribute of qualitative data. Codes derived from the semi-structured research questions (see Appendix H) were structural codes that initiated the coding process after transcriptions were produced. These and other provisional codes were identified in the research as the groundwork was being laid for the study. Structural codes allowed for analysis that directly responded to research questions and theoretical frameworks (Saldaña, 2013). In making coding decisions, the researcher used structural codes but kept herself open to new ideas and patterns that may have emerged. As she worked with the data, she also developed in vivo codes directly from the language of the participants. As she re-read the data and added other codes, she used descriptive codes to help label, group, and sort all the data (Saldaña, 2013). The use of a variety of coding processes emerged as the researcher better understood the data, a strategy Saldaña (2013) called “pragmatic eclecticism” (p. 60). These codes managed large chunks of data provided in response to grand tour guiding research questions (Merriam, 2009).

Then in the second cycle of coding, pattern and axial coding was employed to develop major themes. Provisional codes complimented and fleshed out the structural codes, and they were modified as more data were collected (Saldaña, 2013). Saldaña (2013) warned that provisional codes distorted findings, especially if coders were resistant to changing them as data emerged. Provisional codes were drawn from Gay (2010)’s 18 Pillars of CRT and Edmondson & Butler (2010)’s construct of Radical Democracy (Saldaña, 2013) and subtopics in the literature review. Creswell (2014) suggested deriving 25 or 30 provisional codes and five to seven major thematic categories as findings. Saldaña (2013) demonstrated how codes and themes were

mapped into a code map to illustrate how they fit together (see Appendices H-K). Coded data were displayed in the form of narratives, summaries, and charts (Grbich, 2013), and care was taken to produce readable and clear analysis.

### **Data Presentation**

Throughout the study, data were presented in both narrative and tabular form to enhance the transparency and credibility of the study by allowing the reader to see a concise summary or grouping of relevant data or to determine what the else the data revealed and what the researcher's interpretation of the data added to the study (Yin, 2006).

### **Trustworthiness of Data Analysis**

#### **Triangulation**

Multiple data sources added to the trustworthiness or credibility and transparency of the study (Yin, 2006). This study triangulated interviews with participants, which were transcribed and member checked for accuracy. Data also included a demographic questionnaire, documents volunteered to the researcher as evidence of the teachers' use of CRT, with names and identifiers redacted by the participants. Artifacts requested by the researcher included lesson plans, assignments, student work, and news articles, pamphlets, websites. Also, informal observations and conversations were noted.

All data that were provided to the researcher were included in the data analysis as well as described in field notes which were included as the member-checked transcript (Yin, 2006). An audit trail and researcher's memos and reflective journal notes were preserved (Merriam, 2009). The notes were coded with interview data. The researcher identified themes and added to the trustworthiness that the findings were accurately understood. Transparency in clear explanations of the methodology also enhanced triangulation.



## **Memoing and Note Taking**

The researcher noted memos and field notes during the semi-structured interviews in order to capture data which involved nuances of communication and dynamics of conversation but were not reflected in the audio-recording of the interview. The researcher bracketed thoughts in the phenomenological tradition, and debriefed with a colleague using “shop-talking” strategy (Saldaña, 2013), to assist with separating personal impressions, recording them as memos apart from the data (Grbich, 2013). The researcher wrote analytic memos and a kept reflective journal at each stage of research and after each interview (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher also kept a coding journal to track the development and application of codes and themes. Also, a code map and code landscapes were charted to demonstrate data analysis stages (Saldaña, 2013).

## **Member Checking**

This strategy to improve trustworthiness of data presentation was conducted by offering a both the transcript of interview data and a draft of the statement of the researcher’s process for redacting names and potentially identifying information for approval by the participant in order to assure accuracy of the interview report (Merriam, 2009). Participants were given their transcripts from the interview to member check for accuracy and to add anything else that may have been omitted in the long interview. Interviewees were free to delete or add any data to the transcript, and they were free from coercion to include the data in the research report if the draft were unacceptable to them. Two weeks of non-response regarding the transcript package was accepted as tacit acceptance of the transcripts as accurate.

## **Peer Debriefing**

Three reviewers were used to “shop-talk” (Saldaña, 2013) and audit-check the researcher’s coding analysis of redacted transcripts. Two were respected peers who were familiar

with culturally responsive teaching and rural students, and another was an administrator with a graduate degree. “This strategy—involving an interpretation beyond the researcher and invested in another person—adds validity to an account” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

### **Rich Description**

Findings were reported with much detail and careful reporting so as to capture connections to aspects of CRT; participants were quoted and their stories captured so as to read easily and completely (Merriam, 2009).

### **Saturation**

The iterative process of interviews and observations was followed until the researcher reached a point of saturation and redundancy (Creswell, 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The suggested number of interview participants in a homogenous qualitative study was found to be a total of twelve participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), so this should have been sufficient to discover teachers’ use of responsive strategies and hear their stories about how they perceived the strategies help them connect to their students and their students connect to the course content while feeling like their culture was valued (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2006) observed that saturation could be reached when having confirmatory evidence from two or more different sources for most topics and evidence that revealed some non-examples or rival explanations.

### **Discrepant Data**

The researcher asked open-ended exploratory questions, with the realization that everyone had different perspectives and different ways to use students’ cultures in their classroom contexts. A hallmark of good qualitative studies is the variety of perspectives on a topic (Creswell, 2014).

Because the district did not provide training in CRT and several teachers reported not having CRT training in their teacher education program, negative examples were part of the data set, and since the research questions were open-ended asking what, discrepant data were reported to assure readers of the validity of all data being represented. Additionally, the reporting of all data may allow another researcher to find a connection or code that would make sense of data that this researcher had called discrepant findings (Creswell, 2014).

### **Ethics**

All data were reported, whether or not data aligned with the researcher's understanding of either of the theoretical frameworks.

The researcher's commitment to informed consent resulted in an interview environment free of coercion. Because participation in the research was voluntary, non-participation was also voluntary. Being selected by one's principal was probably flattering to potential participants, but no pressure was exerted on participants to be interviewed either by the researcher or the principals. Some people did decline to participate, and their decision was quietly accepted with a gracious response from the researcher. Also, upon meeting two of the participants face to face, one was found to be the spouse of a colleague of the researcher, and another was casually known from a training in which both participated but neither knew the other's names until meeting at the interview site. Because of a commitment to ethical research, neither participated in the interview nor provided data for the study.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers purposively selected by their administrators or colleagues as caring, warmly-demanding, and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in

using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences. Basic interpretive qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2009) with forty-five to sixty minute semi-structured interviews of twelve fully-certified teachers who were selected in fifteen to twenty minute interviews with their principals who recommended them because they were known as relatable, caring, and having high expectations of all students. At the interview site, the teachers signed an informed consent statement, submitted three to five minute, ten-item demographic questionnaires, and either offered documents with all names or identifiers redacted or showed the researcher exhibits in the classroom that they felt demonstrated how they used students' cultural background knowledge or lived-experiences in their teaching. A variety of codes were drawn from the literature and research questions, and other codes emerged from analysis of the data. Codes were then grouped into six thematic categories used for data presentation and analysis. Data were reported and analyzed in Chapter Four, and discussion and recommendations can be found in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers identified by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in using rural and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences. This chapter describes participants and presents findings from semi-structured interviews during which the researcher collected a printed, ten-item, demographic survey and gathered or made notes of any deliverables, exhibits, or samples of student work offered by the twelve rural secondary teachers who were identified by their principals as caring and culturally responsive teachers. The following research questions framed this interview-based study:

1. What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?
2. What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?
3. What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?

#### **Description of Participants**

Data to describe the teacher participants were derived primarily from a ten-item questionnaire of participants' demographics submitted at the beginning of each participant's interview (Appendix D & L). This questionnaire was printed on paper and allowed participants

to write comments at will on the paper, and the interviewer provided time to respond to questions the participants had about the items and to elaborate on any items they found difficult to answer with the provided responses. This basic qualitative study was not intended to be generalizable, so reporting demographic particulars about the participants in this study was not meant to imply generalizability, only to provide data for the purpose of understanding the cultures of the participants who were identified as caring and responsive to students from diverse backgrounds by their principals in this rural Florida district.

### **Gender and Ethnicity or Race**

The inclusion criteria for this study were selecting certified, secondary level, rural public school teachers as candidates, with an effort for maximum variability. The criteria did not require maintenance of ethnic and racial percentages similar to the State of Florida or the nation.

The most recent Florida Department of Education (2015, November 17) report of the numbers of secondary level public classroom teachers by race or ethnicity and gender revealed that the middle and high schools in this school district employed 50.9% females. The State of Florida employed 64% females in secondary schools. The teachers in this study were 75% female with 3 out of 12 participants being male.

Of the total number of staff in the district, 9.9% identified as African-American, 8.6% identified as Hispanic or Latino(a), and 79.5% identified as White, non-Hispanic. Half of the participants in this study self-identified on the demographic survey as teachers of color (see Table 2), clearly more than the approximate 20% of the district and nation who were teachers of color (NCES, 2013b). Another item of note related to teachers' ethnicity or race was the teachers who stated in the survey that they spoke a language other than English. All teachers except one stated their other language was Spanish (see Table 9 & Appendix L).

Table 9

*Participants by Gender, Ethnicity or Race, and Second Language (Florida DoE, 2015)*

| Region         | Gender |        | Race or Ethnicity |           | Bilingual |       |
|----------------|--------|--------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
|                | Male   | Female | Non-White         |           |           | White |
|                |        |        | Af-Am             | Hisp or L |           |       |
| Florida        | 36%    | 64%    | 14.6%             | 12.9%     | 69.7%     |       |
| District       | 49%    | 51%    | 9.9%              | 8.6%      | 79.5%     |       |
| Study (n = 12) | 25%    | 75%    | 50%               | 50%       | 50%       |       |

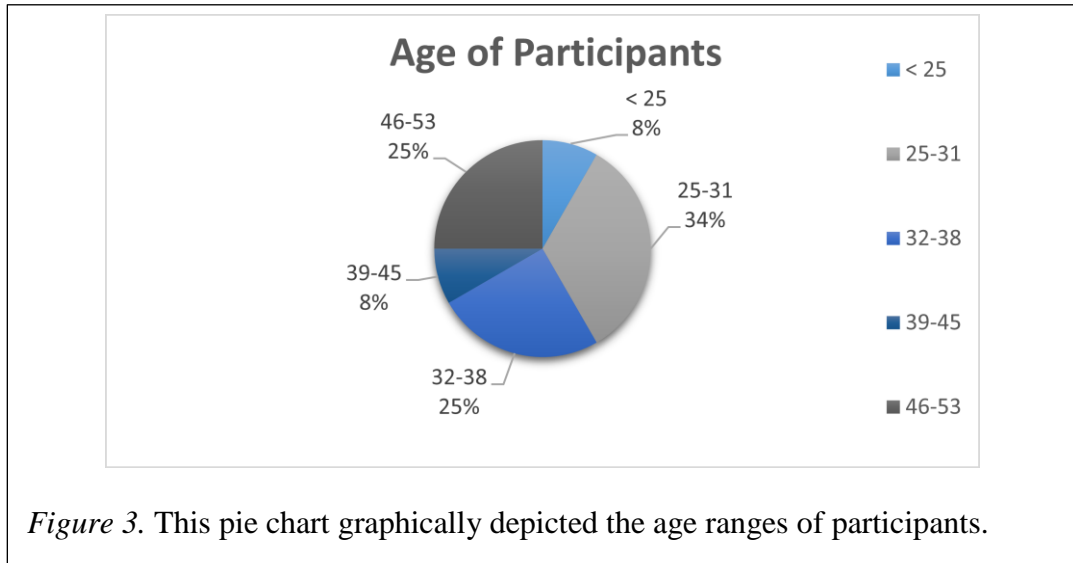
**Satisfaction With Coursework in Diversity Topics**

An examination of the number of courses each had related to the topic of diversity revealed that the two teachers who reported they had four or more such college classes said they felt like they were “pretty well” prepared for teaching in the district. The other three who felt “pretty well” prepared were bilingual teachers of color. Three teachers reported being “not well” prepared or that they “don’t remember” taking this type of class were all White and from rural areas, with the exception being a White person who moved around frequently as a young person and reported never taking such a class. The others who reported feeling “somewhat OK” reported taking two teaching classes to prepare for teaching students from diverse backgrounds (see Appendix L).

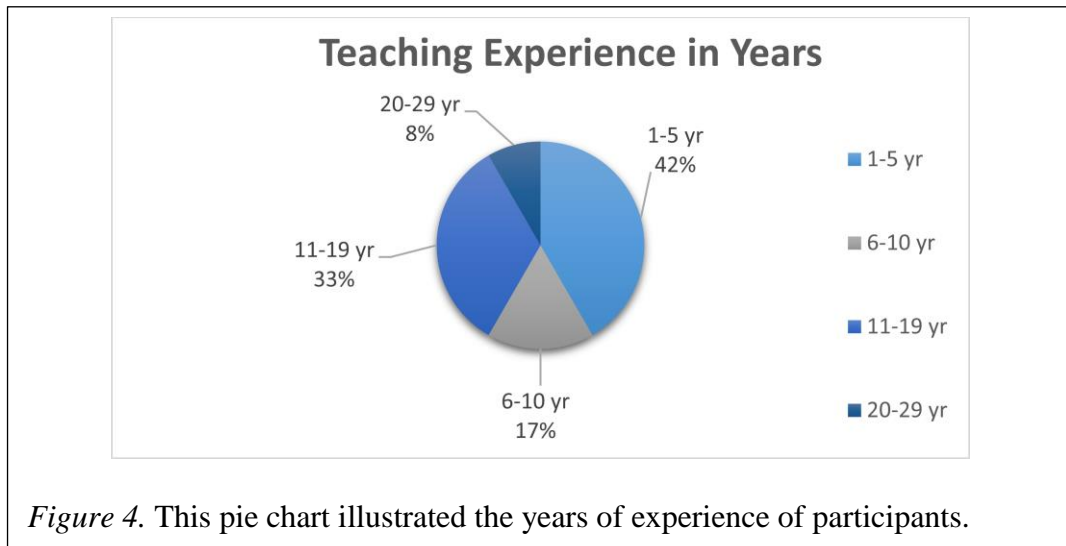
**Participants’ Age, Experience, and Certification Areas**

The participants in this study were 75% female and 50% teachers of color, a variety of ages, teaching experience levels and certification areas were represented (see Table 10 & Appendix L). The representation of teachers from a variety of content areas and experience levels were inclusion criteria for the study. Median age of teacher participants was 32-38 years

old, with no participant in the 54+ age range (see Figure 3).



The majority of teachers had between one and five years of experience, with the same number of teachers having between eleven and twenty-nine years of experience (see Figure 4).



The content areas of English or Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies or History were represented with two teachers each, and three each from Math and electives. The content areas of teachers of electives were not identified in an effort to protect possible violation of confidentiality due to a small number of teachers from particular elective courses in the district



(see Figure 5). Electives were recorded as “other” in Table 10.

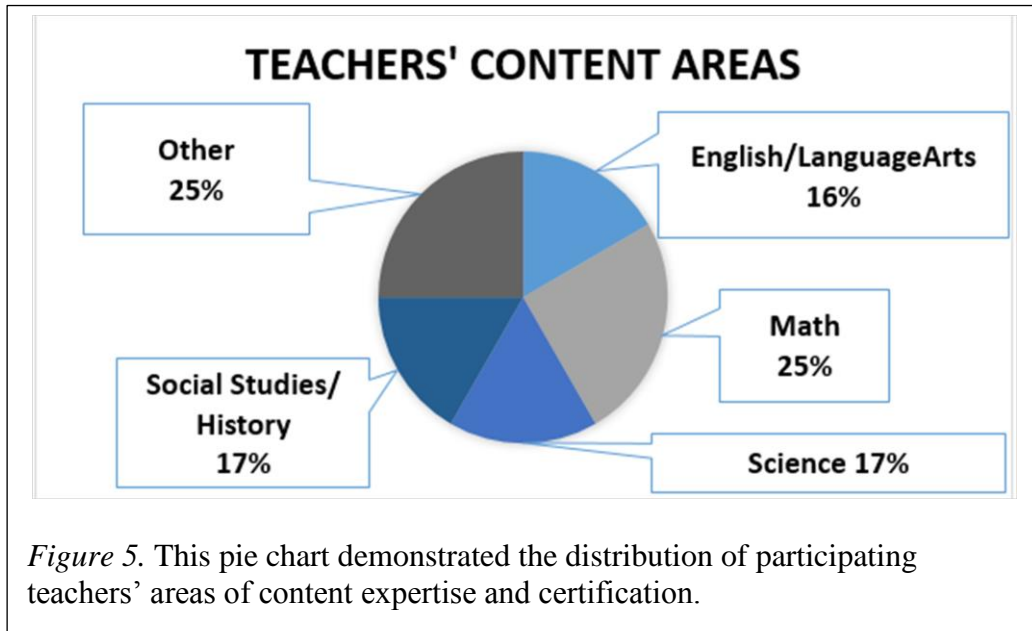


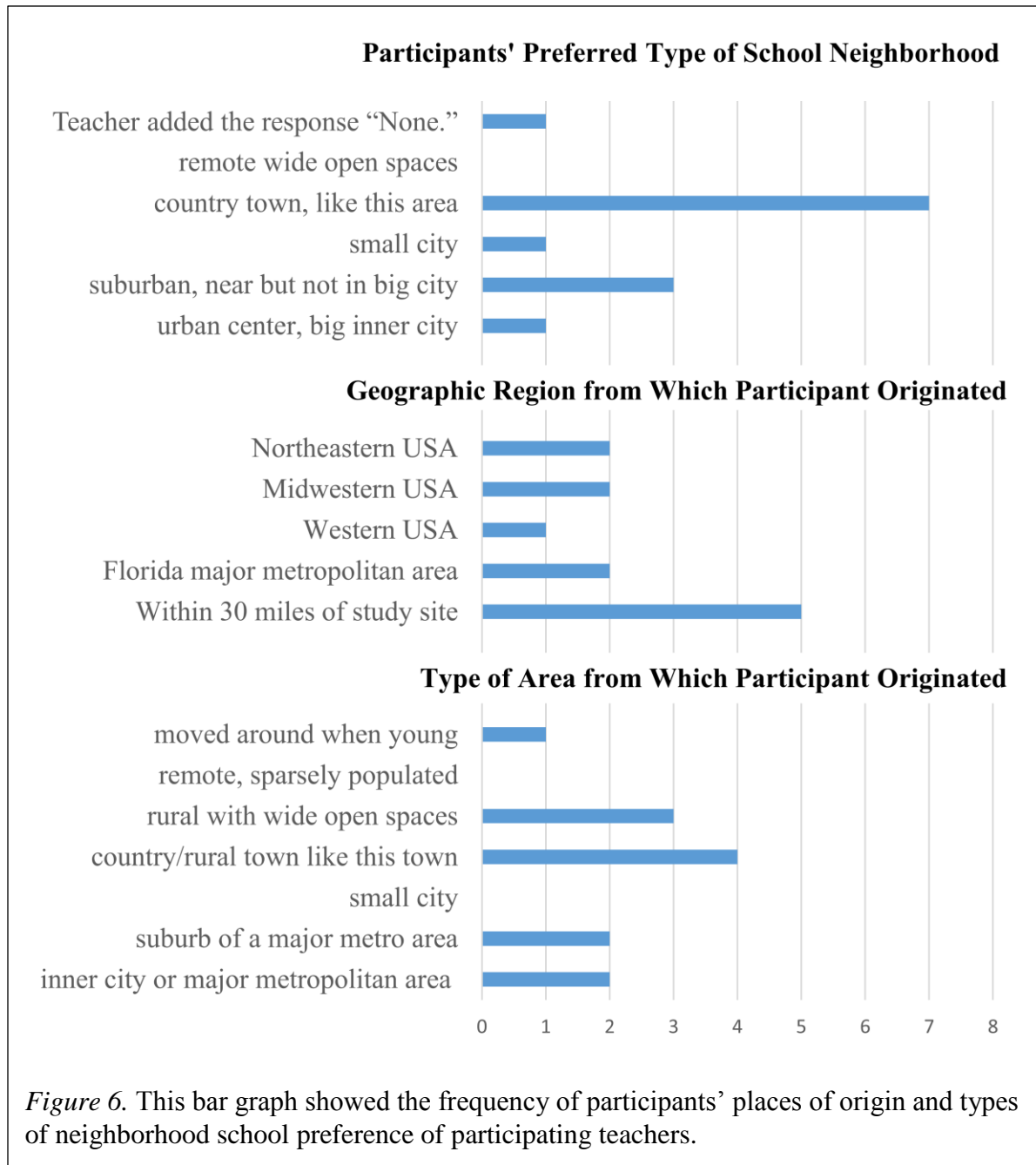
Table 10

*Participants by Age, Certification Area, and Years of Teaching Experience*

| <b>Age in years</b>        | <b>n = 12</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| < 25                       | 1             |
| 25-31                      | 4             |
| 32-38                      | 3             |
| 39-45                      | 1             |
| 46-53                      | 3             |
| 54 +                       | 0             |
| <b>Experience in Years</b> | <b>n = 12</b> |
| 1-5                        | 5             |
| 6-10                       | 2             |
| 11-19                      | 4             |
| 20-29                      | 1             |
| 30+                        | 0             |
| <b>Certification</b>       | <b>n = 12</b> |
| English or Language Arts   | 2             |
| Math                       | 3             |
| Science                    | 2             |
| Social Studies or History  | 2             |
| Other                      | 3             |

## Participants' Home and Preferred Teaching Locale

The remaining three items on the demographic survey submitted by the interview participants addressed the “locale that BEST describes the region” where participants spent most of their childhood and their expressed preference for their ideal teaching neighborhood (see Figure 6).



Because this was paper and pencil survey, respondents were able to write additional responses to the items. One teacher wrote a response to the item regarding preferred teaching employment setting, "I do have my choice! I choose to be here!" Another respondent wrote "none" and elaborated in the interview a desire to retire. One respondent marked two desirable teaching locations, and both were included in the data reported in Table 11. The words "small city" were added to the list in the original survey, based on questions which arose from the survey at the start of the interview.

Interview data were also included in the data display in Table 11 regarding the geographic regions from which participants said they originated. From the data in Table 11, four teachers were from a country town, and three were from an area even more rural, so the rural location was reportedly not an unusual setting for these seven teachers. Five of these seven teachers whose youth was spent in a rural area identified themselves as coming from an area within a thirty-mile radius of the study site itself. Four other teachers were from a major urban area or the suburbs of a metro area, two of which identified themselves as being from Florida. For two of these four teachers, working in this rural area in Florida was a change in population density from that of the area they called home, but state was familiar to them. The remaining two teachers either identified "home" as a faraway rural area or as a variety of places, having moved frequently as a young person. Only three of the seven teachers who identified as being from rural areas chose an area like their hometown as their desired place to work. Three of these seven teachers selected a more urban area as their preference; whereas the teacher who moved frequently and those from nearby major Florida metro areas indicated a level of satisfaction with the rural locale of the study site. Seven of the twelve teachers in this study indicated that a rural town like the site of the study was their preferred type of area in which to teach.

Table 11

*Participants' Childhood Locale and Geographic Region and Preferred Employment Locale*

| Type of Area for Most of Childhood    | n = 12                       |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| inner city or major metropolitan area | 2                            |
| suburb of a major metro area          | 2                            |
| small city                            | 0                            |
| Country or rural town like this town  | 4                            |
| rural with wide open spaces           | 3                            |
| remote, sparsely populated            | 0                            |
| moved around when young               | 1                            |
| Geographic Region of Origin           | n = 12                       |
| Within 30 miles of study site         | 5                            |
| Florida major metropolitan area       | 2                            |
| Western USA                           | 1                            |
| Midwestern USA                        | 2                            |
| Northeastern USA                      | 2                            |
| Preferred School Neighborhood         | n = 12 (one had 2 responses) |
| urban center, big inner city          | 1                            |
| suburban, near but not in big city    | 3                            |
| small city                            | 1                            |
| country town, like this area          | 7                            |
| remote wide open spaces               | 0                            |
| Teacher added the response "None."    | 1                            |

**Organizing Interview Data for Presentation**

Data were collected according to the procedure outlined for the interview in Chapter Three. Member-checked transcripts from interview also included data derived from the researcher's field notes, memos, and coding journal. Interview recordings and notes were created and transcribed during the first semester of the 2016-17 school year. The rest of this chapter presented detailed data from interviews, exhibits, and notes.

**Data Collection at the Interview**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the protocol (see Appendix G) as a basic framework for the conversation, but the conversation in the interviews flowed naturally,

and the questions were not prompted in the order presented in the protocol. The researcher had memorized the questions and consulted them with occasional, brief glances to ascertain that all questions had been touched on in the course of the interview (Seidman, 2013). This resulted in a relaxed and natural conversation appropriate for the rural research setting (see p. 89) and teacher-to-teacher dialogue. Eleven interviews took place in the teachers' classrooms after school, and one interview was conducted in a local coffee shop at the participant's request.

No interview officially lasted longer than an hour, though almost all participants appeared to have or said they enjoyed the reflection that occurred in the interview and were relaxed and continued talking in an unstructured, social way after the audio recorder was turned off. Realizing the power of reflection and reflective practice, the researcher remained with each participant as long as the participant wanted to talk. The researcher made field notes during the interview of any deliverables or displays of student work shown during the interview (Grbich, 2013). After the interview, the researcher made memos about the teacher's classroom setting, demeanor during the interview, and bits of the conversation not captured on the recording (Seidman 2013). Field notes were included on the redacted transcripts for member-checking.

### **Procedure for Coding Data**

To add to trustworthiness of data analysis, Saldaña (2013) recommended creating a code map to illustrate the iterations of the codes from the full list, to categories, and then themes. The researcher followed Saldaña (2013)'s recommendation for novice qualitative researchers and manually used different types and colors of sticky note flags bearing hand-written code names to code the 151 Microsoft Word processed pages of mostly single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman interview transcripts and field notes. Double-spacing was used between the exchanges of the researcher and the participant. The coding process required multiple readings of the

transcripts, and the researcher used peer-debriefing or shop-talking as necessary to post codes on the redacted data (Creswell, 2014; Saldaña, 2013). The researcher kept a coding journal to manage the process and articulate the meaning of the codes (Merriam, 2009).

A two-cycle coding process explained by Saldaña (2013) was used to organize the codes into thematic categories. The researcher used word processor pages to record the grouping of the original codes into three main clusters and the ordering of the clusters into themes. First, the different sticky-note flags were itemized into a list of fifty-eight simple codes that initiated the process of making-meaning from the data gathered for this study; this list of simple codes was twice as long as recommended by Creswell (2014). This first cycle of simple codes were sorted into alphabetical order (see Appendix H). The next cycle involved sorting the simple codes into three groups which aligned with the research questions, making a more manageable number of codes to categorize (see Appendix I). The researcher found six categorical themes (see Appendix J), which was consistent with Creswell (2014)'s suggestion of five to seven as an appropriate and manageable number. This was a process of making meaning by deconstructing and then reconstructing the dispersed ideas in a way that "potentially transforms your codes first into organized categories and then into higher-level concepts" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 198). This process provided the framework for organizing the presentation of the thick and rich interview data which were presented in following sections.

### **Data Presentation by Thematic Categories**

The data presented in following sections were derived from interview transcripts, memos, and field notes about deliverables, student work, and exhibits in teachers' classrooms, the location for all but one interview. The identity of the teachers was protected by pseudonyms such as Teacher 1, Teacher 5, or Administrator. Care was taken to protect the identity of participants

providing the data in this study because of the small pool from which they were selected, for the following ethical reasons. If a reader were able to identify the study site due to the extensive cited demographic and geographic data provided to describe the context which the researcher identified as “rural” (Coladarci, 2007; Howley, Howley, & Yahn, 2014), it would not be very difficult next to identify an African-American female who taught English, or a male beginning teacher who was born in rural Missouri and spoke Spanish (both hypothetical examples).

Therefore, in the interest of protecting the identity of teachers in a small rural district, the teacher pseudonyms were intentionally not connected to demographic data, and all references to people, places, courses taught, or other potentially identifying information in the data which followed were redacted and marked with this notation in the transcripts and in the quotes presented as findings: XX[explanation of redaction]. Moreover, in situations in which the data were sensitive in nature; such as describing the community, identifying barriers in the community, or mentioning and explaining incidents of observed, perceived racist behavior; the identity of teachers was further protected with randomized pseudonyms of Teacher A, B, C, which in no way aligned with teachers’ initials or the numeric pseudonyms.

At times when both numeric and alphabetic codes were incorporated because some of the responses appeared sensitive to the researcher but others were not as sensitive, multiple data pieces from teachers were included to avoid any attempt by process of elimination to determine the source of the data point. Using this process would prohibit a profile of a teacher from being constructed which may violate confidentiality or potentially cause harm to a participant. Data from Teachers 6 and 13 were omitted by mutual agreement, for during the interview process, one was found to be the spouse of the researcher’s colleague, and the other was an acquaintance from a teachers’ in-service training. Twelve teachers’ data were used in this study.

To organize data from the forty-five to sixty minute interviews in the sections which follow, six thematic categories, created from a code mapping process (Saldaña, 2013), were presented as subheadings in the sections which followed, and codes in each category were noted in the introductory narrative and used as subheadings where appropriate. This process of deriving codes and categories was documented in Appendices H-K. The six categories used to organize data presentation were definitions of CRT and the locale, using funds of knowledge and informed instruction, caring and high expectations, development of critical awareness and advocacy, and growth experiences regarding CRT and advocacy.

### **Category 1: CRT Definition and Importance**

The following data were responses to the following questions which aligned with the first research question in this study: *What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?* The italicized questions below were items from the interview protocol which were grouped in this category. The questions were followed by quotes or summaries of participants' responses for each question. Bracketed descriptors and field notes were added throughout this chapter for the ease of the reader's understanding of the participants' responses or connection to the themes.

**Teachers' definitions of CRT.** All definitions of CRT were quoted directly, and Figure 7 provided a visual of most frequently occurring words in teachers' responses to this question: *What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?*

**Teacher 1.** [CRT is] understanding where they [students] come from, and that's racially, their ethnicity, socioeconomics, their town where they are sitting. It all makes up that person, so in order for me to teach them and meet them where they're at, I need to





to make sure you don't cross the line. You don't say certain things, even if you want to. It doesn't matter. You have to understand that this person is different, and so is this one; and if this person disagrees, [hand gestures pointing to three imaginary students], just redirect them, and let them know that everybody's different. And that although we have different experiences and different ideas, it doesn't mean that we're that different anyway. At the end of the day, we have a goal in life to succeed. And if you're a student, it should be to succeed, and if now, well then, we need to do what we can to make sure that your mind is set on succeeding.

**Teacher 5.** Well, I think whenever I hear culturally responsive teaching, I always think about making XX[course content] about their life, and things like that, which is something like “oh, you should put their names in the XX[course content assignments]” but I rarely do because it doesn't feel genuine. . . Like today, we were talking about XX[vocabulary term], and I said one of your snapchat filters does this and that, and they look at me like “how do you know that?” and I'm like “yeah, download the app and get back to me on Monday.” So, I guess that's what I think of . . . aware of their culture and trying to incorporate it as much as possible.

**Teacher 7.** Culturally responsive teaching is being able to relate to each kid no matter what their gender, ethnicity, race, background, if they speak English or not speak English, being able to relate to them. Being able to get the student to think and act on a different level than someone who is just teaching to every student. It's like getting individualized education to each student no matter what they look like, no matter who their parents are, or who their grandparents are, or who their great-great grandparents are.

**Teacher 8.** [Paraphrased from field notes, not recorded] It is so important to know the

cultures of students and somehow connect to what we are teaching. Our curriculum does a good job of helping us start to connect what we are teaching to students' backgrounds, and we have to do the rest by getting to know our students and showing that we care if they learn. Teacher said:

We need to break through assumptions by sharing. Most kids are proud of their backgrounds. But the biggest challenge was students who feel that they have no culture. I tell them that culture goes beyond ethnicity and race: Everything we do, how we think, and our family rituals are based in our cultures. Also, it is good to question why we have moved away from the culture of our forefathers. We have to think about our values and our morals and where those come from.

**Teacher 9.** I was thinking that CRT means that I have to seek their [students'] prior knowledge and basically feed off of that because it depends on their culture, what they know and how they have been taught. So I try to use everybody's culture in the class and have input from different people and what they call it and what they know about it and then go from there to get to the topic I'm teaching [gives example].

**Teacher 10.** It [CRT] means making the classroom as positive as it can be so students from all different backgrounds can comfortable learning, and taking away as many barriers based in their culture as I can that might impact their education negatively.

**Teacher 11.** [Field notes revealed that when getting comfortable for the interview and before starting the recorder in Teacher 11's classroom, Teacher 11 spoke to the researcher about the topic of their research. When CRT came up in the conversation, the participant said, "I had never heard of it [CRT]." Teacher 11 had looked the topic up on the Internet and thought about the articles found on the Internet after receiving the interview packet.] The following section was quoted from the recorded transcript of the ensuing conversation:

I learned color here [this town and school]. Well, I guess I knew it because when I was young, we had friends who were African-American, and my mother was from XX[distant diverse major metro area]; my father was from XX[my home town], but he was in XX and XX[Asian countries]. So they and we were exposed to other cultures, but I don't remember anyone referring to "my Latino friend" or "my African-American" friends. They were identified by name and personality in our home (maybe my neighbors felt different), but in my home, nobody was identified by color or culture. . . . I don't even know if I understand what it means to be culturally aware and culturally responsive. I don't know that I look at people and identify culture. So, if I don't look at people and identify them as different, how can I respond to their culture if it's something that I don't identify?

**Teacher 12.** Cultural responsiveness, especially here, I mean, is just teaching kids. Most of these kids come from an Hispanic background XX[mentions content area], so yes, I'm going to touch on certain or all of Hispanic culture . . . but many, they don't even know their history; they don't know their traditions. . . .the tradition stops once we get here [so talks about the need to have students ask parents and grandparents about their cultures] and they start sharing, and they start opening up, and I get to know them, not just as a student but as a person, and they relate to each other. Like well, we're not so different. . . . To me, that's very rewarding. And it gets us to asking more questions, and they are intrigued, and they do [the work of the class], and that's how they learn. And sometimes some of them feel XX[identifying content redacted] I can't go over there [Mexico] and feel like I'm part of it because I'm not, but I'm not from here [Florida], so I can't really say that I'm part of here. There's a saying, and there's a movie, *Ni de aquí ni de allá*, (not

from here, not from there). So we're kind of in limbo. So we have to learn about our culture from where we are from, and we have to learn about the culture from here where we live. . . And I say yes, but it makes you twice as valuable [to be bicultural].

**Teacher 14.** I had stuff written down [prior to interview, but ignores note cards and says] but my deal is basically meeting the needs of the students and trying to produce the best, most conducive environment for learning. So that's huge. You have to know their needs to meet their needs, but it's a process . . . . Young people are dealing with so many things at once, and I don't mean just at home, I mean within themselves because they are growing, that it's hard for them to realize quickly what is in front of them that is right, and what they are supposed to be doing and what is the right thing to be doing. It takes time. Unless they have that structure in the early grades, it's hard for them to get it, and if they become part of that back row seat in the classroom, it's hard for students to get it. Because once they get lost back there and the teacher continues to teach, they move on to the next teacher, believing that next teacher will just leave them in that back chair and let them continue to do very little or whatever they want to continue to do, and I don't know why it gets that way, but CRT is meeting all students' needs.

**Importance of knowledge of students' lives.** This data were generated by an item asking participants: *On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being highest, how important do you feel it is to use in your teaching aspects of or knowledge of students home cultures or life experiences in our town?* The responses were as follows, with an asterisk if no numeric response was provided:

\*   \*   5   7.5   8   8   8   8   9   10   10   10

The mode was 8, with the mean of all numeric responses as 8, and two-thirds of all surveyed responded between 8 and 10. So most respondents felt that it was important to know about the

home lives of their students. The participants who provided no number said “it depends,” and “hard to answer.” This question was presented with the interview to allow for the participants to elaborate on their response. Some of the commentary which was coded either “knowledge of home” or “knowledge of culture” included these quoted passages:

**Teacher 1.** If you don’t understand where that student is coming from, then you’re making believe that they’re all the same, and they’re not. And you can’t. You wouldn’t want someone to talk to you like you’re someone else. You want them to talk to you like you’re *you* and with everything that you come from. So as teachers, as hard as it is, that comes with the job. If you’re going to be effective in the classroom, you have to be able to know where that student comes from.

**Teacher 2.** Because that’s one of the downsides of growing up [here in this town], because it’s like, “Oh, I know what your family’s like. I know what your brother’s like,” and it’s kind of hard to take the personal out sometimes and give the kids a fresh slate. And giving the kids a fresh slate is probably one of the most important lessons that I’ve learned from the kids. They’re all individuals. They’re all their own unique personalities, and I can’t judge them by their name, by their siblings, by their cousins, by knowing their daddy in high school. It’s all different.

**Teacher 3.** I try really hard, but I’m never going to get it [perfect], with the difference of how I grew up to how they grew up. And sometimes as I get older, it’s a generational thing, too, and then you have that whole deal too. . . because there are some kids, and there’s one who sits right over there [points to empty student desk], and I just [sighs].

**Teacher 4.** Now don’t forget we do reading [Field note: This was not a reading teacher]. Culture doesn’t matter there [when teaching reading]. As far as some background

knowledge on the content, maybe, but when it comes to comprehension, I don't think that culture matters there. I think it's more about right teaching methods to get kids to understand what they're reading.

**Teacher 8.** Even though it doesn't affect my view of students, I think knowing where kids live and what neighborhoods they come from would help us know what they are facing every day. . . . Sometimes I see students struggling with motivation, and when I talk to them about what their parents are doing and what they are thinking about, it turns out that often they are struggling with making a decision about what direction to take in life. Life is sometimes confusing because of conflicts from home that don't go with school achievement, so I encourage students to stick with friends as long as their friends have the same goals, [although] sometimes friends can be a bad influence.

**Teacher 10.** [Understanding cultures is important in removing barriers because] some cultures spend more time on recall and facts, and other cultures focus on XX[content area] concepts. If kids have a background based in concepts, they tend to have an easier time because they can recognize the universality . . . . But someone who doesn't recognize concepts that well, and works mostly in recall, will have a harder time with understanding what concepts I am teaching. Our Latin American students generally come into our system with a stronger focus on memory and facts. The Asians that I have had are usually stronger in concepts and problem solving. This can be a barrier. And language can be a barrier because we use language in XX[content areas] that is not used in conversation, so people who are learning English as their second language have to learn a whole new set of words in English just for the processes and problems as well as the XX[content area] language itself. People read in XX[this content area] for precision

and accuracy; language is concrete in XX[this subject], and that can be a barrier.

**Teacher 11.** That one [1-10] is kind of hard to answer. Here's why. I think it is important to understand that stuff [abuse] could be going on at home. But I also think it is important for all kids to come to a place where nobody knows their story and I see them for who they are here. So, is it important [to know about home lives]? If it is something abusive and should be reported, then it is very important to me. But if it is not, then not so much.

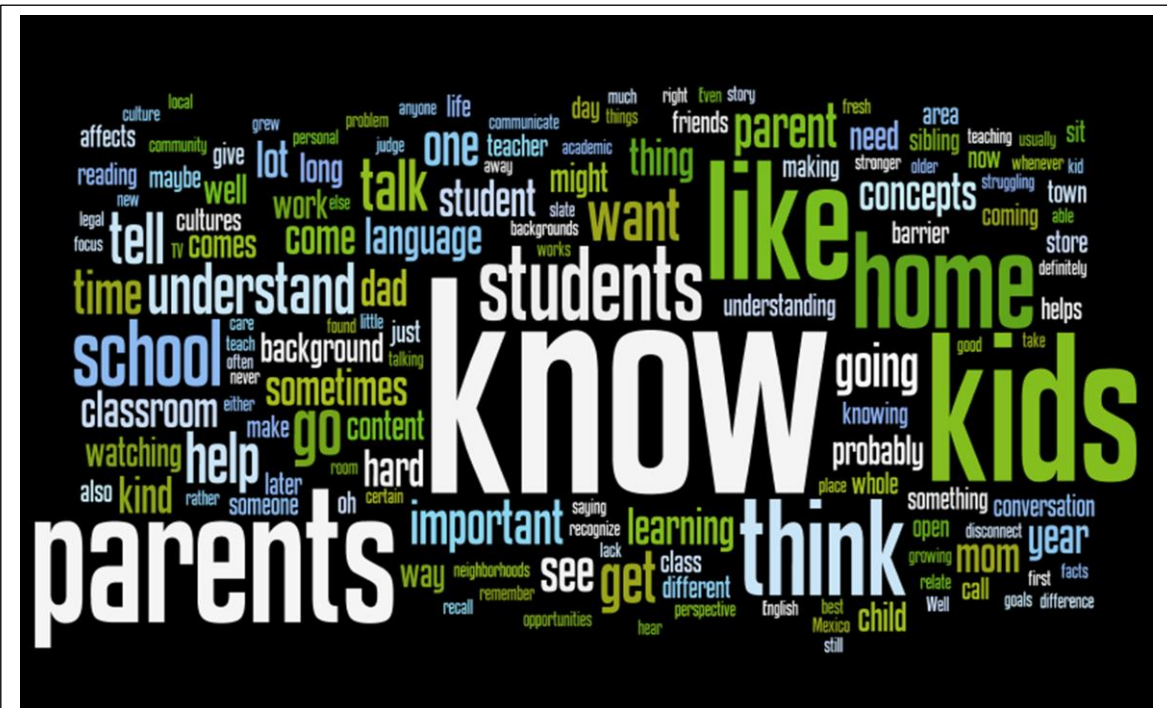
**Teacher 12.** So it [knowing about students' lived experience] kind of gives me a background, like well what if I do what they were doing over there [previous school], or maybe if I give them some extra time; it all depends on what's going on at home. And I've seen that it affects their learning, and the kind of relationship they have with their parents. . . . Student's situations and their home life? It plays a huge role. It's what motivates them. . . . I like that they share.

**Teacher 14.** We don't have to go to the point that I know your mom and I know your dad and your address, definitely not; it's I know you as a person. Because when you get to that point [of knowing them as a person], they will start sharing what is necessary for them: "Hey, you know my sister" . . . "Yes, you do," and they open up opportunities to be definitely different opportunities to maintain respect and keep all the other boundaries in an environment conducive to learning. . . . When you are in Title I schools, we already know it's not the paycheck. It has to be a little more, deeper than that. You have to be able to relate to what is in your classroom, and if you cannot relate to them, to understand the culture in your classroom, then it will show.

**Students' home life and parent involvement.** *What is important for teachers to know about our students' lives outside of school?* Teachers stated knowledge that they perceived



important regarding how students live their lives. Responses in this section included the codes home lives, parents, parent involvement, lack of resources or poverty, and drugs. Only one teacher mentioned “drugs.” Figure 8 showed the most commonly used words in teachers’ explanations of the importance of knowing about lived-experiences and their home lives.



*Figure 8.* This graphic created by the researcher using Wordle.net illustrated the most frequently used words by participants regarding what teachers need to know about their students’ lives at home. Besides the words know, students, parents, and home, notable also are the words language, watching, understand, conversation, friends, and time.

*Teacher 1.* [The best way to understand how to teach our students is], I think, talking to the parents. The kids are going to give you a very biased perspective. They want you to know their side. I think the parents are more willing to tell you what they think about the school, what they think about their child because the parents that I’ve talked to whenever I have a problem with the student, when the student is having difficulty in class, or they’re not performing either because of lack of effort or lack of understanding, they will

tell me, “He doesn’t pay attention. He’s not good at this, this, this.” Like, they’re very honest about their child, and they’re open to how we can best help them. And I think for a new teacher, that parent sees the whole thing: what happens at home, when their child goes to school, what they hear about the child doing at school. And they [parents] might not be at school, but that’s a better perspective than what a teacher can tell you, because in order for that teacher to be successful and culturally responsive, you have to understand what is happening in that community.

**Teacher 2.** I usually know, like, “I know your grandma or your dad,” like growing up with their families, and saying, “When we did this and this or I went to this *quinceañera* [a girl’s coming-of-age, fifteenth birthday party],” or I can do a lot of personal connections and it goes from there.

**Teacher 3.** Like I know with certain groups I need to handle discipline in a different way. I know I need to talk to a mom over a dad, and learning that if I talk to dad, it’s going to be worse for the kid [tells story of making this mistake]. . . . I’ve long quit getting mad at parents for not showing up [at school], because they might not have had the tools to do that, and then they see me as XX[self-description] with an education wagging my finger saying, “Your kid’s not doing a good job. . . Well it’s not that they don’t care; they can’t help us.”

**Teacher 4.** I think I know at least 30% of parents. . . . I think there’s a lot of disconnect with kids because they tend to be on their electronic devices a little too much. So there’s a disconnection with adults. It’s like when you’re [you refers to the students] around your parents now, your parents are probably watching TV, and the kids are in their room, hidden away. Even if you’re watching TV, and you’re watching it with your parents,

you're still watching it with them rather than disconnecting. So that's why no phones. I am against it.

**Teacher 5.** The thing about XX[this town] is I can teach those kids [gestures at empty classroom desks], and then later if I have to go to the grocery store, like ugh, I might see them later. "Can I wear these yoga pants? Is that acceptable? Am I gonna run into their parents?" And sometimes I have to decide if I want to stop and chat. And I remember last year when I ran into one of my students' parents at XX[local store], and I did not talk to her mom, and the next day I was like, "Do you remember how I didn't talk to your mom at XX[local store]? Please be quiet," and she was like, "Oh" because I could have been like, "Your daughter needs to do this, this, and this, or your [trails off]."

**Teacher 7.** Some kids will tell me that their moms or dads are illegal, but they did certain things so that now they are legal, and here they are. I tell them that they probably know more about this than I do because I am not from this area: in my home town, we don't have issues with legal and illegal immigration. This is part of our society.

**Teacher 8.** So, knowing where students come from and what religious backgrounds they have is not for me to judge anyone about anything, but rather for me to be more informed and understanding where their mind is. Also, I think we need to know what their interests are, what their goals are, and what their parents have done. . . . If parents work in the fields, it does explain why they [students] might be tired or maybe don't want to work as hard because it could go either way. Before this year I would find out parent backgrounds organically by talking to students. It's at the door. It's often also from their work.

**Teacher 9.** I have a lot of kids whose mom or dad leaves for half a year to go to Mexico. I don't know why they go to Mexico, but the parent is not there, and while the parent is

away, the kids are freaking out because they may not hear from the parent for a long time, and they don't know if the parent is even alive. And the older kids are taking care of the younger kids.

**Teacher 10.** For one thing, we need to know if there is anyone at home who can help them with their homework. If parents don't have a background to help kids, then I cannot be sending home things and expecting to get academic support from parents. I have to make sure I provide all academic supports here in my classroom, after school tutoring programs, during power hour [extended lunch period], or having my room open before school, and being available for students.

**Teacher 11.** The other thing that I have found that I don't do here is I hardly ever call home. And I don't because I had a student that I called home about, and I never would have expected that he would get beaten. But he did. And I felt awful. The kid asked me not to call again. So they [administrators] can tell me to call home all they want to, and they will probably have to fire me first.

**Teacher 12.** Well, some of them migrate a lot, so that affects their social skills. It affects their learning too. Some parents tell me, "Well I don't know what else to do. They don't want to do their work . . . , and I don't know how to help them." Or, "We just came from so-and-so place, and this is what they were doing, and this seems to help them."

**Teacher 14.** It helps to know on the first day something more than the students' names. . . I like to know about their family life. I won't go across the line to ask if both parents are at home because it comes out later eventually throughout the year, so that is something I am patient enough to find out later. I like to know if I have taught a sibling, not for me to sit there and make any kind of prejudgment, as opposed to it helps me to make a

connection. Because if I still see that sibling on campus or know where that sibling works in the community, I can also go and hang and communicate what I have to about it.

**Teacher A.** A lot of the kids here, they've experienced some very traumatic experiences at home and in their neighborhoods, and you can see that difference between my honors class and my lower level class in what they XX[communicate]. But XX[listening] helped me to understand where they're coming from, and it helps me to have a conversation with them whenever they're coming into the classroom: "Oh I know you like this, or I found out about this." It's a way for me to get to know them without having to sit down because I don't have the time to sit down and have a long conversation at the beginning of the year with my kids.

**Cultural knowledge about schools and community.** The following responses addressed teacher perceptions of community culture. The data gleaned were divided into the culture of the community and challenges in the community. The interview questions providing this information were: *What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students; what would surprise a new teacher in our district; and in what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you were teaching in an urban area?*

The researcher framed the questions in terms of "new teachers" and "urban vs. rural" to tease out community perceptions of the interviewees. Codes included responses to these questions and thoughts that were expressed off topic to other questions as well: new teachers, life in this town, surprising, school climate, and urban vs. rural.

**Teacher A.** There are different layers of culture in this town. We have a big Latin-American community here with its own traditions, and then you have the people who have been here for many generations of ranchers, landowners, and agricultural industry

workers. My family had a book that was published in the bicentennial, 1976, and included all the counties in Florida. I remember the book well, and I remember memorizing all the county seats when I was a child. My mother still had the book, so when we were talking about moving here, I went back to the book and looked up our county. I read that this area was a predominantly White, middle-class, agricultural community where lots of millionaires with lots of land drove beat-up pick-up trucks but didn't show their money. They had a lot of land and lots of resources but didn't drive Bentley's like they do in places like XX[nearby city]. There was a restaurant in town where we used to go when we first moved here. Our pastor would go there for breakfast with a group of us. We'd hang out, and all these guys in jeans and pick-up trucks would park outside the restaurant. The pastor would tell us not to judge because most of these folks would have seven-figure incomes. They were all down-to-earth kind of guys. Those families are still here, but the per capita income is not the same, for sure. Then the '80s and '90s brought the changes and influx of the Hispanics. Our median and probably mean income has certainly gone down. This power structure is still here, but everybody in this area still gets along great. We are a very conservative area, and that surprises me. I've been here most of my adult life, and I am considered one of the new people because I did not go to school here.

**Teacher B.** When I start to describe XX[name of town] to people, I say it's basically an inner city in the middle of nowhere.

**Teacher C.** And it's really, we [teachers] have to do what we can as best that we can within that moment. You'd love to hope that that kid can go home and XX[do homework] at home, but truth is he's either going to go out and pick or he's got brothers

and sisters to take care of or he's got other things to take priority over XX[homework], and understanding that you can affect only what's here and making the best of what you have here, and not getting frustrated over that fact.

**Teacher D.** Parents are afraid to come to the school because if they don't have papers, they think we are going to turn them in. They are very much afraid. I don't know why that would be. I am certainly not asking for social security numbers or papers as soon as someone walks in to talk about a student. It should be spread out to the parents also that they shouldn't be afraid of the schools.

**Teacher E.** And I don't know if the girl was getting emotional because of something that I was saying about immigration, or if there was something else before class unrelated, but the girl started to cry a little bit (I noticed it before other students did) and I said that there are two sides to every story. There's good and there's bad with every political idea, but this debate on immigration is a reality that we face. . . It is not just stuff of the textbook that we say we learn but we forget. This is the stuff . . . that we live every day. Friends live it every day, and society lives it every day. Relating this is more powerful than just studying the textbook. It's real.

**Teacher F.** We know that most kids have to deal with planting, and the agriculture is a big business, and that's a trend in this area. And [it's a trend] they have both parents because that is what is expected in Hispanic and Catholic culture. And the American kids, most of them don't have both parents. I think it is because Hispanics have the culture of no divorce; you have to stick through it. The Americans will be seeking happiness, and if it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out, and they move on looking for happiness.

**Teacher G.** Everybody knows everybody here, and everyone has known everyone

forever, so there's really tight niches. And new teachers have to know who the Whos are. That's my first thing. That's where I failed the first time. [Tells story of learning about who are Whos, the powerful people in the community] I worked really hard for something that did not work out because of how the community is . . . . So you know that some kids can never get in trouble here. They won't get in trouble. They are a Who. So you think, "Why would I send you [referencing a student who's a who] to deal with XX[discipline office] if nothing is ever going to happen there?" So I have kind of taken that into my own hands. I don't send anybody out. Instead if someone is in trouble, they deal with X[me] here and [me] only. I don't believe in punishment: I believe in getting you back. I tell them that, and they get really worried. That's a big deal here.

**Teacher H.** I just hope that although they see that there's more than XX[our town] out there, I just hope that they honor and appreciate the rarity that XX[our town] is. I've been in XX[two metro areas], and I've been all over, but there's something special about this little town that people don't see until they see the ugliness that's out there. And I don't want them to be so sheltered that they never leave here or understand . . . you don't get it until you see the world, and then you understand what a treasure what we have here is.

**Teacher I.** The first thing you need to do is to understand the town and what the town is about and what the opportunities are for our graduates to grow up and do. Like when I first came here, kids would tell me I am going to be a welder; I'm going to work for my dad, or I am going to work on a ranch. They didn't say that they were going to college. We cannot assume that not every kid knows that he wants to go to college or even knows what going to college is like and how to get there. We cannot assume anything culturally because just going by the face. Not everyone has had the same upbringing as we did. We



may have grown up in the same town, but we all have different values and our parents have different ways to do the same kinds of things. So we are different even though our faces may make people think that we are the same. Even in the same classroom, with most of us growing up in the same town, we all have different stories.

**Teacher J.** Our community is very family-oriented here. Even if the families aren't very connected with the school, they are family-oriented here. It may be because there's no movie theater, there's no chillin' spot, not much for them to do, so people get focused on doing things with and being with their families. I know that's true for Hispanics generally, but I don't think that is just culturally Mexican or Hispanic to be family-oriented, because it is American-White too. It may be a rural thing, and culturally linked to the rural areas. It's a here thing.

**Teacher K.** To mean, I drive around and see the outside of houses, I've been to a couple of houses as a homebound teacher, but even that was shocking to me. It's hard to imagine that people live like that. And what some of the kids in my class reveal to me you would never have expected from that particular child. I try to be aware. You know, you pick up cues: are they happy; are they sad. I don't know that I really understand them [students' lives] . . . [Teachers may say they know others and know the town], but do they really know everything about everybody, or, sorry to categorize, or do the White people think they know about the White people . . . the Hispanic people know about the Hispanic people, and the African-American know about the African-American? And so on. To me, it's all clumped. (We do have some inter-racial, but not as much as I am used to in XX[where I am from].) Or even more, do they know about only those in their same neighborhood? How much do we really know?

**Teacher L.** I think there's the illusion of wanting change. I don't know how to word it: we're all very on board with wanting to change our culture and be culturally responsive, but then at the end of the day, a lot of people go back into their classroom, close their door, and do the same thing. So it would surprise a new teacher to see us in a big group talking about all these great things, and then walk into someone's classroom and see that what we actually do doesn't necessarily line up with what we said we were going to do.

**Challenges faced by students and community.** These responses addressed the issues which teachers, using alphabetic pseudonyms, perceived challenged the community. They included issues like limited resources, drugs, migrant work, lack of understanding, immigration.

**Teacher A.** Um, I think we don't have the resources we need to meet the needs of our community. So that makes the job even harder. I think in a suburb, it might be easier within the classroom even if you didn't have the resources just because of the demographics you would expect to find there. And in the inner city, at least you have more resources because they are trying to improve that. But we are somewhat caught in the middle and I would say because they [long pause] because these kids go through the gangs, the violence, the poverty, and yet we're not getting the resources we need to have them ready when they leave.

**Teacher B.** Here there's certain families that everyone [in town] knows are in the [drug] business, but it's not as common, as accepted as widely, here as it is there [big city].

**Teacher C.** You can't get mad at a parent for not coming [to school meetings], but they either had their own bad experience with school; they don't want to be made to feel like they're a failure because their kid's not doing well; and parts are not just because of the culture, but because of the poverty and this community in particular. They just can't . . .

And I said, “You know there are some families, some students who come to school with us, who don’t have that. They don’t have running water in their home; they don’t have electricity; they don’t have the electronics that some of you have.” And you could see some of them going, “Well, why not?” And so I think they just don’t know how desperate some places of our town really are . . . We do have kids that live in desperate situations, and this may be the only safe place they have, and the only place they get something to eat. And this may be the only place they can, y’know, use a clean restroom. And that part of it is desperately, horribly sad.

**Teacher D.** But um, [regarding challenges] I just think that they have big dreams, which isn’t a bad thing, but they have big dreams, and I think that they just get kind of bored with the lack of things that are available [to do here], but I think could be available, with, uh, the right people in big positions. Because I think we need more for the kids to do outside of school. And that’s why the things that are available aren’t always good things.

**Teacher E.** Like I had to print out these questions, because the Internet system is pretty awful, and one of the questions was like, “Click on the XX[item],” and they were like, “XX[teacher name]I can’t click on it,” and I just give them this look like “I’m going to hurt you,” but they know that I’m not.

**Teacher F.** Because there are so many new teachers, it is easy to form bonds because we are all trying to figure out what we [new teachers] are doing. I know it kind of stinks for the kids because of the turnover rate and the problems with consistency from year to year.

**Teacher G.** The negative [thing about this area] is rumors. We all have these perceptions of what people say. I tell kids that just because others have said that this person you have heard is a certain way or said something, actually meeting and getting to know the person

or hearing their own story can surprise us when we make our own judgments. They have likely heard the old saying “don’t judge a book by its cover,” and until they experience something for themselves or get to know someone closely, they should not judge others.

**Teacher H.** Usually one parent leaves XX[our town] and the other one stays, usually because of work. We don’t have the opportunities. I have even seen people stay married and separate because there is no work opportunity here for them. Like the husband leaves, and the wife doesn’t because there is an opportunity for him, and she will stay here with the kids where they have a good school and XX[a local community college scholarship], so they are afraid to go somewhere else . . . some parents are such low income they cannot miss work if a child gets sick, so siblings miss school to stay home instead of parents. A lot of girls don’t make it to senior year because they have babies.

**Teacher I.** Well we went through that depression phase where these people [wealthy people in town] didn’t; they lost a lot of money. And when a lot of people got deported, they [the wealthy] lost crops. XX[our town] lost a lot because of that. Whether they like it or not, the immigrants are the ones who work the fields. They’re the ones who make the economy . . . and during the summer, I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but during the summer, it[town]’s empty. And the stores, they don’t make as much income. . . . We have a lot of kids who come in late to school and leave early. They come in, some kids even start coming in now because they’re migrant children, and they’re trying to finish picking up North. During March, they start leaving up North, even if it’s just within the state, and they start migrating. And that [migrating] reflects in their test scores.

**Teacher J.** Yes, it [topic of immigration] can be touchy sometimes, but they [students] manage to be open about it. They *were* open-minded about it [before the recent election].

There's an Asian in the [border crossing] movie, and he [a surprised White student] said, "Even Asians?" And I said, "Yes, you don't have to be Hispanic to be illegal. People from Asia come illegally, and from all over the world." I saw on his face, like, "wow that's kind of" [trails off]. "About the stereotype that you're usually Hispanic, and you're illegal, and you work in the fields," I said, "that's not true." I said, "Y'know, you can be Hispanic, and you can be illegal, and you can be light-skinned. You can look like a White person and be Mexican, Cuban or Puerto Rican." So, that helped them understand.

**Teacher K.** Socio-economic groups are pretty strong here too. I'm sorry, I hate saying this as an example, but we can use XX[a sport]. Most of those XX[players'] families are mostly middle-class or more, and it's clear that's what it is. And it's been that way for a while. Why? I have no idea. Whereas XX[another sport] is the flip-side. There may be a few middle-class XX[gender], but mostly those XX[players] get up and go to work doing whatever [interrupted by student coming in the room to ask a question], and they've been working all summer. They get up on Saturday and Sunday and do some sort of manual labor like laying sod or whatever their father needs them to do. And on top of that, they are still doing their XX[workouts].

**Teacher L.** There is no close neighborhood here, like in a city. There are farms and houses are spread far apart. Unless they live in town, and some cases even for those who live in town, they have to go far to get to each other's houses. Kids don't have cars until they can work, and then who has money for gas except to go to work and support the car or the family? Here people don't know where to go to get assistance. There is assistance they could have, like the United Way here in town. They do everybody's taxes for free. I don't think people know that is even available for free.



**Acts to learn about students' experiences.** Responses in this group were mostly gained from teachers' answers to the interview question: *What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?* The codes associated with this section were getting to know students and talking to parents. The alphabetical pseudonyms may be duplicated responses from teachers identified by numeric pseudonyms here also so that process of elimination cannot reveal identity. Three teachers talked about the bus ride that one of the educational leaders took new teachers in the district on to see the way students in the district lived, with an emphasis on how this area was different than White, middle-class suburbia. One teacher said it was an effective, good idea. Another said it "is important, but I think to get them more of a connection is [more] important," and the third was opposed, saying it sends the wrong message, and a visit or exposure to effective teachers' classrooms would be more important.

**Teacher A.** I had XX[subject area] parents' night. I invited the kids to come, too, but not many did. What I did was to give the parents a sample of XX[the end of course exam]. And I said parents, "I want you do this, and see how good you are." Some parents were amazed and said, "I don't even know how to do this, and my son or daughter is going to have to do this?" And I said "Yes, welcome to their world. This is the exam that we are preparing for all year." I had a significant number of parents.

**Teacher B.** [I took a summer job] in a neighborhood with kids from a background very different than mine. That besides teaching and coaching, which was the number one way to break down the barrier I had when I started working here. Seeing how kids act and live in their own neighborhood away from school; I could say, "I already know your behaviors from XX[place of employment]," and I could say, "If you get in trouble in other teachers' rooms because of your behaviors, you can come to me and I can help

you.” So my summer job was an opportunity to get to know the kids in a different way. And I got to know the streets in this area, and where kids live. I saw the parents too.

**Teacher C.** I play on a XX[local sports] team. And some of the XX[students] who play here are on that team. So they’ll ask me, “Hey are you going to that game?” Or I go and watch their games; I used to coach, so we used to bring that in too. When I help at the gate, I say, “Hey I saw your game,” you know, “good game,” or um – even if they’re away, I go. I graduated from here. I tell them, “Well back in our day this is how this was.” They say, “Wait, you came to school here?” I say, “Yes, XX[teacher name] was my teacher; XX[teacher name] was my teacher.”

**Teacher D.** [The best way to learn about students’ home lives?] That’s one of the things we have to improve on. I know we have the PTO [Parent-Teacher Organization], but one of the things that I’ve heard over and over again, and even when my mom was trying to be a part of my own education, it is a very specific person that goes, and they look a certain way. [Pause] and it is a little intimidating for someone who doesn’t work or look that way. This year we’ve made it a point to try to get a more representative demographic in the PTO of our own community. And I had four parents come in who were Hispanic: Three of them didn’t speak English, but I was translating for them. They stayed thirty minutes after, saying, “Well we see this, and we see that. We want to do this. How do we get started?” And if we hadn’t had a translator, if we hadn’t had someone who was willing to listen and stay thirty minutes later, we would have never know that this is what they see; this is what they want to do. And so if we really want that resource, that conversation, that dialogue to happen between the parents and the teachers, I think either improve the PTO or create the alternative group for which I would advocate.



**Teacher 2.** [To get to know what students' lives are like?] I would say, "Don't be afraid to get involved in community events." A lot of people I know who have moved here they get, well, [pause]. This isn't like XX[regional metro area]; it's not like XX[nearby large city]; there's nothing to do here. There's things to do. You just have to be willing to look for them, to participate. Like last night we had a downtown revitalization event. I always see dozens of my students at those things, just knowing they care. During season [when different sports are played] you can go to XX[the park] where everyone's playing baseball or longhorn football or the soccer matches at the other park behind the elementary school. You just need to be, like, be around. You don't have to be like, "Hi, I'm so-and-so. I really want to be part of this community." They recognize you by being around. We're very [pause], I'd say the town's very welcoming, if you come in the right way. If you come in very overbearing, like "this isn't how it is up North," or "this isn't how it was over there," well then, go back, if you don't like it. But if you just are learning and an observer, eventually you just get into the fold.

**Teacher 3.** Yeah, I think this year I did more writing with a "tell me something I need to know about you" theme, so it gave kind of an anonymous view. Y'know, establishing up front that we're not reading it out loud; no one's going to see it but me, unless you want to share. So that's worked sometimes: you get those bits and pieces where you go, "Oh, it's good to know that."

**Teacher 8.** Also, get involved in the town. I don't mean go join all kinds of things, but look at the local newspaper regularly, and go to festivals that the whole town turns out for. Be aware of the power of those festivals for a community. Shop in the stores, and go to a church if it is something that you do. Understand that a lot of these kids are

interconnected, and everybody knows each other or else knows of each other. Everybody. Teachers have to understand the family and neighborhood connections and if one thing is said, it pretty much spreads like wildfire! This is a good thing and a bad thing because if something happens in school, it affects the whole town. If something good happens, we think it is great, and we all celebrate like a family. If something negative or tragic happens, it is good to know that the whole town is with you in a way, supportive and ready to help if they can. It is very unique to a small town environment that you don't always hear about in larger places.

**Teacher 9.** You learn this by talking to the kids. They say things like “my family has been here forever” or “I own this restaurant or this business,” so if you own things, you are supporting our little place, and if you support things monetarily, then you become a valuable person . . . It shouldn't be like this, but different people have different values here. Or “you taught my brother.” “Who's your brother?” And so on. Now I've been here XX years to know this now. I think this is where I [suffered from not knowing] before.

**Teacher 10.** At the beginning of the year, I have always sent a letter home in English, Spanish, and Creole. The letter told parents a little about me and what we will be doing in class, and what the expectations are for homework, and where the grades come from for class. Because I am not fluent in other languages, I would have others help with translation. Also, a standard practice for me is to make a phone call home during the first weeks of school just to have parents hear my voice and know that they were welcome at parent nights. If XX[we have different languages] I would have someone nearby who could translate, and read what I wanted them to tell parents, and tell me what they said so I could write it down and have that on file for when we had parent meetings . . . To get to

know the Who's Who, you have to hang out at the restaurants in town. Get involved in church. Knowing and getting to know families, siblings, and relatives really matters.

**Teacher 12.** I talk to their parents. A lot of them come – not a lot of them, but some parents come during their parent teacher conferences, and I get to know them, and I get to know where they're from, where they're coming from. And that helps to know . . . I'd say maybe 10% that I talk to throughout the year . . . either through parent conferences or at the beginning of the year at open house, emails, and phone calls, probably about 10%.

**Teacher 14.** I think the fact that when a student says “you got a minute to talk to me?” and you make the time to listen to what they have to say, that's very important. And more times than not when a student tells me that, they mean it. They need me. [Softer] I had that happen to me during lunch [today]. A student just walked up to me and handed me their phone. And I felt bad because I am aware of the [lack of] rapport they have with their parent, but they went a step farther and asked me to read what their parent wrote in a text. What their parent said to them, to get a little sharing I guess of closer understanding of what actually transpires with the dialogue that they share with each other, and, when I read it, that was the first time I ever felt bad for her. And I really felt bad for her. Hey, you hear kids say, “They don't care; they don't care.” And caring. When we are upset as parents, it's a lot easier to say that you have hurt me, or I am upset with you, than to say any other words past that. When we [adults] start using those other words [harshly and thoughtlessly], then as students, children, it really sends ruffles throughout their bodies and their minds. [About another situation] I think “Wow, that kid keeps coming back because they want my advice.” . . . I shared that with the parent yesterday, and I said “I noticed that your son keeps coming by my room and asking me questions because he

wanted my perspective on it, and I never realized that that was what he was doing.”

**Accessing students learning preferences.** This section presented teachers’ responses to the interview question: *Do you take into consideration students’ learning preferences? If so, how?* The passages coded as learning preferences illustrated both what knowledge teachers value and what knowledge was used to inform their teaching, as in the first research question.

**Teacher 5.** I usually try to do both [follow the curriculum map and provide for learning preferences]. I usually try to use XX[subject area hands-on tool], and they’re a great manipulative, and I’ve noticed, and maybe it’s because I’ve had the higher level kids, they’re like, “No!” The lower level kids like that, I think, because they can see it; they can move it; they get why you’re doing it . . . But I think with the higher level kids, it’s more work, and they’re like, “I’d rather just do it on paper.” But I try, when I can, to build those things in, and to give them a visual representation of the things we’re working on. Like the XX[written words] . . . I try to make . . . that something visual. Um, and in the past I’ve done things. . . But now with XX[this course] it’s pretty fast paced. You kind of just have to keep going [because of the curriculum map].

**Teacher 14.** It also helps to know their comfort zones as far as the learning. There are some who are like hey and have no problems with XX[the course I teach], and some do. I also want to know if they have a problem with speaking; hopefully they say no, but if they do, I tell them, I’m sorry, but you will be talking a great deal to me. And I think that one of the things that it helps to do is to get them not here, but here [pointing near to far] meaning to be college-ready or workforce-ready, and not just say, okay, you are done with this class. It’s through the communicating with me, the speaking with me, that it allows them to be able to go into the workforce and hold conversations with their boss,

their peers, and still be able to exchange what they need to as far as work-related duties. You don't want to be working with somebody who is basically not saying anything. I think you can have way more production with knowing the people you are working with as opposed to not knowing the person next to you.

**Teacher 9.** Every year, we develop new activities, so I can't really say what works the best. We tweak activities depending on what kids I have because they don't always work the same . . . I think that may be why I try so many different activities because I just don't really know what catches each of them, and I want to have a variety of ways to learn the content.

**Teacher 1.** Sometimes the curriculum does not lend itself every day to be culturally responsive. Sometimes you have to engage with the text, like first exposure to it, I can do some opening activities where I bring in what they know, but once we're reading the text, just that first reading, it's hard for me to bring in. Afterwards, when it's oh this connection too, I bring in a lot of the Mexican culture because that's a lot of my students.

**Teacher 4.** I think it's easier to understand their backgrounds based upon their work ethic. You can easily identify the ones that are going to work and the ones that aren't going to work. You go out there you can tell right away which ones are going to [do the work of the class], or even if they don't want to get their hands dirty, you can see them step up as far as trying to direct people, and trying to help people in different ways.

**Teacher 3.** The district has designated more often and especially what we can teach and what curriculum we go for. And the curriculum I have right now has limited me to far less of that creativity, and it's kind of frustrating . . . We're using XX[standards-aligned popular curriculum program], which is very structured. I've tried to pull in more creative

things to go along with that. Some people in administration are okay with that, and others are like, “You’re off. You’re way off from where you should be.”

**Goal setting or talking about the future.** This section addressed the interview question: *Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about their goals for the future?* Codes associated with this section were goal setting or visioning the future, and the college and workforce preparation program, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID).

**Teacher 1.** I think whenever we talk about the future, it’s more when we’re trying to XX[link to coursework] and why we should be good people. Um, in terms of goals, for college or higher education or after high school, and it comes up with XX[when I make an assignment] like, “Why do we have to do this, or why can’t you be okay with this [less than acceptable work]?” And I always say, “You’re constantly having to improve because when you’re trying to apply for college; um, your GPA is going to reflect on it.” I haven’t heard them talk about it [goals] that much. Sometimes I hear kids talk about, “Oh, I’m going to play professional soccer or football,” so it’s always the professional players. So, um, I know they talk about it [goals] a lot in AVID, and I guess that’s why I feel a little better. Like I haven’t had specific activities in this class, because a lot of them are in that class, and that’s specifically to talk about college.

**Teacher A.** I think I like the fact that AVID allows the student who perhaps may have thought a door was closed to them have the opportunity to excel as a student, and maybe even change their socio-economic status for themselves and their family. So with the opportunity to go to college and be successful in college, it is almost what’s not to like about it [AVID]. We have a scholarship, yes, to XX[a college in the area], but it is more than that. They get structures to help them with college prep test scores, the awareness of

a lot of other scholarships that are out there, and even more how to become even more college ready. Most students, it think what happens, is that when they graduate, they are not college-ready. Most of our students are not college-ready when they graduate.

Because of AVID learning structures, what we do with them using Socratic Seminars and Philosophical Chairs, they get to practice that thought process of thinking outside the box--it allows students to be able to think off the paper, and I think that we don't give students enough practice thinking off the paper because we are so busy pushing it.

**Teacher B.** That's been hard with this curriculum in particular because the texts that they picked are so far removed from anything that they've studied before, that they even knew about. So I have spent a lot of time giving background knowledge, especially with this. And I do think community-wise, that's our biggest problem is because we have so few kids who have [traveled], and if they've traveled, they've traveled back home, and usually home is Puerto Rico or Mexico, and that's their only experience. Um, so when you have, especially with XX[this content area], you have texts about Europe, and you have texts about those other places, and I'm very thankful for the Internet that I can quickly pull up [images. For example, when Alcatraz Prison in San Francisco was mentioned in a text,] I said, "Hey, let me pull up the webcam for Fisherman's Wharf," and I pulled it up, and there's kind of a u-shaped area with a bunch of restaurants, and I said, "I XX[have been here] for dinner, and then you'd get on a boat, and you could head out to Alcatraz, . . . and over here, there are a bunch of sea lions that would hang out and make horrible noise. Let's see if we can hear them . . . I think that I haven't traveled a lot or done much, but comparatively, I'm a world traveler, and that makes me sad because I figure, okay, if I have that opportunity to share that, then maybe at least one kid goes

home and says, “Hey my teacher said blah blah,” then at least one kid has maybe a dream to go, “Hey maybe I’ll go there some day.”

**Teacher C.** “I want you to be successful as an adult. I want you to be a productive citizen.” I am probably one of the few who will say that on a constant basis because the more that I share it, the more they will hear it, and hopefully at some point it will motivate them to realize that it is important to do.

**Teacher 2.** So we talk all the time about how important it is to know why you’re doing something, not just because but what do you believe, how are you going to make it clear to somebody else? Kind of like that old Aaron Tippin song, that old country song that says, “You gotta stand for something or you’ll fall for anything,” that’s kind of the concept I try to instill with them.

**Teacher 7.** I think the thing that helps me the most is that I am still kind of young. I tell the kids, look, if they are doing something and it is not good, halfway done, or something that shows that they are not doing their best work, I stop from what everybody is doing, and I will stop and go sit on a desk somewhere in the room, and I say, “I want everyone to stop and look at me, now. And hey, I’m not that far from college, and I have friends who have gone into school and partied their way right out.” And I say I know what could happen if they don’t do their best at this. . . . I see the negative side of what can happen. I tell the kids the two roads speech: “There are two roads: This is the beginning of your choice to go down one of two roads—you can choose the correct road where you do good work, go to college for four years or work toward a career, get a good job, or you can choose the opposite road.” And I don’t have to say anything more because the kids all know what I am talking about.



**Teacher 14.** When you talk about that word leadership, it is definitely taught in the home, but I don't think that in many homes the dream of trying to be in that position of leadership at the front of any business or professional atmosphere is taught, so when students see someone of their culture as a leader, it allows that window of "aha, maybe I can too" and it may erase that doubt, and that's a great thing for a child to see. And totally in a way that is not sports. . . . I've told XX[own children] that I don't care what you do, just be the best at what you do, and if you have an opportunity to do it not only do your best, make sure you are a leader at what you do. If you work at McDonalds' fantastic, but make sure that while you are working, you are the owner of that McDonalds' restaurant. It's great to have people that society would consider to be on a low part of the totem pole as far as workers, but we should try to push people to want more, and I don't think we do that. To be a rural area that is thriving, you have to encourage people to want to make money. So, how are they going to make money and grow the town if we don't inspire students and produce citizens that want to give back?

**Progress checks and students' self-checks.** This section addressed two interview questions: *What kinds of progress checks do you use, and what ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?* Codes for this section included formative, test, self-checking, and background knowledge. Responses to the question on progress checks often veered into the state test (FSA) which students must pass to receive a high school diploma and on which the school grade and teachers' evaluations were partly based.

**Teacher 1.** For the informal checks, I'll do like the thumbs up or thumbs down for just a quick assessment. Or I'll do a piece of paper or a sticky note where it's just one or two questions so we can get through it quick. Now with the Google classroom, I've been

using the Google Forms as a quick quiz because it gives them the answers right away and for them that immediate feedback is awesome. . . . So it y'know keeps them accountable for the notes and also what they were understanding. Um, and they took that quiz, and it was ten questions, and it was really fast. So, for a lot of them, it just boosts their self-esteem to know I used a tool the day before, that same tool is helpful now, and so they understand why it is we do the different steps we do.

**Teacher 3.** Yeah we try to keep, at least for me, try to keep things that are important to what they're doing immediately up front [points to front board]. I have things along the back [points to back wall of classroom] that we haven't done yet, or things we've already touched on kind of moved to the side, and it's just there to reference. So I've tried to set up the board so they can all see the board, and all see the goals we've been working on, but they can still have some independence within their group . . . I tend to stick close to them [in groups] more than I have in the past, saying, "Hey how are you doing? Do you need anything?" I just let them know that even though they're working, and I expect them to work and to be able to do things on their own, that I'm not too far away. "If you need something, give me the eye or thumbs up, then I'll be back over." And knowing that they can ask and "I'm not going to get mad because you asked." Just being available.

**Teacher 4.** [I grade] Participation . . . As long as they're doing things. And I'll kind of spread it out over a week and they'll get one grade for it. So if it's three days, each day is worth 33%, for four days 25%, for two days 50%, or if it's one day then it's all 100%.

**Teacher 5.** I don't want to say I'm lax on grading, but for their homework and also for a weekly review where they have all week to do it, I check on Friday for both of those. I don't check for correctness. I just walk around the room to see that you have something

down on your paper besides just a random XX[response] to show they tried.

**Teacher 7.** Notes and homework assignments are online; XX[one class does] a daily ticket out the door based on their readings, four or five days a week. They do the ticket out the door on their phones . . . Another way to assess their work the day before is do a vocab and standards quiz . . . I always pull vocabulary items from past units because they need to continue to see the ideas so they remember better . . . I reinforce the standard that they do every day. They need to continually see the concepts and words. For all my students, I do big benchmark tests, too, that are sample XX[high-stakes] tests. We do them at the beginning, middle and end of the year. I tell them that I want to see growth; that's my test. My test of whether I am doing the things that they need in order to grow.

**Teacher 8.** When we go over a new topic, I always stress the purpose and remind them that they have responsibility for their own learning. For example, one time when I did not use the normal Cornell notes for a PowerPoint on XX[a learning activity]. It was taking a long time to work our way through the PowerPoint. When we were finished and I asked them questions about the content of the PowerPoint, they found that they did not remember much of it. So then we redid it with taking notes and stopping to talk, and they remembered more. Another time, we used partner talk using the white boards to answer questions about the notes. So they saw that they had to pay attention and stop and talk to a partner or respond in class if they wanted to remember things that they were learning. What my students needed was to do activities to understand the responsibility they had for their own learning, and how it takes practice to listen and then write and talk about a new idea, so they will have a better chance of remembering it. We may do things together, but there will be a time when they will have to do it themselves; however, they

don't have to go into it blind because I always give them something to help them do the task, and they need to use that aid to do the task.

**Teacher 9.** [Field notes: Each student had a folder to track learning topics and grades. Also, students keep a terminology journal. Students tracked their own progress.]

**Teacher 10.** Even before I knew what Kagan [cooperative learning strategy program] was, I discovered I was doing some of those kinds of things. We had cooperative groups with Kagan-style responsibilities for each group member. It was easy even for kids who struggled because they had a job to do in the group, and safety in the fact that they were never on the spot without having a way to check and see if they knew the answers because others were responsible for the same learning tasks. . . . I have flexible grading; I have multiple calendars. . . . [Field notes described the calendar as posted on chart paper all color coded—different colors for the goals, practice, and formative assessment.] Even their name cards are color coded. I also cut up index cards, and all kids' names are printed on the index cards. I will shuffle the cards and pull a name so they can answer questions, but they have first all had an opportunity to do the task in their small group, so nothing is cold-calling. Someone in the group with this person gets called to XX[explain the task to the class]. The group elects the person . . . or they volunteer.

**The test.** The conversation on formative assessments organically included thoughts on the high-stakes state test. This section included codes on the test, background, and advocacy.

**Teacher A.** Well most kids say, "XX[teacher name] why we need to learn this!" That's what I hear in XX[this subject] all the time. And my smart aleck response to that is "you need to learn this because it's going to be on the end of course exam and you want to XX[be successful in] school, right?" because I can see in their brain that there are some

things they don't need to learn. I'm the teacher, and even I don't do much XX[of this subject area] outside of teaching XX[it].

**Teacher B.** Here's the way I see it with testing: We have testing, and we teach standards, and we test standards. Why don't we have our lessons as far as electives and all these other classes that revolve around the standards, if we're going to test the standards? We know that certain standards that are going to be tested in our reading portion. Well, this is what I'm doing. If I know there's those standards, that's all I'm teaching. . . . But I'm teaching the kids how to comprehend reading, [and] if we aren't doing that, I don't know what we're doing. I've been doing [Florida State Standards number] 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, and 2.

**Teacher C.** At least for the purpose of the class, I ask, "What are we doing here?" They say, "We suck at reading and the testing makes us feel stupid." I tell them, "I used to feel the exact same way." That when I was their age, "I didn't know that I could read that well. I was focused on other things, and I struggled with reading. I struggled a lot in college and had to try really hard to be in class with my classmates, and it was intimidating." . . . In the real world, in work, in college, they will have to work really hard to be on the same playing field, but that doesn't mean that they can't and shouldn't dig in and make their dreams happen because they can if they will. I tell them that they can do it, but it's only them that is getting in the way. When they come back from college, they tell me, "You were right," but they are proud when they do it.

**Teacher D.** I understand that as a country, state, and all that, we get our funding through state testing. It bothers me that we weigh testing so heavily on students that—I realize that even for ourselves when we have bad days or the loss of a loved one, as adults we have a hard time functioning with that, but as a child, when a child loses someone or is

going through some adverse condition, and then they have to go test, they still have to be accountable for the results on that test. And so I'm saying it's sad that when we test them that one day. In many cases, it follows them for however long, and it really *really* bothers me. I think that like now, there might or should be different kinds of tests that we should be using like making sure our students are post-secondary ready, like can they communicate? They need to know how to write, but we also need to make sure that they can work along with others.

**Teacher E.** [The test is not fair because,] for example, they have never been to the thirteenth floor. They have never seen a big bridge, so I can't talk about big bridges and things falling at a certain rate for a certain distance from tall buildings because they haven't seen tall. They don't know what tall looks like. Two-stories is tall to them. They can't get to a beach because they don't have cars, and they don't have money, so I can't talk about it even though we live XX minutes from the beach. And we live in Florida and Florida is a peninsula, but I can't do that because it is not something that they have seen.

**Teacher 3.** We looked at the questions that came up on the FSA [Florida Standards Assessments, the state K-12 assessment system] . . . Why would kids in this community know anything about smog? What is that? Why would they know anything about that? Yesterday they had to write an essay on smog, and they didn't know what that was.

### **Category 3: Caring and High Expectations**

Interview questions, codes, and participants' responses included in this category were aligned with the second research question: *What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?* The researcher posed questions about



**Teacher A.** A big thing for me as far as kids, is you care for yourself, and I'm going to care for you. The minute that you don't care for yourself, it's going to be so hard for me to get you to care. So that's why – it's not that I don't care, it's that it's hard for me to get them to care. No matter what, if you own up to things, if you have integrity, if you make mistakes, listen you can always clean the slate with me as long as you understand the mistakes that you make, and you correct them, it's fine.

**Teacher 5.** Because another thing I mention to them is that I don't want them to get so frustrated when they're at home that they're working until midnight, and they're in tears, because that's something I would do when I was a student. Like, I threw my XX[tool to do the work] into my bedroom wall because I was so frustrated and mad. And I don't want that because it's not useful. I want them to say, "Okay, I worked through this XX[assignment], and I can't get it. XX[teacher] will see I did the work, and it'll be fine." And they always say this to me, like "oh XX[teacher] I didn't get it." And I'm like, "it's fine. We're going to go over it," and usually I let them, once I go around and check it. I let them discuss it again with their neighbor, and if they still have questions, then we can talk about it as a class, and it's usually the same questions that everyone has, so we can get them resolved.

**Teacher 7.** Even with kids who . . . are just here and you don't think that they care, there's something that will happen one day, whether it's when you see them at the store or at a pep rally, or on the field or on the court, and they know how much it means to you when you can connect with them. They may not show it, but it means a lot to them too. Sometimes the look of not caring on the outside is very convincing; I try my best every day to reach out to the students because it will pay off.



**Teacher 8.** Emotional support from a teacher can set the climate in the room. When it comes to confidence and emotional self-esteem, students assume because they have heard “failed” or “level 1” [lowest state test proficiency scores] so many times associated with their performance, they think they are not good enough. I tell them that they have to know where they are right now and appreciate that they worked to get how far they are. When I do data chats with students, I don’t focus on the overall non-proficient score. I say, “Look, look at this section where you did really well and that was because you were working on that section. You made growth there.” They don’t understand why on a diagnostic, I would be so happy for a low score. They need to see the gains that they have made in different areas and be happy with that and try to do the same thing on the other sections of the test. I tell them, “You need to know where you are so you can make a plan to get where you are going.” We want you do a year’s worth of gains. I don’t want you to feel like a failure if you don’t get to the passing score. It depends on how I work with you and how you work with me. I don’t want them to be so hard on themselves. Many are so lacking confidence that when they get a question right and I freak out about it, they are in disbelief. I say, “Trust yourself...trust yourself with what you know.” I think it is because they just don’t get told that they can do it. They often don’t get noticed in other classes.

**Teacher 9.** [My advanced classes] are very competitive. I actually have a student who will circle all the wrong answers when he is doing a test, and when he comes to my desk to turn it in, he whites out his answers at my desk and circles the ones he really means, just in case any of his table people were watching him and were looking at his paper, so they get the problems wrong. He does it every single test. He’s like, “Can I have the white out?” And I am like, “I already have it ready for you.”

**Teacher 11.** You do push for excellence. But . . . kids have so many other things going on that sometimes school is not their priority right now, as much as we would like it to be. Maybe they are being sexually assaulted at home at night, and they come to school, and this is the only place where they are safe. Or who knows what is going on. So I am providing academics for them, but I also want this to be a safe place for them. I give very little homework. They work in class. . . . I think somebody who cares [motivates students to do better in my class.] . . . “The Starfish Story” is my favorite motivational story.

**Teacher 14.** So, I have to do a lot of acting to try to alleviate comfort zones, to let them understand that hey okay, I am more than perhaps what they originally thought. Perhaps more approachable, and I am also more caring, all the things that they are hoping to get from a teacher. I think that what happens with most students is they go off of *like* so much. What they don’t understand, us as adults, when we start saying *like* and *dislike*, it involves lots of feelings. I am more of a person who says “You want me to be fair.” And because if I spend more time trying to be fair to my students, my passion drives. You see it, you witness it, and hopefully through, you can witness on your own as far as *like*, but to use that word, I find that so many young people use the word that they don’t truly understand themselves. It has to be the level of the sense of *like*. I kind of sense that they waver off into places that they don’t need to. This is about learning. And we need to care about learning. They need to allow me to be the one to be doctor, or to be psychiatrist, and let me help you to become better at what we do in this classroom.

**Connecting with students.** These items elaborated caring as making connections.

**Teacher 1.** I try my best to greet them at the door, and either shake their hands or high fives. And then I make sure to tell them to have a good day, and sometimes you just get

so caught up and you don't. If I happen to see them somewhere, or I hear something from another teacher, or I graded something the previous day and I thought it was awesome, I'll let them know personally instead of just letting them read it.

**Teacher 7.** I think that the biggest way to connect to kids is to find one thing that you have in common with each one and talk about that thing. Like maybe one of the kids who aren't the sports kids or who aren't the ones into clubs, I find out that they like video games, and I'll ask about Pokémon because I used to play that game when I was a kid, and I want to know what's new with Pokémon. If you can find one thing like that, it just goes miles with them.

**Teacher 4.** The way I interact with them as far as, I like joke around a lot . . . I think that keeps them involved and draws them in. I usually am very animated when I talk to them, and I walk around, and I fist-bump or high-five or firm handshake on the way in, or ask, "How you doing?" Things like that. I hold the door open and make sure that they were alright over the weekend. Some of these kids have needs. You don't know unless you ask. So it's tough. You have to ask them. You have to interact. You can't be, [restarts] you have to be a little personal with them. I tell them stories about myself, I tell them stories about my family, growing up.

**Teacher 5.** I like to know just how kids operate. Like some kids need a lot of help, and they're always calling, and some kids want you to back away. I know a lot of these kids. And I remember last year. A lot of my kids said, "Oh, I'm so stressed out. I have this due, and I have this due," and I forget that like these are the students, and they care about their grades, and they want to get good grades, and they have these other projects. You kind of forget when you're teaching class that this kid isn't just in your class . . . so I have to

remember that and that they're probably stressed out.

**Teacher 8.** Understand the interests of young people, using their lingo if it is appropriate and terminology that can be a link between a story or a lesson and their interest. Social media, as bad as it is in some ways, can be used to give examples and connections . . .

One of the first activities I did this year was [Field notes: points out four posters that were still hanging on the four walls, colorfully stating these words: strongly agree, strongly disagree, disagree, agree. Posters were used for an activity in which students moved to different areas of the room under the posters.] I would say things like “a woman should stay home and do the work of raising children.” Also, I would say, “Wait. Wait until you see what you kids give you. Don't assume.”

**Teacher 9.** I am at a handicap when I don't know the words for this and that in different Spanish's, and they [students] feel like they are better than me when they do [know the words]. I ask, “How do you say this?” And I let the kids teach me how they say it in their own Spanish. It kind of builds my class and builds my community a bit. I say that I need help, and they give me words. They don't like to feel like you are better than them, and so when I close that door [pointing to the classroom door], we try to be all equal in here, learning together, like I am no smarter than you guys, so let's do this.

**Teacher 11.** So I create a climate in which I make jokes in the class that are specific to that class. And it's your little set of inside jokes . . . Here is the thing, the most engaged and loving students who are in your classroom may act like they don't even know you when they are outside your room. They may act like they know you at XX[local store]. I will do looks and smiles [outside the classroom], but seldom do I say “hi” in the hallway because it is not cool when you are a kid to say “hi” to a teacher. I feel like if I respect

their boundaries that they make with their peers in the hallway, they can be cool, acknowledge me with a look or a nod, but an expressionless face, and yet when they come in here, they can be my “bestie,” or I can be XX[a parent], but they can form bonds in my classroom and do their work in my space while they continue to be cool elsewhere.

**Teacher 14.** The caring comes from me knowing what I went through as a high school student. So to be patient, it’s there. But the problem is when they don’t talk. If they will share with me what they know, I know what they don’t know so I can be of service to help them get it. Make the connections.

**Class climate.** The following sample of teacher responses were to the interview questions: *How would you describe your classroom climate?* Most teachers provided adjectives for their classes, starting with first period and moving through their day, with each class having a different adjective, and none repeated among the twelve teachers. All teachers except two were distracted before they reached the end of their day, mentioning adjectives for up to three classes because they started elaborating providing responses like these samples which follow.

**Teacher 11.** [My classroom is] my happy place. Why is it my happy place? There’s something . . . well, I don’t know what to say without sounding too sappy [pause]. I guess when I get to school, I have prepared something for my kids. Not just something academically, but maybe a little joke or a story. I like to tell stories about myself, my dogs, XX[family member], but I find over time [pauses] I find that more and more kids come through—and it’s not about me, so I don’t want this to sound like it’s about me—you offer something to kids academically, but also as person to person . . . But I think that as I give something to them, at the same time they give me something back because this is my job, and in any job you look for a reward, and by them coming back simply to

share how they are doing in another class, or how something has changed at home, something they have improved in, that's the reward.

**Teacher 5.** Well I would hope that my classroom is a safe space. I used to be a teacher that yelled a lot, and I hate that . . . I yelled, and I was angry, and I was miserable, and then I got strep throat, and I lost my voice, and then I was like, "Oh, I don't need to yell," so then I just stopped. So now when I kind of raise my voice or get cranky with the students, I apologize because I want to model to them what we expect out of them. I think we always say, "Oh students are this and this and this," [blaming them] but "How are you behaving to the students? Are you behaving the way you don't expect them to behave to you?" So I try to treat them with respect, and I try to use a sense of humor as well.

**Creating culture of success.** The following statements were responses to an interview question which generated long and multi-faceted responses which were coded with many codes like success, don't give up, high expectations, respect, and trust, communication skills, mentoring students, making a difference, and preparing for college or getting out of town. The question was *how do you create a culture of success in your classroom?*

**Teacher 14.** They [my classes] know exactly how I want the class to go and exactly what I want them to do, and if that phone rings, I can take care of the business of the phone call, and class will go on just like I was directing it. They will run the class. Those are the rewards and perks when you build up the trust, and you get that rapport with them. They know your expectations, and they will achieve them because they realize, like you said, that they want to be a productive citizen. They wish to go to college; they want order; they want structure; they want those things. There are really a lot of kids here that want that. And on the flip-side, it is just hard because the tools they have may not be the tools

that they need for your classroom, and that it is very hard to make that bridge between the gaps because of the structure of what they might have done before, in the past. They may have seen the content, but perhaps at a lower level.

**Teacher 5.** But I try to emphasize that you don't have to be fast, and you don't have to get it right away. And a lot of these kids, they're great students, and this is the first class where they're actually being challenged. So a lot of these kids aren't getting it right away, and they're saying, "Oh there must be something wrong with me." But I say, "No, it's fine. This is a super hard class." So kind of just balancing that because I don't want to push kids when they just need some time to breathe, to decompress because they're stressed, and I don't want them to shut down and think that they're not good at it. I just kind of want to keep their confidence up and let them know that it's okay to struggle, and it's okay.

**Teacher 8.** I don't give things freely. I make them work for themselves. I am trying to teach them how to fish rather than giving them a fish. I don't want them going out into the world which could hurt them without the tools they need to succeed. A lot of time we want to hold their hand; and I am honest that I am holding a hand now, but I will let go of the pinkie and then another finger and another finger. And I make them listen to me. A lot of kids come back and warn my students about not listening because listening is important. There is a kid-to-kid network that they tell each other about teachers.

**Teacher 9.** [When creating my class climate,] what makes me able to do as well with students on one end of the spectrum as the other? Well, I think it is because I play the role that "I am on your team. We are going to figure out how to do the work together. We are going to crash. We are going to fall, but we are going to try, and we will learn this

together. We are together as a team. From the first day, we are a team, and we have a culture of success.”

**Teacher 11.** XX[one class] might say, “We weren’t really doing anything” because they bring up all kinds of side stories. They go all over the place with their questions, and I act like they are getting off subject, but in reality, they are getting more out of finding answers to questions they raise that spring off the notes than if I redirect them back to the notes because they are learning more about XX[the content area] than they would if they were copying notes. They think they are getting away with something, but I tell them that I have them learning the entire class time because we are Googling information; we are looking in our books, seeking answers to the questions. They have an XX[state test] at the end, and I will never tell the administration this, but I can’t say if XX[that class] will pass their XX[state test], but I tell you what, they will love XX[subject area] and understand how XX[subject area] is connected to life when they leave my class.

**Teacher 12.** [To describe my class] in Spanish, it would be *luchadores* (means fighters) because they struggle at the beginning of the year because they’re in a shock and because [it’s something they have never done], and they resist. But I tell them, “There’s no way out of this class. You either do it, or you do it [meaning no options besides succeeding]. It’s tough, and it’s really tough, and some of them are in limbo because for the first nine weeks, they have D’s because they do not want to do it . . . . And at the end of the day, they say, “Wow the XX[high-stakes exam] is easier than your class.” And I say, “Good. Because I don’t want you to go into it thinking that it’s easy, but it’s really hard. I’d rather it be the other way around.”

**Teacher A.** We bond over papers and we bond over their work. I get really excited and



give them good feedback if they take the techniques I teach and have them make it their own and do their own papers. I also use cultural artifacts that are iconic in Mexican culture, like *chunkla* [the sandal or slipper], *piñatas* [paper maché figures filled with candy and broken open in a game] or *quinceañeras* [girls' fifteenth birthday parties]. I am young, and I know kind of where their heads are: *Snap Chat*—I say it's like a paragraph or a story put into ten seconds in an entertaining way—and *Facebook*, or *Instagram*. I am willing to try to understand their interests and use it in class if I can. I use their phones in a way that works with learning.

**Teacher 4.** [I motivate students with] A combination of things. Competition, a lot of them love competition. That's one thing I motivate them with . . . Teams against teams. Individuals? No, it's so hard to be an individual now. You have to be a team player. You can't run away from it. I mean, no matter where you go, you have to talk to somebody and you have to work with people . . . Out there, I'm not going to encourage a single person . . . [I use] good grades, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, a combination of all of them, you know. I try to teach intrinsic motivation; you motivate yourself. That's something that I try to encourage a lot. You have to feel good about yourself. You have to want to do it for yourself: Don't do it for me. Do it for your parents. Do it because you want to . . . . And I do sometimes show a little favoritism because of that, and that motivates kids sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't motivate kids, and I have to understand that. Um, not favoritism as far as I like that one more, it's like [with the student who is doing what I want done might ask,] "Can I go XX[on an errand]?" I say, "Sure." And [to one who is not doing what I want done, the student asks], "Hey, can I go XX[on the same errand]?" I say, "Hmmm, next time." So, they see it.

**High expectations.** The following quoted responses related to having high expectations.

**Teacher A.** Because my socio-economic status was very low . . . [as a child] I laugh and keep it to myself when people make excuses. I am a person who does not settle for excuses. If there's 24 hours, and it takes you 23 and a half, you find a way to get it done.

**Teacher 1.** Sometimes I get a lot of kids that come in, and they're like, "Why do you make me work at all?" Like they see in a lot of the classes, where the work is just something simple, they get it done and have free time at the end of the class. And so to keep them busy all class period long, working and rigorously, they just see that as, well, "What are you doing to me? Why aren't you doing what the other teachers do?"

**Teacher 4.** There's no way that teaching is an easy job, and if you don't care for these kids, it's going to be even harder. If you do care, you'll do what you have to in order to be able to make them step up.

**Teacher 8.** My classes still aren't perfect. Sometimes, they rely on each other too much. Like when one student tells another student the answer, and I have to remind them that they only think they are helping someone by giving the answer, when in reality, they are hurting that person because they won't know how to do the task on their own.

**Teacher 9.** I have learned that if you are really, really tough, they [the students] like you more . . . They [school administration] . . . say I am too tough . . . Tough in what way, I always try to figure out, and they say tough because I don't give them a break. "No, I don't give you a grade you have not earned. No, you will not pass XX[this class] with me and go somewhere else say I took XX[this class] with XX[Teacher's name] and then not know your XX[subject area]. So, you earn your grade in my class," and I think that is an issue with some people [in leadership] here.

**Teacher 11.** They will perform like nobody's business. They perform to please me. Some of them do not have parents to perform for. And face it, they are teenagers, and most of my students are not going to perform for themselves.

**Teacher 14.** In most classes, you have the front-of-the-room group, the middle-of-the-room group, and the back-of-the-room group. And [some] teachers only teach to the middle group in the class, and the students in the back will continue to play or not to engage and not realize that the learning environment is still going on. So when they sit there and [later] get in an area when they feel they need to be more accountable for their learning, they realize that there are huge gaps. I have some XXth graders, and I can see that their XX[my subject area] level is really low. I would believe that they were the students who were in the back of the classroom, and they weren't forced to be accountable for their learning. And when I talk about learning, I am not talking about testing. I am talking about permission to do and not to do. I think a lot of educators are perfectly comfortable with allowing it to happen that students are not accountable. They let students be in the back of the room if they aren't bothering them.

**Don't give up on a student.** The following were related by teachers on the topic of caring, but focusing on the conscious decision to persist when students seemed to resist.

**Teacher 4.** Yeah, because I think at this age, I mean, you can't give up on kids. You can't give up on kids because they have so much room that they can grow into. They don't understand some of the things that they do. So you have to help them understand, and help them. . . . And I tell them all the time, "Now that doesn't give you a reason to do things one to ten times over! Don't become a habitual offender, but you still [trails off]."

**Teacher 7.** Even if you try your hardest, and you don't succeed with a kid, and if you say,

“I am just going to write them off. I’m done with them. It’s not possible,” they will do something one day [snaps fingers] that just flips the switch. If you keep grinding, know that what you do makes an impact on them, and that’s going to be the biggest. I had a XX[sports team] player when I was the coach. This kid was a headache in XX[the sport]; he would sleep in seventh period, and I must have told him once or twice that he was a headache, but he would ask for rides home sometimes, and as long as admin was okay with it, and I had permission, I took him. I saw where he lived, and I said, “Dude, you have the opportunity to change all of this in front of you.” And there were times when I was just going to write him off and say, “I give up,” but the kid would bounce back and be a different person. He gave me this little champion XX[famous athlete] statue [laughs] because this is what we bonded over, and I’m keeping this forever to remind me [field notes: shows statue sitting on the computer unit next to the monitor].

**Teacher 8.** The culture I create in my class is based on the confidence that the work doesn’t go away, and they don’t have permission not to do it. At the same time, students know that my teacher is not going to give up on me. My lower performing students are not the ones that struggle with that concept as much as the higher performing students. They really don’t like it because they want me to give them what they need to do, give them the answers, and move on. They don’t like me having to drag the answers out of them because they aren’t used to that. But I tell them, “That is why we are here.” I tell them that they have to give it a chance to see if it is going to work. I say it a lot that I want them to come along with me like I am on a journey.

**Teacher 12.** But this girl, she sometimes comes up with [pauses, changes direction], she says she’s “dumb.” I said, “There’s nothing dumb. You just think of things in a different

way. And you're very forgetful, and I understand that, but you need to straighten up your priorities." Sometimes they don't get that from their parents because their parents are never home, or they're the only child or the oldest child, so sometimes they need some kind of guidance . . . and so sometimes we are the people that they get it from. It's kind of scary because I never thought that I would give any advice or guide anybody, but this girl [wrote in a letter to me]: "You made an impact in my day. I look forward to your class."

**Respect and trust.** These two codes were mentioned throughout the responses to a variety of questions, usually separately, but both codes were joined in this grouping.

**Teacher A.** Well, a lot of times people try to act like those differences don't exist, but it's pretty obvious that I'm a White girl; I've always been a White girl; I grew up in a rural town that was all White kids . . . I kind of used my lack of knowledge of the Spanish language and Spanish culture, as and if to say, "Look, I don't know things too. Can you relate to how you're feeling maybe about your lack of XX[content area] knowledge?" And I just kind of joke. They'll say something to me in Spanish, and I'll reply with whatever Spanish I kind of know, which sounds awful, and they kind of laugh, and it shows that I'm human, and I can respect you. Can you do the same?" It's kind of that give and take of showing . . . I'm not going to pretend like I know what all parts of their culture, I don't. And even regionally I think I'm different because I'm not from Florida.

**Teacher B.** But having our teachers understand, too, [that] sometimes you do have that kid who comes in in that same shirt or that same sweatshirt every day, and [they might say], "Well can't they change clothes?" Well, no. That's all they have. I remember one kid in particular that was true, and I finally talked to him about letting me, well, saying: "Would you let me take the sweatshirt to the lady across the way? She's got a washer in

her room. I could get it back to you by fourth period?” And he, grudgingly, took a long time, probably 4-5 weeks, to let me have it so I could wash it for him. And it was just that trust of “Now you know my secret, are you going to keep that secret? Are you going to tell people?”

**Teacher C.** [I say,] “My job is presenting both sides, and we can talk about it, but if the conversation starts getting negative, then I can’t have that because then we aren’t having a discussion, we are having an argument. We have to be respectful because there are people in this room who strongly believe both sides; we have to stay respectful of this. I am trying to teach civil discourse.

**Teacher 2.** My high performing classes that are more trustworthy, that follow through with things, I tend to be more lenient with because I can trust them . . . Because there’s still a lot of teachers even now who say, “I’m your teacher. You need to respect me.” And I tell them, “No, no! I’m going to earn your respect, and you’re going to give it back to me.” Like, I had one student being nasty to me, and I said, “I’ve never been rude to you. I’ve never shown you disrespect, so I don’t understand why are you treating me like garbage?” And he was like, “Wait you’re right.” I’ve not had a problem with him since that day.

**Teacher 4.** I mean, you could punch me in the face, and you come back, and you understand your mistakes, and you work hard and earn my respect again.

**Teacher 7.** School has a cell phone policy, and it is not on the constitution [Field notes: The class rules are on a homemade poster made like the U.S. Constitution on the side wall of the classroom]. I am understanding if a phone goes off one time. If it is the first time that a phone goes off, I ask the student for the phone, and I put it on my desk, and at

the end of class, they get it back. But if the student refuses, then we have an issue with disrespect, and it has to advance to the level of the deans. My class runs on the big number one rule: I give you all the respect in the world, but you have to give respect back to me. If it is not mutual, then our relationship doesn't work.

**Teacher 9.** At the beginning [of the year], they tried to find ways to cheat. They wanted to put papers under their test because [they thought that] it is so hard. And then they get the test, and they think "I can't believe I am about to cheat on something that I already know the answers to." And you can see that they start slipping their [hidden] papers off the tables, putting them away. And I kind of let them do that thing because they have to learn to trust me. I see that they are not doing this anymore because they already knew the answers. They have to learn to trust me to teach them and trust themselves to learn the material that they need to know.

Part of this is relationships, building relationships. And this group has failed so many times. It's not just ELL's [English Language Learners]. It's also those who have a lot of absences and who have a history of not being successful in their classes; so they could be higher achieving learners, but they fail because of attendance.

**Teacher 11.** Lunchtime is nuts [meaning busy and fun] in here [points to the empty classroom]. . . . There might be fifty, sixty, seventy kids in here, completely self-controlled. I never have to say a word. Occasionally one or some of them will come over to talk for a little bit, and then they leave, and you would never know that all those kids were in here eating. There's no evidence that they had a lunch tray in here. There's no garbage in here; maybe occasionally a milk carton, but it's rare that there's anything left. [Field notes: the room is extra-large, includes many tables, at least fifty chairs, and tidy

though it was at the end of the day. There was no evidence of lunch trays even in trash cans.] It's such a beautiful thing to watch because they have established a place where they control their environment, and I am simply an observer.

**Teacher 14.** So . . . I think that when we have been doing this for a while, it benefits us when we do get siblings in class. It benefits us because of trust, and it also hurts us. What matters as teachers is that trust because when it comes to learning, if you have that trust with a student, it tears down all the other walls. And I think that's where we need to get to when we first get kids in our classes in August. We have to get the trust going. We have to let them know that we will put the time in to let them learn.

**Building communication skills.** The following were comments teachers made about helping students build their own speaking and writing skills.

**Teacher 14.** [Teacher offers perception of the reason other teachers said Socratic Seminars and Philosophical Chairs activities were "too hard" for their students] It's simple, because it's communication. I tell my students that they have no idea about the power of communication. It's the most important thing in life. They tell me that I don't have any idea what I am talking about, and I say, "Oh, yeah? Try being in a relationship with someone and never telling that person that you love them. I don't think that other person will stay around very long. I say, "Trust me, your words can hurt, and they can heal." So being able to communicate in relationships is important, but it also leads to the work world. And . . . using a resource that matters to them [for a seminar or Philosophical Chairs activity] makes the world of difference. You need a resource that sets an academic tone but also matters to them, like Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech.

**Teacher 8.** One of my unwritten rules is that when I say good morning, they should say



good morning back to me, even if they are having a morning that doesn't feel so good. As long as they tell me good morning, they come in the room. Some students will never talk to me beyond good morning. I have had a student for two years, and she is the sweetest thing. I don't think it is that this girl doesn't like me. I don't think it is something personal like how she feels about me. I think it is just how she is. She keeps to herself. I always say, "XX[her name] I know do this really cool thing that you don't want to let just anyone know your secrets. I know you don't want people to judge you, so you keep your thoughts all together, and you only let special people know you." But we have a way to communicate. She will be the only one who gets my joke once in a while, and she will smile a little smirk, and we will make eye contact so we both know what she understands, and I will say, "You get me, and I get you."

**Teacher 12.** They [students] are afraid [to speak] because they don't know how to say it correctly XX[in class]. And I try to correct them, and they're like, well, "You always correct." I say, "Well, of course I have to correct you. But don't feel like it's wrong. It's just this is the way you want to say it." And they kind of think about it. It's hard for them to switch from English to Spanish, and the writing is always an issue.

**Teacher A.** [The job I had before I started teaching] was really team-oriented and team-based, and everyone had to contribute in order to make the process work. . . . That XX[business name] experience has been helpful, and treating this classroom as . . . "a business, and our business is to make you a successful adult. And all these things that we do here, how can that help you going forward? And truthfully some days, what you guys did or are what you're doing now, in my other life, I would have fired you." And understanding that the expectations for social interaction and social pieces have to be

there, too. So, they're always really surprised, like, "You can't do that," and "Well, I have, and that's just part of what business people and society are going to expect of you." So really, combining those two things has been really important, and culture of success means being able to succeed in society as well, not just XX[this class]. I say, "This will be a good part of it, in how you will communicate with others. Can you communicate by writing? [Or] by speaking?"

**Mentoring students.** Mentoring students was coded as a form of both types of caring.

**Teacher 4.** You can see a certain look in their eye, but you don't know. You have to directly ask sometimes, or they'll come up to you. I've had some kids who feel close to me, and I've had them come up to me and say "Hey" and don't want me to tell anybody, but I have to, and I let them know, "I will tell the counselor. They'll take care of you."

**Teacher 5.** Living in a rural area, you're never not a teacher. The kids know where I live. I have a student who's my neighbor right down the road. I have taught my other neighbor before, and in XX[community organizations]. You're never not a teacher. Someone's always watching you and knows who you are and knows what you do.

**Teacher 7.** They are watching us in school, out of school, in stores, restaurants, and at XX[the local store]. They are onto you.

**Teacher 8.** Sometimes they borderline and want to cross the line with me, and I have to remind them that I am a teacher, and if they say something that is bad, I will have to report it. They feel comfortable around each other and with me and say things that I remind them will have to be reported to guidance or the administration, but most of the time, it doesn't stop them from talking. I wonder sometimes why they trust me with their stories, but they do. They come to me, and I treat their story with respect and importance,

and I do follow up to get students the help that they need by going to guidance or looking up ways to fix the problems. They trust me. A few times, I have tried my hardest, and I couldn't fix it. And sometimes I have to tell myself that it is not always possible to fix everything, but I can at least try to make it better or give students a tool they can use to make things better, whether it is doing classwork or dealing with their lives.

**Teacher 11.** I had a group of boys in a XX[previous year] class, honors, and they are in my class again. They hated me with a passion I think. They would look at each other, and some days...I even told them at the beginning of the year, "I can't help but love you, but you guys are going to drive me nuts, and you're going to give me a headache every day," and they said that another teacher told them the same thing. But now they have migrated from over there [pointing across the room] to here, and four or five of them sit in the table closest to me [points to the table adjoining the teacher's desk], and one of them has claimed my new teacher's desk chair. And they even tell me that I am their favorite or second favorite teacher. And it's not really about whether or not I am a favorite. If they are not doing their work and I am their favorite, something is wrong, but if they feel like there are boundaries set and consistency; they know what I expect of them; and they are doing their work; then I can be their favorite. But only under those circumstances.

**Teacher 14.** [How teachers mentor students to become leaders:] We go back to trust. The caring. The engagement. Me being on point as a leader in a classroom. Me being on point of how I do things. Me giving them structure in a classroom.

#### **Category 4: Teaching and Learning**

The research question which was aligned with this category was *what part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their*



**Teacher 3.** Well I say, as far as my procedures and things go, I usually talk about that [rules on the] first day, so when you do have that new kid come in, they didn't get that message, and you forget that they didn't get that message. I'm a big "don't just run out of here when the bell rings. Everybody waits, so nobody gets run over, and I may not be done teaching". . . . [On the first day] I talk more about me and establish rules, and we all kind of went together and made up our own norms. This was the first year that we talked in hashtags, though they thought that was funny, saying like, "Gee XX[teacher name], no one talks in hashtags anymore." I said, "Well it caught your attention that the old XX[teacher]'s doing hashtags. So I let them talk about that, and what they want to see in class, and that's more of a way for me to see, because each class is so different. . . . [Then] we pulled them together because really they [rules] were all very similar. We just kind of figured out a way, and I put them together, and I said, "Ok this is what I put together for you guys. Are we okay with this?" And a couple of teachers have copied them. Then we go from there.

**Teacher 4.** That's exactly how I build my class. It's a business. It's about management. It's all about classroom management. And if it's managed, and if I delegate correctly [stops].

**Teacher 7.** I tell kids to sit wherever they want. They can make their own choices. I want them to be as comfortable as possible. I tell them that this is a privilege, and if they can't handle sitting where you are, then, "I will move you." And that makes the seat change a more powerful disciplinary action. They lost their freedom because they couldn't handle themselves. I guess I would say this is "loose structure." I also have a classroom constitution. I wrote most of the rules, and I tell them that they can amend the rules in the

constitution. It gives them more ownership of the rules. We take a vote, democratically, and students have power to change the way things are going. [Field notes: There's a white space at the bottom of the class constitution where they could add amendments.]

**Unwritten rules in classroom.** This section provided a sample of what teachers responded to the interview questions: *Are there unwritten rules in your class, and what would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?*

**Teacher 3.** And I came at it again kind of with that unwritten rule that I'm still coming back, and I'm still going to be here, and we're still going to be doing the same things. Expectations aren't going to change from day one to day 180. . . . Another is that I don't like the word "shut up." There are plenty other ways you can tell someone to stop talking to you, besides shut up. So when the new kid comes in and somebody tells someone to "shut up," the whole class goes "Ohhhh, you can't say that." And they're like, "Wait, what?" And I go, "Oh, I should have mentioned that." . . . They know that volume is bad for me . . . I can't think when the volume gets too loud, so they try to do that, not every class, but they try . . . I think they're getting to know me well enough by now to know what they can push and what they can't, so I think that's just getting to know each other.

**Teacher 4.** Yeah, [unwritten rules are that] I'm a big moral XX[person]. I am a lot. My parents taught me respect, and they taught me morals, and I have to include that into my program, especially, you know, in XX[my] class. You need it [morals] more than anything because you're going to interact with a lot of people.

**Teacher 7.** I found that in the environment that kids come from, cursing is something that is second nature, like riding a bike. Maybe they hear it from mom and dad, their friends, their siblings; it just happens. I have never seen or heard anything like it. So I

was trying to think of a way to help students learn that it is inappropriate and teach them not to curse in class at the same time. So I have a swear hat [points to it], and if they swear, their name goes in the swear hat. Anyone whose name is not in the swear hat at the end of the term gets candy. They police each other, saying, “Hey, swear hat,” if someone lets something slip. And if they can go a week without cursing, I will take their name out of the hat. So, the end result is that they learn what is appropriate.

**Teacher 8.** There’s a thing that they learn quickly never to call anyone “stupid” or say the “r” word [a word defined as “slow”]. Their young culture has such a way of saying the “r” word. They use the “s” or “r” words about themselves. I don’t let anyone do that to each other or even to themselves. I tell students to stop and think about this anytime I hear them . . . I say, “Some part of you will believe it and doubt yourself. So we need to stop doing this to others and to ourselves because we can’t be our own worst enemy.”

**Teacher 9.** This is kind of hard to explain to teachers that I am mentoring, like how do you make it feel like a team? Well, it starts on the very first day. It’s like automatically I start saying “the school rules are these: my rule in my class is this. For example, about cell phones the school says no phones, but I say if we are researching, and your phone is a resource, then take your phones out and do your research with your resources.” So as soon as I see them in class, and they have their phones out, they say, “I’m researching,” and I say, “I know what we are doing here, and I trust that you are doing what you are supposed to be doing.” Eventually, they don’t want to be losing my trust because they are pulling out their phone at some random time.

**Teacher 11.** The unwritten rules are “be kind,” “don’t be mean,” and there’s “no cussing.” . . . You try to think, am I living in such a way that I want to see other people in

society living like I am living, and you offer that in a way that is an example to them. I'm not going to tell you not to cuss. I am not going to cuss. I am not going to tell you not to do this. I am not going to. One kid asked me the other day, "Why don't you just yell at them?" I said, "Because it is not only about stopping the behavior, it's about changing the behavior in that child in a very loving way" . . . and if a kid is not doing something he should be doing in class . . . [I discipline by withholding attention]. Like one kid flipped another kid off today, and I said, "I just cannot talk to you today, after you do something like that" . . . and oh, my goodness, he kept coming back. So, it's simply removing that relationship for a few minutes. Sometimes they do act disrespectfully. They are kids, and they are not perfect, and they are responding to all kinds of things going on.

**Teacher 12.** [My unwritten rules are that] sometimes I give them some leeway when to turn stuff in [late] depending on the situation. I always tell them, "Tell me what's going on. If there's something going on, I want to know. Not that I'm trying to be nosy, but I want to know that you are at least doing your work. And if something happens, I want to at least give you credit for it, even if it's late." If it's late, I always give them full credit for it. That's it . . . sometimes they bring up their own issues, their own problems. And I'm like, "Guys, I'm glad that you want to share and that you want me to know, but do you want the whole class to know?" And sometimes, they're like, "I don't care." And I say, "Y'know don't be surprised or don't get angry when other people are talking about it or when other people know." They learn skills in here that they don't learn [other places].

**Project-based learning.** Teacher responses in this group addressed these interview questions: *Do you use projects? How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects?* Fewer than half of the teachers responded to this item.



**Teacher A.** A lot of the assignments I have for them are projects. They do a lot of research [gives examples].

**Teacher 3.** [Regarding taking time for projects, deviating from curriculum pacing guide] We push the envelope as far as we can, until we get an “Oh you really shouldn’t be doing that” and then we pull back a little bit. I think we have, at least within our XX[content area] group, we have enough people that are strong-willed enough that we push enough until we see that we should really pull back a little, and every year we get a little further.

**Teacher 4.** [After giving examples of five projects recently completed] I’m trying to incorporate science, math, and reading.

**Teacher 5.** I haven’t done any projects this year, but I have been thinking about offering a couple over break. The problem with projects is again balancing time, explain a project well enough to get them going without using up an entire class period. I like the idea of projects because it’s more practice and all that, but they just take up too much time.

**Teacher 11.** They work collaboratively, but not in formal groups like some classes. I try to teach them to pick their groups, and I let them pick their group on the last project, but I help them learn that sometimes they need to pick a group they will work well with rather than their friends. Because the project didn’t turn out too well for some of them.

**Use of collaborative structures or groups.** The data in this segment responded to these three interview questions about teachers’ use of collaborative structures in class: *Do you use collaborative learning structures in class; how often on average do you use collaborative learning structures; and do you use (un)structured group assignments?*

**Teacher 14.** And students get mad at me because we rotate seats often. I arrange them because I want them to develop relationships with students who are in the classroom. It is

important for them to be able to make connections inside class because when they move outside the classroom and they have a question, they can ask their peers. I have this idea that learning is supposed to continue outside the classroom, and who would be better to help that happen than a peer who was in class too. The peer may have something more than they do. I have them exchange phone numbers and contacts. In class, I give them structure for that peer interaction to happen. Part of my strategies come from Kagan and part from AVID. I am a firm believer in meaningful collaborative structures. Meaningful collaborative structure . . . I do try to use the strategies and learning methods because peer instruction is so important because students use different language and different words to help each other, and those words are what makes their learning their own.

**Teacher 1:** They do a lot of paired work, and then the way that I've placed them is first by level and then by behavior. So, I try that they're always near people within their same level or just a step up. That way they're constantly challenging each other and learning from one another. But there are times when I have some serious behavioral issues, and so I have to modify that. But I try to get them. I'll do two or three where I choose their groups with the people around them, and when I see that they're handling that, then the next group activity they'll be able to choose their groups, though it gives them a little bit of freedom and the illusion of choice there.

**Teacher 12.** What I did was, at the beginning of the year, I let them sit wherever they want. I said don't sit near your friend, because you're going to get in trouble. If I start to see problems, I switch their seats, which I did. And what my strategy was to sit them next to a XX[a strong student], someone who is doing very well in the class. So I sat them for the most part boy-girl-boy-girl. It works wonders . . . and a lot of them have been

improving because [pause] I have so many kids I can't get to all of them at the same time, or I can't help them immediately, and sometimes they get frustrated, which I understand. But if I can't get to them quickly, they have their partner whom they can ask for help. And that has helped these kids a lot. I've seen that when I put them in groups, they tend to talk a lot more, and when I put them in partners, they only have that one person to talk to. Sometimes they'll talk to the other person across from them, and that's fine, as long as they get their work done. But it's helped a lot, and it's helped the kids that are very quiet and shy to get to know others. I intentionally do that so they [students who don't speak easily] can talk because, other than that, they'll just sit there and be quiet.

**Teacher 3.** I've done groups mostly because the room is small, but it's worked out better in that idea of Kagan you have, that idea of community of learners . . . and it depends on the class, their productivity, how well they're willing to work together . . . and we're talking about culturally diverse, and sometimes kids don't work well together just because of who they are and what they like and don't like. And I try to be cognizant of that, trying to smooch them together when you can, but when there's a real polarization, you just can't sometimes make that work. [Field notes: six groups of desks in a u-shape] I'm kind of experimenting with that . . . the u-shape, because I have a couple special needs kids, and one who has an adult para with her all the time. That way, it's easy for me to connect with the adult para [para-professional assistant for a student who has special needs], because she's trying to assess the student as well and y'know I can talk to both of them rather than looking over, and I'm in front, so she can see me a little better. And she has the ability to connect with the kids across from her, but there's enough distance, um, because sometimes her behaviors are inappropriate to the kids who are

around her, but the adult para has the ability to stop those things without her feeling like she is excluded.

**Teacher 5.** [Small groups can be helpful,] especially if you have a student who is very limited English speaker, and you have a student who can speak both Spanish and English. I don't speak Spanish, so . . . I've always seen it as a benefit if I have a student who's willing to translate and help. Some students, even if they speak Spanish, aren't always willing to do that, or aren't always good at it necessarily. But if you have a student that is [willing and able to help another understand], it seems to be a benefit to me.

**Teacher 7.** Three out of five days, class is usually in rows, but I try to change it up to have some group work, and vary it . . . This morning, I had three groups, and we were reviewing for a test, so one group had a flash card game going on back here [points], and there was multiple choice on the white board [points there], and free response discussions going on in the back corner [points]. I try to change it up not even just with grouping, but with every chapter that I do, I try to do at least one or two activities where the kids are not just sitting. Like for XX[course name] . . . instead of having them sit and write, we did a virtual field trip. We watched a video or looked at *Google Earth* and did a field trip and answered questions about the field trip. [Also,] I had all the kids find out where their ancestors came from, and we mapped it out on the cultures map here, drawing lines from their point of origin to our own town here [Field notes: points at a large world map with students' names noted and strings attached from point of origin to the local Florida town]. Every day, maybe not every day, but most days before tests, we play review basketball. I ask questions, and they answer them and get to shoot the ball.

**Teacher 9.** The kids were doing a small group activity, and they culturally separated

themselves into small groups that were all the same. Literally, that happened in my class. So we had the Mexican table, the White girl table, the really really White boy table, and they weren't learning as well as when I mixed them together, all culturally mixed up. Because they were trying to find the word to explain it to each other [in Spanish] instead of adapting from the word I am trying to teach and then building off that new term.

**Teacher 10.** I group students randomly by giving them cards that help group: I pass out the cards to help group kids. The cards look like this, and there are many ways to set up groups. [Field notes—the cards were the size of very large index cards containing colorful images: face cards from a deck of playing cards, a character from a Disney movie, color coordinated fruits (kiwi, orange, lemon, strawberry, grapes, red and green other fruits) and numbers of all different colors in the other corner. The teacher explained how she gives out the cards, and then tells everyone to group according to similar fruits; other times she will have them group by the face cards or the Disney movie character pictures. She randomly calls out the grouping pattern.]

**Teacher 11.** Classes do talk a lot, but even in a room this size, students make groups and isolate themselves.

**Activities students do and do not enjoy.** For responses in this subgroup, teachers responded to the interview question: *What activities are students' favorite or least favorite?* In addition to activities that students found enjoyable like working in groups, with media, or working with their hands as mentioned above, one reply about students' enjoyment of humor was included to illustrate a divergent idea. Math teachers reported that students did not like doing word problems. Atypical responses regarding disliked activities followed, the first one from a non-English teacher, and the second from a science teacher.

**Teacher A** [not English teacher]. They don't want to write anything; they don't want to read anything. And that's – I guess that's one of my toughest things. A lot of it has to do with reading, and the thing is, the XX[grade group] aren't used to reading, other than a punishment last year . . . it's just a different style than mine, because I have to incorporate reading because reading is a foundation for everything, so I have to incorporate it.

**Teacher B** [Science teacher]. Labs require a different kind of thinking, and this group is not good with lab work. It's not given to you in the lab where you have to find the equation and then plug it into something and try to find an answer; in a lab, there is no answer. It's more like let's try it out and see what happens . . . [my lowest level class] will rock the lab: They can't read; they can't do math; they can't take measurements, but they do really well in a lab. They try different things: They say let's separate a mixture; let's try different temperatures, and they don't mind doing it to see if the experiment fails or not. My honor kids won't even put two liquids together even if the procedures say to do so without me saying, "Yes. Do it." They say, "Are you sure these two? Are you sure these are the two? This is what you are talking about?" I say, "Yes. Yes, do it!"

**Teacher C.** We took XX[large group of students] to the Tut exhibit in XX[nearby metro area] . . . But we all did lessons on King Tut, the Egyptians, all of those things before we went. So that when we went, the kids had some idea of what they were looking at. It went remarkably well: no one broke anything; nobody got in trouble, and we all came home safe. But there's some kids I had who say "Oh I remember that" . . . and at the time I did the public service announcements [for school] and had a brand new camera I could use to do video, so I let them write a PSA [public service announcement]. Some kids talked about, "Well you can see this in Mexico," and they did connect to those things, and

created these really great PSA's about "This is why you should go see this." And some were really funny. Some of them were able to touch on those new things, but still connected it to what they knew.

**Teacher 11.** [Students enjoy when I add] storytelling and jokes [into my lessons]; you can be critical with humor, sarcastic, make yourself approachable, or let out your frustrations with humor. And it helps teaching higher level thinking . . . and they get extra credit for laughing, right XX[student name]? [Laughs with student who comes into the room to turn in an assignment during the interview and gives student a homemade cookie]. So it's higher level thinking and discipline with humor too. I'll say, XX[student name], you have said more words today than I have, and they will be quiet. Or, you are driving me insane. You can say that if you have developed a relationship with a kid, but you can't if you have not. I mean there's all different sorts of ways you can discipline in a very lighthearted, non-confrontational way. If they do get confrontational with me, it is usually at the beginning of the year. New classes, new children, especially XX[first-year students], it takes a good month or two before you get to them . . . when they trust you, they will talk to you. Then classroom management is pretty simple. And if they do something or talk out, I will just look at them and say something like, "I didn't know I even asked you," and then I'm over it. They look at me like "What?" and they stop.

**Direct instruction or lecture.** These responses addressed this interview question: *How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?*

**Teacher 1.** I would say [they work independently, non-collaboratively] maybe one like once a week. Most of the time it's together.

**Teacher 2.** I try to keep my class always moving. I don't lecture for more than five to ten

minutes. They don't work independently for more than 10-15 minutes. They don't work in groups for more than 10-15 minutes. So, there's always a lot of movement, and I'm very lax about structure. Because I'm like, "As long as you're working, I don't care if you're sitting on the counter, or the couches I have by the counter. I don't care where you sit to work, but when it's time to work, get comfortable, and then let it flow. Get it done."

**Teacher 8.** I deliberately call on everyone in class. I also use praise, sometimes so much so that I have to tone it down so I don't embarrass them and cause them to be even more resistant to answer. It takes me a long time in a line of questioning to get them to the point at which they will give me the answer. I realized after a few years of teaching that many students are so used to being fed the answer that they don't even try to come up with an answer. They don't challenge themselves that way. I try to get them to give me the answers, and they say, "Man, XX[teacher name], you take five questions to get to one answer," and I tell them that if they don't learn to do this, then they will not know how to struggle through the thinking on their own to get to their own right answer.

**Teacher 9.** So, at the beginning, I am very lenient. I am guiding and guiding and guiding, and you are taking notes and writing like this, and then I start leaving them on their own. [When] They are doing things on their own, that's what they are more attached to me because I am saying "you can do this . . . you can do this," and I expect them to do it on their own. . . . I told them to trust me, and they look at me, and I can tell them that they are still listening, listening, listening, and then they hear and understand. I win them over because it is so difficult to understand, and then when they find that they do understand, they get it. But I have to tell them ahead of time that they will listen for days, not XX[get frustrated] with the black hole [of not knowing], and then they get it, and they are mine.



**Pedagogical use of cultural knowledge.** *Can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class, and can you tell about a time you used a student's (s') prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?*

**Teacher 14.** I have to stay on point as far as the words they use with each other. Yes, I have to be able to communicate as far as the curriculum, content area, and teaching language, but also as far as the words they use to talk to each other so I know the language they use with each other to explain the concepts. It helps to learn the language that students use when working with your content area. You only get that from experience and from taking the time to listen to students talk to each other, and through communicating with them listening to how they talk to you. You have to break it down for them and then you have to teach them to use the language of XX[your discipline] along with those words.

**Teacher 1.** [Field notes: Regarding a large display of all students' writing assignment to establish a personal credo] I think in public schools there's a lot of pressure to get right into the curriculum. But in order for you to have that rapport with the students, you have to engage with their own beliefs and their backgrounds, and this was one of the ideas I had to give them that liberty to discuss their own background, their belief. I did give them options, so for anyone who came up blank, I gave them a list of different beliefs that they could expand on. While they were writing their own, I was giving them different ones I had started, one to model the structure, and also to share with them my own beliefs and experiences with them. So it was a very powerful experience.

**Teacher A.** I value our curriculum this year because it is very focused on cultures. I use the curriculum to get to know students. If a student is struggling, it is an opportunity for

me to talk one-on-one and get to know them as I figure out how to help them learning. When they were XX[doing an assignment, I was helping a student] . . . We began unpacking his history of family troubles with drug cartels in Mexico, their immigration to the United States, his learning to value his family, and determination not to get involved in trouble. Actually he is a triumph right now because he did a lot of credit recovery work and managed to graduate last year . . . and I was so proud of him.

**Teacher B.** I've seen a couple of my quiet boys bringing in Rubik's cubes, and so one of my prompts had to do with a student who had lost his Rubik's cubes and was upset because it was one of his most prized possessions, and they had to create the rest of the story, thinking about character actions and thought and dialogue. And one of the boys who had started that said, "Did you do this because of me?" So that's a very small thing. . . . For [another example] I hear a lot that teachers don't give them the benefit of the doubt, and they're constantly trying to get them in trouble because of their behavior, which sometimes it's warranted. So, I did a writing prompt . . . about [a culture clash with a teacher]. The way I was describing the teacher and the way she was treating him, how she was talking to him, they were like, "Oh, that's so messed up." And they added the rest of the story how they wanted it to turn out [voicing perspectives of the teacher and boy] . . . So we had two perspectives engaging . . . that's where the real growth happens.

**Teacher C.** I don't know about a particular students' background, but I use what is going on in society. And it took me a while because I don't pay much attention to social media. But I will talk about whatever is trending. . . . I say two or three, maybe up to four out of five times a week, I bring in something that is going on, like XX[person in the news] with the hoodie, or any altercations with the police, things like that that surface, and bring that

into class. And I bring in my personal experience as example, like my [own childhood], and I have to tell them that it doesn't give them the right to do wrong or do bad things. So, my mother to this day, she praises what has happened to me because she was never home, and you know, it would have been so easy for me to be quote end quote "what society thinks I should be" or "what society may want to embrace when they look at me," meaning that I could have lived a life of crime, become a gangster.

**Teacher D.** For an activity I did last year, which was to get to know my students, but also to get them to engage with the text, we read a short story [based on] Puerto Rican culture, [involving] a young boy who had a crush on this girl, and it was just culturally relevant in so many ways. But it took place years back, so I asked them to create an alternative ending to this . . . [using] their own . . . slang. They brought in different teachers they thought were cool and where it would take place. So . . . what I've tried so far, that was probably the most culturally responsive activity I've done because they took full ownership of it. They brought in their own background and what they knew of here at the school and also just who they are as people, and they engaged with the text.

**Teacher 2.** I know some phrases and . . . I learned all the bad words before I learned anything else. So, that's part of my cultural responsiveness. So, when a kid says something [inappropriate for school] it's like, "Hey, hey, I know what that means!" . . . I was like, "you don't speak like that to anybody in any language!"

**Teacher 5.** I'm naturally very introverted and naturally quiet. . . . And I think in other cultures, or in a different culture . . . not a middle-class student, one who comes from a life or family that is much different than that, who is just active and loud, and there's a lot going on at once, and people are talking. I have to remember that if I'm letting students

work together in groups . . . and if the students are talking and getting excited and a little bit loud, as long as they're focused on the task, that's okay. So that's something that I have to constantly remind myself, that just because that's what I'm comfortable with, that's how I operate, it doesn't necessarily mean that's how the students operate.

**Pedagogical use of knowledge of this town.** Randomized alphabetical pseudonyms were used for this section which explored the use of information about the local town because content area identifications were unavoidable. The question addressed by this was *can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class?*

**Teacher A.** Drinking water here, our agriculture, producing spillage into the waterway, and we mostly all have wells for drinking water, and all the spillage seeps into the ground water that we are all drinking...so we can think about that. Twins? Twins! How many twins there are in XX[our town] compared to other places where I have lived? Fifteen sets of twins that I can think of. I have never seen so many twins in such a small community. Why is that? I have a set of twins every year or more [asking an exploratory question related to content area and a local phenomenon]. . . . So I constantly relate things that I know they know happen in our community, linking it back to XX[my class].

**Teacher B.** We talk about some things, like we talk about interest in math. . . .Oh, commission, but also interest, too, like going down to the car dealership. So I say, "I'm going down to the XX[local car] dealership, and I don't have any money because I'm a teacher, and I need to borrow \$20k," and we talk about interest and borrowing money how that's bad interest because I have to pay it back. But if I open a bank account at XX[local bank], that's good interest. And then also talk about commissions . . . and I've also taught about unit price, like when you go to XX[supermarket] and you're trying to

compare what to buy, and I've even taken pictures of the price tags and brought them in. Because sometimes it has no unit price there, and sometimes you have to work it out to figure out which is the better buy. So I talk to them about that.

**Teacher C.** We have an AP [Advanced Placement] wall of fame [displayed in a hallway in the school] that has grown over time. If student made a 3 or above on the exam [the score usually accepted for college credit], their picture and their story is recorded, and the stories do come up in class.

**Teacher D.** One of the benefits of my own big high school in XX[major metropolitan area] was if I chose not to take college preparatory classes, I could choose to take vocational classes. Or I could have chosen a different path. I had options. We are very limited here. And if we are going to be community strong, as they say, you might want to invest in having a more diverse structure that would benefit students' needs.

**Teacher E.** Yeah since I teach XX[subject], I have a lot of local stuff going in. I know growing with the farm community. When we get into international trade, and stuff, I talk about NAFTA, and the farmer strike down in XX[nearby town], I talk about that because my dad was one of the only two farmers whose workers didn't strike. . . .

**Students advance to college, career, or work.** In this section, teachers discussed their perceptions of their rural students' preparation and hopes for attending college or joining the world of career and work, and the possibility that once students leave town for the military, technical training or higher education, they may not return. The interview questions included: *Do you ever hear kids say that they want to move away from XX[this town] or that they can't wait to leave or go away to college and what would you say in response to the research-based claim that public schools in small towns hollow out the town of her brightest and best citizens by*

*encouraging and enabling them to go away to college and live the dream in a metro area?*

**Teacher A.** The brightest students want to leave. And the not-so-bright don't see an out. I see a lot of my brightest also joining the military, I think because of their family income, because they hear "free college in the military" . . . A lot of them have the ability to go to Ivy League schools, but they go to the military or XX[the community college nearby] because they hear that it is free [because of a scholarship] for the first two years, and I think that is handicapping them. They don't even think of going any place else except for right there for the two free years. I see this as a loss. I don't personally see XX[our town] as a bad place. I am from somewhere else, and I choose to stay here. But people need to get out, and they need to experience life. They need to see tall buildings, big bridges, beaches, and other stuff. . . . [Some] kids are afraid to go out of here, and when they get out, they come right back because they don't know how to interact to other people who aren't from here. The culture shock is so big that it socially handicaps them. I see it with the most intelligent and with the least. It's so hard to get anyone to leave XX[this town]. So, they are kind of stuck here. . . . Now, after some graduate college, maybe not from Ivy League, they do come back from their colleges and they start businesses here.

**Teacher B.** [About teacher's youth spent locally] I experienced culture shock when I went away to XX[college], and I wanted to leave within the first year. I didn't feel academically or socially ready for that, but XX[mentor] kept saying "You can do this."

**Teacher C.** I mean I have a former student who went to Ivy League, whom I taught XX[class] years ago . . . I stay in contact with those best and brightest. Another student, she went to law school. She was one of mine, and I try to stay in contact. And even the ones who stayed here who are having babies, and even though they're not doing a lot with

their education, they're trying to grow their families, and those kids are going to be in my room one day. [I am] staying in contact with as many as you can in appropriate ways.

The relationships are going to be what bring them back. Money's not going to bring them back; excitement's not going to bring them back. What brought me back was relationships, and building the relationships is what's going to do it, I think.

**Teacher D.** I see a lot of validity to that. Many do stay away, but we have to note that a lot do finish school and come back here. Not just in education, in other things. A couple of doctors in town came back. Two attorneys. A veterinarian. A lot of educators. Maybe strong family ties bring them back. But one of our graduates wants to come back and speak to our students about how the world of success is possible. One family of Jamaican-Americans is a good example: Mom was an ob-gyn nurse . . . one brother went into the military, and three sisters all hold doctorates. Their success stories are around. One of our grads went to XX[Ivy League college], and she came back to teach.

**Teacher E.** Yes, they say that they want to get out of town and go somewhere else and do something big. I tell kids that I am a living example of that. I tell them that I graduated in XX[Northern state], and now I am down here. I seized the opportunity, and they can do the same. They see college as the way to get ahead and get out. It's not just kids in this demographic and this part of Florida, but it's all over the country. I tell kids I have friends who went right into the work force, but they're doing fine. I tell them that maybe college isn't for them, if they don't choose it, but they need to be happy with their choice.

**Teacher F.** As a kid growing up [locally], I understood my dad's struggle because even though he doesn't have a high school education, he makes more money than I do teaching, but I understood that he has to work very long hours under very harsh

conditions, and he doesn't have health insurance, so that is going to affect him when he gets older or has health issues. I understood that I needed a college education to get farther in life and if I wanted to have a stable life. My brothers, on the other hand, would see his money, and they would assume that money was easy to get without school.

**Teacher G.** [Teacher grew up locally.] I think I stayed because it was just in my heart. I feel like those who go away to bigger cities and towns and work in areas different than ours kind of come back with their stories. I would argue against the claim that we are hurting small towns like ours when our students go on to graduate from colleges and don't come back because they [the graduates who moved away] still are in the community with their stories. We still hear of those people, and we hear stories of their success, and it only inspires the kids more. . . . But even though we are not physically there, we are still role models and inspire and motivate the kids of the community to see that they too can go to college and follow a dream. . . . Yes, we risk having our brightest going away to college and not return or even serve a nearby area, but if we don't send them out, then we aren't *ever* going to get anything back. There *is* potential for them to come back.

**Teacher H.** I don't really think [starts over]. I think for middle-schoolers, their brain is just so focused on what's happening in their lives right now, that that seems so far away.

**Teacher I.** Well, I really never left. I went to school in XX[nearest college], and I was away maybe for two, three years because I moved to XX[nearby town, easy commute], and I came back because I did my internship here [may move to city for leadership job].

**Teacher J.** In my XX[many] years here being an observer, I can see that very easily. I think of some of the brightest ones who have gone to college, and may even have gone



into education—where they could have worked here—but chose not to teach here. They chose to teach in XX[major metro area nearby] or XX [wealthy nearby district]. But they don't choose to teach where they grew up. That should speak volumes to the leaders because you can brag about having successes, but at the end of the day, not to talk back about those who come back, they for the most part were not the top 10% of our students. There's very few. We have a few who were tops, for sure. But they are very few and they have strong family ties. Very few come back and contribute. So I want to sit here and say that it happens [that the highest achieving students don't choose to stay in town].

**Teacher K.** They [students who are high achievers] don't stay here most of the time because XX[this town] is such a small town. Either they want to find things to do, and XX[the closest town with attractions] is really far. Well, it's not that far, but when you want to go out during the week, and then [have to] drive over an hour [each direction], it's hard. Or [if you go to] XX[another regional area, it] is about an hour and twenty-five minutes away. XX[This town] is wonderful if you like the small town life. But other than that, people [who are not from here] struggle with the reality that there's not much to do. But people like me who grew up here, are kind of used to it.

### **Category 5: Critical Awareness and Advocacy**

The responses for this section on critical awareness and advocacy apply to both teachers' and students' growth and address research question #3: *What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?* In an effort to protect confidentiality in a small town, all teacher comments in this section dealing with sensitive information about race, ethnicity, power, and privilege, were marked with randomized alphabetic pseudonyms

which in no way align with the numeric pseudonyms or alphabetic pseudonyms used from section to section. Codes for this category were racism, racism and classroom, racism and school, and racism and community. In a similar manner as executed in previous categories, Figure 12 illustrated most frequently appearing words in quoted passages in which teachers talked about incidences which they observed or which happened in their classrooms, schools, and in the community in general.

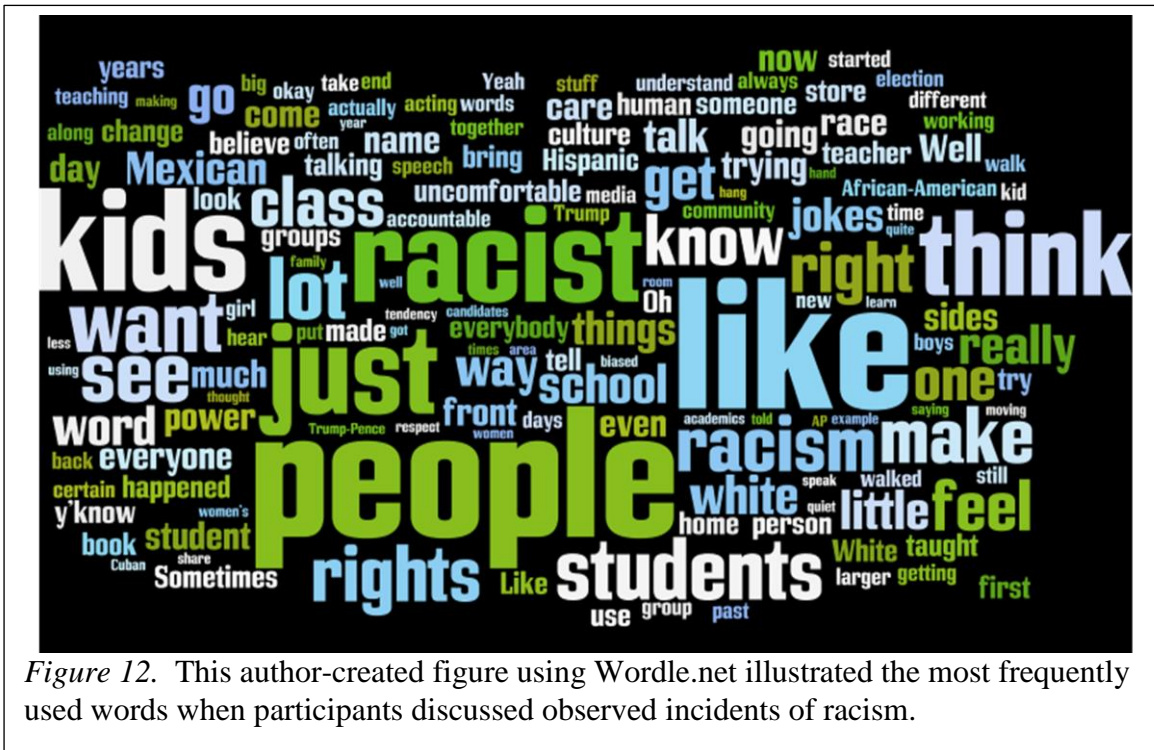


Figure 12. This author-created figure using Wordle.net illustrated the most frequently used words when participants discussed observed incidents of racism.

**Comfort level addressing power, privilege, and racism topics 1-10.** Teachers were asked the following question: *How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise? Rate yourself with a number from 1-10, with 10 as most comfortable.* The responses were as follows:

\* \* 2 8 8 8.5 9.5 10 10 10 10 10

An asterisk indicated no numeric response was provided for the survey. These self-ratings

indicated that half of the teachers who responded felt that they were a 10 or almost a 10. Three other teachers felt that they were very high, rating themselves as an 8.5 or 8. Teacher's elaborative thoughts were presented in this section.

**Teacher A.** I actually feel stifled in how to deal with it. It seems that given the way everything has come to be, no matter how you answer, people take it wrong.

**Teacher B.** It's awkward. I think some of the girls who come in who are newer teachers, who are Hispanic, have an easier time addressing those things because the kids feel like they have that connection. They feel that somehow I don't understand just because of what I look like.

**Teacher C.** Even before I taught in XX[Southern state], when I was in college, I kind of studied that with White privilege.

**Teacher D.** Normally, when I see a student getting out of hand . . . usually, it just takes a few phrases, a little monotone comment, to bring them back. I don't have this loud 'hey' voice. I say things quietly, and it passes along from student to student, saying, "Hey, [Teacher name]'s saying 'quiet down.'"

**Teacher E.** I would say probably an eight or nine, because you know when they actually start talking about politics in class, that's a lot of what they hear at home. They always tell us as teachers that we can't voice our own opinions, and we have to be very careful. But there are times when they want an answer, when they want some perspective. . . . It's really hard to not be biased and say what I feel, but I have to entertain both sides.

**Teacher F.** Oh, yeah. [I'm a ten.] I don't get easily intimidated when talking about this. Even when I taught in XX[regional large city], the Trayvon Martin case happened, and I was the only White teacher in the school, and the kids they [pause, changes direction

midsentence] I walked out one day and there was like a march happening. And I was this preppy little White girl, and there was like this cloud of protestors are coming my way, I just put my fist up and walked right through it. I've found that if you like act scared they often, other groups, can find that offensive as well. There's a balance of respect between acting like it didn't exist and acting like I was scared of it. Like, yes, I acknowledge it, but we're still human beings. I think it's Key West that has that one bumper sticker that says we're all one family and that's [pauses] that's kind of [changes direction]. When people talk about gay rights or Black rights or minority rights or whatever, I often say what about human rights? How about human rights? Because then when you put a label on it, you create division.

**Racism and classroom conversation.** These responses for the subgroup about the topic of racism as displayed by students in the classroom followed the question: *Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?*

**Teacher A.** I have had some incidents [talking about racism] that made some [students] very uncomfortable, and some that have broadened their perspectives as far as past incidents that have happened in our history. Others have just gotten quiet, but you do develop some meaningful thought processes along the way. Like we analyzed all the words in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech and had a Socratic Seminar. Some students asked me when we finished [the seminar], where do we go from here? How do we make this better? Who's accountable . . . ? The idea I want them to walk away with is that the only person you can control and be accountable about is you, yourself. Hopefully we are all moving along in the same way in pace. So, more often than not, it has to be with race, but you have to think about the culture of your class when you

bring up topics of race. For me, being who I am does allow me a little longitude with the topic. But I have students who know, and they speak the truth. They all speak their own opinions. Sometimes I have a student whose family has a nice heritage of being Southern-born and raised, and the topic got too heavy. He had to walk out of class, and stayed home for a few days (had me worried) and then apologized to me when he returned. But he still made sure he was accountable for his actions. Some of the language that they share with each other is meaningful, but unless we are acting wisely as facilitators, it can get out of hand. That's the only danger when you do it. But it [the topic of the Socratic seminar] has to have relevance. And they will be more willing and compelled to engage meaningfully.

**Teacher B.** Kids say the word *racist*, and everyone throws their hands up and starts yelling, and I have to say look, XX[my area of study] teaches you about the where and the why. . . . I said: "I am not telling you this is the way to believe or do things. In my class, we can talk about it because everyone in this class has an opinion, but I am trying to present both sides. You can take whichever side you want to, that's your choice. My job is presenting both sides, and we can talk about it, but if the conversation starts getting negative, then I can't have that because then we aren't having a discussion, we are having an argument. We have to be respectful because there are people in this room who strongly believe both sides; we have to stay respectful of this. I am trying to teach civil discourse." . . . The most important thing that I said I wanted to do when I started XX[my subject] teaching was to be absolutely as unbiased as I possibly could because 90% of what kids see on the media and on social media and on Facebook is biased.

**Teacher C.** [I see people of the same ethnicity and race gathering together], and at the

same time, the kids that have a tendency to score at a little higher level in academics have a tendency to mix more. I am saying that I think they seek out like minds rather than like persons. They break barriers. I don't think people think that "I'm going to go hang out with this person because they are White." They want to go hang out with them because they think the same.

**Teacher D.** Well they mentioned it a little bit. Like the some of the Trump stuff. They mentioned Trump running his mouth, and when *El Chapo* escaped, they were, the kids were all excited about that. So they talk about it, but they don't have a lot of depth yet, and thankfully they don't have a lot of hatred or resentment either about it. Every now or then they'll say, "because I'm Black or because I'm Mexican," and they'll say, "You're racist XX[Teacher D]," and I'll say "Yeah, White people drive me crazy," and they get confused. They look at me all very confused. And I'm like, "Listen. Let me clarify: I don't like people who don't treat people kindly. I don't care what color they are. If they have a good attitude, I like them. If they have a bad attitude, I have less patience. That's all it is. I don't [starts over]. It's not that I don't like you because you're Black. I get upset because you're not working. If you're working, you could be purple with polka dots; I don't care."

**Teacher E.** Yeah. I think right now with the politics, with our candidates, I hear it a lot. "Oh, it's because I'm Mexican," or "because I'm Hispanic," and I try to tell them that that's not okay because you're using that as like a handicap almost. So they'll talk about things having to do with Trump, or they'll say, "Oh, that teacher's racist." When we try to unpack that word "racist," they understand that that's not actually what they meant. I think in the media, they see so much having to do with race relations, that they just

internalize that, and now just everyone is a victim. And I agree. I think that there are people who are victims of the circumstance, and I understand that, but I want to empower my students to rise above that. So, when we're talking about that, I never try to give into the idea that our society is unjust, because although I might agree to some extent, if I leave them there, they're never going to outgrow that. So I try to push them to see that, y'know, if the dean of discipline got onto a student, [and they say,] "Oh he's a racist. He's always thinking this and this and that." Well, we walked through what happened, and we talked about what "racist" means and how those two things don't connect, and just [get to the point of] the ownership of our own actions. So, um, I can see both sides, and I know a lot of that they hear at home, and so they're just [trails off and stops].

**Teacher F.** Yeah, I had a kid [African-American boy] pull out the "n" word today and use it in class. He said he wasn't using it as a derogatory term . . . and that it was okay for him. But I've always kept a rule where we don't use any kind of name-calling [saying], "I don't care who you are, those are words used to make people feel badly. That word originally was used to make you less than a person. And you and I are both human beings. We're both people. Nobody wants to feel bad. Sometimes those words make other people feel uncomfortable even if it doesn't make you feel that way," and he didn't get it. And he still feels like it's okay for him to use it. Well, the other day I had a book over there [pointing to the side of the room] that has the country of Africa on the front of it, and we're reading a book about Africa, and he [the same student] threw that book on the ground, saying, "You can't have that book here. This is racist!"

**Teacher G.** Prejudice not so much. There's a lot about power [in the conversations in my class]. There's a lot about, "Well, if we have freedom of speech why can't we say *this* or

*this* in school,” and I tell them, “Your rights end where they start to harm someone else. You have the right to free speech, but you don’t have the right to lie about somebody. You have the right to you know, protect yourself with a weapon, but you don’t have the right to attack someone else with the weapon.” So we talk a lot about rights versus responsibility, and how your rights end where someone else’s begins.

**Teacher H.** They [my students] say it is anti-racism to make racist jokes. It’s really weird. They say this: If they are willing to say racist jokes about themselves, and other people and about everybody, then it is not racist because we are making the same fun of everybody. So if we make fun of everybody then we are not racist. They say racist stuff all the time in my class, arguing that this is showing that they are not racist. . . . It’s all kids: The Mexican kids make Mexican jokes; the White people make White jokes, and XX[student name] who’s Cuban makes Cuban jokes. It’s like if the African-American kids call themselves the “n” word, and if only they can use the word, then they say that is racist because not everyone can say the same thing. But if anybody is allowed to say the word, then everybody is not being racist. That’s how they see it.

**Teacher I:** Yes, [things about racism come up in class], especially about the election. I just went ahead and said it. I said, “Guys, we all have different views. That’s the beauty of our system: We’re not going to change anyone; we are just trying to share our beliefs.” I stop kids from making jokes because we are trying to establish a culture of respect here.

**Racism observed in school.** Responses to this interview question were coded as classroom in the school: *Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?*

**Teacher A.** They don’t have this issue [dealing with topics of racism] in XX[major



metropolitan area] because the staff on the campus is diverse. I believe that when you go to the larger cities, there is a diverse staff, and that allows you to meet the needs of the students. I don't care what anyone says, but you have to have that diversity percentage-wise, but having familiar faces helps students to see that people of their culture can achieve higher learning and positions of leadership.

**Teacher B.** When I first started teaching, I taught here for XX[a few] years; then it was a majority White. Now that I've come back [after moving away for a while], it's a majority Hispanic. It has shifted. And I think, well, I don't really see it with the kids. Like the parents will come in, and they'll say, "You're doing this to my kid because they're such-and-such [referencing race or ethnicity]." But the kids just see each other.

**Teacher C.** Sometimes it [racism] is quite apparent. There has been racism that I have noticed, and I am speaking district-wide, based on different schools I have been in, not to pick on any one school. [I have] also [noticed] a dislike for certain races by the school administration. Sometimes it was quite vocal, or in manners. I didn't notice it much in academics. More like in certain things that they [certain people but not everyone] were privy to. In one particular incident that stands out the most, there was a box of jackets in the front office, donated for cold days. One little girl who came to the office [because she was cold and wanted a jacket] was told "We don't have any jackets. If you want a jacket, you have to bring one from home." This little girl was African-American, and she was in kindergarten. It was really sad. I didn't believe hatred, racism, existed like that.

**Teacher D.** [Have I noticed matters related to racism in class, school, or town?] Not really until right after the election. There is a group of Hispanic boys who usually sit over there by the circle [pointing in the direction of the bus ramp]. And I was outside on duty,

and a group of six White boys carrying a Trump-Pence sign walked past chanting “Pack your bags; build a wall: Trump-Pence!” I thought a riot was going to ensue right in front of my eyes, thinking, “Not on this peaceful campus, not in front of me.” I stepped in front of the boys and yelled, “Don’t be stupid,” and another teacher helped me diffuse the situation. I don’t remember any of this before the election. . . . I told XX[someone in a position of authority], and XX[the person] laughed. That made me really uncomfortable. XX[this person] said aloud, “It’s okay to support your candidates,” but was laughing at the situation. That probably made me feel even more uncomfortable because the first reaction was to laugh, and I was livid.

**Teacher E.** In years past we’ve had issues where there’s big racism, where there were big groups of kids against each other. Like, back in 2003, 2005, we had groups of students with flags who’d, y’know, bring flags, or they’d wear shirts [gang membership or support symbols], and they would march across the grounds. It was just trying to get the Mexicans against the Cubans against the Puerto Ricans against the Blacks, y’know, and it was a huge. Y’know, it was like watching *West Side Story*; everyone moving around each other. And you just go, “Hey, you all were just sitting in the cafeteria together two days ago, eating lunch!” But I haven’t really seen much of that. With all the stuff going on in the world right now, I expected to come to school this year and see more of that, but I don’t.

**Teacher F.** [Regarding accusations of racism,] I have a lot of kids, and it’s picked up within the last few years, a lot of kids who do it jokingly . . . I just tell students flat out that that’s not acceptable, and if I were racist, and if I were treating kids differently based on their race, I wouldn’t be in the room. Because I don’t take racism lightly, I don’t think

it's a joke . . . And I have this one kid, I haven't even taught him, but he walks by me, and he's like "XX[Teacher F's name], it's because I'm Mexican, XX[name]. You hate me because I'm Mexican." I'm like, I don't even know the kid's name. I just look at him, and sometimes he's wearing a Cowboys' jersey, so I ask him about the Cowboys because XX[someone I know] is a fan. So I don't feed into it, but if he were in my classroom, it would be different.

**Teacher G.** Many of the AP [Advanced Placement] students are taking many AP classes together, so conversations started in one class spill over into the next class. For example, students were angry that they couldn't get fives [the highest score] on the test because they did not learn about women's rights last year. That was the part that they failed on the exam because they had no knowledge of it. Of course they say the teacher had a racism toward women for not teaching women's rights, and he was racist for not talking about how women didn't have power. It was a big controversy.

**Teacher H.** There was a boy who came in the first day of school [first day looking at his new schedule] and wanted to know "Well, why do I need to learn Spanish? This is America." I said, "Well because it will help you communicate with other people who do not know English, like when you want to order tacos [Memo: There was no indication of sarcasm in context or voice; context included other efforts by the teacher to alleviate students' fears of something new].

**Racism and the larger community.** Teacher responses in this group were gathered from the codes racism in school, and racism and the community regarding the interview protocol item: *Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?*

**Teacher A.** [The biggest barrier here is] people not getting to know their neighbor. I think that it is easier to say that we would rather have people go out and work over there and people to work over there, but when it comes down to it at the end of the day, do we want to sit down with them and break bread with them? That's what our kids go through. That's why we are so broken up into our racial groups. There's only certain kids who don't care because we are not helping them get to the point where they can.

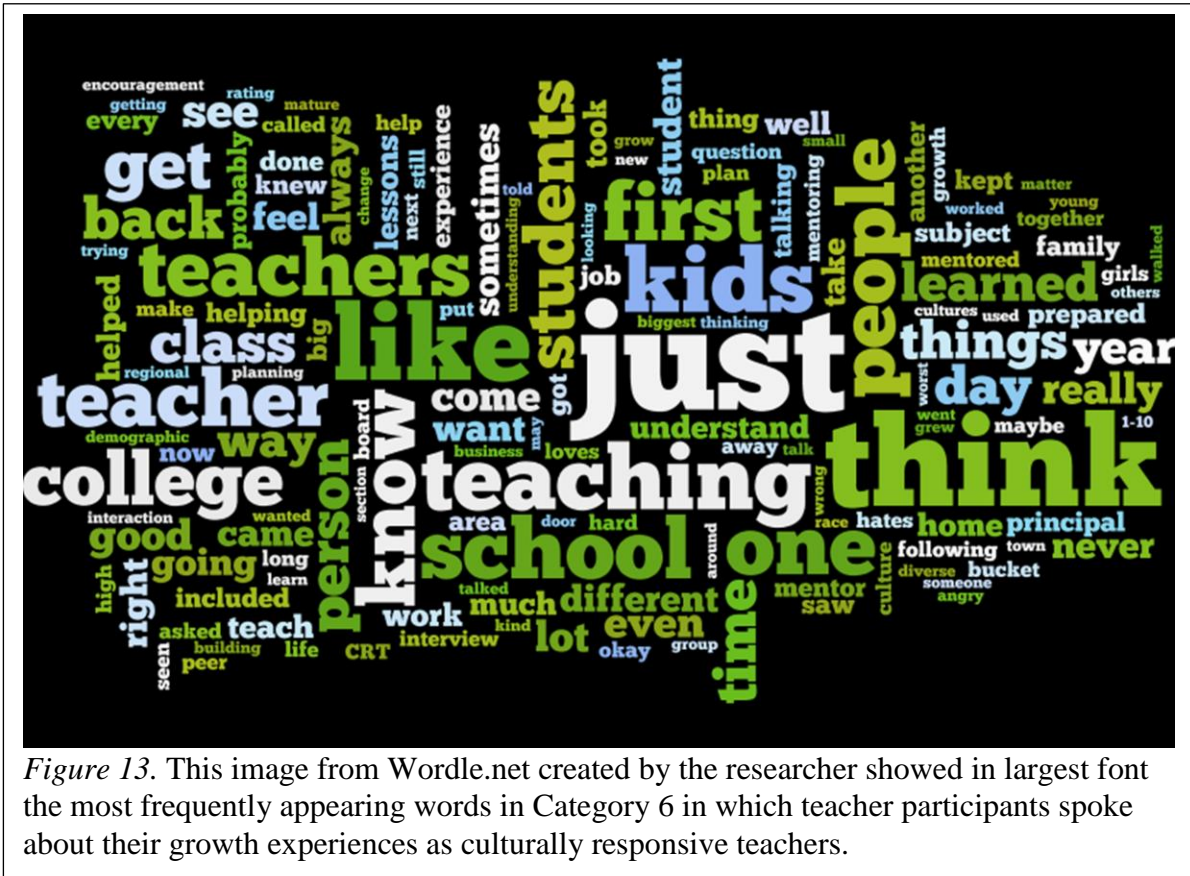
**Teacher B.** I think a lot of people are resistant to change [pause, thinking]. They're resistant to change. We, XX[this town], doesn't have much of an open mind. It [change] is easing its way there. I think it's [the resistance to change is] overall, but mainly, who has the power here. It's the White culture. They make the decisions. And they're the wealthy White people. For example, the XX[new business in town]; people from XX[that place of business] had been wanting to put a new location here for years. But the XX[powerful local people] didn't want it. I don't know what happened now, but they managed to build it. And so we don't grow because our leaders don't want to.

### **Category 6: Teacher's CRT Growth and Advocacy**

The subsections in this category explored the third research question: *What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?* Interview protocol and codes which fleshed out ideas that explored teacher's perceptions of experiences that facilitated their development as a teacher were included in the sections that follow.

Experiences included college coursework and experiences with diversity in college, being mentored or mentoring others, peer collaboration, and reflection. Randomized alphabetical pseudonyms which in no way aligned with the numeric pseudonyms or the other alphabetical

names used previously were used in places where the quote may have revealed potentially identifying information. Figure 13 showed the most frequently used language for this theme.



**Self-rating of CRT practices 1-10.** During the course of the interview, teachers rated themselves as culturally responsive teachers in their schools. The question was *how culturally responsive do you feel? Respond with a number from 1-10, with 10 being high.*

The responses were as follows with an asterisk indicating no numeric response was provided:

\* \* 6 7.5 8 8 8 8 8 8.5 9 9

Since the mode was 8 and the mean of all numeric responses as 8, it may be that three-fourths of the participants felt very responsive. One participant expressed feeling average, and two did not provide a numerical rating. Representative comments were displayed for the rest of this section.

**Teacher A.** I would say an eight, because I'm still learning.

**Teacher B.** I think I'd probably put myself between an eight and nine because there are days where sometimes I really don't understand.

**Teacher C.** When I first came in [to the rural Floria area], I was a one. Then I moved past five. Now I am somewhere close to nine. I think I always have room to grow no matter what I do and whatever I learn. . . . I am not perfect, and I am not striving to be great, but what I am striving to do is to be involved, to be in the game, making it run, making the play. So if I am doing that, hopefully I am doing what I am supposed to be doing.

**Teacher D.** I think I'm naturally hard on myself, and I don't think I'm very culturally responsive . . . I know there's other things I could do, and sometimes we just get stuck in the rut of doing the same thing.

**Preparation for teaching here 1-10.** This group of responses were coded with preparation for teaching 1-10 and resulted from the following interview question: *How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10 (Elaborate.)* Responses to this item were:

0    0    0    1    2    3    4    6    8    10    10    10

Teacher's responses to this self-rating demonstrated that as many teachers rated themselves a 10 as rated themselves a 0. The average self-rating, with all participants responding with a numerical rating was a 4.5, below what would be expected as average with 8 of 12 teachers rating themselves a 6 or lower and 25% rating themselves as highly prepared.

**Teacher A.** I wasn't prepared at all to teach XX[the subject area, then working out-of-field]. I was [stops, restarts]. I thought that my methods of teaching were, y'know, I did well, and I was relatable, and I was, maybe not zero. I think I had enough background knowledge to be able to do it, but as far as knowing what standards were, nope.

**Teacher B.** I would say seven or eight. I think it's because I grew up here, probably because I understand the culture here. When I used to teach in inner-city in XX[regional large city], it was more of a struggle to get there because it wasn't the culture I grew up with. But I'm a farmer's daughter. I grew up here. These are my people, so it comes more naturally to me in this area than it would if I were an inner city area, I think.

**Teacher C.** I'll call that a zero. Honestly because I came in as a substitute, and kept coming back. One day they said, "Hey, maybe you'd like to take this class, and I said, well, sure, because I was trying to figure out how to get into teaching. At the time, being an alternately certified person, it was next to impossible to get your foot in the door. And I just took it as a way to get my foot in the door, and I really was sent out to the back portables with a schedule and a key and a "best of luck to you!"

**Teacher D.** I was a zero [having come from a totally different Northern culture]!

**Teacher E.** Coming here, I was more scared of the fact that they were regular middle schoolers [and teacher's experience was with a different group]. . . . So, I was a six.

**Teacher F.** I would say an eight, so I was pretty prepared. It was a similar demographic as to what I was teaching . . . in the school where I taught [before moving here] . . . This has a more rural feel. [I'm from] where the boom-houses started, but still a lot of country things. It's not as much of a small-town feel, but it's definitely a similar population.

**Facilitation of teacher's growth.** Codes in this thematic category included self-rating of CRT, CRT college classes, preparation for teaching here 1-10, growth, being mentored by others, mentoring other teachers, learning lesson from student, and shop-talking at home. These codes were largely derived from the following interview question: *What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today?*

**Teacher 1:** Because, um, even though we are constantly asked to keep improving ourselves, I think that it's [things we are asked to learn] always about the skill and what are you teaching, and not necessarily how you are teaching it. And all of this [CRT] has to come first, because if you can't connect to a child, then it doesn't matter what you teach them. And I think there are still a lot of teachers, not just here but all across the county, that need to understand this because our county should have changed more.

**Teacher 3.** Something that we've talked about, and we talked a lot about that at the PLC conference . . . [is] if you're willing to take a small step rather than looking at the big picture, you're less likely to look at yourself as a failure. Not that you're a failure, you just haven't gotten to that part yet. But it's sometimes hard for people to see that.

**Teacher 7.** The coolest thing about teaching to me is seeing the change over time from the students XX[when they enter the building], to when they XX[mature to leave the building], changing in ways that you did not even think was possible. It's rewarding seeing the little XX[first year students] who used to annoy you every day when they wouldn't stop talking, how they mature. . . . That's what it's all about right there.

**Teacher 9.** Support from everyone was what helped me grow from the college student into an awesome teacher. Support from XX[principal, assistant principal] believing in me because I didn't believe in myself. . . . I kept thinking, "Don't they know that I really don't know?" [Laughs]. Then the next year, XX[another new teacher] came along, and we worked together to plan out lessons. Everyone just boosted me and boosted me. I learned XX[the subject matter] from her, and she learned classroom management from me. We helped each other, went to trainings together, and figured it out together.

**Teacher 10.** [Talking about a non-example of the way to teach] My worst experience was



with an old-school teacher who called on me to XX[work] at the board, on the spot. I didn't know how to do the XX[task]. I was so embarrassed because I had a reputation of being good in this class. It was my worst experience ever.

**Teacher 14.** When I was in high school, my teacher in XX[my subject area] was the worst. I had this teacher who sat behind the desk. His board was loaded with assignments. We came in and did the assignment and put it on his desk. He never moved. That was fine for me the first year, but the second year [with the same teacher], it was frustrating. And it was worse when you got papers back. It wasn't student-centered. And it bothered me. There was no accountability except having the paperwork done, and if I knew that that was all the interaction that would be, I would know Billy [Teacher 14 provided this pseudonym] had his work done, so I would ask Billy, "Can I look at your paper?" And I would write the answers down. There was no interaction. So, for me, there is more to life than that. The thinking matters; that and the interaction of learning and also teaching others. So I chose my subject area because I hated what was done to me.

**Teacher A.** [Years ago, my district] had the highest per capita teen pregnancy in the state of Florida. Part of that was we had a lot of young girls, Hispanic girls, who were getting pregnant at ages fifteen and sixteen, and we had a parenting class here. . . . the girls who were first and second generation here, they got married young, like at age fifteen and sixteen, and their husbands were eighteen to twenty-one, and they did not want to be grouped with these other girls who were not married and did not have babies because they culturally felt like a married woman in a different place. They came to school, were responsible, took care of babies and husbands, and they didn't want to be grouped with less mature students. . . . I had a girl . . . and she was the biggest behavior problem I had

ever had. . . [She] was about fifteen . . . had her first baby at thirteen . . . [and had] another one on the way. I remember her telling me one time in the front of class, “Well, if you knew how to please XX[the opposite sex], you wouldn’t be so uptight.” [I did not handle that right, and] I got to meet the mother over this one.

**CRT preparation in college.** Information about the numbers of courses participants took and their perceptions of their value was also captured by the demographic survey. This segment elaborated on how teachers perceived their growth was facilitated by college coursework on educational matters of diversity. Responses were coded with CRT college preparation.

*Teacher A.* [I had no college classes—I learned from] my work experience and bringing that to this job. The last business that I ran was in a town XX[in a Western State] and within my business, within just that building, we had eight different languages spoken anywhere from Hindi, to Cantonese to Filipino, Samoan, and Tongan, and even down to the basics of English and Spanish, and all those cultures and all those different personalities trying to work together under one roof was quite an experience for a XX[person] who came from XX[Southern State]. I walked in and went, I don’t even know what these languages are. I’d never heard them, never heard them spoken, never seen people like these people, and so it really was for me just a candy store. [I was excited that] this is all the stuff that I can learn and figure out how each group worked differently, and I had to figure that out pretty quick.

*Teacher B.* And college professors helped me be the XX[person] that I am because I never met another XX[teacher] who happened to have the same race as me. And it took me that long to see a XX[person] like me, and a leader in the field [that I was interested in doing].

**Teacher C.** [About taking a college seminar on CRT] I remember I sat in a class, and it as one of those, you know small units, and a student who was a teacher as well asked, “Why does it always come back to race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Why can’t I just teach my kids?” And you know, for kids who are seen only by their race and ethnicity, it *has* to come back to that, because I just don’t see how to do it any other way. Is this something that people see as important, because if they don’t, when will they?

**Teacher D.** Getting my degree here at XX[regional college], we had to take Latin American history; we had to take, uh, a diverse cultures, and there’s one other one that’s like the legal stuff. We definitely hit on the language barriers and things like that.

**Teacher E.** College prepared me the most for going to XX[my first job]. My college was diverse. My high school had only maybe two African-American kids, and that was all. Learning and growing with my college friends those four years, and being involved in things on campus . . . . That’s the biggest shaper of how I learned to get along with all different groups of people.

**Being mentored by other educators.** This topic aligned with facilitating growth.

**Teacher A.** I admire XX[a leader in district], a trailblazer for this county, wanting to change the school culture, and just wanting people to see education in a different way when sometimes people aren’t ready to see it that way. . . . I admire how long XX[this person] has stayed and how hard XX[this person] has worked to change peoples’ minds, helping them see that we’re more than just people filling spots. We’re people who are transforming lives, if we allow ourselves to do that.

**Teacher B.** XX[my principal impacted my growth as a mentor], because XX[my principal] makes a concerted effort to stay in contact with old students, and he makes an

effort to hire them back [this teacher was hired when returning to the area after leaving town to go to college and working in distant areas]. I would say at XX[this] school, between 30 to 40% of our teachers went through here. And XX[my principal], I think, almost defers to the XX[town]'s pool first before looking elsewhere. XX[My principal] looks for people who do understand our demographic, who do understand our culture.

**Teacher C.** And XX[my mentor] was the reason why I [trails off]. He just mentored me all throughout high school . . . and really took me under his wing. He helped me apply to XX[my college], and that was how I even knew how to apply to a school like that [my faraway D-1, R-1 university]. And I didn't plan on that. I wanted to go to XX[a regional college]. That was the farthest away I wanted to go. That was my comfort zone. And if it wasn't for XX[my mentor's] saying, "Just apply," and my parents, obviously, I never would have trusted myself, or I never would have thought that I had the capability to do that. So when I decided to do that, I knew that one person had the ability to make the difference for another person, even if it's just in one student's life.

**Teacher D.** I think it was probably peer help and latching on to those teachers whom you saw who did a good job, and understanding the teachers you saw who didn't, why they were. So, y'know, [regarding] the ones who weren't doing a good job or who were so angry about being here, you saw how much that affected kids, and you saw how it affected everyone who was around them. And I knew I didn't want to be that way. And those people who had success and had good numbers and who were doing all these things we talked about, they appreciated kids; they liked what they were teaching; and they wanted to do well for themselves and for their kids. That's how it is in business; you want to just do well for everybody. It's, y'know, because it's so disheartening to be near those

teachers: When they walked in the door, they just sucked the life out of you, and they looked at the kids and were like “What are you doing?” [They were] scream[ing] and yell[ing] and just angry all the time.

**Teacher E.** You can’t wait to get out [and move away from this town as a young local person], and then you get out and you are now a little fish in a big pond. You know, we complain, “I could sneeze at McDonalds’, and my mom’s got chicken soup ready at home, because someone told her about it [me sneezing].” But I’ve lived several different large cities, and I had no help. It was just me and my XX[spouse]. I had no support system. And coming back, it’s not just the family of like, my blood family, but it’s my extended family. . . It’s like everybody’s a family. The XX school is a family to me. Nothing’s come close to it. I’m not a mushy person, but school gets me mushy.

**Teacher F.** As soon as I had a feel for the kids, I had a feel for the other teachers, I had help from another teacher who was teaching the same subject. And she wasn’t my mentor, but she was my mentor, but not on paper. And she helped me a lot. I give a lot of credit to her as far as helping me those first few weeks and teaching me, and helping me understand what a standard was. And then I was like, “Okay, I see,” and then I started thinking back on my experiences and learning as a student, and I was going back, and I was like okay, okay, okay, and then I got it. And I think from there, I just progressed.

**Mentoring other teachers.** The section aligned with the subheading teacher growth.

**Teacher A.** And I think that’s one thing I’ve tried to do as I get older and have been in this school and being one of the older ones now, and I haven’t been here the longest that’s for sure, but I’m at the top of that, and understanding that these first-year teachers, you can see it in their face. If we don’t help that person [new teacher], and if we don’t

give them that support, how are we going to get them to stay? Y'know that affects our kids; it affects our numbers and our school grade. I think peer mentoring and peer encouragement has been a big deal [in my growth as a teacher].

**Teacher B.** This is kind of hard to explain to teachers that I am mentoring, like how do you make it [your class] feel like a team? Well, it starts on the very first day . . . The whole secret to making class awesome is “I’m on your team, and I don’t know it all.”

**Teacher C.** So [teachers I mentor struggle with] understanding where they [students] come from, and that you’re going to make mistakes as a first-year [teacher] big time, but being willing to adapt to what the kids are telling you [is important]. And that’s what I’ve seen is the hardest for some first-year teachers . . . [Some have] walked away because they couldn’t fix it perfect their first time. And a teacher now I’m helping mentor, she’s from here, and she wants to fix it, and she will, but maybe not today. It may be next year if she stays; it may be another year or two.

**Teacher D.** We have a board that I put quotes up on every day, and we do a thing that I learned at a PLC [professional learning community] meeting. It’s called Drop in a Bucket where . . . our life is like a bucket and sometimes it’s full and you feel good about yourself, but sometimes it’s empty and you feel like, “Ohhhh things are getting [stops], and, uhm, we don’t have enough water.” The compliments and the encouragement can fill that bucket up, and people who are negative like that take it away from it. So we have a big bucket [on a bulletin board], and people have been writing encouragement like “thanks for helping me out with this” or “Ms. So-and-So has been doing a really great job,” and so, when we don’t have a chance to talk to a person, we can put it up on the board.

**Lessons learned from a student.** This section contained data derived from the code lessons learned and the following interview question: *What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?* Two teachers told stories about having called home about a student who had behavioral issues in class, and both students told the teacher that they were physically punished by a parent (see p. 133 & p. 135). This impacted how and if the teacher called home after that for any other child. Some lessons learned from students were included at other points in this chapter, where the message was one of not giving up on a student, or having high expectations, and those were not repeated in this section.

**Teacher 1.** I don't know how to word it, but it [caring] just goes a long way. They appreciate being seen as an individual when they're going through seven periods a day. You are shaping [stops and restarts], you are part of that transformation that is happening, and sometimes it hasn't even started happening until they walk into your classroom. The fact that you engage with them and you acknowledge and validate their experience gives them that momentum to continue [changing] or to explore new things that they had never considered. So, I think just that validation that where you come from is important, but where you're going is even more powerful.

**Teacher 2.** [From a student I learned] lessons in patience and kindness I think. I had a student yesterday who was just driving me crazy because he wouldn't listen. He doesn't take out his book when I ask him to; he doesn't work; he doesn't write. So finally I kept him after class, and he still barely spoke. But it turns out he's incredibly shy, and he was around some very rambunctious kids, and he was just very uncomfortable. And so I'm just always being reminded about taking time with each kid.

**Teacher 3.** I mean [I learn from] most of the kids that come back and talk to me. For one kid I had several years ago, we had a love-hate thing: Every day when he would come in, he didn't want to do what I said, wouldn't listen, and just was angry all the time. And there was kind of a group of them who ganged up on me and just made it really difficult. But I came back every day and said, "Hey, here we are every day."

Then awhile later, I [saw him] at graduation. . . . He said, "You had showed me that people can't quit, and you kept on. [I] didn't like it, but you kept on." And he said, "I remembered that." And when I saw him graduate, all the mamas are standing around and looking at me like, "Who's this lady, and" . . . I said to him, "Hey you made it!" And he said, "I did. I don't know what's going to happen to me now, but at least I know I can." So that was probably the biggest one that has stuck with me.

**Teacher 4.** I've learned a lot of lessons from students. Mainly, don't always think that you're right. Because kids are always out there trying to prove you wrong. I've been proved wrong before, and I've learned, "Don't assume that you're right. Don't think that you're right, and if you are wrong, own up to it right away."

**Teacher 9.** One of my students is teaching me that she hates doing what she loves. She hates XX[this class], and she loves it. It's so difficult that she has to think, so she hates it right now. She loves it; you can tell how much she is into it. She thinks, and she hates to think, but she loves to think. [This was something the girl had never had to do before.]

**Teacher A.** I've learned as I've been teaching [that many of our Hispanic and Latino(a)] students don't really know their own cultures . . . . The tradition stops once we get here. Some kids [know nothing about their ethnic or racial culture, and they have to be required to ask their parents or grandparents to talk about the past] . . . and it's nice to teach them.



**Reflecting or shop-talking at home.** Codes from the data in this section included reflecting and shop-talking, and they addressed the following interview question: *How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?*

**Teacher A.** Oh, yeah. It's *always* [that I am talking about school at home]. I'm planning XX[name] Week next week, so all I'm talking about is what I am wearing. . . . And I'm planning the pep rally, and the dance, and [stops and laughs].

**Teacher 1.** Um...well when I get home, it's probably just, I don't know, I would say a good two, three hours, especially with all the work lingering and hovering over your shoulders, and all the things you didn't address, and all the things they expect you to do, and so you're constantly worrying about it.

**Teacher 7.** Yes, I plan a lot. I plan until I can't keep my eyes open at night, and my XX[significant other] will wonder why it takes me so long. But I say that I want my lessons to be good, and if they aren't good, there's no point in teaching them.

**Teacher 8.** [I spent] A lot of time [talking about school on personal time], to the point that people think that I actually have children. In fact, when I was talking with people at a wedding this weekend, someone asked me in disbelief how many kids I had, and I had to stop and explain, "No! I have no children at all; I am a teacher, and I talk about my students like they were my own kids."

**Teacher 9.** The new [and any] teacher has to love it [teaching] and has to want to do it because this is not easy. We aren't paid that much to do what we do. I have done calculations on how much I get paid an hour when you count all the planning, grading, and staying after school with kids, and I make about \$2 an hour, working about 13 hours a day. But I pay my bills, and I am happy.

## **Document and Artifact Review**

The researcher made field notes describing the documents, exhibits, and artifacts which were provided by the participants as evidence of their classroom practices during the course of the interviews. These field notes were written during and after the interviews and detailed in the interview transcripts as bracketed information containing references to items of interest which surfaced or were volunteered and explained as evidence during the interview. Field notes about these observed items or contextual evidence were included in the redacted transcript which was sent to participants for member-checking. Then the approved field notes were coded, organized, and presented with the transcript data in the previous six thematic categories of Chapter Four.

Some of these field notes described details about artifacts provided during the interview. Items in the classroom were described in field notes; for example, Teacher 9's data folders (p. 159), Teacher 10's calendars (p. 159) or colorful and image-rich small group assignment cards (p. 191), Teacher 8's posters noting levels of agreement in an activity for beginning to learn about students' cultures (p. 167), and Teacher 7's world map of students' family origins (p. 191) and space on the classroom constitution for students' amendments (p. 184). Clarification of teachers' gestures were also in the field notes, such as when pointing to the swear hat (p. 185), the famous athlete statue by the teacher's computer (p. 175), goals on whiteboards in the front or back of the room (p. 157), or an empty student desk (p. 129). Field notes also described the arrangement of Teacher 3's desks (p. 189) and hashtags on the class rules (p. 183), the cleanliness of Teacher 11's classroom after students ate lunch in there (p. 178), and Teacher 14's classroom setting that minimized the number of back-of-the-classroom seats (pp. 173-4).

Other field notes captured nuances of conversations about documents referenced in the interview including Teacher 8's appreciation of and pointing out the new curriculum map's focus

on cultures (p. 125), Teacher 14's non-use of reflections on previously prepared note cards, and Teacher 11's honesty in not knowing the term *culturally responsive teaching* or pointing to it on the computer monitor (p. 126). The researcher noted some teachers' tones of voice, as in Teacher 1's conflictedness over the pacing guide and completing the large bulletin board display of students' writing about their beliefs (p. 195), Teacher 4's hopes to develop leaders among students, and the change in tone when Teacher 14 told about a student's lunchtime sharing of a text message from a parent (p. 150). Notes provided information about the interruptions in conversations with Teacher K (p. 144), Teacher 14 who barely missed a beat of a response to an interview question when helping a student who came to the door with a question and when answering a phone call from the front office, and Teacher 11 who gave the student a holiday cookie (p. 193).

All field notes provided evidence of the practices related by the teachers in the conversation. The only teacher about whom classroom context and artifact notes were not made was the teacher who was interviewed in the local coffee shop.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented a description of the teacher participants as well as the thick, rich interview data and field notes gathered in this exploration of how twelve secondary, rural, public school teachers who were identified by their principals as being caring and culturally responsive perceived they used their knowledge of their students' funds of knowledge to improve their learning experiences in their classes. Demographic data describing the twelve participating teachers were provided for the purpose of understanding the voices in the presentation of data and demonstrating the maximum variability in participants' demographics, not to promote any generalizability, which was a limitation of small scale qualitative studies. Demographic data

revealed almost even representation of the secondary school core subjects of math, Language Arts, social studies, and science, along with three uncategorized electives. Half of the teachers were teachers of color, and one-fourth were male. Considering the typical high turnover of teachers in rural areas with a Title I designation, a range of teacher experience levels was found.

Themes that emerged from the data included a definition of CRT and teachers' perceptions of the importance of using cultural and background knowledge and students' funds of knowledge to inform their teaching. Thematic codes also included teachers' perceptions of what caring looks like in their classrooms and their striving through high expectations for student learning. Finally, the fifth and sixth thematic codes included advocacy and growth in culturally responsive teaching and helping students understand racism, power, and privilege when related conversations or situations arise in the classroom or school. Direct quotes of teachers' statements dominated the polyvocal data presentation with numeric pseudonyms assigned to each teacher, but randomized alphabetic pseudonyms used in sensitive situations which could potentially cause harm to the participants or violate confidentiality. Paraphrased memos and field notes were bracketed and included to enhance the reader's understanding.

A discussion of these findings concluded this study with Chapter Five, which included an analysis of the alignment of these findings with the theoretical framework of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010). The eighteen CRT pillars elaborated by Gay (2010) were used to consider the responsiveness of these teachers as a whole, not individually. The framework of rural educator philosophies (Edmondson & Butler, 2010) was used to find the "rural" in the data and to consider if teachers were moving toward Radical Democratic philosophy, integrating the rural place into the classroom or scaffolding the learning experience of the rural students with elements of ruralness, therefore aligning the cultures of the school and the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this basic, interpretative, qualitative study was to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceived that they used, valued, and developed their efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences. The site that was selected and approved was a rural Florida district with many Title I qualifying schools and a majority of students of color, most of whom spoke Spanish as their first language. The review of related research revealed very little work with culturally responsive teaching in a rural setting. Because this study was exploratory and examined perceptions, qualitative semi-structured 45-60 minute interviews triangulated with a demographic survey, document review, and member-checking were selected as the methodology.

To identify participants, middle and high school principals suggested teachers on their staff whom they perceived were caring and culturally responsive to students from diverse backgrounds while holding students to high standards of achievement. During brief 15-20 minute interviews with principals (see Appendix B), the researcher strove for maximum variability in the selection of eight to ten potential participants with the goal of six teacher interviews at each school. Candidates were initially contacted via school email and notified of their selection. Then, envelopes containing the letter of informed consent with signature page, a brief demographic survey which would take at most five minutes to complete, and the short interview protocol to help participants understand the plan for their interview were hand-delivered to the school's front desk secretary to be placed in teacher's school mailboxes according to the principals' directions (see Appendices C-F). Mutually convenient interview appointments were set. After receiving

voluntary consent and permission to audio record, interviews with eleven teachers occurred after the school day in their classrooms, and one occurred on a Saturday morning in a local coffee shop. Interviews and transcriptions were completed during fall semester of 2016.

In addition to demographic survey responses provided at the start of the interview (see Appendix L), member-checked interview transcripts including the researcher's memos and field notes of teacher-supplied evidence of their culturally responsive practices, classroom exhibits of students' work, and the classroom setting were the data set in this study. The complete interview protocol (Appendix G) was aligned with three research questions, and redacted transcripts were manually coded with 58 simple codes which were later organized into six thematic categories through a four-step iterative process documented in Appendices H-K. The collected data were presented in Chapter Four, grouped according to both research question and thematic category.

Throughout the process of data collection, transcription and presentation, the researcher was mindful of the importance of protecting confidentiality of participants drawn from a small rural population whose ethical considerations were revealed in the research review. Care was taken to redact all potentially identifying language, noting the omission with the symbol XX[explanation]. Numeric pseudonyms protected participants from gender, ethnicity, and racial associations with demographic data reported in the description of the participants. Furthermore, when the researcher believed data may have been sensitive or potentially identifying, randomized alphabetic pseudonyms, purposefully disconnected from the numeric pseudonyms and all participants' names, were assigned to data. Association of alphabetic pseudonyms changed with each new subheading in Chapter Four, so no composite picture of any participant could or should be constructed. The purpose of pseudonyms was to protect participants' identity, to indicate the shifting voices, and to identify pieces of dialogue for the rest of this chapter.

When producing and studying the transcripts, the researcher noticed, enjoyed, and valued the differences in the participants' discourse patterns and communication styles and hoped to honor perspectives by capturing, coding, and presenting the data with the spirit in which it were offered. Some participants provided linear and concise responses which ended with the next interview question and in the voice of a credentialed reporter of things observed, valued, and accomplished. On the other hand, others' discourse flowed in a topic-chaining style, telling stories and speaking easily, passionately, and reflectively, sometimes returning in circular fashion to responses provided earlier or advancing into topics not yet specifically addressed, and sometimes with inferred connections to the topic. Other voices were reflective, philosophical, and quiet, offering perspectives that indicated a lack of certainty and sometimes reflectively returning to previous topics. The researcher attempted to treat the statements as examples of practices and not as profiles of particular teachers or a fault-finding exercise which Gay (2010) argued was non-productive, and the example ideas were intended to paint a composite picture of rural teachers' perceptions connected to the little researched and lesser understood area of CRT in a rural area where students of color were the majority and the minoritized culture of ruralness and lack of economic opportunity intersected with cultural and linguistic diversity.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This study's literature review examined definitions of culture and the historical and current culture of schooling; presented research on the condition of rural education, rural educational research, and the construct of ruralness; and, importantly, explored both conceptual- and praxis-based studies of CRT. Two theoretical frameworks guided this study, the theoretical framework of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010) and the emerging educators' philosophical construct of radical democracy (Edmondson & Butler, 2010).

## **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

CRT was found not to be a curricular add-on, assigning extra research projects, or a holidays and heroes, foods and fashion approach to bringing the culture of students into the classroom. In Figure 1 (p. 41), an illustration of seminal researchers' definitions of CRT revealed that the language defining CRT centered most prominently upon the words *students*, *cultural(ly)*, *responsive*, *learning*, *experiences*, *prior knowledge*, *curriculum*, *values*, and *referents*. The operational definition for this study was Gay (2010)'s definition which included many of the often-repeated words in other seminal researchers' definitions as in Figure 1 (p. 41); essentially, CRT was defined as using student's prior and cultural knowledge and ways of learning as a scaffold on which new learning was constructed. Gay (2013) explained CRT's goal as improving learning experiences for all students, especially the underserved, by teaching "to and through" (p. 51) students' wealth of knowledge from their lived-experiences.

Gay (2010) provided guidance for teachers and institutions who were trying to grow in cultural responsiveness in the form of a list of eighteen "pillars for progress" (pp. 248-50). The items in the interview protocol for this study aligned with Gay (2010)'s eighteen pillars (see Appendix M), and all pillars were represented by the interview questions (see Appendix N). Regarding the pillars, Gay (2010) wrote, "Ideally, all will occur at once, but a few are better, by far, than continuing tradition" (p. 248). This statement guided this researcher's analysis.

## **Radical Democratic Philosophy of Rural Educators**

With the purpose of understanding the sometimes conflicting beliefs of what teaching means in a rural community and to a rural educator, and recognizing education was a political process (Freire, 2005), Edmondson and Butler (2010) presented a framework of four traditional political educational philosophies: conservative, neo-conservative, neo-liberal, and liberal (Table



4, p. 18). Adding to the basic four designs, they proposed a re-design for rural education termed radical democracy, an alternative and hopeful philosophy that they argued had potential to reframe rural education (Edmondson & Butler, 2010). The tenets of this philosophy were presented, in summary, in Table 12, and this framework was used to determine if the participants connected rural culture to school culture in a way that supported ruralness and the community.

Table 12

*Framework of Philosophy of Radical Democratic for Rural Educators*

| <b>Tenets of Radical Democracy</b> |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Goals                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work for rural social change through participatory democracy</li> </ul>   |
| Beliefs                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build coalitions; redistribute resources; high-stakes tests not relevant; teacher should design the curriculum</li> </ul>   |
| Values                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom; equality; cultural values of community; individuals' identity; civic engagement</li> </ul>   |
| Teacher's Role                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students participate in public life to make decisions about use of local resources; see, appreciate, and value communication and all community members' perspectives; foster citizens that can sustain and grow rural areas while opposing injustice and outmigration</li> </ul> |
| Negatives                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power of dominant groups hard to resist in community that has suffered generations of despair and silencing</li> </ul>  |

**Use of Theoretical Frameworks to Analyze Data**

Throughout the rest of Chapter Five, Gay (2010)'s eighteen pillars for progress were aligned with the research questions (see Appendices M & N) and used to analyze examples from the data of teacher perceptions presented in Chapter Four. Also, the researcher attempted to find that which was uniquely rural in the data by examining evidence of teachers' work to scaffold students' learning with aspects of the rural culture, through the lens of Edmondson and Butler (2010)'s alternative design for rural education. The researcher's paraphrases of each pillar and related interview questions were listed in the forthcoming tables in this chapter and collectively on Table 3 (p. 16). The data were searched for evidence of each pillar for progress for CRT in practice and then for evidence of radical democratic goals, beliefs, values, and behaviors. It was

not the purpose of this study to build a profile of teachers and determine which teachers were or were not culturally responsive or which teachers did or did not act according to the philosophy of radical democracy. Teachers have not been trained in culturally responsive teaching as it related to this rural area, and some had no exposure to the philosophy in college, so they should not be faulted for not knowing what they have not been trained to do. Rather, the purpose was to explore perceptions of how teachers valued, used, and grew in their ability and efficacy to be culturally responsive with the goal of improving learning experiences for all students including those from non-urban, non-White, or non-middle class cultures. Therefore, Chapter Five's analysis presented these perceptions of what was valued and used in an effort to be culturally responsive in a rural school setting. Implications and recommendations concluded the chapter.

### **Data Analysis for Research Question 1**

The first research question asked: *What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?* To answer this question, the data were explored initially to find how participants understood CRT, the value they placed on knowledge of students' backgrounds and preferences, and the knowledge the participants perceived they used to inform their culturally responsive teaching.

#### **Category #1: CRT Definition and Importance**

First, to understand what the participants understood about CRT particularly in their rural setting, they were asked to define it, comment on its importance, and explore what was unique about teaching in their area and their school. The data on teachers' perceptions were framed on Gay (2010)'s Pillars 1, 3, 5, and 8 (see Table 13).

Table 13

*Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 1, 3, 5, and 8 (Gay 2010)*

| Interview Questions   | Pillars 1, 3, 5, & 8 (Gay, 2010)   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?</li> <li>• How important do you feel it is to use knowledge of students’ home cultures or life experiences in our town in your teaching? 1-10</li> <li>• What is important for teachers to know about our students’ lives outside of school?</li> <li>• In what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you were teaching in an urban area? What would surprise a new teacher in our district? What would help new teachers coming into town be better prepared for teaching our students?</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Culturally Responsive Teaching:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 1:</b> Is integral to all classes and all skills taught</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 5:</b> Integrates context, culture, and lived-experience of students of color into curriculum</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 3:</b> Happens systematically, continuously, and purposefully, not just sometimes and ways</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 8:</b> Uses both general group and particular individual student cultural patterns</li> </ul> |

**Pillar 1.** In teachers’ definitions of CRT, evidence demonstrated if teachers felt CRT was for all classes and all skills. Participants’ definitions of CRT included these paraphrased constructs: understanding cultures, knowing where students come from, helping students succeed, breaking through assumptions, relating to students individually, seeking students’ prior knowledge, creating a positive learning environment, and meeting each students’ needs.

In the same way that seminal scholars in the literature review defined CRT also by what it is not (Au, 2001; Nieto, 2013; Sleeter, 2011), many teachers framed their definition of CRT against their views of what did not work with their students. Teacher 14 explained that CRT was not letting students not participate in learning:

If they [students] become part of that back row seat [culture] in the classroom, it’s hard for students to get it. Because once they get lost back there, and the teacher continues to teach, they move on to the next teacher, believing that next teacher will just leave them in

that back chair and let them continue to do very little or whatever they want to continue to do, and I don't know why it gets that way, but [voice trails off]. CRT is meeting all students' needs. (p. 128)

Two participants said CRT was “teaching the student you have instead of the students you wish you have” (p. 124), and responsive teachers were not stagnant “old school” teachers (p. 124). Teacher 5 noted that CRT was more than inserting local and student names into discussions.

Another teacher commented on the biculturalism of some students who felt they were “*Ni de aquí ni de allá*, not from here, not from there” (p. 127) and told the story of helping students reframe their deficit perspective about navigating two cultures. Teacher 8 spoke of helping students who were not of color understand they, too, had a cultural background: “the biggest challenge was students who feel that they have no culture” (p. 125) when students were doing an assignment that required their examination of their own culture. Accordingly, Ladson-Billings (2006) noted the need to remediate this lack of understanding of the word *culture* and cultural background in her own students, calling their denial a “poverty of culture” (p. 109).

Notably, one teacher who held an advanced degree in education from a state outside of Florida did not define CRT due to not having heard of the term. This teacher related the decision of resisting researching and memorizing a definition and deciding to contribute honestly to the study. The teacher elaborated by explaining a background of color-blind beliefs and a desire to see students through classroom behaviors. Another teacher explained the perceived need to silence offensive or negative personal beliefs before saying them aloud in class, “So you want to make sure you don't cross the line. You don't say certain things, even if you want to” (p. 124).

No teachers mentioned the word *rural* although it was purposefully inserted into the question, and the researcher specifically stated *rural* several times in the opening remarks for the

interviews. Teacher 1 was the only one who directly mentioned the community, defining CRT as, “understanding where they [students] come from, and that’s racially, their ethnicity, socioeconomics, their town where they are sitting” (p. 124). Another teacher alluded to the way power was situated generationally through certain family ties in the rural town by saying, “[teaching all students] no matter who their parents . . . or . . . grandparents or . . . great-great-grandparents are” (p. 125). No other teachers referenced the ruralness of the community.

Overall, the majority of teachers’ perceptions of CRT aligned with the first pillar, in that teachers saw CRT as a philosophy applicable for teaching in all classes all skills. Some moved into Pillar 2, 4, and 5 in their definition by stating it is appropriate for all students, uses students’ cultures to support their learning, and reframes negative perceptions or deficit-thinking. It was possible teachers thought about the locale as an implicit part of students’ culture, but most comments did not voice this thinking or mention ruralness in the definition of CRT.

**Pillar 5.** Teachers were asked to rate from 1-10, with ten being the highest ranking, how important they perceived it was to integrate what they knew about students’ home lives into what they were teaching. Because 66% of the participants rated this an eight or higher, the general consensus was that knowledge about students’ homes was important, so overall, looking at only the numerical ratings, teachers’ perceptions appeared to align easily with this pillar. An example of statements highly supportive of the importance of knowing backgrounds was

you wouldn’t want someone to talk to you like you’re someone else. You want them to talk to you like you’re *you* and with everything that you come from. So as teachers, as hard as it is, that comes with the job. If you’re going to be effective in the classroom, you have to be able to know where that student comes from. (p. 129)

Teacher 14 corroborated this with,

When you are in Title I schools, we already know it's not the paycheck . . . You have to be able to relate to what is in your classroom, and if you cannot relate to them, to understand the culture in your classroom, then it will show. (p. 131)

Two others said lives at home motivated or de-motivated students, so it was important to know about their parents and the demands that were placed on their time at home. It should be noted that Teacher 10 also noted group cultural aspects in addition to individual culture, as in Pillar 8.

Teachers made some earnest dissenting statements, such as: "I try really hard, but I'm never going to get it [perfect]. . . And sometimes as I get older, it's a generational thing, too (p. 129). It should be noted that this teacher made other strong responsive statements, so the power of this comment could be distorted taken in isolation. In an rejection of scaffolding teaching with cultural referents, another teacher said, "but when it comes to comprehension, I don't think that culture matters there. I think it's more about the right teaching methods to get kids to understand what they're reading" (p. 129). And another who rejected CRT said it is important to be aware "stuff [abuse] could be going on at home. But I also think it is important for all kids to come to a place where nobody knows their story and can see them for who they are here" (pp. 130-31).

Teacher 2 noted the importance but challenge of knowing students' families and using that knowledge in teaching:

It's one of the downsides of growing up [here in this area], because it's like, "Oh I know what your family's like; I know what your brother's like," and it's kind of hard to take the personal out sometimes and give the kids a fresh slate. . . . I can't judge them by their name, by their siblings, by their cousins, by knowing their daddy in high school. (p. 129)

This teacher was the only one who directly mentioned the locale. The majority agreed with the premise of knowing about students' backgrounds' being important in teaching effectively.

**Pillar 3.** Regarding the systematic and purposeful collection and use of information about students' lives at home, teachers were asked what information was important to collect. They responded that they valued perceptions and experiences of parents about their child, seeing students outside of school to gain perspective, and having brief parent conferences at the grocery store. They found it helpful knowing if anyone were home to provide academic support; the parents' immigration status; what their religious backgrounds were; and if parents worked in the fields, migrated away from the area, or periodically went to Mexico and left older siblings to take care of younger siblings. Another valued knowing about siblings and found it important to avoid crossing a line at first to learn about parents or addresses, trusting it to come out later in conversation. Teacher 4 spoke of knowing almost a third of parents and banning phones in class because of the disconnection students have with home lives because of their phones, so the researcher accepted this as classroom action based on knowledge of their lives at home.

Several teachers noted negative aspects of some students' home lives and of purposefully finding out if, when, and how to call students' parents. Seaton (2007) warned about calling home in rural communities because teachers' concerns could be misunderstood by the parents. One teacher who stated reasons for not connecting with home were due to a students' being beaten due to the phone call, responded, "So they can tell me to call home all they want to, and they will probably have to fire me first" (p. 135). Another teacher told of a similar incident of a student's punishment for the phone call and explained the importance of knowing whether to talk to mom or dad about an issue in class. A third teacher noted, "A lot of the kids here, they've experienced some very traumatic experiences at home and in their neighborhoods, and you can see that difference between my honors class and my lower level class in what they XX[communicate about home]" (p. 135). Reasons for the perceptions about class differences were not stated.

These three teachers experienced situations like those Edmondson and Butler (2010) found in the Northern Tier of rural Pennsylvania where “the struggles of contemporary rural life, the devastating effects of drug and alcohol abuse in some rural families, domestic violence, and lack of access to health care have created unimaginable conditions for some children in these schools” (p. 154). Rural CRT training may help teachers understand how to make effective calls home.

Teachers who said they valued knowledge about students’ religious beliefs, traumatic home experiences, migrating families, caring for siblings, and having absent parents indicated a strong awareness of lived-experiences of some children in the local community. The dissenting views resulted from negative experiences with violence and trauma in some homes of some children in the area. All of the comments indicated strong awareness of life in the community itself; therefore, most teachers acted in ways they perceived to be responsive to cultures of students in their classes (Gay, 2010) and exhibited evidence of the teacher’s RD value of culture and individual identity (see p. 236) in radical democracy (Edmondson & Butler, 2010).

**Pillar 8.** Teachers’ responses to items which prompted them to contrast teaching in their town with teaching in an urban area and explore what new hire teachers would need to do to be successful were designed to tease out teachers’ perceptions of general aspects of life in town that would impact teaching. All numeric pseudonyms were redacted in this section. These teachers spoke of group generalizations related to the culture of the area. Teachers described local culture as follows: the culture of wealthy, powerful landowners who drove old pick-up trucks and wore jeans; the families of the business-owners; the White and African-American rural families who have fewer economic assets and opportunities; and the working-class and migrant Hispanic or Latino(a)s who immigrated over the past twenty years. As evidence of this influx, one teacher spoke of going away to college and leaving a town in which the minority was people of color,



teaching awhile out of state, and moving back to a town with a minority of people who were not of color. Another said, “It’s basically an inner city in the middle of nowhere” (p. 137). About the power of tradition and time, one teacher said, “I’ve been here most of my adult life, and I am considered one of the new people because I did not go to school here” (p. 137).

Overall, teachers spoke of generalizations about the community culture and about individual bits of knowledge that they perceived mattered when teaching young people; all data were evidence of CRT pillars 8, and 3 regarding generalizations about the town, but very few addressed group cultural characteristics or evidenced deeper cultural knowledge about communication and participation patterns. Only Teacher 10 spoke of group cultural values, for example, of rote and repetition vs. concepts and problem solving. Teachers spoke passionately about lives of some students, and most felt it was important to know about the lives of their students to improve the learning experience as in pillar 5.

Some teachers talked generally about the impact of immigration and deportation, parents’ resistance to come to the school because “if they don’t have papers, they think we are going to turn them in” (p. 137), and the “shocking” (p. 140) homes in which some students live. One teacher noted the importance of knowing available employment opportunities were for graduates. Conversely, some statements indicated a love for the town, saying there is “something special about this little town that people don’t see until they see the ugliness that’s out there” (p. 139).

All these responses presented teachers’ awareness of life in their town, and some teachers wanted better circumstances for students’ lives, the goal of radical democracy.

## **Category #2: Funds of Knowledge and Informed Instruction**

Research Question #1 about the cultural knowledge participants valued and used was further explored by asking how teachers gathered the funds of knowledge that they valued, such

as information about students' home lives, learning preferences, and goals. Also questions involved how teachers informed their instruction academically with formative and multiple types of assessments and how they provided the means for students to set goals, self-check their progress toward goals and their learning. The interview questions in the second thematic category aligned with Pillars 11, 12, 14, and 15 were displayed in Table 14.

Table 14

*Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 11, 12, 14, and 15 (Gay 2010)*

| Interview Questions   | Pillars 11, 12, 14, & 15 (Gay, 2010)<br>Culturally Responsive Teaching:   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?</li> <li>• Do you take into consideration students' learning preferences? If so, how?</li> <li>• What kinds of progress checks do you use?</li> <li>• Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about their goals for the future?</li> <li>• Do you ever hear students say that they want to move away from here or go away to college?</li> <li>• What ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 14:</b> Scaffolds learning between school culture and content and students' funds of knowledge</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 11:</b> Uses multiple means of assessment including cultural preferences, participation, and communication styles</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 15:</b> Help students imagine a different life, create goals, and pursue a path to their dreams</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 12:</b> Empowers students with tools for continuous self-assessment</li> </ul> |

**Pillar 14.** This pillar was discussed in two different thematic categories. This section of Category 2 explored how teachers learned funds of knowledge of their students, and Category 4 analyzed how teachers used the knowledge in their teaching. Teachers spoke of many ways that they learned about students' home cultures and used this knowledge to support students in school. One teacher spoke about the impact of having a summer job where students congregated in the community and where the teacher was able to see students outside of school and get to know siblings and parents. Others suggested playing on a local sports team, joining a church,

going to community festivals and events, shopping in local stores, eating in local restaurants, and meeting students and their parents through that affiliation. Some teachers explained their perceptions of the importance of making interpersonal connections by taking the time to talk to the students, by being available at lunch in the cafeteria when a student needed to talk, being a mentor and helping students think their way through their problems, or by reading and responding personally to their writing. One teacher mentioned the interconnectedness of many of the students to each other and the powerful student-to-student network that existed.

Others spoke of building the home-school connection with parents. One teacher told about having a special open house for parents during which the parents saw the end of course test for which their children were being prepared and were reportedly amazed at all the students would learn in the course; also, they had the opportunity to meet the teacher in an informal way. Another teacher sent home letters in English, Spanish, and Creole, and then followed up with positive, getting-acquainted phone calls. Two teachers addressed the importance of talking to parents: one mentioned open house meetings, and the other spoke of refiguring the PTO [Parent-Teacher Organization] so it would be more accessible to all parents including those who were not only “a very specific person . . . [those who] look a certain way” (p. 147). These were ways teachers mentioned for reaching out and connecting with students as a foundation piece for building a home and school connection to support learning in the classroom.

The local area was very much a part of the conversation in this segment of interview questions. Most teachers mentioned an awareness of activities, customs, and behaviors that they perceived as important in understanding who the students were socially. Also, teachers addressed school-home connections and involving, meeting, and engaging with parents.

**Pillar 11.** This pillar and related interview questions were designed to find how teachers find and use students learning preferences, communication styles, and participation patterns. One teacher noted that an opportunity for personal growth happened when learning to accept the noise level of students working in groups, which differed from the teacher's own preference for quiet. Another noted that it was important to assess students' resistance to speaking because the classroom activities revolved around communication with the teacher and peers in both large and small group interactions. Teachers also noted that students preferred working in groups, participating best with partners, triads, or small groups. Some teachers spoke of continuously developing new learning activities to reach a variety of students. Another participant reflected on preparing stories that connected lessons to life. Three teachers noted how biculturalism and bilingualism affected students and referenced partners as helpful for emergent bilinguals. No teachers mentioned students' cultural communication style as differing from the mainstream.

Regarding discrepant data for this pillar, several teachers felt conflicted with taking the time to vary the types of activities and add manipulatives or movement because of the demands to follow the pacing guide and curriculum map closely, saying "but now with XX[this class], it's pretty fast-paced. You kind of just have to keep going" (p. 151) or "sometimes the curriculum does not lend itself every day to be culturally responsive" (p. 152), or "the curriculum I have right now has limited me to far less of that creativity, and it's kind of frustrating" (p. 152).

Teachers also spoke of building students' communication skills which was the teacher's role in radical democracy. Several teachers repeatedly addressed the importance of speaking in class and the power of having strong communication skills. Teacher 14 said communication was "the most important thing in life" (p. 179). Teachers mentioned Socratic Seminars and Philosophical Chairs as valuable activities; others cited writing, answering oral questions

completely, using Popsicle sticks or index cards with student names to give voice to everyone, and working carefully or developing trusting relationships with students who resist speaking.

None of the comments in this segment addressed the local community in particular, but a tenet of radical democracy was valuing individuals and their values, so because half the participants mentioned individual cultural preferences, the responses arguably connected to this philosophy. Teachers' perceived tensions between CRT and a rigid or scripted curriculum plan which they said interfered with their efforts to provide for differing learning preferences and communication styles. These tensions were also found in research (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012; Evans, Lester, & Broemmel, 2010; Sleeter, 2012), Teachers whose philosophy was aligned with radical democracy would express frustration with an unresponsive curriculum plan and advocate designing the curriculum of the classroom for themselves with the community in mind.

**Pillar 15.** These interview questions were centered on students' goal-setting and imagining their futures. Most teachers spoke with conviction about helping students imagine going to college, getting appropriate grades for college, and getting test scores that will allow them to get their high school diploma. Teacher A stated the importance of having a diverse staff to provide role models because it "helps students to see that people of their culture can achieve higher learning and positions of leadership" (p. 211). Three teachers mentioned AVID as being helpful in providing students who may not have the funds of knowledge to understand navigating the way into and sustaining a path while in college: "I like the fact that AVID allows the student who perhaps may have thought a door was closed to them have the opportunity to excel as a student, and maybe even change their socio-economic status for themselves and their family" (p. 153). Another teacher felt less guilty for not taking time in class to set future goals because of the confidence students were doing so in their AVID classes. Gay (2010) also addressed AVID as a

culturally responsive program. Teachers talked about helping students understand the two roads, one of which led to a successful life and the other not (p. 155); the connections of the world of work to the world of the classroom in terms of expectations (p. 180); and the need to “stand for something or you’ll fall for anything” (p. 155). Several teachers spoke of students’ lack of background knowledge, and their use of the Internet, Webcams or *Google Earth* to help students understand things they have not seen or motivate students to want to travel someday and work for the means to travel (p. 154). Imagining a different life and goal-setting were aspects of CRT.

Discrepant data for this pillar included one participant’s comment that middle schoolers were not interested in setting future goals because they lived in the moment. Three teachers said students worked for their caring teachers or for their parents because they did not value working for themselves. Responsive teachers would work to help students set and work toward goals.

Aside from the teachers’ work to build background knowledge for students who did not have much opportunity to travel widely, teachers’ goal-setting efforts did not feature the local community except for one teacher’s response. Teacher 14 noted that students need help setting big goals, visualizing themselves as a leader or business-owner, and working to make it happen:

To be a rural area that is thriving, you have to encourage people to want to make money.

So how are they going to make money and grow the town if we don’t inspire students and produce citizens that want to give back?” (p. 156).

This comment about the students’ goal-setting aligned with Edmondson and Butler (2010)’s philosophy of radical democracy in the areas of goals, values, and the teacher’s role (p. 236).

**Pillar 12.** This pillar and associated interview questions aligned with the teacher’s use of and valuing of various formative assessments to allow for informed teaching decisions and the value and use of students’ self-checks of their own learning. Teachers mentioned the use of

thumbs-up and thumbs-down, sticky-notes messages, and tickets out the door using *Google* forms. Others mentioned keeping expectations on the board for self-assessment of progress, walk-around spot checks of class work or homework, weekly or intermittent quizzes including terms from previous quizzes, Cornell notes that allow for multiple revisions of the information, SIM strategies (Strategic Instruction Model, created for active learning and reading), and partner-talking through new information. Another used student-kept data folders in which students chart their progress toward goals. All teachers made positive comments regarding formative assessments and students' self-checking which were tenets of CRT.

Radical democratic teacher beliefs did not value standardized and high-stakes testing as relevant indicators of student learning. Teachers who held this philosophy preferred to develop curriculum that better aligned with the needs of the community, making the culture of the school the culture of the community. Conversation on assessments and self-checks elicited comments on state testing from all but two teachers. Some teachers spoke with compassion about the emotional impact of students' daily lives and the lack of validity of only one assessment of their achievement when their ability to communicate was ultimately important; others stated that many items on these tests addressed ideas that were out of students' experience, like smog, thirteenth floors, museums, monuments, a peninsula, beaches, and expansive bridges (p. 161), for example. One teacher made a comment aligned with the beliefs of radical democracy in this:

I will never tell the administration this, but I can't say if XX[that class] will pass their XX[state test], but I tell you what, they will love XX[subject area] and understand how XX[subject area] is connected to life when they leave my class. (p. 171)

So, all except one teacher aligned with radical democracy on this topic. The dissenting teacher argued the opposite, saying that teachers should teach the state standards since they were what

was on the state test: “if I know there’s those standards, that’s all I’m teaching” (p. 160).

### **Summary of Data for Research Question #1**

This research question asked what knowledge teachers whose principals viewed them as caring and culturally responsive valued and used to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural backgrounds. Most of what most participants related about valuing and seeking knowledge of students’ home lives, learning preferences, communication and participation styles, and formative and self-assessment of learning gains did align with principles of culturally responsive teaching, and they generally expressed value in connecting the knowledge they systematically sought to the curriculum. Discrepant data were found in the exploration of data aligned with each pillar, some of which was the result of teachers not having been exposed to CRT or their having had negative experiences with perceived power in the community and some parents’ use of corporal punishment. One teacher cautioned that self-perceptions of how culturally responsive teachers were may not be reality:

There’s the illusion of wanting change . . . and [to] be culturally responsive, but then at the end of the day, a lot of people go back into their classroom, close their door, and do the same thing. . . .What we actually do doesn’t necessarily line up with what we said we were going to do. (p. 140)

The literature review provided evidence that what Teacher L said may be at least partly the case (Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, & Bradshaw, 2015; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu & Starker, 2010).

When interview questions required teachers specifically to address the culture of the town, most did so with ease and some with passion, revealing intimate community knowledge and commitment for civic engagement. Evidence was thin but to some degree present for each of the aspects of radical democracy. Teachers expressed perceptions that aligned with the goals,



beliefs, values, and teacher’s role in the philosophy of radical democratic rural teaching to a lesser degree than with CRT. It can be revealed without violating confidentiality that not all of the voices aligned with radical democracy were those of teachers who were born in the area.

### **Data Analysis for Research Question 2**

The second research question addressed the part the community played in the caring and teaching behaviors teachers carried out to help students succeed in class: *What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students’ academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?* The researcher first explored how teachers demonstrated caring behaviors and established a culture of success, and then how teachers put their valued knowledge and caring behaviors to work in the classroom. All data were then searched for aspects of ruralness and community.

#### **Category #3: Caring and High Expectations**

This category addressed teachers’ perceived behaviors that showed their interpersonal and academic caring and creation of a classroom climate and culture of success. Table 15 outlined research questions which aligned with the pillars for progress numbers 6, 7, and 13, Table 15

*Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 6, 7, and 13 (Gay 2010)*

| <b>Interview Questions</b>  | <b>Pillars 6, 7, &amp; 13 (Gay, 2010)<br/>Culturally Responsive Teaching:</b>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would an observer see in your classroom that would show that you care about students?</li> <li>• How would you describe your classroom climate?</li> <li>• How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 13:</b> Demands with genuine caring and appropriate amounts of assistance that students achieve high levels of academic success</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 7:</b> Reflects students’ differing perspectives and cultures in all inter-related areas of curriculum, school and classroom climate, instruction, and communication styles.</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 6:</b> Creates a classroom culture of academic success, collaboration, reciprocity, and community</li> </ul> |

**Pillar 13.** Teachers mentioned a variety of ways to connect with students, from greeting them at the door, writing notes on their papers, talking about things teachers and students had in common, giving high-fives, going to their sporting events, speaking to them at local happenings, and extending spoken, personal, genuine work-related compliments. When speaking of caring and a culture of success, one teacher noted the emotional aspect of learning and said that inspiring confidence and genuinely complimenting even slight marks of growth helped students to trust themselves and have confidence.

Several teachers formed their caring behaviors based on negative experiences when they were students. One teacher spoke of showing compassion when students struggled with homework, and several teachers encouraged and enabled peer collaboration; another learned patience and making connections with students over the learning from a negative example of a former teacher, and explained, “the caring comes from me knowing what I went through as a high school student” (p. 168). Another said knowing how each student operated was critical because some needed help and attention, and others wanted distance or peer connection.

In three bits of apparently discrepant data, because showing culturally responsive caring would not require reducing expectations, one teacher stated that though pushing for excellence was what teachers did, it was important to be mindful of how trauma some students experienced at home affected their performance and to reduce expectations at times; another teacher mentioned academic and personal stress as factor and spoke of pulling back homework demands. Another spoke about pulling away from students who acted like they did not care, saying “the minute that you don’t care for yourself, it’s going to be so hard for me to care” (p. 162).

Several teachers countered this point of pulling back enthusiastically, relating stories of students who acted like they did not care but changed when teachers persist in efforts to connect.

Teacher 7 told a story about making a difference for a student who gave the teacher a thank-you gift the teacher kept by the computer monitor as a reminder not to give up on a student. Teacher 8 also spoke of not giving students permission not to do their work and not ever giving up on students. Teacher 14 identified the source of some students' having gaps in their learning as resulting from teachers who teach to the middle of the room, allow the students in the back of the room to stay there disengaged, and do not care enough about all students to hold them "accountable for their learning. And when I talk about learning, I am not talking about testing. I am talking about permission to do and not to do" (p. 173).

In the teachers' responses related to an awareness of pressures on students as well as their apparent disconnection from the group or lack of self-esteem, teachers demonstrated an awareness of the context in which students lived and aligned with beliefs regarding community- and coalition-building in radical democracy. Overall, participants' examples of caring behaviors demonstrated most teachers' close alignment with CRT pillar 13 as well as RD.

**Pillar 7.** Interview questions connected to this pillar asked teachers to describe their classroom climate and explain how they created a classroom climate of success reflecting different communication styles. One teacher said, "[my classroom is] my happy place. . . I don't want this to sound like it's about me—you offer something to kids academically, but also as person to person" (p. 168). This same teacher spoke of students' appreciation of their classroom climate in that over fifty students chose to leave the cafeteria to eat lunch in this teacher's large room every day but left no trace of their lunches behind, noting "they have established a place where they control their environment, and I am simply an observer" (p. 178). Two teachers spoke about creating classrooms in which students felt safe; one of these spoke of stopping shouting in the classroom and instead modeling expected behavior and respect. Two other

teachers used the metaphor of teamwork and being on the team together to figure out the content of the class, and another teacher spoke of bonding over the papers they write for class. Others explained using the language students used when working collaboratively to speak with each other about course content, as well as cultural artifacts, social media, and their phones. One provided space for some to be “cool” and not speak in the hall but do work and be cool in class. Some encouraged and allowed students to share contact information at will with classmates, so they could ask others questions about homework or missed work when they were absent.

Several teachers spoke of using humor and inside jokes to connect with specific classes. It should be noted that teachers who used humor reported that it worked for their students after they had established relationships with them, and that not all students understood the humor or the jokes, so some were excluded. One teacher took the idea of a team to the level of competition between teams, specifically groups of students working on the same task. While the teacher argued that competition was a motivator, competition was not aligned with radical democracy; it aligned instead with the neoliberal philosophy. CRT was also more about inclusive behaviors, so the use of humor, sarcasm, and competition were discrepant teacher behaviors while the other caring behaviors described by teachers were found to be culturally responsive.

**Pillar 6.** In analysis of data related to this pillar, teachers’ comments on the creation of a culture of success, collaboration, and community were relevant. Correspondingly, Teacher 9 observed, “I have learned that if you are really, really tough, they [the students] like you more” (p. 173). Teacher 12 recognized the tensions in the classroom climate between the teacher’s expectations and students’ fear and resistance, and described the class as *luchadores* (fighters in Spanish), and told the story of students’ slow but steady growth in confidence and achievement, rising to meet their teacher’s expectations. Another teacher spoke about maintaining a balance

between high expectations and discouragement: “I just kind of want to keep their confidence up and let them know that it’s okay to struggle, and it’s okay” (p. 170). Another teacher explained the establishment of a culture of success in the classroom, perceiving that students perform “to please me. Some of them do not have parents to perform for, and face it, they are teenagers, and most of my students are not going to perform for themselves” (p. 173).

This perception and those of others in this section clearly communicated the teachers’ compassion and academic press with its attendant frustrations, but a more complete application of CRT would also including aspects of students’ involvement to envision their futures, set goals, or self-check as part of teachers’ academic press and caring behavior. Also, teachers will persist in building community to support rigorous on-grade and course-level learning, refusing to let up or back away from high expectations with deficit-based reasons. For example, this statement about developing a climate of high expectations and structure included goals and behaviors of the students along with those of the teacher: “They know your expectations, and they will achieve them . . . They wish to go to college; they want order; they want structure; they want those things. There are really a lot of kids here that want that” (p. 169).

In summary, many teachers spoke about being mentors or warm-demanders (Ware, 2006), not giving up on students, and maintaining a culture of high expectations in the vein of CRT. When they spoke about building caring communities with students, teachers also aligned with beliefs and values of RD philosophy in aspects of building and appreciating the culture of the community which in this case was the classroom community. Comments in which teachers recognized the stress or trauma under which some students lived illustrated the teacher’s role and goals of RD by their expressed desire to change the experience for students. For example, one teacher told of building the trust of a student over a period of four to five weeks to receive

permission to wash his sweatshirt (p. 176). Also, several teachers spoke about getting counseling or other help for students who let them know they had needs or were in danger.

**Category #4: Teaching and Learning**

This category included interview questions connected with teachers’ behaviors in the classroom, the establishment of rules and unwritten rules and consequences, use of collaborative structures, group assignments and direct instruction. The final concepts in this section were the use of community, cultural, or prior knowledge to teach a lesson. The interview questions and associated pillars 5, 6, 7, 10 and 14 were displayed in Table 16.

Table 16

*Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 5, 6, 7, 10, and 14 (Gay 2010)*

| <b>Interview Questions</b>   | <b>Pillars 5, 6, 7, 10, &amp; 14 (Gay, 2010)<br/>Culturally Responsive Teaching:</b>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you develop and implement classroom rules and procedures?</li> <li>• Are there unwritten rules in your class? What would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?</li> <li>• Do you use projects?</li> <li>• How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects?</li> <li>• Do you use collaborative learning structures?</li> <li>• How often on average do you use collaborative structures?</li> <li>• Do you use (un)structured group assignments?</li> <li>• What are some successful activities or strategies you have done to help students learn your course content?</li> <li>• What activities are students’ favorite or least favorite?</li> <li>• How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?</li> <br/> <li>• Can you tell about a time you used a student’s (s’) prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?</li> <br/> <li>• Can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 10:</b> Teaches to students of color the informal, unstated, implicit rules and behaviors needed to succeed</li> <br/> <li>• <b>Pillar 6:</b> Creates a classroom culture of academic success, collaboration, reciprocity, and community</li> <br/> <li>• <b>Pillar 7:</b> Reflects students’ differing perspectives and cultures in all inter-related areas of curriculum, school and classroom climate, instruction, and communication styles.</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 14:</b> Scaffolds learning between school culture and content and students’ funds of knowledge</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 5:</b> Integrates context, culture, and lived-experience of students of color into curriculum.</li> </ul> |

**Pillar 10.** Data aligned with pillar 10 concerned the establishment of stated classroom rules and teaching the unwritten rules necessary for success in the mainstream culture of the classroom and the school to students who were not of the mainstream culture. Teachers spoke of establishing rules during the first week of school. Teacher 3 facilitated students' writing of classroom rules using hashtags, which the students humored their teacher with using despite their being out of style. Teacher 7 wrote the classroom constitution but allowed students to negotiate the amendments. Teachers identified a variety of unwritten rules, including unwavering high expectations; never saying, even to themselves, "shut up," "stupid," the "r" word (meaning slow) or the "n" word (racial slur); acting according to normed morals, being kind, and not cursing or cussing; and deadlines being soft deadlines if students communicated with the teacher. Teachers identified these rules as unclear or unknown to some students, so teachers explained appropriate behaviors in following these rules. Teaching unwritten rules was consistent with pillars of CRT.

Disciplinary consequences were also taught as unwritten rules by some teachers; and the researcher accepted teaching unwritten consequences as culturally responsive. Some unwritten punishments involved withholding attention after a relationship was established, allowing privileges for those who performed according to expectations and the converse, using humor or sarcasm which was sometimes misunderstood and required explanation, or moving some students to assigned seats. At least two teachers justified their practice of handling discipline matters within the classroom because the teachers recognized that some students were privileged members of the school and community and wouldn't be disciplined by the administration. These two teachers viewed privileging some students as an inequity and took care of their own classroom discipline. This recognition of unequal players and efforts to seek justice for all was consistent with the teacher's role in RD (p. 236) and critical advocacy, pillar 16 in CRT.

**Pillar 6.** Ten of the twelve teachers spoke about using collaborative structures to improve the learning experience for their students. One teacher said that students were frustrated by the teacher's frequent rearrangement of assigned seats, a growth strategy used to enlarge students' social networks and provide a wider network of peer support for their learning outside the classroom. Other teachers explained the power of pairing wherein students who were more resistant to talking in a larger group were more likely to feel safer and take the risk of speaking to a partner. Teachers used strategies like pair and share to fill in missing notes on new knowledge presented in direct instruction or discussion. Some teachers used pairs for students who were emergent bilinguals. Others mentioned partner peer-review of student writing, small groups for problem solving in math, and multiple rotating stations in the classroom. Two teachers noticed students' segregating themselves culturally in the classroom. One teacher said self-segregated students "weren't learning as well as when I mixed them up [when they had]grouped themselves into the Mexican table, the White girl table, the really really White boy table," (p. 191). Another teacher noticed that students segregated themselves not by ethnicity or race but by similar learning styles, goals, and abilities: "they seek out like minds rather than like persons" (p. 208). These ten teachers who used collaborative structures, mindfully watching students' reactions and productivity with the realization that frustration often appears before learning, worked in a culturally responsive way to increase students' learning, collaboration, and cohesion. They also acted in accordance with the rural radical democratic teacher's role of building community and helping students appreciate other perspectives (p. 236).

**Pillar 7.** Teachers reported students had clear preferences and perspectives about types of activities they enjoyed and those at which they felt successful. One teacher observed that the attention to detail and language in word problems was hard for math students; another who was



not a reading teacher said, “They don’t want to write anything; they don’t want to read anything” (p. 192), indicating students preferred other types of activities. A science teacher observed, “labs require a different kind of thinking” (p. 192), and some students, differentiating by the figured levels of the course as honors or regular levels, had the courage to separate or create mixtures or change variables in an experiment, and others were resistant to taking risks or using the creative and critical thinking required in a lab situation. Others noticed that students appreciated and learned much from hands-on experiences and field trips, and several teachers expressed appreciation for the worlds opened up by Internet images in the way of virtual field trips and live webcams. Most teachers said they used direct instruction less than collaborative learning structures, and several explained the need to “keep my class moving” (p. 194), transitioning from mini-lessons of direct instruction, to shared work, and then to independent work. Another teacher described the process of calling on everyone in class and probing through a lengthy series of questions, refusing to accept no answer as an answer. Teacher 9 described the process used to move from direct and guided instruction to independent work as:

So, at the beginning. . . I am guiding and guiding and guiding, and you [students] are taking notes and writing like this, and then I start leaving them on their own . . . saying, “You can do this!”. . . I told them to trust me, and they look at me, and I can tell them that they are still listening, listening, listening, and then they hear and understand (p. 195)

In the examples provided in this segment, teachers understood the needs and expressed preferences of the class, and they responded by providing a variety of paths for learning, and with persistence and encouragement, consistent with this pillar of progress in CRT. Aside from the field trips and lack of background knowledge, no mention was made of the local setting.

**Pillar 14.** Teachers provided several examples of scaffolding the learning of course content with students' cultural funds of knowledge. When explaining the decision-making behind a classroom display of student writing on the topic of their beliefs, the teacher noted the pressure of a district curriculum and pacing guide which would prohibit teachers' doing this type of assignment, but this teacher resisted in a culturally responsive way and made the assignment anyway because "to have that rapport with the students, you have to engage with their own beliefs and backgrounds" (p. 196). At least three teachers spoke about listening to the words students used in their collaborative structures when they engaged over the course content and then using those same words to explain content to other students. Other participants reported connecting individual students' backgrounds with their writing prompts or texts read in class, providing examples such as family tragedies experienced in Mexico, a fascination with Rubik's cubes, two young people falling in love, or experiencing a culture clash with a teacher. Other teachers reported engaging students to begin a lesson with relevant and trending news reports, like those involving recent clashes of people of color with the police, young people wearing hoodies, immigration controversies, or the recent presidential election. Teachers who did not speak Spanish reported using cultural artifacts and learning some Spanish words to communicate with students or to stop the use of school-inappropriate language.

These were all examples of using students' culture as a scaffold for learning. Also, the teacher's decision to assign the writing activity on students' beliefs was an example of radical democratic beliefs that teachers should design the curriculum based on the needs of the students and the community rather than a test (p. 236). However, to move fully into the realm of radical democracy, teachers needed to use aspects of the rural community, culture, local news, or the economy rather than national news and general or individual culture to scaffold learning.

**Pillar 5.** For this second look at pillar 5, teachers were asked to elaborate further on the knowledge that they said they valued related to students' lived-experiences in their rural area, and explain how they included that knowledge in their lessons. Teachers who used the locale in their teaching did so, some self-admittedly, at a surface level of integration. For example, one teacher spoke of using the name of the local car dealership and bank to teach about paying and earning commission and interest; also, this teacher took photographs of the grocery store shelf stickers to teach about unit price (pp. 199-200). Another teacher provided the example of teaching about the North American Free Trade Agreement, the causes and effects of labor strikes, and immigration issues as they related to the local farmers (p. 200). A third teacher used student knowledge of local warnings not to drink the water and prior experience with problems with safe drinking water elsewhere as a scaffold to teach about water as a mixture (p. 199).

Evidence of teachers' use of the local context to scaffold learning experiences at any degree of integration was thin; only three of the twelve participants produced an example of the use of the rural setting as a scaffold for learning. Most teachers provided an example of scaffolding learning with students' cultures and social interactions. One teacher observed that a school that served the needs of this community and aligned the culture of the school with the culture of the community would have a strong vocational and technical education program: "We are very limited here. And if we are going to be community strong, as they say, you might want to invest in having a more diverse structure that would benefit students' needs" (p. 199).

### **Summary of Data for Research Question #2**

The second research question explored the part community context played in behaviors teachers perceived they did to improve their students' learning experience. Two teachers explained personal effects of teaching in a rural community in that teachers were not invisible

people, and one said, “You’re never not a teacher. Someone’s always watching you” (p. 181). Overall, with very few exceptions, data illustrated teachers used their knowledge of a student’s individual attributes and needs to establish interpersonal and academic caring relationships and support all students while they did the work of the class. Participants reported using collaborative structures to establish a community of learners who grew socially, academically, and reciprocally with their peers and the need to transition frequently from direct to guided instruction and then independent work. The establishment of a collaborative classroom community centered on high expectations and supported by students’ cultural knowledge figured richly in the data and aligned with CRT and radical democracy.

While most participants provided examples of valued local community knowledge, and saw themselves as part of the community, most teachers did not provide examples of use of the community with teaching in a deficit-removing mindset. Evidence of the use of ruralness and the community context as a scaffold for learning was not as rich. Mention of the rural community context outside the classroom was less frequent than mention of students’ group and individual cultural backgrounds; ruralness as a scaffold for learning was thin; and evidence of teacher’s commitment to nurture citizens who could grow the economy of the rural area was rare.

### **Data Analysis for Research Question 3**

The final research question explored teachers’ perceptions of their growth experiences: *What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?*

The thematic categories aligned with this question were critical awareness of and growth in advocacy to address injustices regarding race, power, and privilege; and finally, teachers’ growth in responsive practices considering both CRT and the construct of ruralness.

## Category #5: Critical Awareness and Advocacy

This thematic category included teachers' perceptions of situations connected to race or ethnicity that teachers observed in their classrooms or their schools. Teachers mentioned racism least frequently in the rural town and most frequently in the classroom. Because most incidents discussed by participants revealed growth experiences and opportunities for both teachers' and students' in their ability to discuss topics related to race, power, or unearned privilege and garner the moral courage to promote justice, this category was included with the third research question. The interview questions explored in this category aligned with pillars 9 and 16, as in Table 17.

Table 17

### *Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 9 and 16 (Gay 2010)*

| <b>Interview Questions</b>  | <b>Pillars 9 &amp; 16 (Gay, 2010)</b><br><b>Culturally Responsive Teaching:</b>   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Regarding issues of racism, power, and privilege:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise? 1-10 with 10 being most comfortable.</li> <li>• Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?</li> <li>• Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 9:</b> Provides accurate information about contributions of members of ethnic groups, discussion of moral or ethical issues, power and privilege or distribution and deconstruction of academic racism and hegemony</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 16:</b> Develops intolerance for oppression and moral courage to address injustice and promote justice</li> </ul> |

**Pillar 9.** One of the interview questions requested teachers to rate their comfort addressing topics related to race, privilege, or power with their students. Over half of the teachers rated themselves as highly as possible on this indicator. One of these teachers said,

I don't get easily intimidated when talking about this. Even when . . . I was the only White teacher in the school . . . There's a balance of respect between acting like it didn't exist and acting like I was scared of it. (p. 206)

Two teachers did not respond with a number rating, and one teacher self-rated as a two. Other teachers who rated themselves low explained feeling trapped because “people take it [whatever was said] wrong” (p. 205). Another felt “awkward” and cited age and White skin color as deficits when addressing these issues with students. While most participants rated themselves highly, not all provided examples in their responses to interview questions that they pressed past surface discussions to confront the topics of institutional racism, unearned privilege, and the situation of power or to consider and model valuing of all perspectives. Data included in analysis of pillar nine elaborated on participants’ self-ratings of strengths in discussing issues related to racism and prompted them to share experiences with incidents in their classroom, school, or community that involved discussion of moral or ethical issues or deconstructing and critiquing power, unearned privilege, and academic racism.

A majority of participants spoke about incidents involving the use of language connected to racism. Some of the teachers related incidents in which people misused the term *racist*, either calling the teacher, school administration, or people in the news such, or a book with Africa on the cover *racist*. For example, Teacher E talked about handling students’ accusations that a school leader was racist by unpacking the meaning of *racist* so students understood what they accused someone of being, what the definition stated, and “how those two things don’t connect, and end with the ownership of our actions because I want to empower my students to rise above that [blaming and victimization]” (p. 209). In another situation in which Teacher F told about an African-American student using the “n” word in class; the teacher explained the derogatory meaning of the word and how it was “used to make people feel badly . . . [but] he didn’t get it. And he still feels like it’s okay for him to use it” (p. 210). Teacher H explained how students shared their understanding of and use of the term *racism*; students argued “if we make fun of

everybody, then we are not racist” (p. 210). These students continued their explanation for the teacher, saying if people who identify with a racial or ethnic group make jokes about their own group, and they allow anyone else to do so as well, then their joking behavior was not considered *racist*, but if African-Americans call themselves the “n” word, and nobody else can, then that is *racist* according to the students’ understanding. Another participant told of students use of the word *Mexican* or *Hispanic* in class when reacting to statements heard in the media regarding politics: “[students said] ‘Oh, it’s because I’m Mexican or . . . Hispanic,’ and I [the teacher] try to tell them that that’s not okay because you’re using that like a handicap almost” (p. 209). Teachers attempted to explain the meaning of language related to racism, and in nearly all cases, it was a struggle to help students understand. The implications from their statements of their perceptions were that they did not feel successful to a noticeable degree nor did they advance to the level of discussing institutional racism or unearned privilege in a courageous conversation.

Data which appeared to address the part of pillar 9 centered on the discussion of moral or ethical issues and power and privilege revealed that when discussing issues in class, most teachers spoke about difficulty managing the discussion. Almost all teachers spoke of students’ bringing up topics of race regarding the recent presidential election, and a few teachers noted similar responses when El Chapo was in the news. Teacher B observed that students reacted with instant engagement when any subject connected to race came up in class. Teacher B said that the most important goal this teacher had when deciding to teach was to engage with students in class discussions and present ideas as free from bias as possible because the teacher perceived that most of the information students encountered in the media and social media was biased. The teacher did not move to the level of helping students value all perspectives and recognizing one’s own personal bias, bravely exploring which are positions of the powerful and the less powerful.

Regarding the instant engagement noted by Teacher B, all teachers mentioned strategies they used to control the spirited and sometimes unmanageable classroom conversation. They said they maintained unbiased perspectives, shut down controversial statements, or redirected out-of-control conversation. Teacher D explained several responses used to deescalate accusations of personal racism directed at the teacher: play off students who accuse one of racism with humor, saying, “Yeah, [I’m racist] White people drive me crazy” (p. 208); move into addressing moral behavior rather than race, with “I don’t like people who don’t treat people kindly. I don’t care what color they are” (p. 208); or redirect and shift the argument, such as, “I’m upset that you’re not working. If you’re working, you could be purple with polka dots, I don’t care” (p. 209).

Alternatively to such strategies of silencing and diversion, one teacher mentioned using peer pressure while the teacher’s calming directions in a soft voice were repeated from student to student to focus the group. The teacher noted that this strategy usually worked except for one time recently with “a student whose family has a nice heritage of being Southern-born and raised” (p. 207) who left class and stayed home for a while to recover because the topic of the discussion was too intense. Another teacher had a similar unfortunate conversation with a student who did not like his new schedule and objected to being required to learn Spanish, saying, “Why do I need to learn Spanish? This is America” (p. 213). Rural democratic philosophy and culturally responsive teaching demanded educators not ignore or accept such behaviors that indicated lack of inter-cultural understanding; furthermore, research demonstrated that racist discourse and biased thinking was not successfully punished into disappearance.

In their study of racist discourse used by a small group of White rural high school boys, Groenke and Nespore (2010) found the boys’ use of racist language in school despite repeated punishments provided insularity against outsiders moving into their community, formed their



group identity, and offered resistance to school administrations' attempts to punish their cultural discourse that they identified as racist and change it to discourse the boys heard as foreign and urbanized. Groenke and Nespor (2010) wrote they did not intend to imply that the school administration accept the language, but rather, suggested they enact change more effectively by helping students examine the source of the resistance symbolized by the discourse; then understand their symbolic resistance to urbanity and change; and create of an improved rural identity and a more powerful form of resistance to urbanization.

While non-escalation was necessary in a classroom discussion to maintain safety, trust, and respect, a culturally responsive teacher guided students through a meaningful discussion to an understanding of where the power was, where the disprivilege was, and what the language used actually meant in the situations. All participants' statements would require more context for clear analysis of their positions, but for the purpose of exploration of the data, most statements were not aligned with these pillars of CRT. A tight alignment with CRT's pillar 9 required deconstruction of the sources of power, disprivilege, and prejudice for topics in the conversation, as well as addressing individual groups' perspectives, rather than shutting down the conversation with diversion or silencing or presenting what teachers called an unbiased position without exploring one's own biases. CRT and RD required deconstructing issues from all perspectives in terms of power and privilege and hearing the voices of the silenced, rather than participating in the silencing. Examples provided by participants did not appear to be aligned with radical democracy which would have involved honoring and understanding individuals' perspectives, addressing the injustices, and working toward social change.

**Pillar 16.** The responses of teachers which indicated they or their students were developing an intolerance for injustice or a desire to promote justice were included in this section

associated with pillar 16. As an example of students' growth in thinking about injustice, Teacher A related an incident which occurred when studying a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., that made some students uncomfortable while other students, "they speak the truth" (p. 207). At the end of the lesson, students were strongly engaged, asking who was accountable and what the next step should be for them, now that they understood MLK's dream. The teacher said, "The only idea I want them to walk away with is that the only person you can control and be accountable about is you yourself. Hopefully we are all moving along in the same way" (p. 207). The teacher moved students toward advocacy and warned that teachers must be wise facilitators to guide students to use meaningful language when addressing topics involving race and power.

The data contained incidents of injustice observed beyond their classroom which teachers said were troubling and which required attention of or involved the school leadership. Teacher C related noticing in a different district school than the one in which the teacher currently worked, a "dislike for certain races by the administration. Sometimes it was quite vocal, or in manners. I didn't notice it much in academics" (p. 211). Then the teacher told of an incident witnessed in which an African-American kindergartener asked for a jacket from a box of donated jackets kept in the front office for children who may need one, and was told instead to bring a jacket from home. In another instance, the teacher told of breaking up a post-presidential-election celebratory parade of students on the bus ramp chanting, "pack your bags, build a wall" (p. 212) which this teacher and another quickly disbanded, but when telling an administrator about the parade, the administrator laughed. The first reaction of laughter disturbed the teacher more than the students' behavior. Another teacher recalled a period almost fifteen years prior when student gangs would fight at school, and expressed gratitude that that had not resurfaced with all the tensions related to the recent presidential election.

To protect against misunderstanding of the researcher's point, it was not the goal of this analysis to fault teachers for what they were not trained to do. Research revealed the skill to conduct such discussions about racism, privilege and power requires much confidence and courage which may begin with teacher education programs but should continue with professional development relevant and responsive to the unique setting of the school (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Kumar, Karabenick, & Burgoon, 2015; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Shaw, 2015). The participating teachers were not provided any local professional development in CRT, and some did not recall having had any coursework related to CRT in college. Many teachers were being guided by training that happened many years prior or by their own learning from peers or their own mistakes. Regardless of one's skin color, language acquisition, or age, the ability to conduct courageous conversations about race, ethnicity, power, and unearned privilege requires reflection and training in a community of learners with similar goals.

Escalating tensions regarding justice and injustice were concerns expressed by almost every teacher. One teacher admitted to feeling uncomfortable entertaining both sides of an issue because of strong feelings and critical awareness combined with the recognition of the students' desire for guidance, saying: "I never try to give into the idea that our society is unjust, because although I might agree to some extent, if I leave them there, they're never going to outgrow that" (p. 209). Teacher B said, "My job is presenting both sides, and we can talk about it, but if the conversation starts getting negative, I can't have that because then we are having an argument. . . I am trying to teach civil discourse" (p. 208). Teacher F told of using diversion to change the difficult conversation and emphasizing unity instead of understanding other perspectives, "when people talk about gay rights or Black rights or minority rights or whatever, I often say what about human rights? How about human rights? Because then when you put a label on it, you create

division” (p. 206). Teacher I said to the class, “We all have different views. That’s the beauty of our system. We’re not going to change anyone. We are just trying to share our beliefs” (pp. 210-11). These participants’ examples shared similar themes, notably, taking a side in the debate, presenting both sides and being uncomfortable with the process, or framing the class discourse in terms of no division, no arguments, or no changes to students’ thinking.

To summarize, using examples provided by participants, extracted and included above without context or at best with little context, to move all examples presented into a stronger alignment with CRT, the next step would have been deconstruction of each position and maybe other positions not mentioned by the class in terms of who had power, who was silenced, which had privilege or access and which did not, what provided that privilege or access, and how justice and injustice figured in the discourse. Borrowing and elevating language from the examples in this section, the goal of class discussion *would* be to seek change, at the very least, in terms of deeper understanding of others’ perspectives; the *beauty of our system* of the U.S. government would be freedom to unpack and understand power and privilege and as it impacts all sides or perspectives in the conversation, not to *create division*, but to build community through the honoring of others’ perspectives as assets. Also, teachers would become advocates for justice and increased understanding instead of leaving the conversation at the stage of observation, civil discourse, or wanting to say more. As Teacher A reflected:

[The biggest barrier in our town is] people not getting to know their neighbor . . . when it comes down to it at the end of the day, do we want to sit down with them and break bread with them? That’s what our kids go through. That’s why we are so broken up into our racial groups; there are only certain kids who don’t care [who can break bread with other cultural groups] because we are not helping them get to the point where they can.

CRT and radical democracy both advocated being able to break bread with our neighbors in this way, appreciating and valuing differing cultural perspectives and experiences as assets at the table, and helping students “get to the point where they can” as well. For advocates of radical democracy, the work for social change included sustaining and growing the local community and growing in cross-cultural understanding.

**Category #6: Teacher’s CRT Growth and Advocacy**

Analysis of the data in this category included teachers’ perceptions of what helped them grow into the caring and responsive teachers that they were identified as being. Interview questions focused on teacher’s growth in both CRT and advocacy for the community. Table 18 displayed the research questions and their alignment with pillars 2, 4, 17 and 18.

Table 18

*Interview Questions Aligning With Pillars 2, 4, 17 and 18 (Gay 2010)*

| Interview Questions  | Pillars 2, 4, 17, & 18 (Gay, 2010)<br>Culturally Responsive Teaching:   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How culturally responsive do you feel? 1-10</li> <li>• How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10</li> <li>• What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 2:</b> Enhances learning for all, not some, students</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 17:</b> Requires professional development to improve cultural knowledge, teaching skills, reflection, and self-monitoring of classroom situations for students of color</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?</li> <li>• What would you say in response to a research-based claim that public schools in small towns hollow out the town of her brightest and best citizens by enabling them to go away to college and live the dream in a metro area, seldom returning to their hometown?</li> <li>• How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pillar 4:</b> Cultivates school success for all aspects of a person without negatively affecting cultural identity</li> <li>• <b>Pillar 18:</b> Uses school or teacher resources of time, funds &amp; imagination for student success</li> </ul>                    |

**Pillar 2.** This pillar required CRT be understood as a practice intended for all students, not just some. Data presented in previous sections overlapped with this pillar, particularly in the first category in which teachers articulated their definition of CRT and explained the knowledge they used and valued, and data indicated most teachers who defined CRT said it was good for all students. However, the interview question that asked participants to reflect on their self-rating of how culturally responsive they felt added a new dimension to the data and provided a point of reflection for the third research question exploring growth experiences as a teacher in the rural area. Regarding how culturally responsive teachers felt, 75% of the participants rated themselves as an eight or more on a ten-point scale with ten being high. Nobody scored themselves as a ten, and elaborative comments indicated that teachers felt that they were still learning or had room to grow. Some teachers acknowledged they were not a ten since some days were better than others, and sometimes they fought to keep ideas fresh.

**Pillar 17.** The data associated with this pillar explored the professional development attended and reflective practice used to improve teachers' CRT. The demographic survey presented in the description of participants revealed that half of the teachers participating in this study did not feel well prepared by their university coursework, and most who felt well prepared were either bilingual teachers of color or else had four or more university teaching courses on topics related to teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Self-ratings of teachers' feelings of preparedness when they first began teaching in the district indicated a similar distribution of feelings in that only 25% of teachers felt well-prepared, and seven of the twelve rated themselves as below average with three of these giving themselves a zero and one each at a one, a two, and a three. Teachers who rated themselves high said they grew up in the area or had experience with in a similar area. Teachers who rated themselves low were new to either teaching or the area.

When asked what helped participants most to grow as teachers in the area, a variety of responses were represented in the data. Teacher 3 valued professional learning communities and attendance at a conference in which this teacher learned about having a growth mindset. Teacher 7 valued the rewarding feeling of seeing growth in the students from the time they entered to the time they left the building. Teacher 9 appreciated going to trainings and planning with another new teacher, so they learned together. Several teachers valued the support they received from their mentors or from other educators in their building. One teacher said, “Support from everyone was what helped me grow from the college student into an awesome teacher . . . . Everyone just boosted me and boosted me” (p. 218). Another teacher said that after getting help from a peer and remembering being a student, this teacher progressed in teaching efficacy. Several teachers spoke with glowing admiration of their administrators who gave them encouragement and provided positive and helpful feedback. One teacher felt like the school was “my extended family . . . it’s like everybody’s a family . . . nothing’s come close to it” (p. 223).

Some teachers told stories of how they learned how not to teach from bad experiences or bad teachers whom they either had as a teacher or with whom they have worked. One teacher’s non-example used to cold-call students to the board to do the work of the class, and another participant’s non-example never left his desk and never engaged with students but had assignments written on the board, and spent class time checking papers which many students copied from each other during class. Teacher D said that seeing how teachers who were angry about their job and raised their voices often negatively affected students while teachers who had a positive attitude and wanted to do well had the opposite effect on students. Teacher A spoke about learning how not to handle a culture-based discipline clash by making a mistake that was still in the teachers’ mind after many years. Non-examples were powerful for teachers’ growth.

Many teachers valued their college experiences. One said that it was not until attending college that this teacher saw a person of the same race teaching in the content area in which this person wanted to work. Another participant said that college experiences were also a point of growth because that was when this teacher's experience with diversity began. Another related an experience in a college seminar on CRT which raised this teacher's awareness of the opposing views of other teachers when a frustrated teacher who was White asked in the seminar:

“Why does it always come back to race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status? Why can't I just teach my kids?” and [Teacher C said,] you know, for kids who are seen only by their race and ethnicity, it *has* to come back to that because I just don't see how to do it any other way. (p. 221)

Another participant did not have teacher education classes from which to draw when teaching and said work experience instead was what helped this teacher develop cultural responsiveness, for eight different languages and cultures were represented on this teacher's work team.

All data aligned with pillar 17 and suggested that a variety of experiences were valued by teachers when they reflected on their growth and learning about cultural differences and CRT. Notably, only two teachers mentioned trainings, a professional conference, and a professional learning community. CRT required a commitment to professional development and reflective practice, so findings on this pillar were weak and were likely related to the absence of CRT professional development in the district because the majority of participants' experience was in the local district. One teacher reflected in the interview why professional development usually was not about CRT philosophy which research showed improved teaching, but rather was always about the skill and what are you teaching, and not necessarily how you are teaching it. And all of this [culturally responsive teaching] has to come first, because if



you can't connect to a child, then it doesn't matter what you teach them. And I think there are still a lot of teachers, not just here, but all across the county, that need to understand this because our county should have changed more. (p. 218)

**Pillar 4.** This pillar required that students' cultural identities were not lost or damaged by success in school; in essence, successful students from non-mainstream backgrounds become bi-cultural in the way Delpit (2006) argued students should be both fluent in Standard English and the discourse of their cultural group. One of the interview questions designed to probe this topic required participants to reflect on the best lesson they learned from a student from a diverse background. Responses ranged from the traumatic to the joyful. Two teachers told about calling home and having the student be physically punished, and another teacher learned to be less confrontational and therefore more effective in disciplinary matters. One participant told about experiencing the power of encouragement to transform and motivate a student. Another related learning a lesson about patience and kindness with a student who was a culturally misunderstood shy student. Several teachers told stories about not giving up on students who protected their vulnerabilities behind a facade of not caring. Another teacher said one of the lessons learned was not to assume to be right and to own up to making mistakes, giving students credit if the students' were right and the teacher were wrong. One told a story about learning about the cultural tensions in a female Hispanic student who was enjoying but not enjoying the cognitive challenges of their class. Finally, a teacher related learning not to assume that students know their cultures or even the languages of their parents because students of families who recently immigrated were sometimes caught in the middle between cultures.

In response to another interview question that aligned with several of the pillars, and strongly with the teacher's role of in the framework of radical democracy, teachers responded to

the research-based statement that public schools in small towns emptied the town of the highest achieving citizens by encouraging and enabling them to go to college, from which they seldom returned to work in and sustain their hometown (Carr & Kefalas, 2009). Three teachers stated that they were actually examples of that, with each teacher leaving one small town, their hometown which did not need teachers, to live the site of this study that did need teachers.

Teachers who disagreed with the statement were in the minority. One said “I never left” (p. 203), and another echoed the comment; however, the third teacher admitted to thinking of leaving in search of leadership opportunities in a large city, and the fourth was happy to stay in town with family. Another teacher left but returned because of missing and wanting family support and involvement. When speaking of the return those who left, the teacher said that if they return, they do not do so for money or excitement; rather, it is because of relationships.

Only two of the remaining teachers disagreed that schools help hollow out the talent in rural towns at varying levels. One of the two said that the teachers’ students were too young to be thinking about going away to college. The other dissenter agreed the people moved away, but added that graduates were “still in the community with their stories. We still hear of those people, and we hear stories of their success, and it only inspires the kids more” (p. 202).

Regarding evidence of the stories lingering in the community, data from one teacher described a wall of Advanced Placement fame on which pictures and stories of students who received passing scores on their national AP exams to receive college credit for their high school classwork were posted as an inspiration to others (p. 200). Other teachers spoke of keeping contact with people who left for more opportunities.

The outmigration of the leaders who would sustain and grow the rural community was not aligned with radical democracy. Instead, it followed the tenets of CRT in helping students

imagine a different life, set goals, pursue their college or career or work dreams; and in providing them the support that they need to make their dreams happen. Those who dissented or disagreed with the statement from research (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) were from the local area and were happy to be teaching near their birth place were aligned with the central belief of maintaining or improving the rural town.

Radical Democracy advocated aligning the cultures of the town and school, seeing ruralness as an asset, producing graduates who were able and willing to work to grow the town, and having the courage to work to strengthen the community through participatory democracy. One teacher's comment clearly illustrated these major tenets of radical democracy. After this teacher's establishing having lived in the town a while, having seen many students leave and not return over the years, and providing examples of those who received a teaching degree and chose to teach elsewhere, the teacher said, "they don't choose to teach where they grew up. That should speak volumes to the leaders because you can brag about having successes, but at the end of the day . . . very few come back and contribute" (p. 203).

**Pillar 18.** Data on this pillar explained teachers' use of resources, particularly of time and imagination to improve their success with students. Participants were asked how much time beyond the school day they spent talking about teaching. One teacher said, "It's always" (p. 226) that this teacher was talking about school and planning activities and participation in school events. Another teacher mused that time spent talking about and working on schoolwork at home was "a good two, three hours, especially with all the work lingering and hovering over your shoulders, and all the things you didn't address, and all the things they expect you to do, and so you're constantly worrying about it" (p. 226). Teacher 7 said, "I plan until I can't keep my eyes open at night [and my significant other asks why I work so long] . . . but I say I want my lessons

to be good, and if they aren't good, there's no point in teaching them" (p. 228). Teacher 8 said the time spent talking about school was so much that "people think I actually have children. In fact, at a wedding this weekend, someone asked me in disbelief how many kids I had" (p. 228). Finally, Teacher 9 said,

I have done calculations on how much I get paid an hour when you count all the planning, grading, staying after school with kids, and I made about \$2 an hour, working about 13 hours a day, But I pay my bills, and I am happy. (p. 228)

Although the data contained no mention of school resources, this data aligned tightly with pillar 18 in that it portrayed very dedicated teachers who invested much time and imagination in making their work with students the best that they knew to make it with resources they had at their disposal. The attitudes expressed by these teachers were similar to those interviewed by Nieto (2013) and identified as teachers who thrived and who found joy in teaching their students from non-mainstream cultural backgrounds. Nieto (2013) found "all teachers *can* find joy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds. It takes humility, a willingness to learn, an openness to acknowledging and valuing tremendous assets of students of diverse backgrounds, and a commitment to public education" (p. xiv). In other words, joyful teaching in a rural setting like that in which these teachers worked required a humble readiness to learn more about and grow as culturally responsive teachers.

### **Summary of Data for Research Question #3**

This section provided analysis of the data in thematic categories five and six, which were linked to the third research question exploring the growth experiences participants perceived contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching the students of their rural school. Addressing issues related to academic racism, power distribution, unearned privilege,

and silencing figured strongly in CRT which ultimately leads teachers and students to learn to be advocates for social justice. Furthermore, addressing a deficit perspective toward ruralness and nurturing citizens who can strengthen and contribute to the rural area was a main tenet of rural educators' radical democracy.

The data were rich with evidence of the prevalence of racial issues arising in class or school and the engagement of students in these issues, for every teacher provided examples for this question. The use of language associated with academic racism or hearing themselves or others being accused of racism or addressed with a racial slur was a topic of concern for many teachers, and most of these teachers perceived they were apparently unsuccessful teaching students to unpack and understand the meaning of these terms which surfaced in the classroom. Almost every teacher addressed the challenge of holding a conversation in class on these issues without escalation, and data included evidence of teachers' management attempts which frequently minimized, silenced, or diverted focus from the topic. Participants also struggled with authenticity or classroom management when they attempted to remain what several called unbiased and present what they perceived as both sides of the issue.

The data revealed room for growth in the deconstruction of issues in terms of the sources of power, privilege, and racism. Participants also contributed examples of concerns with injustices which they found troubling, but it was not clear in the data that any participant moved into the realm of advocacy for social justice, attempting to right the wrongs they observed in any way except to manage their own discipline issues and addressing race-based topics within the context of their classroom.

Teachers also reflected on what experiences impacted their growth as teachers in this district, with most participants mentioning mentoring or working with more knowledgeable or

similarly experienced peers. Other teachers learned what not to do from negative examples of teachers in their experience, and one teacher said thinking about former experiences in school helped the teacher know what to do in class. Others mentioned experiences in college and in teacher education as important in their growth. Two teachers mentioned attending trainings or participating in a professional learning community as a source of growth. Participants related learning about teaching students from backgrounds of diversity through a variety of individual experiences or by making mistakes. Data recounting teachers' dedication to the work of teaching and shop-talking at home revealed highly engaged and committed teachers, so not knowing how to move into deconstruction of racism or respond fully in culturally responsive ways should not be the fault of the teacher who has not been trained in CRT specific to their rural school setting. Noticeably absent from the teachers' list of activities that facilitated their growth was mention of professional development, possibly because the district has not offered such in CRT.

### **Implications**

A rural area with much cultural and socio-economic diversity was the site of this study that explored secondary teachers' perceptions of how they valued and used knowledge of students' culture and community as a scaffold for their learning and how teachers grew in their efficacy and ability to do so. The study was framed by Gay (2010)'s eighteen pillars for progress in using CRT. Because the research base for this basic exploratory qualitative study was limited with respect to the rural setting, the researcher also used the emerging philosophical construct of radical democracy for rural educators in order to understand any data that may have reached more deeply into scaffolding learning with rural cultures and sustaining the rural community than did CRT. When analyzing data that were more aligned with mainstream praxis, more evidence of alignment with the pillars was found, but in areas which were more unique to the

experience of students of color, less alignment, more gaps, and more misunderstanding of CRT were found, particularly in the areas of deconstructing racism and advocating for social justice. Data about providing the use of the rural culture as a scaffold for new learning or to sustain the community were thin, if present at all.

Almost all data demonstrated teachers perceived value and made efforts to obtain knowledge of students' cultures and lives outside of the classroom; additionally, data showed teachers' awareness and even passion about the effects of a lack of economic, social, and linguistic power and opportunity for the community. Examples of culture as a scaffold for learning in the data included the classroom use of culture-based interview and writing activities to develop skills and identity-awareness; pop culture, national news, or personal story-telling as segues into the new lesson; students' language associated with content-learning overheard in collaborative interactions; group cultural preferences for factual recall or conceptual problem solving; building background knowledge and doing research with digital media; and lab- or project-based assignments.

Generally, data were rich with evidence of teachers' caring on both interpersonal and academic levels; readiness to work beyond their time in the classroom to build relationships with students or peers, provide academic assistance, design meaningful learning experiences; and tenacity in not giving up on students despite their perceived lack of caring about their learning. Also, data contained many examples of teaching with formative and varied assessments, helping students understand stated and unstated rules and consequences, and a creating a classroom culture of respect and trust. Data indicated teachers perceived they used collaborative and discursive structures more than direct or transmission methodologies. The various collaborative structures provided opportunities for reluctant speakers to have the benefit of peer consultation

and for teachers to understand the language students used to engage over the content and were evidence of the teachers' awareness of students' preferred participation patterns. Data indicated teachers' perceptions of their role being that of a guide or facilitator who stretches students beyond the familiar but uses the familiar to support new learning. The level of instructional rigor was not clearly understood from the data, but data indicated most teachers perceived a high level of rigor in their instruction. The words "best practice" only appeared one time in the entire data set, indicating that most data aligned with the CRT tenet of there being no one set of best practices for all students, including those of color or who were marginalized by ruralness.

Data included the cautionary that teachers' did not always walk their talk of being culturally responsive after they closed their classroom doors and slipped back into *status quo*. To this point, one statement in the data indicated unfamiliarity with CRT, and several revealed color-blind perspectives. Data were infrequently provided or were classified as discrepant regarding few teachers' assistance with students' setting personal goals, providing support for a path toward the goal, and devising a student self-assessment for progress toward the goal. A few bits of data indicated the perceived effectiveness of competition and favoritism as a motivator, humor (not as in sense of humor) or sarcasm in discipline, and the perceived need to back away from perceived rigor to relieve stress or recognize divergent priorities other than the work of the class. Negative data showed resistance to use of culturally responsive practices like understanding and responding to learning preferences, and providing culturally responsive assignments and materials. Resistance to this was often connected in the data to pressures and dissatisfaction with the district pacing and curriculum guide. Teachers' frustration with injustices associated with testing culture and a district curriculum guide not allowing for culturally responsive lessons aligned with both CRT and radical democracy. However, activism to improve



the rural cultural responsiveness of the curriculum and the pacing would be the next step for a responsive teacher.

Data showed some participants let information about home lives emerge naturally in the course of their caring and academic relationship with students was found to be purposeful and therefore responsive. Discrepant CRT data included evidence that some participants purposefully did not directly seek knowledge of students' homes and cultures, and others denied the need for a home-school connection due to negative experiences with parenting styles or deficit perspectives about students' homes. One teacher asked how much we were actually able to understand about others who were of a different culture than ours. Data also included a perceived need for reimagining the PTO so all parents felt welcome and valued and so it could become the platform for home-school connection that it was intended to be.

Data revealed many points of civic and personal appreciation for the rural community; however, in the data that were gathered, very few teachers addressed the potential power of the school to support the local community in ways beyond preparing students for higher education. One-fourth of teachers counter-argued the narrative that schools created a path to outmigration from small rural communities which offered few economic opportunities by preparing the most talented students to leave town to go to college and usually metropolitan careers. Two spoke of relationships being what brought back home some who joined the military or who were doctors or professionals. Other data provided the argument that while the high achievers may be gone, their stories remained behind as motivators and inspiration for others to do the same. Although it was romantic to acknowledge the power of human relationships and motivational stories, since only a few former students were mentioned as able and willing to return, this finding indicated a

lack of alignment with the goal of radical democracy wherein the school would inspire and provide the means for sustaining or growing the community.

Fewer than half of the participants elaborated on evidence of the use of the local setting as a scaffold for learning, including use of contaminated local drinking water and the curious numbers of twins in science; the car dealership, bank and grocery store to teach math concepts; taking humanities-based field trips to enhance background knowledge; and discussing political, labor, and public policies in terms of how they affected local ranching and agricultural industries. Data revealed some of these examples were self-admittedly thin and occurred only once annually or even years ago. Data also included the suggestion to develop vocational education training programs to align the community's needs and students' interests with school culture, or starting an entrepreneurship program to help students imagine themselves in positions of leadership and to provide them the tools to succeed with their own small business.

Data were rich with opportunities for growth in both teachers and students regarding their grappling with classroom situations connected to issues of racism, power, and privilege and their becoming change agents for situations involving observations of racism and injustice within the school. Half of the participants in this study were teachers of color, but data that the researcher identified as negative, discrepant, or low in responsiveness, particularly regarding racial issues that bubbled up in the classroom, were derived not only from teachers who were not of color, nor were teachers who were born in the area the most rurally responsive. This finding aligned with Gay (2010) who argued, "The ethnicity of teachers is not the most compelling factor in culturally responsive teaching for ethnically diverse students. Rather, it is teachers' knowledge base and positive attitudes about cultural diversity, as well as their ability to effectively teach" (p. 114). Several pieces of data identified teacher growth associated with college classes as well as from

exposure to the diversity on campus, among the professoriate, or in the workplace. Also, data were rich and detailed with praise for the support participants received and the appreciation they held for their peers and their mentors who helped them grow as teachers. Noticeably weak in the data set were references to professional development, book studies, or CRT trainings.

The negative or discrepant findings and the thinness of evidence of rural CRT indicated that professional development guided by the pillars of CRT would enhance the teachers' effectiveness for teaching the students of this district. CRT should include the rural perspective, informed and negotiated by community members selected with maximum variability of perspectives. The strength of peer interaction among the data indicated that a community of practice, professional learning, and peer mentoring may be the best way for teachers in this area to grow in cultural responsiveness as represented by Gay (2010)'s pillars for progress. Through a professional development program in a safe third space for learning and reflection, guided by the pillars for progress and locally identified needs of the entire socio-cultural-linguistically diverse rural community, teachers would move past the beginning stages of unawareness of CRT to the stage of awareness, valuing diverse perspectives and not silencing or ignoring uncomfortable conversations; and then progress to become change agents, feeling competent to address academic or embedded racism and issues of power and privilege.

Educators have a moral and ethical responsibility to serve the students in their charge in ways that best provide for learning to occur. Students whose cultures were not of mainstream, White, middle- or upper-middle class, English-speaking, museum-going, metropolitan culture often found themselves on the non-proficient levels of government-mandated exams, evidenced by the persistent and invidious achievement gap. While CRT was not developed for a purpose of raising high-stakes test scores, it was found that devising a scaffold from the students' funds of

knowledge and lived-experience to support learning goals, set with high expectations of success, improved students' learning experience. As Gay (2013) said, positive attitudes and expectations about teaching students from diverse backgrounds generally produced positive outcomes, and success beget success. Gay (2010) indicated that a micro-level implementation of individual teachers engaging in reflective practice alone or with a few interested others can impact their students individually or severally. However, for wider impact to be felt, a macro-implementation of resources was Gay (2010)'s preferred recommendation for improvement of the learning experience for the students referenced in this study and others similarly situated in rural communities with high levels of cultural diversity or lack of economic advantage.

### **Recommendations**

CRT is an intellectual belief system which when put fully into practice advances to the level of advocacy, supporting educational equity, inclusion, and justice for people of all marginalized or minoritized cultures. The culture of rural students whose families have little economic or educational power was found in the research review to be a marginalized culture. In the area where this study was situated, this culture of ruralness intersected with the majority population of students from non-Anglo linguistic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, creating an educational situation in which research demonstrated not only the minority-majority students or the minoritized rural students, but rather all students would benefit from a curricular program strongly guided by culturally responsive practices.

The researcher recommends that CRT be envisioned, elaborated, shared, and practiced by teachers of this district to include not only the linguistic, ethnic and racial aspects of the eighteen pillars for progress (Gay, 2010), but also the geographic and socio-economic aspects of the culture of ruralness which was marginalized throughout modern history by an urban-centered

mainstream culture. Resources of time, imagination, and professional development should be committed to growing a culture of ethnic, racial, and rural responsiveness uniquely designed for this area. Justice in our schools, including rural schools, has been too long delayed.

State of Florida policymakers should immediately rewrite rural public policies to support more equitable distribution of funds to make strides toward leveling the playing field for school districts in rural Florida whose needs were shown to be overall the most out of line with legislative policy of all the fifty states (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). For example, Carr and Kefalas (2009) described creating programs providing college-debt relief, to incentivize former community members to return to their small rural hometowns to work, and tax-incentives for sustainable or renewable ecology-based technologies or businesses to start-up in rural areas. Stakeholders should vote according to the strength of lawmaker's record serving rural areas.

### **Curriculum Development**

With or without legislative equity, the researcher recommends this district and others like it in rural Florida consider seriously to invest at whatever level possible in or to procure grant funding for technical and vocational education, programs for entrepreneurship, or agricultural or ecology-based certificate programs (Corbett, 2009) which could better align the culture and programs of the school with the economy and needs of the community and the expressed interests of students. These programs would offer more economic options for students who may choose to stay in and grow the community, and they may align the culture of the school more closely with the socio-economic-geographic culture of the community.

The data indicated the need for the district to develop or enhance the curriculum map, with which many teachers expressed frustration, to a standards-aligned curricular program that responds to both the demands of the State and the cultures of the students including that of the

Mexican and Central American; Cuban, Jamaican, and Caribbean Island; African-American; and the marginalized rural Floridian culture including the rural town and the agricultural and ranching cultures. Teachers should not have to feel they are defying their administrators by responding to learning preferences or cultural communication and participation patterns by cultural responsiveness (pp. 250 & 261). Teachers who are content-area experts and know the community and cultures of the students should be involved in the development or enhancement of the curriculum plan, and adjustments to the pacing guide should be made to reflect both rigor and realistic praxis.

### **Professional Development**

Analysis of the data revealed either gaps, misunderstandings, or an absence of knowledge about culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, because a majority of teachers valued working with other teachers and mentoring, the researcher recommends an extended professional development plan for district teachers which includes a substantial reflection and mentorship piece. The culture of rural Florida demands special attention of the developers of the program to create a unique culturally responsive teaching professional development program which allows both the cultures of rural students whose culture was marginalized by urban-centric hegemony and the cultures of students of racial, ethnic, economic, and language diversity to serve as the scaffold for the learning to occur.

Community members should be involved in creating a CRT program unique to the area. Program developers should review the CRT professional development program that researchers established among the Yukon First Nation, Indigenous Australian people, and Indigenous Māori of New Zealand to support student interaction within the mainstream curriculum of the school with added elements of the local rural place and student culture (Bishop, et. al, 2009; Boon &

Lewthwaite, 2015; Hynds et al., 2011; Lewthwaite, et. al, 2014; Savage, et. al, 2011). In order to access the local place in the cultural responsiveness of this program, as in Lewthwaite (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015; Lewthwaite, et. al, 2014)'s and *Te Kotahitanga* (Bishop, et. al, 2009; Hynds et al., 2011; Savage, et. al, 2011)'s research teams' experience, this would require interviewing and exploration of attitudes of community members and all stakeholders to determine what they believed should be taught and how it should be taught in the local school. The purpose of developing this program would be to find if CRT with emphasis on the local area enhances learning in this district, as defined by the policymakers as test scores, but also if it improves teacher understandings and implementation of CRT principles and the students' learning experience in the school.

This professional development program should include modules, developed with sensitivity to the needs of the rural school community, especially targeting improving the teachers' ability to address students' racist language and issues in their classroom and in the wider school community with a critical stance that helps students unpack the meaning of racism and the impact of power and privilege without silencing. This program would also benefit teachers in that it would provide an opportunity for growth and reflective practice on this topic of leading conversations about racism under the guidance of trained, experienced experts.

### **Future Research**

Because so little work has been done to understand how CRT interacted with a rural location with significant numbers of students from non-White, non-affluent, and emergent bilingual backgrounds, especially an area in which the majority-minority crossover predicted by the U.S. Census (2010) has already occurred, more studies like this one could add to our understanding of CRT and enhance students' learning experiences in these types of areas, which

were projected to be the demographics of the future. These studies may add enough to the thin research base (Sleeter, 2012), which is even more thin when rural context was added to the search parameters, to advocate for the articulation of ruralness as a marginalized culture in the general framework of CRT (Reed, 2010). Gay (2010) included a discussion of Appalachia's Foxfire program as evidence of a rural CRT program, but rural students who live in increasingly more diverse areas could be found to be different than rural students with economic challenges in Appalachia, and CRT would look different in these classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

The researcher recommends a multiple case study of several of the strongest culturally responsive teachers interviewed in the study (Stake, 2006), with responsiveness defined by specific criteria drawn from the study. The researcher in this case study project would observe participants' classes and student interactions, study their lesson plans and assignment descriptions, and interview their students with the purpose of fleshing out a more complete picture of the work of a culturally responsive teacher in a rural district with much socio-cultural diversity. A cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) of different content area teachers could determine if any connections or differences exist among the content areas or in gender and ethnicity or race of those teachers (Borman, Clarke, Corner, & Lee, 2006).

The socio-linguist and rural researcher may appreciate the exploration and articulation of students' framework and understanding of racism and of racist language to discover how their identification of racism intersects with the local context, especially to elaborate the students' concept of racism as noted by Teacher H (p. 210). Also, another study may originate from one participant's comment that students in honors and regular class differ according to trauma experienced in their homes (p. 135), to determine reasons for this difference in the two presumably academically leveled classes (Saunders, 2012).



In the same way that Evans, Lester, and Broemmel (2010) presented their data, the thick and rich data set of this study may also be reorganized into a postmodern data presentation of a polyvocal one- or three-act play in which the voices of teachers were honored and their quoted language preserved. When presented as a drama portraying the messiness, tensions, and conflictedness of rural teachers striving to be culturally responsive, the findings may be more entertaining for a reader. This format was not selected for this study due to the researcher's expressed effort at achieving trustworthiness, presenting all relevant data including discrepant data points. However, a subsequent study presenting data dramatically could reference this study.

### **Summary**

Based in Gay (2010)'s pillars for progress in the theory of CRT and Edmondson and Butler (2010)'s emerging framework of rural educator's philosophy of radical democracy, this study situated in a rural area with much socio-cultural-linguistic diversity yielded an opportunity to explore perceptions of twelve public middle and high school teachers regarding how they valued and used knowledge of their students' culture and community as a scaffold for their learning experience and how the teachers grew in their efficacy and ability to use CRT.

Data were more detailed, rich, and more closely aligned with tenets of CRT when aspects applicable to both CRT and mainstream ideas of effective teaching were discussed; however, when principles more specifically concerned students of color or the use of the local ruralness as a scaffold for new learning, the depth of the data and alignment with CRT were average or weak. Teachers spoke more easily and provided more elaborative data when addressing topics of knowledge they sought and valued about their students' cultures, their community, and creating a classroom climate of caring and respect than they did about scaffolding learning with funds of knowledge; critical advocacy; use of learning preferences, communication patterns, or goal

setting and self-monitoring; and their own CRT growth. All data including negative or discrepant data were reported, and the content of one response was often repeated or was similar to another participant's response for most items on the protocol, indicating a possible but unconfirmed attainment of the point of redundancy. Data at varying levels of responsiveness were found that related to most of the pillars for progress in CRT except for a commitment to professional development and critical advocacy.

In an analysis of the presence of ruralness in the data, the researcher found teachers generally had not taken cultural responsiveness to the level of radical democratic rural teaching in which rural culture was used as a scaffold for learning with the ultimate goal of nurturing citizens who will use their talents to add to the vitality or rejuvenation of a rural community instead of outmigrating to urban universities and urban lives. Data indicated that teachers valued and used knowledge of the community in combination with their knowledge of students' cultures within the framework of CRT but not with the teacher's role or goals of radical democracy.

The district would determine appropriate policy for the political stance regarding the use of the rural context in the school, whether in the vein of radical democracy working purposefully to sustain the community, align the culture of the school and the community, and push back against outmigration, or with the intention of envisioning culturally responsive teaching to include cultures of the local marginalized rural students as scaffolds for learning. However, the researcher recommended adding vocational and entrepreneurial programs, revising the district curriculum framework to include more cultural responsiveness, and providing a professional development program in CRT unique to the diverse and rural community, using the model of peer collaboration in a community of reflective practice, and designed to deepen teachers' understanding, use, and efficacy for rural culturally responsive pedagogy.

## References

- Achinstein, B., & Ogawa, R. T. (2012). New teachers of color and culturally responsive teaching in an era of educational accountability: Caught in a double bind. *Journal of Educational Change, 13*(1), 1-39.
- Ajayi, L. (2014). Investigating effective teaching methods for a place-based teacher preparation in a rural community. *Educational Research for Policy & Practice, 13*(3), 251-268.
- Applin, J. L. (2007). CRT assessment instrument. Retrieved from *Kentucky Teacher Educator Paper 5* website: <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/kte/5/>
- Arnold, M. L. (2005). Jump the shark: A rejoinder to Howley, Theobald, and Howley. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 20*(20), 1-2. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ724912>
- Arnold, M. L. (2005). Rural education: A new perspective is needed at the U.S. Department of Education. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 20*(3), 1-3.
- Arnold, M. L., Newman, J. H., Gaddy, B. B., & Dean, C. B. (2005). A look at the condition of rural education research: Setting a direction for future research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 20*(6), 1-25. Retrieved from <http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/20-6.pdf>
- Au, K. H. (2001). Culturally responsive instruction as a dimension of new literacies. *Reading Online, 5*(1). Retrieved from *ERIC* EJ665997
- Avruch, K. (1998). *Culture and conflict resolution*. Washington, DC: Institute of Peace Press.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman.

- Banks, J. A. (2007a). *An introduction to multicultural education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Banks, J. A. (2007b). *Educating citizens in a multicultural society* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.
- Bartholomaeus, P., Halsey, J., & Corbett, M. (2014). A triologue about method in rural education: Experiential perspectives. In S. White & M. Corbett (Eds.), *Doing educational research in rural settings* (pp. 58-71). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Baskerville, D. (2009). Navigating the unfamiliar in a quest towards culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(2009), 461–467.
- Bass, L., & Gersti-Pepin, C. (2011). Declaring bankruptcy on educational inequity. *Educational policy*, 25(6), 908-934.
- Beck, F. D., & Shoffstall, G. W. (2005). How do rural schools fare under a high-stakes testing regime? *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 20(14), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/20-14.pdf>
- Bishop, R. (2012). Pretty difficult: Implementing *kaupapa* Māori theory in English-medium secondary schools. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 47(2), 38-50.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Māori students in New Zealand. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(2009), 734-742.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Wearmouth, J., Peter, M., & Clapham, S. (2012). Professional development, changes in teacher practice and improvements in Indigenous students' educational performance: A case study from New Zealand. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(2012), 694-705.

- Bondy, E., Ross, D. D., Gallingane, C., & Hambacher, E. (2007). Creating environments of success and resilience. *Urban Education, 42*(4), 326–348.
- Bonner, E. P. (2014). Investigating practices of highly successful mathematics teachers of traditionally underserved students. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 86*(3), 377-399.
- Boon, H. J., & Lewthwaite, B. (2015). Development of an instrument to measure a facet of quality teaching: Culturally responsive pedagogy. *International Journal of Educational Research, 72*(2015), 38-58.
- Borman, K. M., Clarke, C., Corner, B., & Lee, R. (2006). Cross-case analysis. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, P. B. Elmore with A. Skukauskaite, & E. Grace (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 123-139). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Brenner, M. E. (2006). Interviewing in educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, P. B. Elmore with A. Skukauskaite, & E. Grace (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357-370). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Brockenbrough, E. (2014). Further mothering: Reconceptualizing White women educators' work with Black youth. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 47*(3), 253-272.
- Brown-Jeffy, S., & Cooper, J.E. (2011). Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 38*(1), 65-84.
- Budge, K. (2006). Rural leaders, rural places: Problem, privilege, and possibility. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 21*(13), 1-10.

- Bureau of Economic and Business Research (2014). *Florida estimates of population 2014*. Retrieved from <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/population-demographics/data/PopulationEstimates2014.pdf>
- Cammarota, J., & Romero, A. (2006). A critically compassionate intellectualism for Latina/o students: Raising voices above the silencing in our schools. *Multicultural Education*, 14(2), 16-23.
- Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). *Time to act: An agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Carr, P., & Kefalas, M. (2009). *Hollowing out the middle: The rural brain drain and what it means for America*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Causey, V. E., Thomas, C. D. & Armento, B. J. (2000). Cultural diversity is basically a foreign term to me: The challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(2000), 33-45.
- Chun, H., & Dickson, G. (2011). A psychoecological model of academic performance among Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 40(12), 1581-1594.
- Cobb, J. (2005). Planting the seeds ... Tending the garden ... Cultivating the student: Early childhood preservice teachers as literacy researchers exploring beliefs about struggling readers and diversity. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 26(4), 377-393.
- Coladarci, T. (2007). Improving the yield of rural education research: An editor's swan song. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 22(3), 1-9. Retrieved from <http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/22-3.pdf>

- Colby, S. L., & Ortman, J. M. (2015). *Projections of the size and composition of the U.S. population: 2014 to 2060 current population reports, P25-1143*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Coleman, J. S. (1985). Schools and communities they serve. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 66(8), 527-532.
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D., & York, R. L. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from *ERIC* website: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED012275.pdf>
- Cooper, K. S. (2012). Safe, affirming, and productive spaces: Classroom engagement among Latina high school students. *Urban Education*, 48(4), 490–528.
- Corbett, M. (2007). *Learning to leave: The irony of schooling in a coastal community*. Halifax, Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
- Corbett, M. (2009). Rural schooling in mobile modernity: Returning to the places I've been. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 24(7). Retrieved from <http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/24-7.pdf>
- Corbett, M. (2010). Wharf talk, home talk, and school talk: Politics of language in a coastal community. In K. A. Schafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 115-131). University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cromartie, J. (2013). *How is rural America changing?* U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/cspan/rural\\_america/20130524pdf](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/cspan/rural_america/20130524pdf)

- Cuban, L. (2013). *Inside the black box of classroom practice: Change without reform in American education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Press.
- Culp, B., & Chepyator-Thomson, J. R. (2011). Examining the culturally responsive practices of urban primary physical educators. *Physical Educator*, 68(4), 234-253.
- Dabson, B., Arnold, N., & Seekins, T. with the Rural Institute of the University of Montana. (2012). *Overview of rural America: Past, present, and future: Paper 39*. Retrieved from [http://scholarworks.umt.edu/ruralinst\\_independent\\_living\\_community\\_participation/39](http://scholarworks.umt.edu/ruralinst_independent_living_community_participation/39)
- Debnam, K. J., Pas, E. T. Bottiani, J., Cash, A. H., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2015). An examination of the association between observed and self-reported culturally proficient teaching practices. *Psychology in the Schools*, 52(6), 533-548.
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: New Press.
- Dewey, J. (2004). *Democracy and education*. Mineola, NY: Dover.
- Dillwyn, G. (1815). *Occasional reflections offered principally for the use of schools*. Burlington, NJ: David Allinson.
- Edmondson, J., & Butler, T. (2010). Teaching school in rural America: Toward an educated hope. In K. A. Schafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 51-71). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Elish-Piper, L., Matthews, M. W., & Risko, V. J. (2013). Invisibility: An unintended consequence of standards, tests, and mandates. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 9(2), 4-23. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1023571.pdf>
- Ellis, J. (2005). Place and identity for children in classrooms and schools. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 3(2), 55-73.



- Erickson, F. (2010). Culture in society and in educational practices. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee-Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (7<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 33-52). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Eslinger, J. C. (2014). Navigating between a rock and a hard place: Lessons from an urban school teacher. *Education and Urban Society*, 46(2), 209–233.
- Evans, K. R., Lester, J., & Broemmel, A. D. (2010). Talking back to scripted curricula: A critical performance ethnography with teachers' collective narratives. *Power and Education*, 2(2), 183-196.
- Faitar, G. M. (2011). Building culturally responsive classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Policies*, 5(1). 5-14.
- Farmer, T. W., Dadisman, K., Latendresse, S. J., Thompson, J., Irvin, M. J., & Zhang, L. (2006). Educating out and giving back: Adults' conceptions of successful outcomes of African American high school students from impoverished rural communities. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 21(10). Retrieved from <http://jrre.vhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/21-10.pdf>
- Ferguson, R. F., Phillips, S. F., Rowley, J. F. S., & Friedlander, J. W. (2015). *The influence of teaching beyond standardized test scores: Engagement, mindsets, and agency*. Retrieved from The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University website: <http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/TeachingandAgency.pdf>
- Fitchett, P. G., Starker, T. V., & Good, A. J. (2010). Review, reflect, and react: A culturally responsive model for pre-service secondary social studies teachers. *Social Studies Research & Practice*, 5(3), 1-20.

- Florida Department of Education. (2015). 2014-15 *Informational baseline school grades*. Retrieved from <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/1415/SchoolGrades15.pdf>
- Florida Department of Education. (2015, Nov. 17). *PK-12 public school data publications and reports: Staff*. [Spreadsheet]. Retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/staff.shtml>
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 30th anniversary edition*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Frye, B., Button, L., Kelly, C., & Button, G. (2010). Preservice teachers' self-perceptions and attitudes toward culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 5(1), 6-22.
- García, S. B., & Guerra, P. L. (2004). Deconstructing deficit thinking: Working with educators to create more equitable learning environments. *Education and Urban Society*, 36(2), 150-168.
- Garza, R. (2009). Latino and White high school students' perceptions of caring behaviors: Are we culturally responsive to our students? *Urban Education*, 44(3), 297-321.
- Gay, G. (2001). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.
- Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1), 48-70.
- Gist, C. (2014). A culturally responsive counter-narrative of effective teaching. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 9(4), 1009-1014.

- Gollnick, C., & Chinn, P. C. (2009). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Gordon, B. M. (2001). Knowledge construction, competing critical theories, and education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 184-199). San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.
- Gove, M. K., Volk, D., Still, K., Huang, G. H., & Thomas-Alexander, S. (2011). A critical look at four multicultural reform efforts in one urban college of education. *Multicultural Education, 18*(4), 18-23.
- Grbich, C. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Groenke, S. L., & Nesor, J. (2010). The drama of their daily lives: Racist language and struggles over the local in a rural high school. In K. A. Schafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the 21st century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 51-71). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82.
- Gutiérrez, R. (2002). Beyond essentialism: The complexity of language in teaching mathematics to Latina/o students. *American Educational Research Journal, 39*(4), 1047-1088.
- Harrington, J. (2014, August 16). Florida's hardest-hit county searches for economic boost. *Tampa Bay Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.tampabay.com/news/business/agriculture/floridas-hardest-hit-county-searches-for-economic-boost/2193289>
- Hernandez, C. M., Morales, A. R., & Shroyer, M. G. (2013). The development of a model of culturally responsive science and mathematics teaching. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 8*(4), 803-820.

- Hilty, E. B. (1999). Southern schools, southern teachers: Redefining leadership in rural communities. In D. M. Chalker (Ed.), *Leadership for rural schools: Lessons for all educators* (pp. 155-169). Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981287>
- Hobbs, F., & Stoops, N. (2002). *Demographic trends in the 20th century: Census 2000 special reports, Series CENSR-4*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf>
- Howards, T. C. (2001). Telling their side of the story: African-American students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. *The Urban Review*, 33(2), 131-149.
- Howley, A. A., Howley, C. B., & Pendarvis, E. D. (2003). Talent development for rural communities. In J. H. Borland (Ed.), *Rethinking gifted education* (pp. 80-104). New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- Howley, C. (2009) Critique and fiction: Doing science right in rural education research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 24(15). Retrieved from <http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/24-15.pdf>
- Howley, C. B., & Howley, A. (2010). Poverty and school achievement in rural communities: A social-class interpretation. In K. A. Schafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 34-50). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Howley, C. B., & Howley, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Dynamics of social class: Race, and place in rural education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

- Howley, C. B., Howley, A., & Yahn, J. (2014). Motives for dissertation research at the intersection between rural education and curriculum and instruction. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 29*(5), 1-12.
- Humes, K. R., Jones, N. A., & Ramirez, R. R. (2011). *2010 Census Briefs: Overview of race and Hispanic origin*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics, and Statistics Administration. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>
- Hynds, A., Sleeter, C., Hindle, R., Savage, C., Penetito, W., & Meyer, L. H. (2011). Te Kotahitanga: A case study of a repositioning approach to teacher professional development for culturally responsive pedagogies. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(4), 339–351.
- Johnson, J., Showalter, D., Klein, R., & Lester, C. (2014). *Why rural matters 2013-14: The condition of rural education in the United States*. Washington, DC: Rural School and Community Trust. Retrieved from [http://www.ruraledu.org/user\\_uploads/file/2013-14-Why-Rural-Matters.pdf](http://www.ruraledu.org/user_uploads/file/2013-14-Why-Rural-Matters.pdf)
- Johnson, M. A., & Chang, D. (2012). Balancing act: Addressing culture and gender in ESL classrooms. *Journal of Adult Education, 41*(1), 19-26.
- Joseph, P. B., Bravmann, S. L., Windschitl, M. W., Mikel, E. R., & Green, N. S. (2000). *Cultures of curriculum*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kandel, W., & Cromartie, J. (2004, May). *New patterns of Hispanic settlement in rural America.*, Rural Development Research Report Number 99. Retrieved from United States Department of Agriculture website: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/latinos/hispanic-settlement.pdf>

- Kannapel, P. J., & DeYoung, A. J. (1999). The rural school problem in 1999: A review and critique of the literature. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 15*(2), 67-79. Retrieved from [http://jrre.vhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/15-2\\_4.pdf](http://jrre.vhost.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/15-2_4.pdf)
- King, M. L., Jr. (1963). Letter from Birmingham jail. Retrieved from *The King Center* website: <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-birmingham-city-jail-1>
- Kleinfeld, J. (1975). Effective teachers of Eskimo and Indian students. *The School Review, 83*(2), 301-44. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1084645>
- Knaus, C. B. (2014). Seeing what they want to see: Racism and leadership development in urban schools. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 46*(3), 420-444.
- Koziol, N. A., Arthur, A. M., Hawley, L. R., Bovaird, J. A., Bash, K. L., McCormick, C., & Welch, G. W. (2015). Identifying, analyzing, and communicating rural: A quantitative perspective. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 30*(4), 1-14.
- Kumar, R., Karabenick, S. A., & Burgoon, J. N. (2015). Teachers' implicit attitudes, explicit beliefs, and the mediating role of respect and cultural responsibility on mastery and performance-focused instructional practices. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 107*(2), 533-545.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995a). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant teaching. *Theory into Practice, 34*(3), 159-165.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995b). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006a). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3-12.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006b). It's not the culture of poverty, it's the poverty of culture: The problem with teacher education. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 104-109.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The Dreamkeepers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lewthwaite, B., Owen, T., Doiron, A., Renaud, R., & McMillan, B. (2014). Culturally responsive teaching in Yukon First Nation settings: What does it look like and what is its influence? *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (155), 1-34.
- Lichter, D. T. (2012). Immigration and the new racial diversity in rural America. *Rural Sociology*, 77(1), 3–35.
- Lichter, D. T., & Johnson, K. M. (2006). Emerging rural settlement patterns and geographic redistribution of America's new immigrants. *Rural Sociology*, 71(1), 109-131.
- MacDonald, G., Miller, S., Murry, K., Herrera, S., & Spears, J. (2013). Efficacy of ACA strategies in biography-driven science teaching: An investigation. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 8(4), 889-903.
- Mann, H. (1848). *Twelfth annual report of Horace Mann as Secretary of Massachusetts State Board of Education*. Horace Mann on education and national welfare. Retrieved from [http://www.tncrimlaw.com/civil\\_bible/orhorace\\_mann.htm](http://www.tncrimlaw.com/civil_bible/orhorace_mann.htm)
- Martin, B. (1997). Culturally responsive teaching. A review of research and literature. Retrieved from ERIC website: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED408387.pdf>
- McAllister, G., & Irvine, J. J. (2000). Cultural competency and multicultural teacher education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 3-24.
- McCullough, C., & Ramirez, O. (2012). Cultivating culture: Preparing future teachers for diversity through family science learning events. *School Science & Mathematics*, 112(7), 443-451.

- McKenna, J. (2013). The disproportionate representation of African Americans in programs for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure, 57*(4), 206-221.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Modla, V. B., & Wake, D. G. (2007). Using a culturally-responsive approach to multicultural literature: Preparing pre-service teachers to work with all students. *College Reading Association Yearbook, 2007*(28), 293-311.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141.
- Morell, E. (2005). Critical English education. *English Education, 57*(4), 312-321.
- Morrison, K. A., Robbins, H. H., & Rose, D. G. (2008). Operationalising culturally relevant pedagogy: A synthesis of classroom-based research. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 41*(4), 433-435.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015). The nation's report card: Achievement gaps. Retrieved from [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2015](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015)
- National Center for Education Statistics (2013a). Chapter 3: The status of rural education in America. *May 2013 Spotlight: Elementary and secondary education*. U.S. Dept. of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/orruraled>
- National Center for Education Statistics (2013b). Table 209.10. *Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools*. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_209.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_209.10.asp)



- National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Achievement gaps. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/>
- National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Definition: Rural. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/definitions.asp>
- NCATE (2008). Unit standards in effect 2008: Standard 4a. Retrieved from NCATE website: <http://ncate.org/Standards/UnitStandards/UnitStandardsinEffect2008/tabid/476/.aspx>
- Nelson, S. W., & Guerra, P. L. (2014). Educator beliefs and cultural knowledge: Implications for school improvement efforts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(1), 67-95.
- Nieto, S. (2000). Placing equity front and center: Some thoughts on transforming teacher education for a new century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 5(3), 180-187.
- Nieto, S. (2009). Multicultural education in the United States. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *The Routledge international companion to multicultural education* (pp. 79-93). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nieto, S. (2012). Teaching, caring, and transformation. *Knowledge Quest*, 40(4), 28–31.
- Nieto, S. (2013). *Finding joy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Noddings, N. (1988). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. *American Journal of Education*, 96(2), 215–230.
- Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools*. New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.
- Okoye-Johnson, O. (2011). Does multicultural education improve students' racial attitudes? Implications for closing the achievement gap. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(8), 1252-1274.

- O'Neal, D. D., Ringler, M., & Rodriguez, D. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of their preparation for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners in rural eastern North Carolina. *The Rural Educator*, 30(1), 5-13.
- Parsley, D., & Barton, R. (2015). The myth of the little red schoolhouse: Challenges and opportunities for rural school improvement. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 90(2), 191-3.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Quiroz, P. A. (2001). The silencing of the Latino student "voice": Puerto Rican and Mexican narratives in eighth grade and high school. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32(3): 326-349.
- Reed, K. (2010). Multicultural education for rural schools: Creating relevancy in rural America. *The Rural Educator*, 31(2), 15-20.
- Roberts, P. (2014). Researching from the standpoint of the rural. In S. White & M. Corbett (Eds.), *Doing educational research in rural settings: Methodological issues, international perspectives and practical solutions* (pp. 135-147). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rural School and Community Trust. (2012). *Why rural matters 2011-2012: The condition of rural education in the 50 states*. Washington, DC: Rural School and Community Trust. Retrieved from [http://www.ruraledu.org/user\\_uploads/file/2013-14-Why-Rural-Matters.pdf](http://www.ruraledu.org/user_uploads/file/2013-14-Why-Rural-Matters.pdf)
- Ryan, W. (1976). *Blaming the victim*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

- Sampson, D., & Garrison-Wade, D. (2011). Cultural vibrancy: Exploring the preferences of African American children toward culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant lessons. *Urban Review, 43*(2), 279-309.
- Saunders, J. M. (2012). Intersecting realities: A novice's attempts to use critical literacy to access her students' figured worlds. *Multicultural Education, 19*(2), 18-23.
- Savage, C., Hindle, R., Meyer, L. H., Hynds, A., Penetito, W., & Sleeter, C. E. (2011). Culturally responsive pedagogies in the classroom: Indigenous student experiences across the curriculum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(3), 183-198.
- Schafft, K. A., & Jackson, A. Y. (2010). Introduction. In K. A. Schafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 1-13). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Seaton, E. E. (2007). "If teachers are good to you": Caring for rural girls in the classroom. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 22*(6), 1-16. Retrieved from <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/22-6.pdf>
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.
- Shapiro, F. (2010, Sept.-Oct.). You can quote them. *Yale Alumni Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://yalealumnimagazine.com/articles/2967/you-can-quote-them>
- Shaw, J. T. (2015). Knowing their world. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 63*(2), 198-223.
- Showalter, D. A. (2013). Place-based mathematics education: A conflated pedagogy? *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 28*(6), 1-13. Retrieved from <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/28-6.pdf>

- Siwatu, K. (2009). Student teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding culturally responsive teaching and their professed classroom practices. *Teacher Education & Practice*, 22(3), 323-333.
- Siwatu, K. O. (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 23(7), 1086-1101.
- Siwatu, K. O. (2011). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy-forming experiences: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Educational Research*, 104(5), 360-369.
- Siwatu, K. O., & Polydore, C. L. (2010). Resolving a cultural conflict in the classroom: An exploration of preservice teachers' perceptions of effective interventions. *Journal of Negro Education*, 79(4), 458-472.
- Siwatu, K. O., & Starker, T. V. (2010). Predicting preservice teachers' self-efficacy to resolve a cultural conflict involving an African-American student. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 12(1), 10-17.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of Whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94-106.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2011). An agenda to strengthen culturally responsive pedagogy. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 10(2), 7-23.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2012). Confronting the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy. *Urban Education*, 47(3), 562-584.
- Sleeter, C. E., & Cornbleth, C. (2011). (Eds.). *Teaching with vision: Culturally responsive teaching in standards-based classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers' College Press.
- Sleeter, C., & Stillman, J. (2005). Standardizing knowledge in a multicultural society. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 35(1), 27-45.

- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Swartz, E. E. (2012). Distinguishing themes of cultural responsiveness: A study of document-based learning. *Journal of Social Studies Research, 36*(2), 135-167.
- Tieken, M. C. (2014). *Why rural schools matter*. Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Theobald, P. (1997). *Teaching the commons: Place, pride and the renewal of community*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Theobald, P. (2016). *Education now: How rethinking America's past can change its future*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Theobald, P., & Wood, K. (2010). Learning to be rural: Identity lessons from history, schooling, and the U.S. corporate media. In K. A. Schafft & A. Y. Jackson (Eds.), *Rural education for the twenty-first century: Identity, place, and community in a globalizing world* (pp. 17-33). University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research, 68*(1998), 202–248.
- Tylor, E. (1871). *Primitive culture*. London, United Kingdom: John Murray. Retrieved from [https://archive.org/stream/primitivculture01tylouoft/primitivculture01tylouoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/primitivculture01tylouoft/primitivculture01tylouoft_djvu.txt)
- United States Census Bureau. (2010). 2010 census data. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>
- United States Census Bureau. (2010). 2010 census: Urban and rural classification and urban area criteria. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>
- United States Census Bureau. (2012). U.S. Census Bureau projections show a slower growing, older, more diverse nation a half century from now. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>

- United States Census Bureau. (2015). State and County Quick Facts. Retrieved from <http://ororquickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12or12051.html>
- United States Department of Agriculture. (2014). *Rural America at a glance: 2014 edition*. Economic Research Service Economic Brief Number 26. Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1697681/eb26.pdf>
- United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). Population and migration. Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/population-migration.aspx>
- United States Department of Education. (2004). Glossary of terms: Achievement gap. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/index/az/glossary.html#2>
- United States Department of Education. (2015, December). U.S. high school graduation rate hits new record high. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-high-school-graduation-rate-hits-new-record-high-0>
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schools: U.S. Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20–32.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2007). The culturally responsive teacher. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 28-33.
- Ware, F. (2006). Warm demander pedagogy. *Urban Education*, 41(4), 427–456.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Wiens, K. F. (2015). Considering culturally responsive teaching, children, and place in the music room. *General Music Today*, 29(1), 19-23.

- Wlodkowski, R. J., & Ginsberg, M. B. (1995). A framework for culturally responsive teaching. *Strengthening Student Engagement*, 53(1), 17-21.
- Woodrum, A. (2009). Cultural identity and schooling in rural New Mexico. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 24(8). Retrieved from <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/24-8.pdf>
- Yin, R. K. (2006). Case study. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, P. B. Elmore with A. Skukauskaite, & E. Grace (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357-370). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

## Appendix A

### Informed Consent and Site Approval from Superintendent



Professional Studies in Education Department  
303 Davis Hall Indiana, PA 15705  
724-357-2400  
[date]

[Superintendent's Name Here]  
Superintendent  
[District Name Here]  
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Superintendent's Name]:

As the final requirement for completing my doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, I am required to conduct research for my dissertation. I am requesting your permission to include teachers and administrators in your school district in my study titled "Exploring Secondary Teachers' Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Diverse Rural School District." The purpose of this basic qualitative interpretive study is to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceive that they use, value, and develop their efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences.

The theory of culturally responsive teaching is a way of teaching with high expectations that honors and affirms students' diverse cultural identities while infusing them into the school learning culture so learning becomes more meaningful and equitable. Essentially, what I hope to find is how middle and high school teachers use their knowledge of individual students' backgrounds and the life in [District Name] as an asset to help students connect what is taught in school to their prior knowledge and their life experiences.

In order to conduct my dissertation research, I write to ask formally if you would be willing to permit 12 secondary teachers and 2 administrators to participate in this qualitative study. Very little work, if any, has studied this theoretical construct in a rural environment, so findings from [District Name] could fill in a gap in the literature on how teachers connect learning with both a rural context and other aspects of cultures of diverse students. The research questions are:

- **What knowledge do caring and culturally responsive rural secondary teachers value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds; how do they learn to do so, and how do they perceive it affects their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?**



My primary research materials are interviews and document analysis. I hope to interview one administrator from [High School Name] and one administrator from [Middle School Name] for 20-30 minutes in order to explain my purpose briefly and ask for suggestions of 6 teachers from each school who are warm demanders with high expectations who use what they know about students' lives to make learning more meaningful. I would then, with the permission of teachers, conduct an audio-recorded interview of 30-60 minutes to find out how teachers value and use cultural responsive teaching as well as how they have professionally grown in their ability to be responsive teachers. The duration of the study will be for approximately two to four weeks depending on the number and availability of teachers and administrators who volunteer to participate. No data will be collected from students.

As with any research, participation is voluntary, and as a voluntary activity, participants can withdraw from the study at any time by simply contacting me in person, by email, or by telephone. If the interview is underway, participants can also state their desire to terminate the interview and simply exit the interview. Participation or non-participation in this study will not adversely affect participants in any way.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participants in this study beyond reflection of the use of students' cultural referents in their teaching. The findings of this study will be discussed as aggregated and composite data. All participants, the schools, and the district will be identified only by pseudonym without any identifying characteristics.

If you agree to allow me to work with the teachers and administrators in your district to complete this research in the manner described above, please respond granting permission in a written format on district letterhead.

Thank you for considering my request. I believe the information [High School Name] and [Middle School Name] teachers will provide will contribute significantly to my study. If you have any additional questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Principal Investigator:  
Diane Z. Onorato, D. Ed., Candidate  
Curriculum & Instruction  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
2010 Fort Denaud Road  
LaBelle, FL 33935  
Email: [dianezonorato@gmail.com](mailto:dianezonorato@gmail.com)  
Phone: 814-464-3316

Faculty Sponsor:  
Dr. Valeri Helterbran  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
323 Davis Hall, IUP  
570 South Eleventh Street  
Indiana, PA 15705  
[vhelter@iup.edu](mailto:vhelter@iup.edu)

This letter and response will be submitted to the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724or357-7730).

Superintendent's Site Approval with Redactions

*Superintendent*

Attn: Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board

I have reviewed Diane Z. Onorato's research protocol titled "Exploring Secondary Teachers' Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Diverse Rural School District."

I understand her research question is:

What contextual knowledge do caring and culturally relatable rural secondary teachers value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse economic, ethnic, racial and linguistic family backgrounds; how do they learn to do so, and how do they perceive it affects their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?

I understand she will contact principals for suggested teacher participants whose perception and experiences will be the data for the study. I understand that she will collect demographic information on a questionnaire, conduct an interview, and receive copies of teaching materials that teachers may voluntarily bring to the interview with identifying information removed. She will take 2-4 weeks, depending on the numbers of participants.

I grant Diane Onorato permission to conduct her study at High School and Middle School.

I understand that if I have any questions regarding this IRB approval or the rights of research participants I can contact Dr. Valeri Helterbran, Chair, Indiana University of Pennsylvania or the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Please feel free to contact my office at if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol for Principals



This interview will not be recorded. Begin writing notes about our conversation after introductions are made and questions are answered about the study.

- Your pseudonym for purposes of this interview is Principal # \_\_\_\_\_
- As I wrote in the informed consent letter, your school has been approved by the district superintendent as a site for research on teachers' perceptions of the use, value, and improvement in the use of culturally responsive teaching. Essentially, what I hope to find is how middle and high school teachers use their knowledge of individual students' backgrounds and the life in this town as an asset to help students connect what is taught in school to their prior knowledge and their life experiences.
- The study design calls for me to interview 6 teachers from your school. I am hoping for the names of 8-10 teachers who fit the profile of culturally responsive, in particular, a teacher who
  - is fully certified to teach the subject the teacher is assigned to teach
  - is caring in an authentic way,
  - has high expectations for all students, and warmly demands that students work toward appropriate and challenging goals
  - uses or integrates information about diverse students' cultures, life experiences, or family backgrounds in their teaching.
  - [i.e., is relatable—knows how to relate to students—understands where they are and how they feel]

Using a list of teacher names procured from the school website by the researcher ahead of time or else provided by the principal at the time of the interview, should the website information be out of date, the principal will review and suggest a desired 8 (up to 10) names of teachers who to his or her knowledge fit the inclusion criteria above.

The researcher will make field notes and memos pertaining to this conversation.

Appendix C

Demographic Survey of Teacher Participants



**Professional Studies in Education Department**  
**303 Davis Hall**  
**Indiana, PA 15705**  
**724-357-2400**

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  
2. Which age range best describes you?
  - a. under 25
  - b. age 25-31
  - c. age 32-38
  - d. age 39-45
  - e. age 46-53
  - f. over 54
  
3. What locale BEST describes the region where you spend the most time as a child?
  - a. Inner city
  - b. Suburbs
  - c. Small city
  - d. Country town
  - e. Rural open spaces
  - f. Remote, sparsely populated
  
4. What teaching certificate(s) do you currently hold?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What best describes your teaching experience?
  - a. 1 - 5 years
  - b. 6 - 10 years
  - c. 11 - 19 years
  - d. 20 - 29 years
  - e. 30+ years
  
6. How many language(s) do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. How many TOTAL college or university classes have you taken that included an emphasis on multicultural education or working with culturally and linguistically diverse children?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
8. How well do you feel those college classes on learners from diverse backgrounds prepared you to teach your classes today?
  - a. Extremely well
  - b. Pretty well
  - c. Somewhat OK
  - d. Not well at all
  - e. I don't remember taking any of these classes.
  
8. How would you describe your ethnicity or cultural identity?
  - a. White or Anglo
  - b. Black or African-American
  - c. Hispanic or Latino(a)
  - d. Native American or Alaskan
  - e. Asian or Pacific Islander
  - f. Multi-racial
  - g. Other
  
10. In what type of neighborhood(s) would you prefer to teach?
  - a. Urban Center, big inner city
  - b. Suburban city, near but not within city limits of metro area
  - c. Country Town, like our area
  - d. Remote, wide open

## Appendix D



### Participant's Letter of Informed Consent

Professional Studies in Education Department  
303 Davis Hall  
Indiana, PA 15705  
724-357-2400

[Date]

Dear [Teacher Participant],

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, "Exploring Secondary Teachers' Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Diverse Rural School District."

You are eligible to participate in this study because an administrator in your building recommended you as a teacher who is caring, has high expectations for all students, and uses information about diverse students' cultures or backgrounds in your teaching. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this basic qualitative interview and document-based study is to explore how rural, secondary public school teachers viewed by their administrators or colleagues as caring and responsive to students' cultures perceive that they use, value, and develop their efficacy in using contextual and cultural responsiveness to improve students' learning experiences. Essentially, what I hope to find is how middle and high school teachers use their knowledge of individual students' backgrounds and the life in this town as an asset to help students connect what is taught in school to their prior knowledge and their life experiences.

The duration of the study will be approximately two to four weeks depending on the number and availability of participants. Participation in this study will require approximately 30-60 minutes of your time to answer interview questions pertaining to how you use your knowledge of students' lives and cultural backgrounds to improve their learning experiences in your class. The interview will be scheduled at a time and public location that is mutually agreeable and determined in advance.

The interview questions are enclosed for your consideration and convenience. There may be questions that do not apply to your situation, and you may decline to answer any specific question or questions. If you agree to participate, information discussed by you in the interview will be provided to you shortly after your interview to assure the researcher correctly transcribed and captured the essence of your statements. You can approve or disapprove of the transcription of the interview or change any part of it before it is used in this study via telephone, email, or postal mail.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research beyond reflecting about your use of students' culture to enhance their learning experience.

Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You are free to decide *not to participate* in this study *or to withdraw* at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the school district, investigator, or the university.

- Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the faculty sponsor or informing the researcher in person, by email, or by telephone.
- If the interview is underway, participants may also state their desire to terminate the interview and exit the interview. Upon withdrawal, all your information will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all your information will be held in strict confidence.
- Your responses will be reported only in combination with those of other participants. Unrelated pseudonyms will be used for every proper name except State of Florida.
- You will have the opportunity to approve, disapprove, or change the transcription of your interview before it is used in this study via telephone, email, or postal mail.
- The information obtained in the study may be published online in a dissertation, in educational journals, or presented at educational meetings, but your identity and that of your school and district will be kept strictly confidential.

Very little research has studied this concept, Culturally Responsive Teaching in a diverse rural environment, so findings from your experience in this district could fill in a gap in the literature on how teachers connect learning with both a rural context and other aspects of cultures of diverse students.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the enclosed Informed Consent Statement and keep the additional copy for your records.

Thank you for your consideration,

Principal Investigator:  
Diane Z. Onorato, D. Ed., Candidate  
Curriculum & Instruction  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
2010 Fort Denard Road  
LaBelle, FL 33935  
Email: [dianazonorato@gmail.com](mailto:dianazonorato@gmail.com)  
Phone: 814-464-3316

Faculty Sponsor:  
Dr. Valeri Helterbran  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
323 Davis Hall, IUP  
570 South Eleventh Street  
Indiana, PA 15705  
[vhelter@iup.edu](mailto:vhelter@iup.edu)

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724or357-7730).

Appendix E

Informed Consent Participant Signature Form



**VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:**

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study.

I understand that my responses are completely confidential, transcribed only by the researcher if I give permission for the researcher to audio-record our conversation for the purposes of insuring accuracy in reporting my ideas. My interview responses will be reported in combination with other teachers' responses, and pseudonyms will be used in place of all identifying proper nouns except the State of Florida. I understand that shortly after my interview, I will have the right to review the report of my interview responses and approve, disapprove, add, or delete information from the report, and I can request a final copy of the research report once the study is completed.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time by simply contacting the researcher or faculty sponsor in person, by email, or by telephone. If the interview is underway, I can also state their desire to terminate the interview and simply exit the interview. I have been provided a copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT):

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Granted permission to audio-record interview? Yes No

Phone number and email where I (participant) can be reached:

\_\_\_\_\_

Best days and times to be reached: \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, any possible risks associated with participating in this research study, and have answered any questions that have been raised.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature

## Appendix F

### Short Interview Protocol Pre-View for Participants



- Do you consent to my recording our conversation to help assure accuracy? *Turn on tape recorder now, or if preferred by teacher, begin memoing.*
  
  - **Regarding the VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:** by signing and submitting this copy of the consent form, you declare you have read and understood the informed consent letter, so do you consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study? \_\_\_\_\_ and do you have a copy of the consent form for your files? \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - Your pseudonym for purposes of this interview is Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ (suggest an unrelated first name that nobody would associate with you except you). The interviewer will report the data using the voice of a composite teacher.
  
  - The questions that form the framework of your interview follow. They are provided so you can anticipate what the interviewer will address and perhaps so you can reflect and prepare, if you wish.
1. **How would you describe your classroom climate?**
    - How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?
    - If I were to observe your class, what would I see that would show me that you care about your students?
  2. **What is important for teachers to know about our students' lives outside school?**
    - What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?
    - If I were to observe your class, what would I see that would show me that you take their cultural backgrounds into consideration when planning and executing lessons?
  3. **Tell about a time(s) when you used students'('s) prior knowledge when teaching?**
  4. **Tell about a time when the topic of living in our area was addressed in class?**
  5. **What are the most successful activities that you have done to help students learn the course content?** Think about how you may have infused knowledge about students' backgrounds in the delivery of that content.
  6. **What most helped you grow into the teacher you are today?**
    - How prepared to teach your first class in this district were you?
    - What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse backgrounds?
    - What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students?

Thank you for your time! Diane Onorato 814-464-3316 [dianezonorato@gmail.com](mailto:dianezonorato@gmail.com)



## Appendix G

### Complete Semi-Structured Interview Protocol With Probes

Conversation before beginning interview questions:

- i. Permission to record after signed consent.
  - ii. Answer any questions that arise from the demographic survey.
  - iii. Where do you call home?
  - iv. How long have you been in this school district? At this school?
  - v. Have you always taught this subject?
- 
1. What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?
    - a. Provide your own definition, not necessarily a textbook definition, because we are in a rural area that may be perceived differently than what textbooks portray.
    - b. How culturally responsive do you feel? 1-10
  2. What is important for teachers to know about our students' lives outside of school?
    - a. What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?
    - b. Do you take into consideration students' learning preferences? If so, how?
  3. How important do you feel it is to use in your teaching aspects of students' home cultures or their life experiences in our town? 1-10
    - a. Can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class?
    - b. Can or will you tell about a time you used a student's (s') prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?
  4. Regarding successful activities:
    - a. What activities are students' favorite or least favorite?
    - b. Do you use projects? How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects?
    - c. Do you use collaborative learning structures in class?
      - 1) How often on average do you use collaborative learning structures?
      - 2) Do you use (un)structured group assignments?
      - 3) How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?
  5. Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about their goals for the future?
    - a. What kinds of progress checks do you use?
    - b. What ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?

6. What would an observer see in your classroom that would show that you care about your students?
  - a. How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?
  - b. How would you describe your classroom climate?
  - c. How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?
7. How do you develop and implement classroom rules and procedures?
  - a. Are there unwritten rules in your class?
  - b. What would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?
8. Regarding issues related to racism, power, and privilege:
  - a. Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?
  - b. Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?
  - c. How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise? 1-10
9. Regarding teacher's growth:
  - a. How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10
  - b. What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today?
  - c. What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?
10. Regarding teacher's perceptions about rural areas:
  - a. In what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you were teaching in an urban area?
  - b. React to this statement:  
What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students?
  - c. What would surprise a new teacher in our district?
  - d. Do you ever hear students say that they want to move away from here or go away to college? What would you say in response to the research-based claim that public schools in small towns hollow out the town of her brightest and best citizens by encouraging and enabling them to go away to college and live the dream in a metro area, seldom returning to their hometown?
11. In closing, is there a question that is on your mind that I should have asked you?
  - a. A question that you want to elaborate more about?
  - b. Something you want to ask me?

## Appendix H

### First Cycle Coding: Simple List

1. Academic caring
2. Activities students do not enjoy
3. Activities students enjoy
4. Activities to get to know students
5. Attracting and keeping new teachers in this town
6. AVID
7. Being mentored by other educators
8. Building communication skills
9. Comfort level addressing power, privilege, racism topics 1-10
10. Communicating with students
11. Creating culture of success
12. CRT preparation in college
13. Curriculum
14. Define CRT
15. Descriptions of each class
16. Direct instruction or lecture
17. Don't give up on a kid
18. Drugs
19. Establishing classroom rules
20. Facilitation of teacher's growth
21. Formative progress checks
22. Getting to know culture of the town
23. Goal setting or visioning future
24. High expectations
25. Interpersonal caring
26. Lack of resources or poverty
27. Learning preferences
28. Lessons learned from a student
29. Mentoring other teachers
30. Mentoring students
31. Need to know about students 1-10
32. Parent involvement
33. Pedagogical use of knowledge of this town
34. Pedagogical use of prior knowledge
35. Preparation for college
36. Preparation for teaching here 1-10
37. Project-based learning, projects
38. Racism and classroom conversation
39. Racism and the larger community
40. Racism observed in school
41. Reflecting or shop-talking at home
42. Respect
43. School climate
44. Self-rating of CRT practices
45. Student self-checks of learning
46. Students' home life
47. Surprise a new teacher here
48. Talk about leaving town, getting out
49. Talking to parents
50. Teacher's home, background
51. Teaching in urban v. rural districts
52. The test
53. Transforming lives
54. Trust
55. Unwritten rules in classroom
56. Use of collaborative structures or groups
57. Use of cultural knowledge
58. Welcoming behaviors

## Appendix I

### Three Groups of Simple Codes

---

#### **Group 1 for Research Question #1**

---

1. Activities to get to know students
2. Attracting and keeping new teachers in this town
3. AVID
4. Comfort level addressing power, privilege, racism topics 1-10
5. Define CRT
6. Drugs
7. Formative progress checks
8. Getting to know culture of the town
9. Goal setting or visioning future
10. Lack of resources or poverty
11. Learning preferences
12. Need to know about students 1-10
13. Parent involvement
14. Racism and classroom conversation
15. Racism and the larger community
16. Racism observed in school
17. School climate
18. Student self-checks of learning
19. Students' home life
20. Surprise a new teacher here
21. Talking to parents
22. Teaching in urban v. rural districts
23. The test
24. Use of cultural knowledge

---

#### **Group 2 for Research Question #2**

---

25. Academic caring
26. Activities students do not enjoy
27. Activities students enjoy
28. Building communication skills
29. Communicating with students
30. Creating culture of success
31. Curriculum

32. Descriptions of each class
33. Direct instruction or lecture
34. Don't give up on a kid
35. Establishing classroom rules
36. High expectations
37. Interpersonal caring
38. Mentoring students
39. Preparation for college or work
40. Project-based learning, projects
41. Respect
42. Talk about leaving town, getting out
43. Transforming lives
44. Trust
45. Unwritten rules in classroom
46. Use of collaborative structures or groups
47. Pedagogical use of prior knowledge
48. Pedagogical use of knowledge of this town
49. Welcoming environment

---

#### **Group 3 for Research Question #3**

---

50. Being mentored by other educators
51. CRT preparation in college
52. Facilitation of teacher's growth
53. Lessons learned from a student
54. Mentoring other teachers
55. Preparation for teaching here 1-10
56. Reflecting or shop-talking at home
57. Self-rating of CRT practices
58. Teacher's home, background

## Appendix J

### Second Cycle Coding: Thematic Categorization of Codes

#### 1. CRT definition and local area

- Definition of CRT
- Need to know about students 1-10
- Talking to parents
- Students' home life
- Parent involvement
- Attracting and keeping new teachers
- Lack of resources or poverty
- Drugs
- Getting to know the culture of the town
- Surprise a new teacher here
- School climate
- Teaching in urban vs. rural

#### 2. Funds of knowledge and informed instruction

- Activities to get to know students
- Use of cultural knowledge
- Learning preferences
- Formative progress checks
- Goal setting or visioning future
- AVID
- Student self-checks of learning
- The test

#### 3. Caring and high expectations

- Descriptions of each class
- Welcoming environment
- Communicating with students
- Caring: academic and personal
- Creating culture of success
- High expectations
- Don't give up on a kid
- Respect
- Trust
- Building communication skills
- Mentoring students

#### 4. Teaching and Learning

- Establishing classroom rules
- Unwritten rules in classroom
- Use of collaborative structures or groups
- Curriculum or AVID
- Direct instruction or lecture
- Project-based learning, projects
- Activities students enjoy
- Activities students do not enjoy
- Pedagogical use of cultural or prior knowledge
- Pedagogical use of knowledge of this town
- Preparation for college or work
- Talk about leaving town, getting out

#### 5. Critical awareness and advocacy

- Comfort level addressing power, privilege, racism topics 1-10
- Racism and classroom conversation
- Racism observed in school
- Racism and the larger community

#### 6. Teacher's CRT growth and advocacy

- Self-rating of CRT practices 1-10
- Teacher's home, background
- Supporting the local community
- CRT preparation in college
- Preparation for teaching here 1-10
- Facilitation of teacher's growth
- Being mentored by other educators
- Lessons learned from a student
- Mentoring other teachers
- Reflecting or shop-talking at home

Appendix K

Alignment of Research Questions and Protocol With Codes

| Research Questions  | Interview Protocol and Probes  | Associated Codes   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Research Question 1:<br/>What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?</p> | <p>What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?</p>  | <p>Define CRT</p>  |
|   | <p>How important do you feel it is to use in your teaching aspects of or knowledge of students home cultures or life experiences in our town? 1-10</p>   | <p>Need to know about students' lives 1-10<br/>Knowledge of culture</p>                    |
|   | <p>What is important for teachers to know about our students' lives outside of school?</p>   | <p>Students' home life<br/>Parents or involvement<br/>Resources or Poverty<br/>Drugs</p>   |
|   | <p><i>*What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?</i></p>   | <p>Activities to get to know students<br/>Talking to parents</p>                           |
|   | <p>Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about their goals for the future?<br/><i>Do you ever hear students say that they want to move away from here or go away to college?</i></p> | <p>Goal setting or talking about the future<br/>Preparing for college or work<br/>AVID</p> |
|   | <p><i>*What kinds of progress checks do you use?</i></p>   | <p>Formative progress checks or The test</p>   |
|   | <p><i>*What ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?</i></p>  | <p>Student self-checks</p>   |
|   | <p><i>*Do you take into consideration students' learning preferences? If so, how?</i></p>  | <p>Learning preferences</p>  |
|   | <p>What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students?</p>   | <p>Attracting and keeping new teachers<br/>Get to know life in town</p>                    |
|   | <p><i>*What would surprise a new teacher in our district?</i></p>  | <p>Surprising or surprise a new teacher here</p>   |
|   | <p>In what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you taught in an urban area?</p>  | <p>School climate<br/>Teaching in urban v rural</p>  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Research Question 2:</b></p> <p>What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?</p> | <p>What would an observer see in your classroom that would show that you care about your students?</p>             | <p>Welcoming environment<br/>Communicating with students<br/>Academic caring<br/>Interpersonal caring</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*How would you describe your classroom climate?</i></p>  | <p>Describe class climate</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?</i></p>   | <p>Create culture of success<br/>High expectations<br/>Don't give up on a kid<br/>Respect or Trust<br/>Building communication skills<br/>Transforming lives<br/>Mentoring students</p> |
|   | <p>How do you develop and implement classroom rules and procedures?</p>  | <p>Establishing classroom rules</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*Are there unwritten rules in your class?</i></p>  | <p>Unwritten rules in classroom</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*What would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?</i></p>                              | <p>Rules</p>   |
|   | <p>Do you use collaborative learning structures in class?</p>  | <p>Use of collaborative structures or groups</p>   |
|   | <p><i>*How often on average do you use collaborative structures?</i></p>   |  |
|   | <p><i>*Do you use (un)structured group assignments?</i></p>  |  |
|   | <p><i>*How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?</i></p>   | <p>Direct instruction, lecture</p>   |
|   | <p>What are some successful activities or strategies you have done to help students learn your course content?</p> | <p>Curriculum<br/>Activities<br/>AVID</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*What activities are students' favorite or least favorite?</i></p>   | <p>Activities students enjoy<br/>Activities students do not enjoy</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*Do you use projects? How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects?</i></p> | <p>Project-based learning or Projects</p>  |
|   | <p>Can you tell about a time you used a student's (s') prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?</p>        | <p>Use cultural knowledge</p>  |
| <p>Can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class?</p>   | <p>Use prior knowledge<br/>Use of knowledge of the town</p>  |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Research Question 3:</b></p> <p>What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?</p> | <p><i>Getting acquainted questions:</i></p> <p>Any questions about items on demographic survey?</p> <p>Where do you call home?</p> <p>How long have you been in this school district? At this school?</p> <p>Have you always taught this subject?</p>          | <p>Teacher's home, cultural background</p>   |
|   | <p>How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10</p>  | <p>Preparation for teaching here 1-10</p>  |
|   | <p><i>*How culturally responsive do you feel? 1-10</i></p>   | <p>Self-rating of CRT practices 1-10</p>   |
|   | <p><i>*What would you say in response to the research-based claim that public schools in small towns hollow out the town of her brightest and best citizens by encouraging and enabling them to go away to college and live the dream in a metro area?</i></p> | <p>Talk about leaving town, getting out</p>  |
|   | <p>What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today?</p>  | <p>Facilitation of teacher's growth<br/>           CRT college preparation<br/>           Being mentored by others<br/>           Mentoring other teachers</p> |
|   | <p>What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?</p>   | <p>Lesson learned from a student of diverse culture</p>  |
|   | <p>How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?</p>  | <p>Reflecting or shop-talking at home</p>  |
|   | <p>Any questions that you would like to ask me or that you think I should have asked?</p>  |  |



## Appendix L

### Findings from Demographic Survey of Teacher Participants

(n = 12)

| SURVEY ITEM                     | COMPOSITE DATA |   |   |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| <b>1. Gender</b>                |                | <b>5. Years' Experience</b>                                   |   |
| Male                            | 3              | 1-5 years   | 5 |
| Female                          | 9              | 6-10 years  | 2 |
| <b>2. Age</b>                   |                | 11-19 years   | 4 |
| < 25                            | 1              | 20-29 years   | 1 |
| 25-31                           | 4              | 30+ years   | 0 |
| 32-38                           | 3              | <b>6. Languages spoken</b>                                    |   |
| 39-45                           | 1              | one   | 6 |
| 46-53                           | 3              | two (All but one said Spanish)                                | 6 |
| 54 +                            | 0              | <b>7. Diversity-focused classes</b>                           |   |
| <b>3. Childhood locale</b>      |                | 0   | 1 |
| <b>Type of Region</b>           |                | 1   | 3 |
| Urban Center                    | 2              | 2   | 3 |
| Suburbs                         | 2              | 3   | 3 |
| Small city                      | 0              | 4   | 2 |
| Country town                    | 4              | <b>8. Preparation from classes</b>                            |   |
| Rural open spaces               | 3              | Extremely well  | 0 |
| Remote, sparsely populated      | 0              | Pretty well   | 5 |
| Moved around                    | 1              | Somewhat OK   | 4 |
| <b>Geographic Location</b>      |                | Not well at all   | 1 |
| Within 30 miles of study site   | 5              | I don't remember the class                                    | 2 |
| Florida Major Metropolitan Area | 2              | <b>9. Ethnicity or cultural identity</b>                      |   |
| Western USA                     | 1              | White or Anglo or Caucasian                                   | 6 |
| Midwestern USA                  | 2              | Black or African-American                                     | 1 |
| Northeastern USA                | 2              | Hispanic or Latino(a or x)                                    | 5 |
| <b>4. Certification</b>         |                | Other   | 0 |
| English                         | 2              | <b>10. Desired type of neighborhood in which to teach</b>     |   |
| Math                            | 3              | Urban Center, big inner city                                  | 1 |
| Science                         | 2              | Suburban, near but not in big city                            | 3 |
| Social Studies                  | 2              | Small City  | 1 |
| Other                           | 3              | Country Town, like our area                                   | 7 |
|                                 |                | Remote, wide open spaces                                      | 0 |
|                                 |                | Teacher responded "none."                                     | 1 |
|                                 |                | Teacher responded "I do have my choice! I choose to be here!" | 1 |

Appendix M

Alignment of Research Questions to Protocol and Pillars

| Research Questions  | Interview Questions Presented in the Order of Discussion in Chapter Four: Findings  | 18 Pillars of CRT (Gay, 2010) CRT is . . .  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Research Question 1:</b><br><b>What knowledge do rural secondary teachers, who were identified as caring and culturally responsive, value and use to inform their teaching of students from diverse rural economic, ethnic, racial, and linguistic family backgrounds?</b> | <b>Category 1:</b><br><b>CRT Definition and Importance</b>  | <i>Pillars 1, 3, 5, 8, 17, 18</i>   |
|   | What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?  | <b>Pillar 1:</b> Is integral to all classes and all skills taught   |
|   | How important do you feel it is to use in your teaching aspects of or knowledge of students home cultures or life experiences in our town? 1-10 | <b>Pillar 5:</b> Integrates context, culture, and lived-experience of students of color into curriculum   |
|   | What is important for teachers to know about our students' lives outside of school?   | <b>Pillar 3:</b> Happens systematically, continuously, and purposefully, not just sometimes & ways  |
|   | What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students?   | <b>Pillar 18:</b> Uses school or teacher resources of time, funds & imagination for student success   |
|   | What would surprise a new teacher in our district?  | <b>Pillar 17:</b> Requires professional development to improve cultural knowledge, teaching skills, reflection, and self-monitoring of classroom situations for students of color |
|   | In what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you were teaching in an urban area?                                 | <b>Pillar 8:</b> Uses both general group and particular individual student cultural patterns  |
|   | <b>Category 2:</b><br><b>Funds of Knowledge and Informed Instruction</b>  | <i>Pillars 11, 12, 14, 15</i>   |
|   | What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?   | <b>Pillar 14:</b> Scaffolds learning between school culture and content and students' funds of knowledge  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <p>Do you take into consideration students' learning preferences? If so, how?</p> <p>What kinds of progress checks do you use?</p>   | <p><b>Pillar 11:</b> Uses multiple means of assessment including cultural preferences, participation, and communication styles</p>  |
|  | <p>Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about their goals for the future?</p> <p>Do you ever hear students say that they want to move away from here or go away to college?</p> | <p><b>Pillar 15:</b> Help students imagine a different life, create goals, and pursue a path to their dreams</p>  |
|  | <p>What ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?</p>  | <p><b>Pillar 12:</b> Empowers students with tools for continuous self-assessment</p>  |
| <p><b>Research Question 2:</b></p> <p><b>What part does community context play in the behaviors these teachers perceive they do to improve their students' academic achievement, the classroom climate, or the larger rural community?</b></p> | <p><b>Category 3:</b></p> <p><b>Caring and High Expectations</b></p>   | <p><b>Pillars 6, 7, 13</b></p>  |
|  | <p>What would an observer see in your classroom that would show that you care about your students?</p>   | <p><b>Pillar 13:</b> Demands with genuine caring and appropriate amounts of assistance that students achieve high levels of academic success</p>  |
|  | <p>How would you describe your classroom climate?</p>  | <p><b>Pillar 7:</b> Reflects students' differing perspectives and cultures in all inter-related areas of curriculum, school and classroom climate, instruction, and communication styles.</p> |
|  | <p>How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?</p>   | <p><b>Pillar 6:</b> Creates a classroom culture of academic success, collaboration, reciprocity, and community</p>  |
|  | <p><b>Category 4:</b></p> <p><b>Teaching and Learning</b></p>  | <p><b>Pillars 5, 6, 7, 10, 14</b></p>   |
|  | <p>How do you develop and implement classroom rules and procedures?</p>  | <p><b>Pillar 10:</b> Teaches to students of color the informal, unstated, implicit rules and behaviors needed to succeed</p>  |
|  | <p>Are there unwritten rules in your class? What would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?</p>   |   |
|  |  |   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>Do you use projects?<br/> How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects?<br/> Do you use collaborative learning structures?<br/> How often on average do you use collaborative structures?<br/> Do you use (un)structured group assignments?</p> | <p><b>Pillar 6:</b> Creates a classroom culture of academic success, collaboration, reciprocity, and community</p>   |
|  | <p>What are some successful activities or strategies you have done to help students learn your course content?<br/> What activities are students' favorite or least favorite?<br/> How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?</p>  | <p><b>Pillar 7:</b> Reflects students' differing perspectives and cultures in all inter-related areas of curriculum, school and classroom climate, instruction, and communication styles.</p>  |
|  | <p>Can you tell about a time you used a student's (s') prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?</p>   | <p><b>Pillar 14:</b> Scaffolds learning between school culture and content and students' funds of knowledge</p>  |
|  | <p>Can or will you tell about a time you used or addressed a topic related to living in our area in your class?</p>   | <p><b>Pillar 5:</b> Integrates context, culture, and lived-experience of students of color into curriculum</p>   |
| <p><b>Research Question 3:</b><br/> <b>What growth experiences do these teachers consider to have contributed to their preparedness and teaching efficacy for teaching students from diverse backgrounds in a rural community?</b></p> | <p><b>Category 5:</b><br/> <b>Critical Awareness and Advocacy</b></p>   | <p><b>Pillars 9, 16</b></p>  |
|  | <p>Regarding issues related to racism, power, and privilege:<br/><br/> How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise? 1-10</p>   | <p><b>Pillar 9:</b> Provides accurate information about contributions of members of ethnic groups, discussion of moral or ethical issues, power and privilege or distribution and deconstruction of academic racism and hegemony<br/> <b>Pillar 16:</b> Develops intolerance for oppression and moral courage to address injustice and promote justice</p> |
|  | <p>Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?</p>   |  |
|  | <p>Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?</p>  |  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <b>Category 6:</b><br><b>Teacher's CRT Growth and Advocacy</b>   | <i>Pillars 2, 4, 17, 18</i>   |
|  | How culturally responsive do you feel? 1-10  | <b>Pillar 2:</b> Enhances learning for all, not some, students  |
|  | How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10<br><br>What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today?   | <b>Pillar 17:</b> Requires professional development to improve cultural knowledge, teaching skills, reflection, and self-monitoring of classroom situations for students of color |
|  | What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?  | <b>Pillar 4:</b> Cultivates school success for all aspects of a person without negatively affecting cultural identity   |
|  | [Advocacy] What would you say in response to the research-based claim that public schools in small towns hollow out the town of her brightest and best citizens by encouraging and enabling them to go away to college and live the dream in a metro area, seldom returning to their hometown? |   |
|  | How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?   | <b>Pillar 18:</b> Uses school or teacher resources of time, funds & imagination for student success   |

Appendix N

Alignment of CRT Pillars With Protocol and Themes

| <b>18 Pillars of CRT Pedagogy (Gay, 2010)</b>   | <b>Complete Semi-Structured Interview Protocol Including Probes</b>  | <b>Thematic Categories from Code Mapping</b>          |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Is integral to all classes and all skills  | What does culturally responsive teaching mean to you as a rural teacher in this community?   | RQ #1, Category 1<br>CRT definition and importance    |
| 2. Enhances learning for all students   | How culturally responsive do you feel? 1-10  | RQ#3, Category 6<br>Teachers' CRT growth and advocacy |
| 3. Happens systematically, continuously, and purposefully   | What is important for teachers to know about our students' lives outside of school?  | RQ #1, Category 1<br>CRT definition and importance    |
| 4. Cultivates school success without negatively affecting cultural identity   | What is the best lesson you learned from one of your students about teaching students from diverse and rural backgrounds?<br>What would you say in response to the research-based claim that public schools in small towns hollow out the town of her brightest and best citizens by encouraging and enabling them to go away to college and live the dream in a metro area, seldom returning to their hometown? | RQ#3, Category 6<br>Teachers' CRT growth and advocacy |
| 5. Integrates context, lived experience and culture of students of color into curriculum  | How important do you feel it is to use in your teaching aspects of students' home cultures or their life experiences in our town? 1-10   | RQ #1, Category 1<br>CRT definition and importance    |
|   | Can or will you tell about a time you used a topic related to living in our area in your class?  | RQ#2, Category 4<br>Teaching and learning             |
| 6. Creates culture of academic success, collaboration, and community in classroom   | How do you create a culture of success in your classroom?  | RQ#2, Category 3<br>Caring and expectations           |
|   | Do you assign projects? How much of your time in class is spent on group and (or) individual projects? If you use them, how often on average do you use collaborative learning structures?   | RQ#2, Category 4<br>Teaching and learning             |
|   | Do you use (un)structured group assignments?   |   |
| 7. Reflects students' differing cultures and perspectives all interrelated areas: curriculum, classroom climate, instruction, communication style | How would you describe your classroom climate?   | RQ#1 Category 2 FoK                                   |
|   |  | RQ#2, Category 3<br>Caring and High Expect            |
|   | What are some successful activities or strategies you have done to help students learn your course content?<br>What activities are students' (least) favorite? How often do you use lecture or direct instruction?   | RQ#2, Category 4<br>Teaching and learning             |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 8. Uses both general group and particular individual student cultural patterns  | In what way do you imagine the class you are teaching would be different if you were teaching in an urban area?  | RQ #1, Category 1<br>CRT definition and importance           |
| 9. Provides information about accurate contributions of members of ethnic groups, discussion of moral or ethical issues, power and privilege, and deconstruction of academic racism | Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?<br>Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?<br>How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise?         | RQ#3, Category 5<br>Critical awareness and advocacy          |
| 10. Teaches informal, unstated, implicit rules and behaviors to students of color   | How do you develop and implement classroom rules and procedures?<br>Are there unwritten rules in your class?<br>What would your students say is the worst rule to break in your class?   | RQ#2, Category 4<br>Teaching and learning                    |
| 11. Uses multiple means of assessment including cultural preferences and styles   | Do you take into consideration students' learning preferences?<br>If so, how?<br>What kinds of progress checks do you use?   | RQ#1 Category 2<br>Funds of knowledge & informed instruction |
| 12. Empowers students with tools for self-assessment  | What ways, if any, have you developed for students to self-check their understanding of your course content?   | RQ#1 Category 2<br>Funds of knowledge & informed instruction |
| 13. Demands with genuine caring and assistance that students achieve goals  | What would an observer see in your classroom that would show that you care about your students?  | RQ#2, Category 3<br>Caring and high expectations             |
| 14. Scaffolds learning between content and students' funds of knowledge   | What are some things you do to learn about students' home lives and what students know about and value?<br>Can or will you tell about a time you used a student's (s') prior knowledge when you were teaching a lesson?  | RQ#1 Category 2<br>Funds of knowledge & informed instruction |
|   |  | RQ#2, Category 4<br>Teaching and learning                    |
| 15. Help students create goals and pursue a path to their dreams  | Do you structure activities in which students set goals for class or talk about goals for the future?<br>Do you ever hear students say they want to move away from town and go to college, get out?  | RQ#1 Category 2<br>Funds of knowledge & informed instruction |
| 16. Develop intolerance for oppression and moral courage to address injustice   | Have topics related to racism ever come up in class?<br>Have you witnessed issues in the school or larger community related to racism, power, or privilege?<br>How comfortable are you addressing topics related to race, power, and (or) privilege when they arise?<br>1-10 | RQ#3, Category 5<br>Critical awareness and advocacy          |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 17. Requires professional development to improve cultural knowledge, reflection, and self-monitoring of classroom situations with students of color | What would surprise a new teacher in our district?   | RQ #1, Category 1<br>CRT definition and importance    |
|   | How prepared were you to teach your first class in this district? 1-10<br>What helped you most to grow into the teacher you are today? | RQ#3, Category 6<br>Teachers' CRT growth and advocacy |
| 18. Uses school or teacher resources of creativity, time and funds for student success  | What would help new teachers coming into our town be better prepared for teaching our students?  | RQ #1, Category 1<br>CRT definition and importance    |
|   | How much time do you spend each week, outside of the school day, talking about teaching?   | RQ#3, Category 6<br>Teachers' CRT growth and advocacy |