

LEARNING FROM THE TEACHING PRACTICES OF SUCCESSFUL
TEACHERS OF LATINA AND LATINO STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Learning from the Teaching Practices of Successful Teachers of Latina and
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by

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The achievement gap between White students and students of color has long been a concern of educators. It is well established that critical pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching practices increase the possibility of academic achievement for ethnic minority students; yet, throughout the U.S., the implementation of such practices has been less than optimal. It is also clear that some teachers are doing an excellent job of teaching students of color. However, it is not clear what those teachers are doing and what their practices look like, particularly in secondary classrooms and for Latina/o students—the fastest growing ethnic minority population in the U.S. Are successful teachers of Latina/o youth engaging in critical pedagogy or culturally relevant teaching practices? Have they developed caring, empathetic relationships with students that result in greater engagement and academic success? Using a multifaceted theoretical framework of critical social theory, seen specifically through the lenses of culturally relevant pedagogy,

empathy and false empathy, critical studies in Whiteness, and critical race theory, this ethnographic multiple-case study aimed to answer those questions. By observing and interviewing educators whom principals, teachers, and parents all nominated as “successful” for the Latina and Latino students in a particular school, and identifying the teaching strategies and classroom management routines they employed, I hoped to illuminate key practices and underlying attitudes that other teachers can emulate as they strive to reach and teach Latina/o students.

(170 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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by

Glori H. Smith, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2015

The purpose of this study, sponsored by the Department of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University, was to determine the classroom practices and attitudes of the teachers that had been identified as successful with Latina and Latino students at an urban middle school. Criteria for *successful* teachers were not determined by the researcher, but by those school stakeholders who were asked to nominate such teachers: the administrators, faculty, and parents of Latina/o students.

The difference between the achievement of White students and students of color has long been a concern of educators. It is well established that critical pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching practices increase the possibility of academic achievement for ethnic minority students, yet, throughout the U.S., the implementation of such practices has been less than optimal. It is also clear that some teachers are doing an excellent job of teaching students of color. What is not clear, is what those teachers are doing and what their practices look like, particularly in secondary classrooms and particularly for Latina/o students, the fastest growing ethnic minority population in the U.S. Are

successful teachers of Latina/o youth engaging in critical pedagogy or culturally relevant teaching practices? Have they developed caring, empathetic relationships with students that result in greater engagement and academic success? This research project aimed to answer those questions.

By observing and interviewing educators that principals, teachers, and parents all nominated as “successful” for the Latina/o students in a particular school, and identifying the teaching strategies and classroom management routines they employed, I hoped to illuminate key practices and underlying attitudes that other teachers can emulate as they strive to reach and teach Latina/o students.

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Finally, I thank my Heavenly Father for the opportunity to study and learn and for helping me demonstrate that “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13, *Holy Bible*, King James Version).

Glori H. Smith

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The academic achievement gap between White students and students of color is well documented. Standardized test scores of math and literacy in reading and writing continue to show a difference of 21% or more between White and Latina/o students (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2013). The high school dropout rate for White students is around 4%, but for students of color it is approximately 10.5% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012); in some urban schools that number rises to 70% (Garza & Garza, 2010).

This study took place in an urban middle school in a Utah city of approximately 116,000 residents, in which the largest ethnic minority in the local school and community was Latina and Latino. The 2010 census put the Latina/o population at 15.2% for the city, but the school count on October 1, 2013, listed the Latina/o students at 26% (Provo City School District, 2014). The academic achievement gap between Latina/o students and the White majority in this city was similar to that reported nationally. In 2011, Latina/o students in the district performed 19.5 percentage points lower than White students on the state English language arts criterion referenced test (CRT) and 29% lower on the mathematics CRT (Provo City School District, 2011a, 2011b)—the standardized tests used in the state of Utah at that time.

Study Focus

Though there is a real gap in academic progress, students of color are also finding

school success. Though there are many factors that go into school success, clearly, there are some excellent teachers reaching the Latina/o students in their classes. Several of the Latino colleagues I work with point to specific teachers in their early years who made a personal connection and motivated them to work hard and progress academically. Similar teachers, making similar efforts, must also exist in the schools of this city today. I wanted to identify some of them and discover what they were doing that led to school success for Latina/o students.

Research Statement

The purpose of this research project was to determine the teaching practices and attitudes of teachers that were identified by administrators, faculty, and parents to be successful teachers of Latina and Latino students.

There has been some difficulty with the choice of the word “successful” for this research. Other word choices were considered (i.e., effective or best), but all of the possibilities had problems. I finally settled on *successful*, but I left it up to the school stakeholders I surveyed to define what they meant by successful, and specifically what they meant by *successful with Latina and Latino students*.

Study Importance

Multicultural education is the subject of much research and there have been numerous books and articles that have addressed the achievement gap between Whites and people of color in the U.S.; the recommendation to educators is often a call for

culturally relevant teaching (e.g., Banks, 1998; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995) or for empathetic teaching (e.g., McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Warren, 2012). However, there have been few studies done on what successful teachers are actually doing, particularly at the secondary level and specifically addressing the needs of Latina/o students. This study adds to the body of research in this area. Illuminating the teaching practices and underlying attitudes of successful teachers adds insight and understanding to the discussion of secondary education for Latina/o students.

Role of Researcher/Positionality

I have been teaching U.S. history, U.S. government, and English (both mainstream and as a second language [ESL]), for 25 years at a high school in the same Utah city in which this study took place. About 70% of the English language learners (ELLs) in the school were Latina/o speakers of Spanish. In my history classes, Latina/o students often comprised much more than 15%, which was their proportion of the total school population. My association with the ESL program undoubtedly contributed to students self-selecting my class and with counselors placing them in my class.

As a teacher, I saw firsthand how many Latina/o students struggled linguistically, socially, and academically; I intuitively understood that students could benefit from having a teacher of the same culture or ethnicity. Though I cared deeply about the students, I sometimes wondered if a Latina/o teacher could do a better job than I, a White, non-Spanish-speaking woman. During one of those moments of self-doubt, I spoke to an assistant principal at our school, a Latino. He told me the story of the White,

female teacher that encouraged him, lighting the first fires of education that eventually led to a Ph.D. from Columbia University. He assured me that White teachers can be successful with Latina/o students. I determined to learn and develop skills and attitudes that would help me become an effective teacher for all my students, of all ethnicities.

Through reading, discussions with other teachers, and trial and error, I found a few things that seemed to help. Cooperative learning activities, offering choices in project-based assignments, and facilitating discussions on uncomfortable topics, such as race and ethnicity, are a few of the ideas I stumbled upon. I genuinely liked my students and loved how I often learned about the world through them. Some of my practices can be explained as “culturally relevant,” but it was many years before I heard that phrase. I didn’t call it empathy, but my path led to a more empathetic relationship with my students.

However, I wasn’t always successful. Some students dropped out; some stayed until the end of their senior year but failed to graduate; pregnant girls usually left school; and too many boys went to the local alternative high school, which is reserved for students with chronic discipline issues, truancy problems, or lack of credit toward graduation. Few of the graduating students went on to college or other post-secondary training. This research was another step in my quest to find out which teacher practices and attitudes help Latina/o students succeed in school.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple Theoretical Framing

This study was framed by critical social theory, with multiple perspectives woven throughout. Critical social theory is concerned with relationships between people and how those relationships are shaped by their material and historical conditions. Critical theorists look closely at society to expose hidden patterns of meaning, communication, and control. They attempt to raise critical consciousness by illuminating assumptions, patterns of oppression, and bias (e.g., Apple, 2004/2012; Giroux, 2004; Kincheloe, 2004); Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Webb, 2013). The interrelated elements of critical theory that informed my research were: culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), empathy and false empathy, critical studies in Whiteness, and critical race theory (CRT), as shown in the Venn diagram (Figure 1).

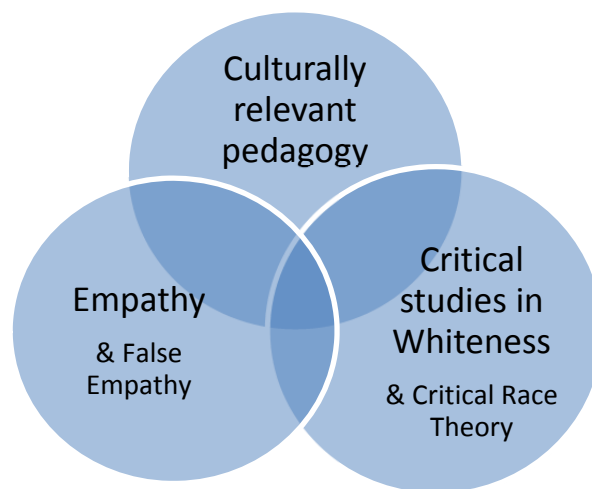


Figure 1. Venn diagram, showing the interrelated elements of critical theory: Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), empathy and false empathy, critical studies in Whiteness, and critical race theory (CRT).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

When teachers come from the same cultural and ethnic background as the students they teach, they tend to use similar language patterns, support the values of the culture in their educational activities (e.g., cooperative or collective learning strategies), share “similar conceptions of themselves,” and achieve “cultural synchronization” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 66). However, the vast majority of public school teachers in the U.S. are White, middle-class women (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Landsman & Lewis, 2006; Sleeter, 2008). According to the 2013 report of the NCES for the 2011-2012 academic year, nearly 82% of public school teachers were White. In contrast, just 52% of the student population is White, and by 2023 that percentage is expected to decrease to 45% (NCES, 2013). By 2050 the disparity between the proportion of White teachers and students of color is expected to be even more dramatic (D’Angelo & Dixey, 2001). It would be preferable to have the ethnicity of the faculty closely match the student population, but in the U.S. the teacher-student ratio is far off the mark and not likely to catch up soon.

In 1995 Ladson-Billings used the phrase culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) to explain how teachers could reach out to students that were not from the dominant White culture and help them to succeed academically and in life. CRP delineates multiple ways that teachers can empower “students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18). Ladson-Billings defined CRP as

...not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not

merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order. (p. 160)

Ladson-Billings believed that engaging students with culturally relevant curriculum and helping them develop critical thinking skills, leads to academic success.

In the 20 years since Ladson-Billings first coined the label “culturally relevant pedagogy,” there have been variations on the theme by other scholars. Gay (2000, 2004, 2009) called CRP culturally *responsive* pedagogy and added focus on the curriculum taught, seeking to show how the methodology or pedagogy melds with the subject matter. A background in social studies helps her to compare and contrast multicultural education with CRP, and she advocated for the inclusion of both. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) identified five themes that explained how CRP could increase the opportunities for all students to learn: (a) identity and achievement, (b) equity and excellence, (c) developmental awareness, (d) teaching the whole child, and (e) student-teacher relationships. While these five themes overlap with the three tenets outlined by Ladson-Billings (1994), there is a lack of emphasis on challenging the status quo. Likewise, Milner (2005, 2007, 2010, 2011) focused attention on the need for teachers to make their curriculum relevant to the students’ cultures, become immersed in the students’ worlds so that teachers really know and understand the students, and allow the students (with both time and stories) to get to know the teachers. In these ways, the teachers are able to build caring and empathetic relationships that lead to increased student learning. Finally, in 2012, Paris suggested the phrase “culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (CSP),” as better than

either culturally relevant or culturally responsive pedagogy because the words “ensure the valuing and maintenance of our increasingly multiethnic and multilingual society” (p. 94).

Despite this variety of CRP possibilities, a 2012 article by Sleeter, “Confronting the Marginalization of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy,” lamented the limited successes and discontinued emphasis over the last two decades on culturally responsive and multicultural teaching strategies, which have largely been supplanted by uniform curricula and pedagogy that drive for accountability through standardized testing. Young (2010) concurred, adding that another reason for low implementation of CRP was that many teachers thought that to be good at culturally responsive teaching was extremely difficult for both novice and veteran teachers, given the time and curriculum restraints. In contrast, Sleeter found that when educators desire to engage in CRP, too many have a faulty and simplistic notion of what constitutes CRP and implementation has been less than effective. She outlined four ways that educators simplify CRP: cultural celebration, trivialization of CRP, essentializing culture, and substituting cultural for political analysis of inequalities.

Cultural celebration has also been called the “heroes and holidays” syndrome (Banks, 1998), which occurs when teachers believe that celebrating Black History month in February or having tacos on Cinco de Mayo is practicing multicultural education. *Trivialization* of CRP occurs when teachers or administrators believe it can be reduced to a series of steps to follow, not understanding that it is a paradigm for teaching and learning. For example, Sleeter (2012) found teachers who believed they were practicing

CRP when they occasionally inserted a cooperative learning activity. *Essentializing* culture means assuming that all students from a particular ethnic or racial group have a set list of cultural characteristics into which they fit. Finally, believing that some attention to the culture of students will end inequity in education is what Sleeter referred to as “substituting cultural for political analysis” (p. 568). The conditions that have resulted in the achievement gap between Whites and students of color will not end until they are deconstructed and dismantled. Ladson-Billings (1994) believed that educators must allow students to name these conditions and empower their students to be involved in the deconstruction of social injustice. Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) agreed that “educators and students are key in producing powerful affective connections that create even small cracks in oppressive traditions” (p. 161).

After reading Young (2010) and Sleeter’s (2012) explanations of the difficulties and resistance that teachers exhibit in understanding and fully implementing CRP, I wondered if any of the successful teachers in my study would measure up to either Ladson-Billings (1994) or Brown-Jeffy and Cooper’s (2011) list of CRP criteria. I was hopeful that I would find teachers who worked to make connections and develop caring empathetic relationships (Milner, 2011; Warren, 2013). I thought it was likely that I would find partial implementation, but I was particularly skeptical about the possibility of discovering teachers who guide students to “develop a critical consciousness through which to challenge the status quo” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 160) or begin to crack oppression (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). As explained in a section below, on the setting of the study, the local area is politically and socially conservative and I was doubtful of

finding teachers who embraced and taught progressive values of change. Milner (2010) suggested that at the core of being culturally responsive is the teacher's ability to "understand the complexities of students' culture and their ways of experiencing the world" (p. 131).

Empathy and False Empathy

Teaching is a service profession. Arguably, most people who go into the teaching profession want to "do good," to help students and society in general. Though they may not understand the multiple elements of CRP, nor be aware of the overarching paradigm necessary for effective implementation, successful teachers typically build friendly and respectful relationships with students (Marx, 2006; Milner, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999; Warren, 2012) which help the students achieve academic success.

A growing body of literature suggests that empathy is an implicit part of being a caring, supportive, and responsive teacher of culturally diverse students (McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Milner, 2010; Warren, 2012, 2013). Genuine empathy for the experiences, issues, and perspectives of other ethnic groups may be one of the most accessible ways that teachers can take action against racial prejudice and to minimize its effects. According to Warren "empathy is personal and begins with the actions that teachers take to minimize racial prejudice" (2012, p. 54) and is "one variable worthy of greater consideration for its utility to help teachers negotiate culturally responsive interactions" (2013, p. 178).

Understanding and starting where the student is (psychologically, academically,

etc.) and helping them move to the next level, can be described as using empathy or building empathetic connections to help students learn (Ladson-Billings, 2006; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Young, 2010). Some good teachers may not understand how to incorporate CRP, but if they are able to communicate genuine care and empathy for their students, the result seems to be that many students are willing to work harder and they achieve more. Communicating empathy is often enough to induce students to engage with the curriculum and achieve academically (e.g., Milner, 2010; Saunders, 2012; Seltzer-Kelly, 2009; Warren, 2012). However, when teachers and students are not of the same ethnic or cultural background, empathetic connections can be more difficult. Noddings (2012) explained that it is much easier to attend to and understand the perspective of one who is viewed as “one of us” (p. 55). At the same time, what may feel like empathy to the teacher may not be perceived as empathetic by the student.

Communication is at the center of all relationships. The need for clear and caring communication is important for all teachers, but for teachers and students with an ethnic mismatch it can be especially challenging. Values and beliefs are often framed in language structures unique to the culture of the speaker and a minefield of miscommunication can derail caring, well-meant, messages.

Students from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds talk, write, think, and listen in ways that are different from school patterns and expectations. More specifically, these differences can be seen in relationships between speakers and listeners, problem-solving processes, task engagement, organization of ideas, self-presentation, how individuals gain entry into conversations, and how speakers relate to the content of conversations. (Gay & Howard, 2000, Multicultural Communications section, paragraph 1)

Teachers must learn how to deliver the message so that the intended meaning is the one

that is received, and they must listen to accurately hear the response.

Mr. Hall, the White, middle school science teacher in Milner's (2011) study, found this to be true. When Hall first became a teacher at the school, the students "didn't know" him (p. 80). He had to work to explain commonalities and build relationships, especially with the African American students. The students were less likely to learn from the teacher, or to become engaged in the learning opportunities available in the classroom, if they did not feel understood and if they did not understand that the teacher cared. Eventually, student engagement and achievement increased. Milner was specifically looking for evidence of CRP, but what he found was a teacher who worked hard to build empathetic, caring relationships with his students, colleagues, and the school community at large. Mr. Hall's cultural competence was specific to his students' situations; he did not essentialize his cultural expectations to a stereotyped idea of their ethnicities. He spent time getting to know the students that were actually in his classes. Milner's article is entitled "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in a Diverse Urban Classroom," but there is no mention of teaching toward a sociopolitical challenge to the status quo, or of a teaching philosophy which embraced cultural norms. Though part of his friendly rapport with students involved sharing experiences of watching Discovery Channel shows, there was no discussion of how the teacher planned or executed his lessons and no indication that he considered cultural relevance during lesson planning. The school principal, and eventually Milner, nominated this teacher as "excellent" because of the relationships he was able to build with students.

Similarly, Warren (2012) studied and wrote about empathetic, White, female

teachers in his doctoral dissertation. Though he framed his study using multiple theoretical perspectives, including critical race theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, and Whiteness studies, he used an overarching theme of how empathy helps White female teachers build bridges of understanding as they work to reach and teach young, Black, male students. From interviews and multiple observations, Warren saw how empathy made a difference across various teacher personalities, teaching styles, and subject areas. The students knew that the teachers cared about them and expressed reciprocal feelings. Teachers reported former students emailing them from college. Warren saw students and teachers giving friendly hugs and heard students call out, “You know I love you, Mrs. ___!” (p. 174).

False empathy can be one of many types of missteps a person may make. Three specific manifestations of false empathy are (a) equating sympathy with empathy, (b) equating one’s experiences with those of another, thinking one understands the other’s position more than reality indicates, and (c) a continuation of White supremacy.

Empathy is not sympathy, just feeling bad for someone’s situation; rather, it is the ability to imagine being in their position, putting on their perspective. Just feeling pity can be condescending and is not empathy. Helms (1990) described false empathy as one of the steps White people go through in the process of developing a racial identity. It often involves the person rejecting their former family, friends, and culture as they are disgusted by the actions and advantages of Whites in general. Sympathy is passive and it separates people into those who do and do not have a pitiable situation. Conversely, empathy is active and it brings people together to solve a jointly understood situation or

problem.

Rosenberg (1998) warned against teachers having a “false sense of involvement” (p. 9) that can lead them to assume they know and understand their students’ experiences, though their understanding may be quite superficial (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Warren (2012), citing Delgado (1996) and O’Brien (2003), explained that false empathy was often the result of a White person thinking that they are more empathetic than they truly are. In trying to find common ground, a person might equate his or her experiences with that of another, affectively denying any distinction or difference in life experiences (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). An empathetic person imagines him or herself in the other’s situation and considers how they would feel or what they would do. If they have never actually been in a similar position, they must learn from the other.

O’Brien (2003) explained the barrier of false empathy experienced by Whites, not as an issue of personal prejudices against people of color, but as a continued habit of White supremacy. An antiracist White person may genuinely want to *help* fight racism, but in their helping, they may assume that they know how best to do it, a leftover vestige of White supremacy. Because White people have been conditioned to not have to take into consideration other worldviews, they expect their ideas and good intentions, in relationships with non-Whites and with ideas of how to fight racism, to be accepted as superior. Whites may take offense when someone is suspicious of their motives or if the other person wants to tackle a problem with a different strategy. They are used to people trusting them at (White) face value, a privilege people of color don’t always enjoy. I cringe as I recall the time that I lectured a Latina colleague on the pointlessness of

accusing those who were anti-immigration of racism. I was on the same side of the issue as she was, but I was sure that I knew how best to attack the problem.

In interviews and observations with the teachers at Central Middle School, I watched for both empathy and false empathy. I was hoping to see teachers that could imagine themselves in the position of the students and guide them from that perspective. I watched for ways that the teachers exhibited true empathy and built respectful relationships with students.

Critical Studies in Whiteness

As Sleeter (2012) and Young (2010) pointed out, CRP has been relegated to the back of the educational bus in the quest for a standardized curriculum and teacher accountability. When attempted, CRP is often simplified to the point of being unrecognizable. However, there must be some excellent teachers who are making meaningful connections with their students and helping them find success. Given that the demographics of teachers and students in the U.S. are increasingly an ethnic, cultural, and racial mismatch (D'Angelo & Dixey, 2001; NCES, 2011, 2013), some of the teachers who are helping Latina/o students succeed must be White.

Whiteness is a social construct that works to maintain racial hegemony and domination. Whiteness as an academic term is not to be confused with *White culture* (Leonardo, 2002), which is an amalgamation of ethnic practices derived from Europe or European Americans. Eating hamburgers and French fries, participating in a Protestant wedding, and voting in a democratic republic are all part of White culture, but they are

not Whiteness. Critical studies in Whiteness attempt to expose and explain the unearned privileges that come to White people, simply on the basis of their skin color (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002; McIntosh, 1990; McIntyre, 1997). Though White culture and Whiteness are not the same concept, they are connected by association; Whiteness theory elevates White culture for the purpose of racial domination (Leonardo, 2002).

As a White woman examining the teaching practices of several White and Latina/o teachers, male and female, it was important to examine my White identity as part of this study in which I specifically racialized the teachers and students (using the social construction of race to categorize them and mark them as members of a racial group) as I looked for practices that were successful with the Latina/o students. Examining my own Whiteness was essential because the racial identity development of the researcher affects the observations, results, and analysis in cross-cultural research (Helms, 1993). I needed to be aware of my Whiteness and the Whiteness evident in the school culture. Being aware of my biases helped me in critically analyzing the findings of the study.

In 1990, Helms published a model of White racial identity. Though her model is imperfect, and has had challenges over the years, it has become the standard for Whites trying to come to terms with their historical and cultural positions of privilege (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997, McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Helms and Cook updated the model in 1999, the scale suggested six stages of evolving identity.

Stage 1--Contact: limited interaction with people of color, obliviousness to or denial of both White privilege and the existence of serious racism.

Stage 2--Disintegration: disorientation as the previous oblivious position becomes untenable through education and experience. A moral dilemma ensues when one desires to maintain their former position and simultaneously feels guilt or self-revulsion.

Stage 3--Reintegration: reverting to the former position of comfort and White privilege. The disintegrating feeling of guilt is transformed into anger and blaming of people of color.

Stage 4--Pseudo-independent: acknowledges the responsibility of Whites for past and present racism, but primarily keeps the exploration on an intellectual level, rarely engaging in self-analysis or examining personal positions and attitudes.

Stage 5--Immersion/emersion: in some explanations immersion and emersion are split into two stages, but they both generally refer to the White person claiming a positive White identity that embraces antiracism practices and other like-minded people.

Stage 6--Autonomy; defines a person who rejects the privileges of Whiteness and actively works to combat oppression. Though this is the highest stage, it is not a permanent end-position of White racial identity. Because racism permeates society, the work to be *unracist* continues indefinitely.

Though I have spent quite a few years immersing myself in the literature of Whiteness and antiracism, striving to be a White ally, I cannot claim to be firmly in the autonomy stage of White racial identity (Helms, 1990); I am probably most often in the immersion/emersion stage, but also spend some time in the pseudo-independent, and even disintegration stages. Coming to terms with Whiteness, like becoming one's best self, is a lifelong process.

Many Whites define racism as the individual, violent acts committed by bad people; certainly nothing they would ever do (Tatum, 1997). They fail to recognize that the system in which they live gives Whites many advantages while simultaneously disadvantaging people of color. These privileges are often invisible to and unrecognized by Whites, until they are pointed out. This was certainly my experience. I had never heard of Whiteness studies until about 1995 when I read McIntosh's 1988 article, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." I had no comprehension of the advantages I had always enjoyed, but her list of privileges provoked a gut-wrenching response in me. The truth was undeniable and I was astounded to learn how much I had not understood about my life.

Even when delineated, some White people have a tendency to reject the information, insisting that their situation is "just normal" or earned through merit (Marx, 2006; Tatum, 1997). The underlying message is that being White is "normal" and everyone and everything else is defined in their relation to the White counterpart. An interesting facet of the invisibility of Whiteness is that it is often invisible only to White people. Non-Whites often have much less difficulty seeing it; they can usually identify multiple aspects of White culture, in addition to their own identity and culture (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). While many White people can easily identify, or misidentify, aspects of Black/African American or Brown/Latino cultures, they can often not see their own culture (Aveling, 2004; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). One reason that Whites have difficulty seeing the privileges and advantages in which they live, is they have grown up in a White world, never having been challenged or confronted by the disadvantageous

sides of racism. Once they have the privileges pointed out to them, the choice to participate in the racism and take advantage of the privileges becomes optional (Tatum, 1997).

Whiteness is expressed in ideals that govern nearly every social institution in the U.S., including schools. Public schooling is part of the culture of the U.S.; everything that happens in school, *and the things that do not happen*, reflect the culture. This is another space where racism is hidden and nearly unrecognizable to Whites until pointed out, usually by members of a marginalized group (Warren, 2012). Daily school routines, the images in the halls and classrooms, the curriculum (explicit, implicit, and null), the words, actions, and very being of the school staff, speak to the students and help them identify their place within the culture. As Apple (2004/2012), in *Ideology and Curriculum*, put it "...the knowledge that we teach, the social relations that dominate classrooms, the school as a mechanism of cultural and economic preservation and distribution, and finally, ourselves as people who work in these institutions..." (p. 41) are all part of the hegemony of the dominant culture. The dominant culture is White and of European descent. As explained by Kohli (2008), "[W]hen we prioritize White culture above others, we are being racist. Whether conscious or unconscious, when we teach dominant cultural norms, we are often teaching students to think less of themselves, their culture, or their people" (p. 185). As explained earlier, when White culture is elevated to a hegemonic position, it is called Whiteness.

Another way that Whiteness is manifest in teaching is through *deficit thinking* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Ronda & Valencia, 1994; Solórzano, 1997)

about communities of color and *subtractive* educational policies (Valenzuela, 1999).

Educators that practice deficit thinking blame the students and their families for low academic achievement, believing, for example, that the family culture is not supportive of education or that the parents do not really care about the child's success or future (Delpit, 1992; Moll et al., 1992; Ronda & Valencia, 1994; Solórzano, 1997) Lower expectations of student ability may lead teachers to remediate the curriculum and not require students to think abstractly or communicate on a critical level appropriate to their age and development (Solórzano, 1997).

Subtractive education, a phrase coined by Valenzuela (1999), is another way that White supremacy (Gillborn, 2005) is practiced in schools. This refers to practices that effectively subtract the home culture from students' lives. Examples include ignoring or under-appreciating the values and skills that the children are taught at home and not allowing native languages to be spoken in the class. The goal seems to be to eliminate the native culture and supplant it with the dominant culture, eliminating the possibility and advantage of being bilingual and bicultural.

Critical race theory (CRT) was developed in the 1970s by Bell and others (D. A. Bell, 1987, 1993; Kohli, 2008) as a perspective to identify the continued racism in the U.S. legal system, which is manifest in property rights, power and privilege. Matsuda (1991) defined CRT as "...the work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination" (p. 1331). Wellman's 1977 definition of racism as a "system of advantage based on race" (Tatum, 1997, p. 7) has

been accepted by many scholars (e.g., Kohli, 2008; Marx, 2006). Using this definition, critical race theorists posited that racism is not only individual acts of discrimination or violence; it is also part of the underlying fabric of our system and the passive acceptance of what is “normal,” a permanent part of U.S. society (D. A. Bell, 1987, 1993; Kohli, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Tatum, 1997).

Critical race theorists have identified a framework to engage ethnic minority and majority voices in identifying and challenging racism. This framework includes a commitment to social justice and the recognition of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Over the last 20 years, CRT has expanded into many fields, including education. Scholars and educators use CRT to heighten awareness of and to dismantle racism and inequity in the U.S. educational system.

The literature in CRT and Whiteness studies agrees that many White teachers do not realize how their latent cultural bias is reflected in their expectations of student performance. Teachers of European descent must search out their “cultural biases and ethnic prejudices” if they are to effectively teach students of color (Gay & Howard, 2000, p. 8); such personal inventory is important as teachers attempt to rid themselves of deficit thinking about students (Ronda & Valencia, 1994) and eliminate subtractive educational practices (Valenzuela, 1999). I think it is important to stress that this deference to the dominant culture is unintended by most teachers. Few people who go into teaching, a profession of caring and service, are overtly racist, but all are influenced by the racism in their history and culture.

For a White teacher, Whiteness typically veils his or her ability to recognize and

confront the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that disadvantage students of color (L. A. Bell, 2002; Marx, 2006). A careful examination of underlying beliefs, through probing conversation and thoughtful reading and reflection, can help both pre- and in-service teachers begin to recognize White privilege and power and to reveal their underlying, negative beliefs and low expectations of various ethnic groups (Galman, Pica-Smith, & Rosenberger, 2010; Marx, 2006). Even hidden, unrecognized judgments interfere with respectful student-teacher relationships and effective teaching. Teachers of European descent must carefully search for cultural biases and ethnic prejudices if they wish to be effective teachers for students of color (Gay & Howard, 2000). Recognizing such tendencies is the first step toward teaching with equity, something every teacher should want to do. Remembering that racism is the underlying fabric of our society and the passive acceptance of what is “normal” (D. A. Bell, 1993, 1987; Kohli, 2008; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002), can help teachers eliminate the attitudes and practices that make them less likely to build meaningful connections with students.

In “White Educators as Allies,” Lawrence and Tatum (2004) discussed the need for White teachers to develop a stance of an “educator as an ally, an advocate for students of color, and a much-needed antiracist role model for students” (p. 371). Aveling (2004) concurred, adding the idea that to become a White ally is to become a better teacher for one’s students of color.

Understanding Whiteness theory helped as I interviewed teachers and watched them teach. Four of the six teachers that I studied were White. I wanted to know if they had any understanding of the White privilege and culture that surrounded them. Did they

consider themselves “White allies” for their students of color and, if so, how well did they negotiate that position? I also listened and looked for evidence of deficit thinking that indicates lowered expectations for students of color (Delpit, 1992; Duncum, 2010; Eisner, 2002; Moll et al., 1992; Ronda & Valencia, 1994) and watched for subtractive educational policies and practices that effectively erase a student’s home culture rather than build on its strengths (Valenzuela, 1999). Watching and listening carefully for evidence of teacher understanding of the Whiteness in which we are all immersed, was important.

Summary

To reiterate, these varied, but overlapping aspects of critical social theory (i.e., culturally relevant pedagogy, empathy and false empathy, critical studies in Whiteness, and critical race theory) informed my study. As I interviewed the teachers and observed them teaching and interacting with students, I paid attention to words and actions that could be viewed through the multiple lenses that relate to this framework. I hoped to see culturally relevant pedagogy implemented and to see teachers making empathetic connections to their students, but I watched and listened for evidence that the teachers harbored deficit thinking paradigms or engaged in subtractive education practices with their students of color.

In interviews, the teachers explained how they came to their teaching style and how they chose teaching strategies when planning lessons. Given my own privileged position of Whiteness, I was concerned that I might not recognize an underlying attitude

of White supremacy. Keeping all of these questions and concerns in my mind, I analyzed what I observed to figure out why these teachers were identified as successful teachers of Latina/o students.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Problem Statement

Throughout the U.S., Latina/o students have long experienced an achievement gap in relation to their White peers. I identified teachers who were deemed successful with secondary level Latina/o students and investigated their teaching practices and attitudes. I observed how they communicated high academic expectations, made personal and academic connections to student cultures, and built empathetic relationships with students. I wanted to see how their teaching practices, attitudes, and relationships with students worked so well that they were singled out as successful with Latina/o students. I had one major research question and several subquestions that guided my study.

1. What are the teaching practices and underlying attitudes of the successful teachers of Latina and Latino students whom I studied?
 - a. How do the successful teachers connect the content curriculum to students' language, culture, family background, and community?
 - b. Do successful teachers of Latina/o students connect personally to the students' community, history, and culture (e.g., are they Latina/o themselves, do they speak Spanish, etc.)? If so, how is this manifest?
 - c. What do the teachers do to facilitate home-school connections?
 - d. Are the successful teachers empathetic to the students? How do they communicate empathy? How do they appropriately build caring

relationships with students?

- e. Is there a common thread that runs through a diversity of teachers and teaching styles that leads to success for the Latina/o students in their care?

If so, what is it?

Ladson-Billings (1994) answered most of these questions for the teachers of one community of elementary-aged African American students in the powerful study that led to her book, *Dreamkeepers*. She found that teachers who were part of the students' local community and shared in the students' history and culture, used and encouraged that knowledge in the classroom, and had an easier time motivating students to learn. She found that empathetic and caring teachers are not always demonstrably affectionate, but "their common thread of caring was their concern for the implications their work had on their students' lives, the welfare of the community, and unjust social arrangements" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 474). A focus on group needs, before the individual's, was another common thread that ran through eight very different teachers' classrooms and affected their classroom procedures. In fact, a focus on the group beyond the classroom, society in general, was important as teachers empowered their students to "engage the larger social structural issues" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). Finally, Ladson-Billings (1994) found teachers that believed in the academic capabilities of all their students and worked to help the students achieve at high levels—knowing that no change can happen without the communicative skills necessary to engage the wider world.

I wanted to find out if the teachers in my study demonstrated a similar connection to the Latina/o community in our city. I wondered if they would emphasize group well-

being over that of the individual, believe in the academic potential of their Latina/o students, or empower students to change the world, as the teachers in Ladson-Billings (1994) study did. If these attributes were present, I was curious to find out how they looked and played out in the classroom, which classroom procedures and management practices I would observe, and which underlying attitudes I would be able to detect.

Research Methodology

An ethnographic, multiple-case study was ideal for my research because I wanted to look closely at the practices of several teachers that had been deemed “successful” by stakeholders in their school community. I was following the ideas of Stake (1995), who suggested case studies are useful for delving into the intricate and intimate details of a specific person or program. By choosing to do case study, even a multiple-case study as I did, the researcher is not looking for generalizations but for “particularization” (p. 8). I did not want to determine the general teaching practices of a group of teachers; I wanted to determine the specific practices and attitudes of each person within a small group of teachers and consider how those practices led them to be recommended as particularly successful with the Latina/o students. I also wanted to relate the observation experiences clearly and naturally, and “so well constructed that the [reader] feels as if it happened to themselves” (p. 85).

Ethnography is the method used when the researcher is trying to understand a culture-sharing group. In this case I wanted to understand the cultures of the various teachers’ classroom spaces and the cultural traits (the beliefs, values, and practices) that

might be shared by teachers who are most successful with Latina/o students. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) stated:

The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. (p. 2)

Ethnography requires a long enough access to the group so that a record of their behaviors and beliefs can be built over time (Cresswell, 2008) and a detailed picture of the group's social experiences can emerge. Typically, an ethnographer employs three kinds of data collection: observations, interviews, and documents (Hammersley, 1990), but there are "no hard and fast rules" for conducting ethnographic research (Spindler & Spindler, 1992, p. 64).

For this study, I did not have the resources for a full ethnography, but I used ethnographic methods as I observed the culture of the teachers' classrooms and examined how their beliefs, values and behaviors influenced their teaching practices. Similar to Milner (2011), I wanted to develop a thick description of the classroom atmosphere of several teachers and the beliefs that led to their teaching philosophies. As did Marx (2008), I recorded interviews with the teachers as I asked about their life histories, their teaching practices, and their attitudes about teaching and about the Latina/o students with whom they work. I hoped "to construct coherent (stories) that take the reader into a deeper and richer appreciation of the people who have been studied" (Massey, 1998, p. 8). After careful preparation and presentation of my plan, I received permission from the university's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F) and began the research.

Identifying the Teachers

I identified teachers for my study by triangulating the answers to just one question that I asked administrators, teachers, and parents: “Who are the successful teachers for your Latina and Latino students?” I followed the question with the prompt: “Please share any reasons or criteria that you used to answer the question.” I asked this question in face-to-face meetings with the administrators and faculty in two middle schools and one high school. It was very useful to be present, able to explain and personalize my research aims.

Before any official meetings, I contacted the principal of each school (by email or in person), briefly explained my research proposal, and asked if they were willing to have their school participate. All three of the principals I contacted were interested in and agreeable to the research. I then scheduled an appointment with the entire administrative team. At that meeting I explained my research proposal and presented the principals with the question and follow-up prompt on a single-sided sheet of paper that also listed the faculty members by department (see Appendix A). I asked them to mark the teachers that they believed were successful with the Latina/o students and to make any comments they wished to add in the margins or on the back of the paper. At each school, the principals asked me what I meant by “successful” and I replied that I was interested in finding out what they thought constituted successful teaching, which I hoped to be able to determine by their comments and explanations. Each administrative team marked their papers and added comments while I waited, approximately 10 minutes.

At all three schools I was given time to explain my research and survey the

teachers at a regularly scheduled faculty meeting. I distributed a paper with the identical question, prompt, and faculty list (see Appendix A) that I had given the administrative team. The meetings with the principals had been very cordial and professional, so it surprised me (and surprised all of the principals), that a few teachers at each school resisted when they were asked to identify colleagues that they considered successful with the target student population. In addition to asking me what I meant by “successful,” some worried about the impropriety of “judging” a colleague and others were concerned about the lack of privacy as they marked their surveys in a faculty meeting. Others claimed they had no knowledge of other teachers’ practices. Being in attendance facilitated my ability to quickly answer the questions and concerns that arose. I explained that, as a teacher myself, I felt we often had impressions of other teachers’ practices, gathered through casual conversations with each other in the teachers’ lounge and in the copy room, discussions in faculty meetings, and from overhearing student comments. I assured them that not marking a teacher’s name only indicated lack of knowledge; it was not an indictment against that teacher. I also assured them of the confidentiality of any surveys that I received and made arrangements to allow confidential return of the papers through the intra-district mail system. Though I am sure I did not relieve all anxieties, a majority of the teachers at all three schools completed and returned surveys to me.

I discussed with the principals the best way to contact parents. Though an in-person meeting would have been preferable, I had missed the opportunity to meet parents who came for parent-teacher conferences, and scheduling another meeting was deemed problematic. Rather than ask parents to come to the school, all of the principals were

most comfortable with a combination of sending the survey home with students and contacting the parents through email (see Appendix C). The survey for the parents was identical to the one the administration and faculty were given, with the exception that the question, prompt, and department names were all written in both English and Spanish (see Appendix B). All of the schools had “Heritage Spanish” classes and those teachers allowed me to come into their classes, explain the research to their students, and send the papers home for parents to fill out. Perhaps a low return of parent surveys was predictable—from the three schools, combining hard copy and email, I received just 27, 29, and 34 parent responses, with very few adding reasons or comments.

After collecting surveys from the various groups in all three schools, I tabulated and triangulated the responses, looking for names that appeared on all three lists. After identifying the teachers that were highly recommended by all three groups in each of the schools, a consensus about who the successful teachers were, was evident. At all three schools, the recommendations clustered around 6-10 specific teachers. I then carefully considered which school and teachers would work best for my study. I looked for men and women who taught in diverse curricular content areas, and had varying lengths of experience in the teaching profession. I considered the strength of the recommendations, both numerically and in the comments. Central Middle School stood out in all areas: the consensus on successful teachers of Latina/o students was strong between all stakeholder groups and the resulting list was balanced in all key aspects. Also, it was at this school that I got the highest percentage of parents completing and returning the survey. I decided to consolidate the research, investigating Central Middle School teachers only.

The number of comments and reasons given for nominating teachers was disappointing in all three schools. On the Central Middle School surveys, only two administrators, two teachers, and one parent included comments on their returned surveys. The comments overwhelmingly mentioned that teachers worked to build caring relationships with students. Classroom management skills were noted, as were Spanish language fluency and knowledge of Latino cultures. Therefore, though the number of comments was disappointing, the content of the few received was specific, helpful, and reassuring, as I began the research. Because my focus was on critical social theory, I was interested to see that the nominators suggested that relationships and cultural knowledge were reasons to consider a teacher successful. No one mentioned “high test scores” as criteria for success (Garza & Garza, 2010). Also, the recommendations were very clear; the nominations and comments of all three stakeholder groups at Central Middle School clearly converged on seven teachers.

The educators on the triangulated list of Central Middle School faculty taught in core and elective content areas; represented a balance of men and women; and a diversity of ethnicity, age, and length of time in the teaching profession. After deciding on Central, and notifying the principal, I invited the teachers on the list to be part of my ethnographic case study. I presented each with a letter of informed consent (see Appendix E), explained the aims and procedures of my research project, and estimated that I would be asking for approximately 5 hours of their time in interviews and manuscript review and I would be in their classrooms for at least 4.5 hours, observing six class periods of their teaching. Though I promised to be as unobtrusive as possible, I recognized that

participation would be an intrusion on classroom space. Like Ladson-Billings (1995), I found that not all those who were invited were able to accept. The math teacher declined to participate as he felt that he was too busy with responsibilities at school and in his personal life to commit to the time required. The remaining teachers were three men and three women, four Whites, two Latina/os. Four of the six spoke Spanish fluently and two were monolingual English speakers. They ranged from 31 to 59 years in age and had taught school from 3 to 22 years.

Data Collection

Following the identification of the teachers, I observed and filmed at least six class periods of each teacher in his or her classroom. Like Battey (2013), I took field notes as I observed the teachers with their students, focusing on teaching strategies, management practices, and teacher-student interactions. Either the teacher or I briefly explained to the students why I was there and gave them a Letter of Information (see Appendix D) to take home to parents or guardians. The videos provided additional context as they captured the entire classroom, rather than particular actions and words that caught my attention.

I interviewed each teacher twice (see Appendix G), at the beginning of the study and after the classroom visits were completed. The initial interviews lasted one to two hours; I asked the teachers about their personal backgrounds and educational experiences that led to teaching and those that helped them develop their teaching and management practices and relationships with students (Marx, 2008; Milner, 2011). The follow-up

interviews gave me an opportunity to ask about observations I made during classroom visits and offer the teacher the chance to expand on or add to the information they provided earlier. I gave the teachers copies of what I wrote about each of them and asked them to check for clarity and accuracy (Marx, 2008). I asked them to consider adding any additional information that they thought was relevant which had not been shared previously. Such member-checks are standard (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and help to build trust between researcher and subject. In addition to the formal interviews, there were multiple short, but important, conversations that took place as I came and went from the classrooms; the information from those interactions also found its way into data. Finally, as I began synthesizing the data and writing my analysis, I continued to contact all six teachers, as needed, to clarify discrepancies and answer questions that arose.

I observed each teacher in a minimum of six classes of 45 minutes each, for a total of 1,620 minutes. Additionally, I watched student-teacher interactions before and after most of the class periods (perhaps an additional 200 minutes), attended an afterschool help session, and an evening choir concert. Most of my observations took place late in the third term of school, from the end of February to the beginning of April. By this point in the school year, class routines and relationships had been established and I was not able to observe how those things happened. I was only able to hear the teachers' descriptions of establishing classroom norms, observe the results, and infer what had occurred. On the other hand, I was able to witness the established relationships. I observed six educators, all six committed to teaching students and making a positive difference in the lives of young people.

Data Analysis

Informal analysis of the data began as I was collecting it. I took notes and annotated specific words and actions as they occurred in classroom observations and immediately after interviews with the teachers. On many visits to the school, I went to two or even three teachers' classrooms in a row, making observations in each. Therefore, this initial analysis was also cross-case; that is, I was already comparing the data collected in the various classrooms, noticing both differences and similarities.

When it was time to systematically begin the formal analysis, the first decision was whether to continue with the cross-case pattern or switch to one-case analysis (Patton, 1990/2002). I began with one case at a time, carefully transcribing videos and interviews, reviewing observation notes, and then writing descriptions of each teacher individually. As I moved through the six teachers, I began to notice commonalities within this disparate group of teachers. I saw themes and similarities in the words, attitudes, and practices of the teachers and I began to analyze their perspectives on teaching through the lenses of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), empathy, and critical studies in Whiteness.

I started by grouping incidents that seemed to fit the theoretical categories and then separated them within each category by the context in which they occurred. I continued, comparing new information with that which was previously collected, and slowly developing more categories and subcategories of information. The categories were not predetermined, but included teaching strategies, management practices, and words or actions that indicated caring, empathy, cultural knowledge, and understanding of race, ethnicity, and equity issues in schooling. I watched the videos, listened to recordings, and

read the transcripts and field notes numerous times as I developed codes for various categories of information and compared new information with that previously collected (Creswell, 2008). Codes reflect the theoretical framework of the study: evidence of CRP, empathy, and understanding of Whiteness. There are also sub-codes, such things as teachers' words and actions, and class signage. Codes that are similar in concept were gathered into thematic categories (Patton, 1990/2002).

I was very curious about what I would find in the classrooms of successful teachers. I wondered if, like Sleeter (2012), I would find limited use of CRP. I was open-minded, allowing the teachers and classroom experiences to speak for themselves, but I looked for CRP, expressions of empathy, and evidence of critical Whiteness. I identified practices that resonant with one or more of the pedagogical approaches that I was looking for, but which are used by the teacher for other reasons. For example, in my own teaching experience, I utilized cooperative and collaborative learning strategies years before I realized that it was a good fit culturally. Similarly, many of the teachers had never heard of CRP, or Whiteness studies, but had a natural affinity for building empathetic relationships with their Latina/o students.

I also watched for evidence of deficit thinking (Delpit, 1992; Moll et al., 1992; Ronda & Valencia, 1994; Solórzano, 1997), subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), and institutionalized or structural racism, explained by Gillborn (2005) as White supremacy that gives advantages to Whites and disadvantages people of color. I realized that my own Whiteness could limit my ability to clearly "see" the myriad manifestations of White supremacy, but, I reminded myself continually of this problem. I had the

working categories of *deficit thinking*, *subtractive schooling*, and *structural racism* printed on note-taking pages to keep these ideas uppermost in my mind.

I expected to find caring teachers who worked hard to teach all their students, regardless of ethnicity, but understood that those same teachers would almost certainly be affected by the racialized milieu in which we all live (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Marx, 2006; McIntosh, 1990; Tatum, 1997). I suspected I would find that most of the teachers who were nominated as “successful for Latina/o students” had developed an empathetic stance and an empathetic relationship with their Latina/o students, but even popular teachers who feel a reciprocated fondness for their students, can harbor deficit thinking (Marx, 2008) or false empathy (Delgado, 1996; O’Brien, 2003). Subtractive schooling practices can be a matter of either teacher or administrative directives and also a matter of good intentions gone awry. For example, an “English-only” policy in the classroom may be implemented by a teacher with the intention of building class unity or by the principal as an encouragement to strengthen English language skills. The detrimental results of such a policy, which include an inability to access pertinent prior knowledge and the devaluing of the home culture, may not even be considered by educators. I was curious what findings and contradictions would emerge from this study.

After considering the data from multiple angles, coding and sub-coding various teacher behaviors, I synthesized the data into the three theoretical frames of my research and divided it into either teacher words or actions. Table 1 shows this compilation and supports my findings and analysis.

Table 1

Synthesis and Compilation of Data into Theoretical Frames of the Research and Divided by Teacher Behaviors

Themes and categories	# Verbal	# Actions	Total #
Culturally relevant pedagogy			
Academic achievement	56	29	85
Cultural sustenance	50	37	87
Critical consciousness	4	0	4
Empathy/care	49	32	81
Indications of understanding of Whiteness/critical race theory	4	5	9

Trustworthiness

This purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes and practices of teachers who were nominated as successful with Latina/o students by school stakeholders; the triangulation of the completed surveys speaks to the issue of credibility. I did not determine nor define the term *successful*. Those surveyed made that determination and the study was simply to investigate the teachers so named.

The orientation of this study is toward a naturalistic view of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where reality is believed to be complex and causality is multi-faceted, not linear. I believe that teachers have an important role in student success, but their actions and attitudes are not the only factor. In analysis, I looked for multiple causes and perspectives, but I also continuously monitored my own biases. That said, I did not entirely discount my perspective as a classroom teacher with some understanding of how student-teacher relationships affect student actions. I considered my experiential knowledge along with the observational data, as I analyzed the attitudes and practices of

the teachers. Ultimately, this multiple-case study represents a new perspective on successful teachers of Latina/o students, not a final statement on what constitutes teacher success with Latina/o students.

Study Boundaries/Setting

This research project took place in a Utah city of approximately 120,000 people. The 2010 census reported that nearly 85% of the city residents identify as White, but over 15% list Hispanic or Latino as their ethnicity, which was 55.19% more than in the 2000 census. Latino/Hispanic is the largest ethnic minority in the community, but there are also residents that identify as Native American, Polynesian, Asian, and African American.

During the 2013-14 school year, Latina/o students made up approximately 23% of the local school district enrollment and 26% of the student enrollment at Central Middle School, the location of the study. The ethnic diversity in the community increased greatly over the last 15 years and has had a significant influence in the school. Teachers and administrators have tried to learn, sometimes enthusiastically, sometimes reluctantly, how to provide an equitable and quality educational experience for all the students that come through the doors.

I hope my findings are applicable beyond the boundaries of our city; however, each community has its own unique microcosm of culture and geography. For example, this is one of the most socially and politically conservative counties in the nation. Until very recently, this was also one of the most homogenously White areas in the nation. Had the educators ever considered the Whiteness in which we are immersed or is that a bit

like being unable to see the forest for the trees? Also, the list of teachers I studied included one non-Latino teacher who spoke Spanish as a result of serving a 2-year religious mission to South America. I was curious if his experience immersed in a Spanish-language culture influenced his teaching and if it resulted in greater empathy with students. As I proceeded with this research, I wondered how the specific attributes of this locale might be reflected in the teaching practices of the successful teachers of Latina/o students.

Ethical Issues and Limitations

I designed this study because I thought it was ethical and moral to determine the successful practices of teachers who reached out to and connected with Latina/o students. My interest in this research stemmed largely from my two decades as a teacher of many Latina/o students. Though I worked hard to be the teacher the students needed, I have multiple memories of missteps and I often wished that I understood more. The time I spoke to all my classes about a hurtful, racist, remark made to a Korean student at our school stands out in my memory. Afterwards, two Latino boys privately told me that they were upset that I would highlight that story because similar incidents happened to them and to other Latinos every single day and I never said anything about it. I protested a bit at the accusation, but I had to accept their point. Another time two boys tried, unsuccessfully, to explain to me why violent, racist (my perception) rap lyrics helped them to feel that their life experiences were validated.

As a self-proclaimed advocate for students of color, I have sometimes struggled in

my relationships with colleagues. From time to time I was asked to lead in-service meetings, to share ideas for reaching the “diverse students” in the school. At one faculty meeting I decided to instruct my colleagues on the necessity of putting aside their political positions on immigration and focus on the needs of the innocent children in their classes. At another meeting, I passionately and vehemently introduced the concept of White privilege with Peggy McIntosh’s (1990) article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” My position was similar to that shared by one of O’Brien’s (2003) participants:

I can tend to get excited about things and tend to become evangelistic. And so I was the person at the school, once I began to see it, I was talking about it, and I knew that I was quickly getting marginalized. And so a lot of the work for me has been, how do I do this work holding people with love that I’m working with and not be judgmental? (p. 264)

I, too, had to learn how to accept my colleagues as caring, though imperfect, educators, not unlike myself. I had to realize that I do not have all the answers and that building bridges of understanding is much more useful to my goals than burning my relationships because I am “in the right.”

As I entered Central Middle School to work with fellow educators on this research, I kept my limitations in mind. I could not pretend to have all the answers. As I discussed the issue of academic success of Latina/o students with educators, I was aware of the limitations of my Whiteness. I had to constantly be alert to the danger of conveying the idea that I, the White teacher and researcher, knew best what needed to be done. This was true in my interactions with all the educators, but especially true when I was talking with the Latina/o teachers. At times I caught myself unfairly expecting more of them,

thinking that they should innately understand and do whatever I thought was right for the Latina/o students. I needed to remember that I do not always know the best practice for every situation.

Though it was important for me to be empathetic, I needed to constantly remind myself that I really don't understand what it is like to be Latina. I don't know what it is like to be an ethnic minority faculty member. I have never had to negotiate my position as a Latina professional among a sea of White faces, balancing the demands of teaching, while countering the possibly deficit views of parents and other faculty members.

Finally, I needed to remember the difficulties of being in the classroom daily, responding to a bell that rings relentlessly, each time bringing in a new group of students that look to the teacher for an engaging lesson. Teaching is hard work and it is difficult to keep the needs of 30 or more students in mind as a teacher prepares and delivers a lesson, not to mention 200 students throughout the day. It was important to eliminate my sometimes judgmental attitudes and words that could have preempted the opportunity to have open and honest discussions with teachers.

Limitations of the study itself included the relatively small number of classroom visits and the inability to survey or interview students. Six classroom observations per teacher is not enough time to fully develop an ethnographic report. I got an overview of several teachers' practices, and the interviews helped me to understand their attitudes and motivations, but more time in any one classroom would help me to more fully see the culture of the classroom and understand the relationships therein.

I did not survey nor speak with any students to ask their opinion on who the

successful teachers were. I was interested in doing so, but was discouraged from attempting to get approval from the research review boards at both the university and school district levels. It would not be surprising to find that adolescent interpretations of teachers and classroom activities differ from that of adults. Having the student opinions would both complicate and enrich the analysis.

Implications and Significance

The field of multicultural education is the subject of much research and there have been numerous books and articles that have addressed the achievement gap between Whites and students of color in the U.S., the need for culturally relevant pedagogy, critical studies of Whiteness and critical race theory. There have recently been studies that purport to show the academic effectiveness of empathetic relationships between teachers and students. However, there have been few studies done specifically on teaching practices of successful teachers of Latina/o students, particularly at the secondary level. This study will add to the body of research in these areas.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

Six Central Middle School teachers took part in this ethnographic case study. There were three men and three women, four Whites, two Latina/os, ranging in age 31 to 59 years. Two are single and childless; four are married with children. Four of the six speak Spanish fluently and two speak only English. They have between three and 22 years of teaching experience in both core and elective subjects: biology, choral music, English, family and consumer science (FACS), physical education (PE), and Spanish. Table 2 gives an overview of the teachers and their surface characteristics; this may be helpful for readers to refer back to. All names are pseudonyms.

Through interviews and observations I found all the teachers to be caring individuals, committed to educational excellence and to building relationships with students. I found some evidence of the interrelated elements of critical social theory that informed my research: culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), empathy, critical studies in Whiteness, and critical race theory (CRT). Each teacher was working hard to design effective lessons and make meaningful connections with the Latina/o students. As one said, “Basically, I do things based on what makes sense to me. I try to be the teacher that I wished I would’ve had at this age...the teacher that I would want my children to have.”

Most of my observations took place late in the third term of school, from the end of February to the beginning of April. By this point, class routines and relationships had

Table 2

Overview of the Teachers Who Were Subjects of the Study, Their Demographic Information, and Teaching Areas

Pseudonym	Age	Years in education	Ethnicity (self-ID) & language spoken	Subject area/s	Classes observed
Robert Abbott	44	19	White English/Spanish	Spanish	Introduction to Spanish Spanish I Heritage Spanish
Katherine Barton	57	16	White English only	Science Health	Seventh-grade Science
Caitlyn Williams Fernandez	32	8	White English/Spanish	English	Honors English 8 English as a Second Language
Mike Hartvig	59	22	White English only	Physical education	Boys Physical Education
Esperanza Sanchez	34	8	Mexican Spanish/English	Family & consumer sciences	Foods
Geraldo Torres	31	3	Hispanic English/Spanish	Choral music	Seventh-grade Choir Girls' Choir Concert Choir

been established and I was not able to observe how those things happened. I was only able to see the results, the established relationships, and had to infer what had occurred. I saw six educators, committed to teaching their students and making a positive difference in the lives of young people. All six were successful in making connections with Latina/o students specifically. Though united in their care and concern for students, the teachers were all unique in personality and teaching style.... Like Warren (2012), I found teachers of very different personalities, dispositions, and skills, all able to communicate the care and concern that they had for their students, all able to build empathetic relationships that inspired students to be more engaged with their learning.

In the following subsections, the teachers are presented in alphabetical order, by last name; all names of teachers and students are pseudonyms. I begin with an introduction of each teacher, giving a brief background sketch that includes what drew them into the teaching profession and to their particular secondary curriculum area. I outline how they were selected for this study, focusing on the reasons given on the surveys that were collected from administrators, other teachers, and parents. Following the reasons for inclusion, is a physical description of their classroom space and a short explanation of their teaching demeanor and practices. Next comes a longer section of teaching examples from my observations, with evidence that points toward the multiple lenses of my research framework. Finally, each teacher's section ends with an analysis of the teaching practices I observed and the ideas and attitudes that emerged in the interviews. Evidence, or lack thereof, of the various perspectives of critical pedagogy are presented in the order that makes the most sense within each teacher's narrative.

Mr. Robert Abbott, Spanish Language

Introduction

Mr. Abbott, a 44-year-old White male, had been an educator for 19 years. He grew up in Idaho where his father was both a teacher and a farmer. Many of the workers on the family farm were Spanish-speakers and Mr. Abbott picked up a rudimentary level of Spanish as he worked on the farm in his youth. When he was 19 years old, he went on a 2-year religious mission to Uruguay and gained fluency in Spanish.

When he returned to the U.S. and enrolled in college, Mr. Abbott decided on a

Spanish teaching major. In addition to Spanish, he had also taught English as a second language (ESL), had a master's degree in educational administration, and had been an assistant principal at a junior high. Several years earlier he took a leave of absence to work on a doctoral dissertation, but his family situation changed, putting that project on hold. A position teaching at Central Middle School opened mid-year and he took it. At the time of this study, he looked forward to getting back into administration and also hoped to complete his dissertation in the future.

Mr. Abbott taught seventh-grade Intro to Spanish, eighth-grade Spanish I, and a heritage Spanish class that not only included students who heard or spoke Spanish at home, but also native-English speakers who had been enrolled in a dual-immersion Spanish/English program during elementary school. There were many Latina/o students enrolled in the lower-level courses and Mr. Abbott reported that these students offered various reasons why they registered: some because they understand that their Spanish literacy skills did not match their listening or speaking skills, others for whom English was the language of their home, but they wished to learn the language of their family roots, and still others who admitted they signed up hoping for an easy class.

Reasons for inclusion. As were all the teachers in this study, Mr. Abbott came highly recommended by the principal, teachers, and parents of Central Middle School. He received a unanimous nomination from the administrative team and no other teacher received more collegial support. His Spanish language skills were the most common reason noted, but several people also mentioned his work to make personal connections with students and his ability to be a male role model or father figure, particularly for the

Latino males.

When I asked Mr. Abbott why he would be identified as a successful teacher of Latina/o students, he stressed that he speaks of the Latina/o students affectionately and in the first person; they are “my students.” He saw their uniqueness, but as part of the whole, “our students.” Also, he never assumed that a Latina/o was from Mexico; though the majority of the Latina/o students in the school were from Mexico, there were also students from many of the other Latin American countries. He was conscientious about recognizing and honoring their differences and their individuality.

Classroom environment. The set up in Mr. Abbott’s class was standard for Central Middle School: desks were in traditional rows, with two white boards and a flat screen on the wall. Otherwise, the visual curriculum was fairly standard for a world language classroom, but it provided a subtle antiracist marker in Mr. Abbott’s room. There was a wall calendar with the days and months in Spanish. He had charts of vocabulary, verb declensions, and common Spanish abbreviations. There were several regional maps, centered on the areas of the world with high Spanish-speaking populations, all labeled in Spanish. There were also multiple motivational posters and cartoons, also all in Spanish, and a few pieces of realia (authentic cultural artifacts). The important thing to note is that all of the printed materials on display were in Spanish.

Teaching examples. Class usually began with direct instruction and segued into a lesson-related class discussion after about 10 minutes or when the students asked questions. Mr. Abbott tended to teach from the front of the room, with a very teacher-centered lesson delivery, but he also had a very open and relaxed teaching style. He

followed the adage, “they don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care,” and worked to build friendly, caring relationships with students. When the class was working independently, which was common during the last 15 minutes of class, there was a great deal of talking between students and with the teacher. Some of it was lesson related, but much was not, though it was always “appropriate for the classroom.” Mr. Abbott liked the friendly, relaxed nature of his classroom, but said that some teachers, particularly younger teachers, have difficulty in keeping teacher-student banter on appropriate topics. He explained further, “kids can sense when you care and if you like them, but you also need classroom boundaries that the students recognize as fair.” Mr. Abbott believed that boundaries and structure, fairly enforced, were necessary for teaching to occur.

As a teacher of the Spanish language, it was not surprising that Mr. Abbott appreciated the language, but his affinity was not limited to just one standard version of Spanish. He made sure that different dialects of the language were recognized and respected. I saw this demonstrated during a lesson on clothing terms. Mr. Abbott stopped his instruction on different types of footwear and asked a Latina student:

Mr. Abbott: Analisa, are you from México?

Analisa: (Nodded.)

Mr. Abbott: What do you call [high] heels?

Analisa: Tacónes.

Mr. Abbott: Tacónes, also? Okay.

The whole exchange took just seconds and was accepted as a normal classroom

interaction, indicating that it is common for Mr. Abbott to ask students to add to the classroom knowledge.

During another period, the instructional video showed someone shopping at a store in Mexico. That prompted Mr. Abbott to hit “pause,” leaving the image on the screen while he gave an additional lesson of cultural appreciation, discussing the differences between shopping in México and shopping in the U.S. He pointed out the price benefits of the Mexican experience:

It’s an old tile floor and it’s worn...there are boxes, they aren’t stacked up on fancy shelves, they are just stacked up on top of each other. The thing that I like [about] shopping when I go to México is that you feel like you get a better deal on things because they are not putting a ton of money into the store itself.

Mr. Abbott followed this with a discussion of bartering.

Mr. Abbott: Say I only have 20 pesos and the thing says they’re 25. They are more likely to make a deal with you. ‘Sarita [the teacher looked at a girl across the room], is it the same way in Bolivia?’

Girl: Yeah, we call it regatear.

Mr. Abbott: Regateando?

Girl: Yeah, you can have 10 centos, and the shoe is 15. You say, ‘can you do a 10 or 12 or’...yeah.

Mr. Abbott: But, are the stores more like this [pointing to the image of the Mexican store on the screen]?

Girl: Yeah, they are. [But], it’s mostly on the streets, ours.

Mr. Abbott: Yeah, street markets.

Girl: Yeah.

Though he had lived and vacationed in Latin America, he was a White man from the U.S., whose knowledge of Latino culture is respectful, but incomplete. He was willing to

learn from his students and defer to their cultural knowledge.

Though friendly and respectful, Mr. Abbott's teaching style did not easily explain how he was able to develop the comfortable, empathetic relationships that were indicated in the survey responses and that I observed in his classroom. Then, I learned about his extra-curricular activities; he signed up for the extra duties of lunchroom and bus-loading supervision. On a daily basis he interacted with hundreds of students, many who are not even in his classes. This provided multiple opportunities to get to know students in a casual atmosphere. Officially, his presence was to make sure that rules were followed and to keep the peace, but with his friendly demeanor he made connections, built relationships, and diffused tension. He was paid with lunch and a small stipend of about \$10 per hour but said:

I do it because, as an administrator, lunch was the key part of the day and when I came back to the classroom, I had grown so used to interacting with the kids at lunch, that it was really awkward for me. I'd sit up in my room alone and...I tried the faculty room for a while...and that didn't fit. So, I just started showing up in the lunchroom and helping and Jason [the principal] said, 'do you want to work here' and I said, 'sure.' He put me to work.

Mr. Abbott continued, explaining his motivation for spending his lunch period in the student cafeteria and immediately-after-school time at the bus-loading zone.

[These are] the best interaction time[s] I have with kids that aren't mine, or who were mine but I don't have currently, just to say 'hi' and chat, and they love that part...recognize them for something. And they [the administration] always need help maintaining order in the chaos. (R. Abbott, personal communication, April 11, 2014)

Mr. Abbott believed these activities probably increased enrollment in his Spanish classes and definitely increased attendance at his advisory period, a time when students were free to go to any classroom or teacher for help with assignments. His advisory period was

always very full, often with students that were not even in one of his classes. Many of the students attending Advisory were Latina/o, some were ELLs, and it is likely that the Spanish language wall décor, mentioned earlier, increased the perception that this was a place they would be welcome.

Critical Analysis

Critical race theory. The visual curriculum in Mr. Abbott's classroom sent a subtle, but clear, antiracist message. He chose the posters and realia in his classroom to send the academic message that the subject of this classroom is the Spanish language, and to support language acquisition through visuals and graphic organizers. As he did this, he also sent an antiracist message, in line with recommendations from Duncum (2010) and Eisner (2002), that *the Spanish language is important and valued*.

CRP, which has its roots in CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1995), suggested that teachers should guide students to recognize injustice and take steps to rectify it; activities in Mr. Abbott's classroom did both of these things. During a lesson on pronouns, the class viewed a video that was intentionally silly and included crazy antics, apparently in a bid to capture the attention of 12- to 14-year-old students as they reviewed pronouns with the corresponding verb conjugations. Besides being inane, I thought it reinforced stereotypes and was a bit insulting to the intelligence, even of young adolescents. The students in Spanish I seemed mildly amused by it, but those in the Heritage class were very quiet while watching, and one Latina sitting near me seemed quite irritated by the antics and the dialect, grumbling quietly, "Why is his Spanish so weird?" Being subjected to, and the subject of, stereotyping is one of the micro-aggressions that students of color often

endure on a daily basis.

In a follow-up interview, I asked Mr. Abbott about this and he agreed that the video had some stereotyping. He said that all his classes had discussed the problems with that video series in the past. As an excuse for its lack of professionalism, he had also explained to his students that it was made by college students for an assignment. He said he intentionally looks for stereotyping to discuss in class and helps the students learn to recognize and challenge it in student interactions, popular culture, and even their textbook and educational films, as recommended by Solórzano (1997) and Solórzano and Yosso (2001). He also mentioned that the Heritage class tends to be rather Mexico-centric; most of the native Spanish speakers are from Mexico, more likely to chafe at pronunciations that are not standard for Mexicans. Accepting and building on students' experiential knowledge to support social justice, is in line with the CRT framework of Solórzano and Yosso (2001) and Solórzano and Ornelas (2002). His willingness to point out and discuss these issues followed the advice of Kunzman (2012) and Michael (2012), who said that avoiding and silencing difficult subjects sends the message that they are either taboo or unimportant.

However, Mr. Abbott's continued use of the videos may also have sent the message that the previously critiqued stereotyping was actually unimportant (Kunzman, 2012; Michael, 2012) and this complicated the picture of his classroom practice. If a teacher instructs and guides students to recognize and deconstruct stereotyping, but continues to use the identified source for content instruction, he or she is intimating that it is not really important to eliminate stereotyping when one has the power to do so.

Cultural stereotypes are endemic to deficit thinking (Delpit, 1992; Solózano, 1997; Ronda & Valencia, 1994) and perpetuate the essentializing of cultures (Sleeter, 2012). As he led class discussions on stereotyping and helped students learn to identify and call it out, Mr. Abbott gave attention to CRP and critical race theory (CRT) but had not fully embraced the antiracist call to action. His Whiteness still limited his ability to clearly see the problem and understand the importance of eradicating it where he was able (Marx, 2006; Solózano, 1997; Tatum, 1997).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Mr. Abbott did not fall into the “heroes and holidays” version of cultural appreciation that Banks (1998) warned of and avoided the trap of “essentializing” or boiling an entire culture down to one rendition, as explained by Sleeter (2012). When Mr. Abbott interrupted his lecture to ask a Latina for authentic vocabulary input, he sent a clear message of respect and demonstrated his culturally relevant teaching practices.

Supporting the maintenance of a student’s home culture is an important part of CRP; deferring to the knowledge that students already have, recognizes the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005) that they bring to school. He acknowledged the learning that took place at home, and asked the students to share it with the rest of the class. He was clearly not guilty of practicing subtractive education (Valenzuela, 1999), which ignores or devalues the culture or learning that takes place at home. Mr. Abbott wanted his students, Latina/os and others, to recognize and understand his respect and to incorporate that regard into their lives.

Empathy. Mr. Abbott intentionally sought opportunities to build caring and

empathetic relationships with students. According to Milner (2005) caring teachers provide a safe and reassuring learning environment and “care is critical for effective learning to occur” (p. 402). McAllister and Irvine (2002) posited that establishing and maintaining caring relationships is what teaching requires. Milner (2007) explained that many teachers say they care, but it is their caring words and actions that actually make a difference. McAllister and Irvine explained that empathetic teachers “take on the perspective of another culture” (p. 433).

It is likely that Mr. Abbott’s experience of living for 2 years as a missionary in a Latin American country was significant in helping him develop this empathy. He understood what it was like to be “the other,” struggling with language acquisition, and wanting to be accepted as an individual. He welcomed the perspective of his diverse Latina/o students because he personally had diverse cultural experiences. He was intentional in classroom interactions that insure that his Latina/o students were not marginalized and their cultures were not reduced to a single rendition. His actions back up his stated positions.

In the classroom, cafeteria, and at the bus-loading zone, Mr. Abbott could be found engaging in friendly conversations, often in Spanish. The evidence suggests that between his extracurricular activities, his casual use and respectful knowledge of the Spanish language, and his nonverbal CRT messages, Mr. Abbott was successful in building empathetic relationships with Latina/o students. During the advisory period, when they could go to any teacher or classroom to work on assignments, get help, or just kill time, many Latina/o students, some that were not even enrolled in one of his courses,

chose Mr. Abbott's room.

Conclusion

By not teaching just one variety of Latino or Spanish culture, looking to students to help teach and enrich the class knowledge, and helping students to recognize and challenge stereotypes, Mr. Abbott was incorporating many aspects of CRT, using elements of CRP, and building empathetic relationships with students. He fought stereotyping through class discussions and set an example of not reducing Latino cultures to a mono-culture. While he did not seem to be particularly aware of the culture of Whiteness in which we are all immersed, he did intentionally work to build empathetic relationships with students and to teach all, Latina/o and non-Latina/o students, to respect and appreciate the various Latin American cultures. Whether or not he knew the term, he was a "White ally" (Lawrence & Tatum, 2004) to the Latina/o students.

Ms. Katherine Barton, Science and Health Teacher

Introduction

Perhaps it was inevitable that Katherine Barton eventually became a teacher. Both her parents were teachers, as were many of her aunts and uncles; her sister as also teacher. However, her bachelor's degree as in philosophy and religious studies. As an undergraduate student, she became very interested in psychology and a professor encouraged her to consider medical school with the intent of becoming a psychiatrist. After graduation, she went back to college, nearly earning a second bachelor's in psychology while taking the many science courses required before applying to medical

school. When her admission was denied, she completed certification for teaching life sciences.

Ms. Barton has taught multiple science and health courses, including sixth-grade general science and high school biology and health. Born and raised in southern California, she taught there before moving to Utah 11 years ago to care for her elderly parents. She was 57 years old and had taught for a total of 16 years. At the time of my observations, she was teaching five sections of seventh-grade general science and an eighth-grade health course.

Reasons for inclusion. As a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, middle-aged, White woman, who spoke only English, nothing overtly indicated a connection between Ms. Barton and 12- to 14-year-old Latina/o adolescents—she seemed genuinely surprised to have been nominated. In our first interview, she indicated that the principal had been concerned over her students' low end-of-level test scores the previous school year. However, she received a strong recommendation, particularly from the Latina/o parents. Reasons given for nominating Ms. Barton focused on her respect for, and ability to connect with, the students. One of the administrative team members wrote that she “creates a very safe, accepting environment in her classroom” and that Latina/o students have said that she is the person they “would go to for help” and that students “trust her with emotional issues.” All of these comments resonated with another that I heard several times during my visits to Central—Ms. Barton had a very “motherly” presence, to which the students respond.

When thinking about her ability to make connections to diverse students, Ms.

Barton considered her own parents' open and loving attitude toward people of color, and experiences that her mother related to her about teaching in Compton, California, during the 1960s, a time of much racial tension in that area. She said that her parents were well known in their community for reaching out to and accepting all people and she believes that they were instrumental in helping her feel love and acceptance toward different ethnic groups. Continuing to ponder why she would have been identified for research observation, eventually she said, "Maybe they know I like them."

Classroom environment. Ms. Barton's classroom was bright, full of interesting displays of posters and assorted objects. Books and other supplies lined the walls and spilled out of shelves and off of counters. There were colorful science-related art projects hanging from the ceiling and a taxidermic golden eagle perched high on a shelf. Two skeletons stood guard behind Ms. Barton's desk, one dressed as a pirate and one, representing a chain smoker, draped in chains. A large flat screen connected to her computer and a white board, attractively filled with color-coordinated, lesson-related vocabulary and designs, was updated regularly.

The relationship between teacher and students was important to Ms. Barton: "Love is...the only thing that won't change. The science will change...test scores are not as important as integrity and character." She also believed that students who enjoy the subject or the class were more likely to return to science at a future date. However, she was quick to add that these points do not minimize the importance of the curriculum and the need to learn *now*. She had recently discovered that 50% of her Latina/o students read below grade level and she was working with the guidance counselor to design a reading

program to help them prepare to pass the end-of-year science test. For students who needed to retake tests or complete missing assignments, Ms. Barton offered supplemental help after school and on selected Saturday mornings, providing a friendly, relaxed atmosphere for students who needed additional time or instruction.

Teaching examples. During class, Ms. Barton spoke quickly and moved the topics and discussion along quite fast. She stayed focused on the academic topic at hand and was able to keep the students' off-topic comments to a minimum. The students were generally quite attentive; they seemed to be paying attention and trying to keep up. She asked many questions and many students, girls and boys, representing multiple ethnicities, raised their hands and were called on to offer answers. I never witnessed either ridicule or embarrassment when students offered incorrect responses; Ms. Barton would simply call on someone else or guide a student to discovering the correct answer. She worked vocabulary development into the discourse. During one oral quiz, she used the word "advantageous." After a couple students asked about it, she helped the group recognize and remember the root of the word and come to a conclusion about its meaning.

Ms. Barton used multiple tricks to keep students attentive. Most class periods included a scientific demonstration or simulation. To keep the interest of students for whom science was perhaps less than scintillating, she brought treats to sweeten the situation. She was also willing to use silliness and middle school humor to keep the students listening and learning. During the times I visited her class, a boy read aloud mimicking various accents, two boys took turns walking in high heels on various types of

wood to demonstrate the density of various surfaces, candies were used and consumed as part of the explanation of the composition of atoms, and she assigned the students homework to observe their own feces to see if they were “sinkers or floaters,” explaining that this would be the result of the fiber content of their diet.

After spending just a short time in Ms. Barton’s classroom, the affection between her and the students was obvious. Her speech was constantly peppered with “sweetie” and “honey” as she talked to students between and during classes, and to those who come for afterschool help: “Honey, could you put that away please?” “Here you go, sweetie.” “Sweetie, can you turn that off?” “Honey, here, I’ll take that.” “Jose, where’s your iPad, sweetie?” It was also common to hear conversations that attested to close relationships between teacher and students.

Ms. Barton: Enrique...time for you to have one of those VEs. VEs, buddy, take it out.

Another student: What’s a VE?

Ms. Barton: That’s a code between me and Enrique.

Yet another student: What’s a VE?

Ms. Barton: You don’t know; that’s between me and Enrique.

Another time, a student said something about another student’s hair. I did not hear the comment, but Ms. Barton did and quietly said, “Hey, don’t tease him about his hair. He doesn’t like it.” The teasing stopped; Ms. Barton’s requests were usually respected. Once, in response to a student-to-student insult, I heard her quietly, but firmly, say, “Don’t say that,” and the exchange immediately ended. I think the students knew that while she might be protecting someone else today, tomorrow her energies might be

expended for them.

Former students seemed magnetically drawn to Ms. Barton's classroom door, popping in between classes for a quick hello before she hurried them off to their own classes. In response to so many nonclass members wandering into the classroom between classes, one student called out, "Why is everyone coming in here?" He was answered by someone else responding, "Because we can." When asked about the obvious affection that must exist to draw so many visitors, Ms. Barton shook her head and insisted they were just coming for a piece of candy. But, she did not always give them candy and during one between-class segment that I filmed, students and former students could be heard reviewing science terms and definitions.

After school, the visitors continued. Of course, some did lobby for a piece of candy. Others came for help with assignments or test preparation, and others came just to visit. Visitors included former students who were now in high school; they stopped by to say hello and sometimes offered help in organizing and decorating her room.

I attended one afterschool help session and found some students working on assignments, others bantering and having fun with each other and the teacher. A couple students came for specific help with assessments that Ms. Barton allowed them to redo and one or two came to help tutor other students. At one point a student picked up an origami-like folded paper game (called a "fortune teller") with science words and definitions. The following exchange demonstrated the playful way Ms. Barton worked to incorporate science into nearly everything,

Student: What is this?

Ms. Barton: I made that up. Don't you think it's cute? You wanna play it with me?"

Student: It's creepy.

Ms. Barton: No, it's not creepy (quietly chuckling). Here let me see it. Here, pick a number. Come on, pick a number.

Student: Three.

Ms. Barton: Three. One, two, three. Okay, pick a definition.

Student: Grams.

Ms. Barton: What is grams?

Student: It's mass over volume.

Ms. Barton: What? It's what?

The student repeated "mass over volume" and Ms. Barton said, "No, it's this" and showed him the definition. Then another student said, "Can I do it?"

Ms. Barton: Yes, you can. Come here. Pick a number.

Student: Five.

Ms. Barton: One, two, three, four, five. Okay, pick one.

Student: Volume.

Ms. Barton: Okay, what's volume?

Student: Matter...the amount [of space that an object occupies].

Ms. Barton: That's right [she gave him a couple candy skittles].

This was followed by a third student who selected "gram." When he did not know the answer quickly, the first student chimed back in, "I know it," and now, with a little help from the teacher, said "a metric unit of mass."

Critical Analysis

Empathy. The relationships observed between Ms. Barton and her current and former students were reminiscent of the empathetic relationships that Milner (2011) and Warren (2012) described between White teachers and Black male students. They both wrote of appropriate affection and academically motivating relationships, strong enough to encourage former students to stay in touch with their high school teachers. The relationships between the White Ms. Barton and her Latina/o students were similar.

The observation of the science vocabulary game illustrated several aspects of the empathetic relationships that Ms. Barton was able to nurture. Students were voluntarily in an open classroom after school, some doing schoolwork, some “hanging out.” Students and teacher were spending free time together, playing an academic game. No one laughed when the first participant, a Latino, gave an answer that was completely wrong. That first participant continued to pay attention as the game proceeded, and was willing to jump back in when he knew the answer, demonstrating both the learning that took place and the comfortable relationship he had with his teacher. This was not class time; he could have left, and perhaps would have if he had felt humiliated or singled out by his failure to know the definition the first time. Ms. Barton could say, “No, [that’s wrong].” and keep her students’ affection and attention because they knew she loved them, accepted them as they were, and believed they could learn.

Ms. Barton genuinely cared for the students; she guided her students to learning, never embarrassed them when they did not know something, was willing to give the additional time and space some students require for learning, defended them against

teasing, and even fed them. Her words and actions, and the comments written on the surveys and spoken to me in halls of Central Middle School, remind one of the *othermothering* mentioned by Collins (1991), teachers who “mother the mind” and go “beyond that of providing students with...technical skills...” (p. 191). Ms. Barton’s ability to build close relationships with students is clear. She was able to convey her sincere affection to her students, gaining their trust and increasing their engagement with the curriculum (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Ms. Barton was empathetic in that she could take on the perspective of her students and guide or protect them as she would her own children and, similarly, wanting the very best for them (Milner, 2005). However, no evidence suggested that she took on the perspective of another culture. There was no indication of CRP, nor understanding of Whiteness or CRT (Gay & Howard, 2000; Marx, 2006; Solózano, 1997; Tatum, 1997). While her demonstrations and classroom examples were connected to adolescent culture, there were no attempts to connect to the home culture of the Latina/o students, nor of any of the students who were not part of the majority culture (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994). For example, during the various scientific demonstrations, no articles that might have resonated with students of color were used. In her attempts to “sweeten” the hard work of science, she never offered treats that required a trip to a local Mexican or Latino market. The interesting and engaging classroom décor, did nothing to counter the dominance of the majority culture (Duncum, 2010; Eisner, 2002).

If Ms. Barton’s empathy reminded one of the White teachers of African American

students in Milner (2011) and Warren's (2012) studies, the lack of evidence of CRP, understanding of Whiteness or CRT, brought to mind the teachers in Marx's (2008) study of popular White teachers who had difficulty relating to their Latina/o students and held decidedly deficit views of their culture. There was some limited evidence of deficit thinking (Delpit, 1992; Solózano, 1997; Ronda & Valencia, 1994) in Ms. Barton's classroom. At the beginning of one class period, with resignation in her voice, obviously expecting negative responses, Ms. Barton asked, "By the way, did anyone do their homework last night?" When discussing homework incompleteness with me she said, "Kids don't do homework. If I were a parent, I would be on them constantly."

While she often mentioned having students work with a partner or group, I only saw that happen once. Often, after saying they would work on an assignment with a partner, Ms. Barton would proceed to guide the class through the worksheet as she completed it on the overhead screen. One particular time she announced that they would work in groups, but then decided to take a vote on whether they would like to complete the work in small groups or as a whole class following her guidance from the front. Before they voted she said, "I just want you to know that it will be easier and you are more likely to complete the assignment before the bell if we just do it all together." Not surprisingly, the student vote concurred. Was she conveying the message that they were incapable of completing an assignment without her close guidance, or did she just have a strong preference for direct instruction? It was unclear how much was deficit-thinking and how much is simply a lack of awareness or embracing of CRP methods that are more likely to be effective with diverse populations.

Whiteness studies and critical race theory. There was some dismissal of the impact of micro-aggressions that commonly goes unnoticed by Whites (Solórzano, 1997). The boy who was encouraged to read for the class using his mimicry talents included British, Texan, East Indian, and Chinese accents. The teacher, and the class as a whole, laughed, but it may not have been funny to everyone. Another time, a light-skinned boy, who appeared to be of mixed-racial parentage, came to class and asked Ms. Barton, “Do I look like I’m from Africa? ‘Cuz everyone keeps saying ‘go back to Africa.’” The teacher responded with, “Really? Oh, don’t worry about it.” When I asked her about it later, she did not remember the incident and said, “Oh, he is fine. He is very bright; he does well in school.” I had noticed that particular boy before and he did participate in class, could be heard in friendly banter with other students and the teacher, and was often in Ms. Barton’s class after school; so perhaps this was an isolated and unusual incident. The teacher’s dismissal of it may have been the best response, but it did seem indicative of a lack of awareness of the milieu of Whiteness (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Marx, 2006; McIntosh, 1990; Tatum, 1999) in which we all exist.

Conclusion

Despite Ms. Barton’s shortcomings in noticing and attending to cultural differences, she managed to communicate her respect and love for her students. Her authentic care and empathetic stance may have been stronger than her lack of culturally responsive pedagogy or understanding of White privilege. Her genuine concern and empathy were enough so that even the Latino parents nominated her as a successful teacher of their children. She was very successful in building empathetic, caring

relationships that kept students attentive and participating in class; her motherly personality encouraged them to seek her out in their free time and to come to her when they needed help in academic or personal issues.

**Ms. Caitlyn Michaels Fernandez, English as a Second Language
and Honors English**

Introduction

Ms. Fernandez, a 32-year-old White woman, grew up in Fresno, California, and Houston, Texas. In both locations she knew many Spanish speakers and felt somewhat immersed in Latino culture, particularly in Fresno, which is in California's Central Valley, what Ms. Fernandez referred to as "the heart of migrant worker" territory. She studied a bit of Spanish in secondary school and again in college. Sometime after marrying a Mexican national, attending church (even teaching Sunday school) in a Spanish-language congregation, and spending time with many of her husband's non-English speaking relatives, she realized that she had acquired Spanish well enough to be considered fluent. Fernandez and her husband spoke Spanish at home and were raising their infant daughter to be bilingual.

With a love of literature, Ms. Fernandez (then Caitlyn Michaels) went to college intending to become an English teacher, but had a very unfavorable student-teaching experience. Convinced that she no longer wanted to teach, Fernandez found other satisfying work as a program director in a facility for mentally handicapped adults. A couple of years later she "applied on a lark" for a teaching position; but, it was more than

a year before she received a call from an administrator who happened to see her application. She was subsequently offered a job and decided to give teaching another try. During the time that I spent at Central Middle School, Ms. Fernandez had been teaching English language arts (both mainstream and honors) for 8 years; she added ESL after completing the additional endorsement requirements during her first 2 years of teaching. The semester that I observed her classes, she was teaching part time, balancing her career with caring for an infant with serious medical needs, and surviving on very little sleep; she did not think her current teaching was up to the standard for which she had become known, and referred to what I might observe as “Ms. Fernandez Lite.”

Reasons for inclusion. As with all the teachers in the study, Ms. Fernandez received multiple nominations as a successful teacher of Latina/o students from parents, teachers, and administrators. Her training for teaching ESL was given a reason for her identification, as was her ability to speak Spanish. One administrator cited her immersion into and understanding of Latino culture as the reason she was able to make connections with the students and their parents. Ms. Fernandez agreed that her knowledge and intimate understanding of Latino culture was a great advantage in helping her to make connections and build relationships with students and parents; she also believed that it helped her with classroom management and discipline. As she said, “if you’re confronting five Latino boys with spit wads, you gotta know something to get their attention.”

Classroom environment. Ms. Fernandez’s room was tucked into a far corner of the school and was filled with what looked like castoffs from other teachers: assorted

filing cabinets, shelves, tables, and chairs. The space provided several nooks and crannies that were used by small groups of students during collaborative assignments. The books and posters that populated the shelves and walls of Fernandez's classroom represented many cultures and illustrated literature from different times, places, and authors: *The Good Earth*, *Black Boy*, *War and Peace*, *Animal Farm*, *Invisible Man*, *Things Fall Apart*, and more. Her wall décor included displays of student work, including essays by her ELLs that would be seen by her honors English students.

In interviews, Ms. Fernandez stressed the importance of teachers knowing the curriculum well and getting to know the students: "Know your content inside and out, so you can focus on the kids." To quickly make connections with her Latina/o students, each year she spent the first several class periods in "getting to know you" activities that focus on building community. She did not just get to know *them* however; she made sure they knew her. Before the first class period ended, they knew she learned much about Latino culture as a child, that she was married to a Mexican national, and that her family spoke Spanish at home. They undoubtedly also found out that first day that Fernandez would use Spanish in class if it were needed to get attention or to explain a concept.

Teaching examples. A very cheerful and relaxed atmosphere was present in Ms. Fernandez's classes. Students spoke with each other (sometimes in their native language) and with the teacher freely. Ms. Fernandez set an atmosphere of academic urgency, but somehow managed to also keep it relaxed and friendly. When it was time to transition between activities, Fernandez could be heard saying, "You have 15 seconds to move, starting now: 1, 2, 3...!" She carefully planned for the learning activities that needed to

happen in 45-minute class periods. In this academic atmosphere, the students were self-managed and on-task behavior was the rule.

In the ESL class, students were organized into groups based on reading level, and were expected to work with partners from the assigned group, though sometimes they could choose to work alone. They were often allowed to leave their desks, and even the room, if they preferred another space for working. However, a clear agenda of academic work was present. For example, I heard Ms. Fernandez ask an ELL who wished to go get a drink, if he had completed his assignment; I watched as he simply held up his paper in response to the question, and I listened as Ms. Fernandez required him to verbalize “yes” in English.

Ms. Fernandez acknowledged the importance of using teaching strategies that help language minority students access the same content as more English-proficient students. She regularly taught the same lesson to her ELLs as to her honors English students, with more scaffolding to support the ELLs and adjusting the focus on the skills that were necessary for each student’s progress. On one observation day I was present for both the ESL class and honors English, which were taught back-to-back. She was teaching essay writing in both classes and had prepared a graphic organizer on the white board that showed the organization of the various parts of an essay. I watched as she taught the lesson to the ELLs, occasionally using Spanish to clarify points or answer specific questions; by the end of the 45 minute lesson the students had filled in their own charts and were beginning to write independently. Before the honors English class began, Ms. Fernandez erased the terms and explanations that she had used as she was teaching

the ELLs. When the next class began, she reminded the students that they had filled a chart like this the week before and she instructed them on errors she had noticed with their previous assignments. They worked through the chart as a group and like the ELLs in the previous class, were writing independently by the end of the period.

As ELLs progressed and were ready for mainstream English, she sometimes arranged their schedules so that they moved directly into her honors English class. This was done for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, because she knew her students' abilities well and she determined that they were capable of high level work; at other times she wanted to keep struggling students close, where she could quickly see problems and scaffold her instruction for optimal learning. Finally, there were legal issues. If a student had not yet tested out of the ESL program (but Ms. Fernandez had determined they would be better served in another environment), he or she needed to be placed with an ESL-endorsed teacher for full-compliance with federal law and another qualified teacher was not always available. Therefore, the student would stay with Ms. Fernandez, in the honors English class. She was skilled and flexible enough to make the situation work.

In addition to the previous example of including ELLs in her honors English class, Ms. Fernandez also lobbied for and was given the freedom to schedule ELLs for a double dose of literacy practice every day. During the first 45-minute class session, the class focused on listening, speaking, and writing skills. Then, following a 5-minute break, the students spent 45 minutes in sustained reading in small, leveled groups. Knowing that reading was an important key to all other language skills, and to academic success across the curriculum, Ms. Fernandez worked to ensure that the ELLs at Central Middle School

had every opportunity to succeed.

Critical Analysis

Culturally responsive teaching. Ms. Fernandez's teaching practices incorporated many elements of CRP, based on the knowledge accrued from her personal history and family situation, and her resulting affinity for Latino culture.

Ms. Fernandez had high expectations of academic proficiency for her students, the first tenet of CRP (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994). If students did not learn the academic skills of the powerful majority, they could not hope to compete, nor could they hope to be in a position to change society. Over the time that I watched, she taught persuasive writing to both classes. Though the ELLs were still struggling with basic grammar and spelling, she recognized that they were at a developmental level in which they were capable of learning how to write for argumentation and that being limited in English proficiency did not limit their ability to think and write critically. Many teachers mistakenly remediate or water down the curriculum (Kohli, 2008) for students who are learning English. A teacher could just as easily instruct on and correct basic errors in a student essay as she could in the discrete sentences common to grammar worksheets. While it is challenging to teach abstract thinking when a student is still learning the basics of English vocabulary and grammar, it is a challenge worth addressing. If not, the students' cognitive skills fall behind those of their peers as they acquire English.

The second principle of CRP is that students must develop and maintain cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The visual curriculum (Duncum, 2010, Eisner,

2002) in Ms. Fernandez's room showed an effort to acknowledge the contributions of many cultures and the academic abilities of all her students, even those who were still struggling to acquire English proficiency. Displaying the written essays of ELLs sent the message that their work was valued and worthy of presentation. Ms. Fernandez was cognizant of the influence on attitudes and aptitudes that might occur as her students crossed paths. In some schools the ELLs are effectively segregated from any interactions with native English speakers. It was important to Ms. Fernandez that in the intersection of her classroom, students were exposed to respectful appreciation of diverse peoples and cultures. Another crucial element of CRP is to empower students to make the changes that will make society more just and begin to dismantle White privilege (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). I did not see any evidence that Ms. Fernandez overtly challenged her students to act toward change, but she was certainly offering them the skills to make that a possibility.

In addition to incorporating elements of CRP, Ms. Fernandez avoided some of the negative practices that critical pedagogues warned against. She did not reduce nor essentialize Latino culture (Sleeter, 2012) by assuming that all her Latina/o students had the same cultural referents. She recognized differences within and between migrant and Chicano cultures that she knew in California, Tejano culture of Texas, and various Latino cultures represented at Central Middle School. She believed this helped her in building relationships and also in curriculum decisions. For example, she named several novels that are commonly suggested for Latina/o students and explained to me why she would

not choose them for a whole class reading selection. While she had a couple copies on her classroom shelves and individual students could borrow them for free reading, the cultures that they illustrated were very specific to a time and place that did not correspond to the lives of any of her students. She knew that just because a book has Latino characters, and a few Spanish names, words, and phrases, does not mean that Latino students necessarily will be able to identify with the story and enjoy it. Finally, Ms. Fernandez also avoided any actions which could be seen as subtractive education practices (Valenzuela, 1999), those that tend to eliminate, or *subtract*, the home culture from students.

Critical race theory. CR theorists are concerned that the curriculum not be watered down for students of color (Kohli, 2008). As Ms. Fernandez adapted the honors English class lessons for her ELLs, she was certainly not guilty of that. Moving students directly from ESL class to her honors English class was evidence that she saw her students as having many assets, including the ability to do high level work simultaneous to learning English. She did not show any signs of the deficit thinking that often holds back multicultural students (Delpit, 1992; Moll et al., 1992; Ronda & Valencia, 1994; Solórzano, 1997). Ms. Fernandez had high expectations for her students and did not blame them or their families for academic struggles, did not believe that their family culture did not value education or that the parents did not care if the child was successful. She understood that learning in a new language is hard work and she supported her students in that endeavor while recognizing that lack of English proficiency does not indicate lack of intelligence (Solórzano, 1997).

Empathy. Though not Latina by heritage, Ms. Fernandez had achieved “cultural synchronization” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 66) with her Latina/o students and carefully communicated this information early in the year. Her personal life was immersed in the local Latino culture. During the first days of school, she made sure her students understood that her empathetic position was genuine and sincere. Ms. Fernandez’s story reminded me of Mrs. Lewis, one of the three White teachers who Ladson-Billings (1994) called “culturally black” (p. 383). Ms. Fernandez, née Michaels, learned much about Latino cultures as a child. In adulthood she became fluent in Spanish as she was immersed in the local Latino culture after marrying a Mexican national; she attended church in a Spanish-speaking congregation, and she and her husband spoke Spanish in their home. However, she lived north of the city in which Central Middle School was located, not in a neighborhood that sent children to that school.

The same practices that have been considered indicative of CRP, the acknowledgment of Whiteness, or CRT, can also be seen as marks of empathy. For example, when Ms. Fernandez treated ELLs as intelligent adolescents, capable of abstract thought, she was likely remembering her experiences as an adult Spanish language learner. Though, at that time, her second language skills were less than proficient, she was still a capable, college-educated adult. Having not long before been in a similar situation as the students, helped Ms. Fernandez empathized with them. She told me she had never heard of the phrase “White ally” (Aveling, 2004; Lawrence & Tatum, 2004), but certainly saw herself in that role. Her position as a White ally for her students was authentic, as she sought to be a bridge between the cultures of her students and the

society of the White majority.

Mr. Mike Hartvig, Physical Education

Introduction

Mr. Hartvig was a 59-year-old White male who had been teaching boys' physical education (P.E.) for 22 years. He grew up in Fairfax County, Virginia, and taught school there, as well as in Georgia and in several schools in Utah. Mr. Hartvig attended Brigham Young University on a baseball scholarship, had a bachelor's degree in physical education, and a master's degree in exercise physiology. After teaching for 5 years, he spent 11 successful years in business, but eventually teaching drew him back. He said he always knew that "teaching young people is crucial" and that call proved stronger than the desire to make more money. He believed that he did "much more than teach P.E."

When I asked Mr. Hartvig about his teaching philosophy, he quickly said, "Each and every student, each and every day, I will find a way to reach and teach." To do that, Mr. Hartvig said a teacher needed the ability to engage students in the way *they* will learn, to find their style, and teach them in a way they will enjoy. He saw 240 students daily and worked to "teach to the wide circle, without forgetting the kids on the edges." He tried to treat each student fairly, giving each boy what he needed, but not necessarily treat them all the same.

Reasons for inclusion. The administration, faculty, and parents gave more diverse reasons for naming Mr. Hartvig (known as "Coach" throughout the school community) as a successful teacher of Latina/o students than for any other teacher at

Central Middle School. In addition to mentioning that he worked to build relationships and connect with students, the list included “holds high expectations,” was a “master storyteller,” had a “passion” for teaching, and had a “strong paternal influence, particularly helpful with Latino boys.” When I asked Coach Hartvig why he thought he was nominated for my research, he opened his filing cabinet and, within a few seconds, produced a piece of paper from his files. It was a handwritten list he created 8 years earlier of 10 actions or goals that he thought would help him build the relationships with Latino boys that he knew were necessary to “reach and teach” students. He explained that when he was transferred to Central Middle School, he understood that this school had a much larger Latina/o population than other schools in which he had taught and he needed to prepare to meet the unique needs of this group of students. Though Coach Hartvig was a monolingual English speaker, his list included “speak and honor” Spanish, pronounce names correctly, and use successful Latinos in examples of accomplished individuals—all actions specifically designed to help him make connections to the Latino boys in his classes. Coach Hartvig was convinced that the actions and habits that he committed to eight years earlier had paid dividends in reaching the Latinos in his P.E. classes.

For help with speaking Spanish and pronouncing student names correctly, Coach Hartvig consulted his wife, who had learned Spanish fluently as a young adult. She taught him the letter sounds of the Spanish alphabet, basic greetings, a few phrases that would be useful in class, and helped him with name pronunciation. Over time, she helped him learn additional words and phrases and he also asked students to teach him. For example, there was a leg stretch he called “froggie,” and he asked a student how to say the same in

Spanish and began using the two words interchangeably.

Coach Hartvig reported to me that he also used a bit of Spanish when meeting parents who spoke mostly Spanish. He felt that his willingness to try to communicate, and to laugh at his own mistakes, allowed them to try out their imperfect English.

I tell parents that I am trying to learn a little bit of their language from their son... If that gives them permission to speak Spanish, then I am okay with that. Even if I don't understand it all, that's okay. I will do my best. I try to meet them where they're at.

They could all smile and laugh together, appreciating the difficulties of learning a second language. It did not completely eliminate the need for an interpreter at parent-teacher conferences, but it did break the ice and build relationships. His empathy for students and parents learning a new language was very real, born of his own attempts to add Spanish to his list of skills. His cultural knowledge and competence were the result of purposeful study.

Classroom environment. Coach Hartvig's "classroom" included the locker room, the cavernous gymnasium, the weight room, and the outdoor playing fields. There were a couple of small motivational posters in the weight room and gymnasium, but it was the hallway, between the locker room and the gym, that was most instructive. Important announcements and the current learning targets were posted on a bulletin board. The boys in all of his classes could find their name listed on pre-assigned teams, saving class time and preventing the problems associated with adolescents choosing teammates. Also posted, were "Coach Hartvig's ABCs for Success," his guide for discussing important life lessons with his students.

Teaching examples. I observed several classes play games as part of the

basketball unit. Two games ran simultaneous to each other; at any one time, half of the boys played with “playground refereeing” (previously explained to the students), and the other half had the coach as referee. Boys were called on to be scorekeepers, and when it was their turn to play they were expected to teach another boy how to run the scorekeeping device. Near my observation post, Coach asked a Latino to keep score first. “Miguel, will you keep the time and score for the first game?” Miguel came over and the coach demonstrated how to run the apparatus. “Now when it’s time for you to play, ask someone who just finished the game to take over for you. You will need to show him how to do it, because I will be busy ref-ing.” At the appropriate time, Miguel then taught another Latino boy. “Hey, Daniél. Wanna do this? (The boy came over.) This is the time...and the score...” (demonstrated in about 5 seconds). The second boy taught someone who appeared to be of Asian heritage. All of these transitions went smoothly, with no need for intervention or help from Coach Hartvig.

Over four class periods, I watched 24 ten-minute games of basketball. I observed as multiple students passed on the control of the timing/scoring machine to other students of various ethnicities. I saw no disagreements or fights break out over the score, fouls, or any aspect of playground refereeing. I witnessed no laughing or taunting when less-coordinated players attempted to dribble, shoot, or otherwise play basketball.

The life lessons that Coach Hartvig fit into physical education classes most commonly occurred at the beginning or end of class. About half way through the semester, he introduced his “ABCs for Success,” posting them outside the locker room and reviewing one or more each day: Avoid negative people, places, and things, Believe

in yourself, Consider the other perspective, and so forth. With each tenet, he gave examples and explanations from real life, his or others. During one class period I observed, a portion of the lesson went like this:

Coach: C. What does 'C' stand for?

Students offer several answers that are imperceptible on my video. Within a few seconds, the coach said, "Consider. What's that mean? What's that mean?" followed by more muffled student answers.

Coach: That's right. Try to look at it in another way. I believe this: if you want to be a good son, consider things from your parents' angle. Consider things from their angle. If you want to be a good parent, consider things from your children's angle. If you want to be a good employee, consider things from your boss's angle. If you want to be a good boss, consider things from your employee's angle. Do you understand that? Consider things from other angles and you'll be successful. If you don't do that... I don't know. "D"?

Several students called out: Don't give up. Don't give in. The coach then told a short story about a young neighbor who came to him to learn to catch a baseball, but gave up after the first failure.

I said, "Hey, Adrián, Coach is trying to teach you to play baseball."

But he said, "I don't want to play no more."

"How are you going to learn to do anything if you quit in seven seconds?"

(Coach to students:) So don't give up so easily. Don't give up on things. Stay with them, even if they're difficult. Like for me, math was difficult. But, I didn't give up on it. Now I can do some math. 37 plus 45?

Coach points to a student who quickly gives an answer.

That's right, 82. I can do things like that because I didn't give up. I wasn't good at it at first. Okay, so A, B, C, and D, we have covered. Now we are going to cover a few other things and then move to the weight room.

Coach Hartvig regularly fit these and other life lessons, in at the beginning or end of the 45-minute class period. Sometimes these inspirational stories were in conjunction with his “ABCs for Success” and sometimes not. One day I observed a post-game debriefing where he discussed the role of planning team strategy in sports. After explaining the benefit of using the strength of numbers in pursuit of the goal, he extrapolated that to family life, asking for examples and reminding them of how much more is accomplished in a family when you work together, helping each other.

Coach Hartvig told me the story of a new student who came to him at the beginning of a semester and pointedly asked him, “Coach, are you a racist?” The teacher hadn’t had much interaction with this boy yet, but had already noticed that he seemed a bit aloof from his White peers and they with him. As the coach paused, trying to formulate a response, his adopted son (noticeably darker skinned and of a different genetic heritage than his father) walked in and said, “Hi, Dad. I need to get the car keys....” The student looked from one to the other, rather confused. Coach Hartvig said, “Yeah, that’s my son.... Would that answer your question?”

Critical Analysis

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Of all the teachers I interviewed and observed, Coach Hartvig seemed to be the most intentional in his quest to specifically teach the Latino students effectively. He thoughtfully engaged in practices that resonated with all of the pedagogical approaches I was looking for. For example, he unknowingly followed the five themes of CRP, as set out by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011, p. 72).

- He supported students’ Latino identity and achievement.

- He worked to offer educational equity and expected excellence.
- He understood that all students are not at the same developmental levels and worked to teach each student in the way they best learned.
- In his quest to teach about life, not just exercise and sports, he taught to the whole child.
- He worked to improve student-teacher relationships.

When he began teaching at Central Middle School, Coach Hartvig ascertained some critical gaps in his knowledge, set out to find the necessary information and then incorporated it into his lesson plans and teaching stance.

The list he created when he first began teaching at Central Middle School indicates he understood that life as a White male had not prepared him to teach Latino students. Even though he was already recognized as a successful P.E. teacher, he realized that he would need some new knowledge and strategies to teach this specific population. It is almost as if he had read Ladson-Billings' (1995) article, "But That's Just Good Teaching!" in which she discussed how teachers can reach out to students who are not from the dominant White culture. He set out to develop cultural competence so that he could support the maintenance and development of the home cultures of the Latino students' in his classes.

At the beginning of each new term, the Latinos in Coach Hartvig's classes must have noticed that the teacher pronounced their names correctly; he even used some Spanish words and phrases, though they quickly realized that he didn't speak the language fluently. His attempts to "speak and honor" the Spanish language were an example of his willingness to work hard to gain cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995). He said the Latino students thought it was fun to hear him say a few things and

seemed to appreciate that he tried to learn a bit of their language, but he also said he used his limited Spanish sparingly. The students knew that he could not really speak Spanish and he believed if he “overdid it” he could actually be perceived as *mocking* the language and the students. Whether or not this was true, the fact that Coach Hartvig considered this possibility is evidence of his sensitive attempts to be culturally appropriate and to avoid false empathy (McAllister & Irvine 2002).

Empathy. Many of Coach Hartvig’s intentional actions helped him to build authentically empathetic relationships with the Latinos in his classes. When the teacher and students are not of the same ethnic or cultural background, extra communication is needed to develop commonalities and build empathetic relationships. Just as Milner (2011) found, the students need to get to know the teacher. When the student challenged Coach Hartvig on racism, he was trying to figure where he stood with his teacher. Seeing the coach’s mixed-race son gave him reason to pause, but if it had not been followed by the cultural respect that Coach Hartvig is known for, it is likely that student would have continued to challenge him. When a Latino student can see and hear his White teacher take culturally congruous actions, taking the first steps toward the student, they are more likely to be able to build a relationship (Milner, 2007).

Coach Hartvig’s students sensed the genuine respect and paternal care he offered to all his students during personal interactions, instructions, and class lessons. The atmosphere set the stage for building empathetic relationships (Milner, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999; Warren, 2012). As I observed the students play basketball and participate in other activities without any noticeable friction over scoring, fouls and other calls or violations,

and no sign of taunting of the less-athletic students, I saw that Coach Hartvig's example of respect and kindness set the expectation of cooperative relationships.

Coach Hartvig's regularly incorporated life lessons and inspirational stories at the beginning and end of class followed his self-instruction to intentionally "use successful Latinos in examples of accomplished individuals." This was where he was able to add culturally appropriate examples, whether they were acquaintances, neighbors, or famous individuals. He used various Latino examples of success in family, academic, sports, or business; all were people who made a difference in the world. When teachers use examples from a student's culture and represent them as exemplary, they communicate possibility to the student, as if they are saying, "you [too,] can do this, son" (Milner, 2007, p. 244). He also created analogies between his curriculum and his students' lives. When he taught about team strategies and extrapolated it to family life he was making a deliberate connection to the lives of his students. This is culturally responsive pedagogy, building empathetic connections to help students learn (Ladson-Billings, 2006; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Young, 2010).

Coach Hartvig's caring and empathetic connections to the Latino boys in his physical education classes was the result of the intentional actions that he outlined on the list compiled when he was first assigned to Central Middle School. He asked his wife, and later his students, to teach him enough Spanish to communicate his desire to make connections with his students and their lives. He went to the students to ask for their music requests and followed through in providing the desired selections. He thought about how he connected with and taught life lessons to students in the past, the vast

majority which had been White males like him, and figured out that he needed to know about another group's role models, heroes, and values, and incorporated those people and ideas into his teaching practice. According to McAllister and Irvine (2002), empathetic teachers have the ability to "take on the perspective of another culture;" and they work with students to face and solve problems together (p. 433). This is a good description of what Coach Hartvig did as he worked with the Latina/o students and parents at Central Middle School.

Critical race theory. I wonder how much of this self-knowledge and introspection resulted from the experiences that Coach Hartvig and his wife had in adopting three mixed-race children, or from the experiences that his children endured? Having adopted a child of a different race is not conclusive evidence that one is not racist; many parents in inter-racial adoptions adhere to the ideology of racial colorblindness, that color or ethnicity do not matter (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). In the case of the boy who challenged Coach Hartvig on his racism, the image of his son was enough for the student to give the coach the benefit of the doubt and begin to build a relationship. Whatever the source of Coach Hartvig's empathy, his response to a new teaching assignment in mid-life, one that presented him with a new population of students, was met with an admirable attempt to learn new things and stretch his ability to reach and teach.

Coach Hartvig did not intentionally follow the ideas of Freire (1970/1993), Giroux (2004), or McLaren (1994/2003), aiming to become a critical pedagogue. He did not overtly confront racism in his physical education classes, and he did not suggest to his

students that they disrupt the social order by challenging the status quo. He did, however, practice the critical pedagogy of Kincheloe (2004) by guiding his students to “cultivate the intellect and expand the horizons of [their] human possibilities” (p. 45). I saw no signs of deficit thinking (Ronda & Valencia, 1994) about the capabilities of his students or their families, nor of engaging in subtractive education (Valenzuela, 1999). He supported cultural competence in his Latino students and encouraged them to reach for athletic and academic excellence. He expected all the boys in his classes to strive for superior performance in all areas of life.

I asked Coach Hartvig if he considered himself an “antiracist educator” (Lawrence & Tatum, 2004). I was not surprised when he kind of chuckled, admitted he did not know that label and said:

Never even thought of it. But, I would say, I’m antiracist, yeah. I don’t like anybody to think they’re superior to anybody else, which is the hallmark of racism. ‘By virtue of where we come from, we are superior.’ And I would be against that. (M. Hartvig, personal communication, October 30, 2014)

He did not name and challenge racism in his life lessons, but he showed, by example, how to treat all people with respect. He also believed he was helping other students to accept and respect Latino culture and Latina/o students. He told of a White, former student, who came back to visit him from the high school, and said, “you taught me how *not* to be racist.” By his acceptance and inclusion of his diverse students, his incorporation of multicultural examples in the life lessons that began and ended many class periods, and his attempts to “speak and honor” Spanish, he set an example of a middle-aged, White, adult who valued the contributions of the Latino students and culture. I consider Coach Hartvig a White ally (Aveling, 2004; Lawrence & Tatum, 2004)

for his students of color.

**Ms. Esperanza Sanchez, Family and Consumer Science,
Latinos in Action**

Introduction

Ms. Sanchez, 34, was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, but grew up primarily in Colonia Juarez, and attended a private, bilingual school. She immigrated to Utah after high school, following older siblings who had come before her, living with them, and working for three years before deciding to go to college, majoring in family and consumer science (FACS). She had long desired to be a teacher and remembers “playing school” as a little girl, with her stuffed animals as students. She also loved cooking, dreamed of having a cooking show on television, and did not realize that it was possible to study and teach cooking or food preparation.

As a teenager, Ms. Sanchez resisted following in the footsteps of her siblings, whom she thought had all been “perfect students.” This led to an unfortunate interaction with one of her teachers who commented that she was “only capable of flipping burgers.” The memory of this teacher who ridiculed her, in response to an honest question, led to Ms. Sanchez’s decision to become a caring, loving teacher. “That day I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I would be the kind of teacher who would believe in my students. I would help them set high goals and encourage them to follow their dreams.”

In addition to teaching FACS classes, Ms. Sanchez also led the Latinos in Action (LIA) class, a program designed to teach bilingual Latino youth to use their language and

other cultural skills to support younger students, serve their school and community, and prepare to move into higher education. During the year of this research, Ms. Sanchez won a state award as “LIA Middle School Adviser of the Year,” given to an advisor who exemplified love for students and dedication to the mission of the organization, which included “to empower our Latino youth through culture, service, leadership, and excellent education” (Enriquez, 2013).

Reasons for inclusion. Ms. Sanchez received a unanimous nomination from the administrative team of Central Middle School; she tied with another teacher for the strongest faculty recommendation, and earned the highest number of votes from the parents who answered the questionnaire. Those who gave reasons for her inclusion on their list of successful teachers for the Latina/o students most commonly mentioned her work with Latinos in Action and her ability to connect with the students through her native knowledge of the culture, her bilingual skills, and her caring attitude. Her excellent classroom management skills were also mentioned.

Ms. Sanchez probably would have been surprised if she had not been selected; she knew that being a bilingual, Mexicana immigrant helped her make connections with immigrant students and their parents.

I feel that I have the duty, but also the ability, to connect with the Hispanic students, because of my background, because of my life. I feel like I actually have an influence in their lives, because I can connect with them. (E. Sanchez, personal communication, October 30, 2014)

Sanchez said that many first- and second-generation immigrant students feel torn between two cultures; she can identify and commiserate with them because she had a similar experience as a young girl in Colonia Juarez, an area of Mexico with many

English speakers and close ties to the U.S. Her Mexican home culture often conflicted with the U.S.-centric bilingual school she attended and she remembers the tension she felt between some school teachings and what her parents taught. She said she willingly shares those memories with her students and is also willing to share stories of her family's struggles with poverty. "I will share to make an impact, even if I cry."

Classroom environment. Ms. Sanchez's classroom was set up with the typical rows of desks, the teacher's desk at the front. But, the first thing one noticed is that, instead of the beige walls found in most classrooms and halls of Central Middle School, the walls in Ms. Sanchez's room were painted a warm shade of deep yellow. Ms. Sanchez got permission for the change and spent her own time and money to paint the room during a summer break. A large calendar with brief explanations of the week's objectives and lesson plans filled one wall. Other walls had motivational and academic posters, displays relating to FACS and foods curriculum, or the LIA organization. In an adjoining room were six kitchen labs, a demonstration area with an overhead mirror, and a food pantry with a refrigerator. This room had recently been updated with new, sparkling-white appliances, countertops, and flooring; Ms. Sanchez had added a few pieces of kitchen décor, giving the area a homey touch.

Ms. Sanchez believed students will care more about a subject and content if they know that the teacher cares about them, that "all the knowledge in the world will not lead students to learn, if they don't feel that the teacher cares." Her teaching philosophy is summed up with, "I will love every student that comes through the door; with their stinkiness, awkwardness, grumpiness, whatever they bring; I love the whole package."

Teaching examples. I observed six sessions of Ms. Sanchez's eight-grade foods class and was able to see her and her students in multiple situations, including several labs in the kitchen. Class always began with instruction in the traditional classroom. As the students started to arrive, Ms. Sanchez was typically at the front of the room, busy with last minute preparations. She greeted the first arrivals, often commented on how quickly they made it to class, and continued to have friendly conversations with students, sometimes in Spanish, as the room filled up. Class time had a very relaxed atmosphere, with good-natured bantering between teacher and students (in both English and Spanish), reminders of upcoming assignments or activities, and direct instruction on vocabulary, nutrition, or food preparation skills, for example. During a review game on the uses of kitchen utensils, I heard Ms. Sanchez say, "If you don't remember the word in English, you can give it to me in Spanish."

On most days, after about 15 minutes of instructional time, the students moved to the adjoining kitchen labs for food preparation. They gathered in previously organized teams in which each student took a role assembling equipment and ingredients, and preparing the food as needed. On five different class visits I saw approximately 30 students file into the kitchens, regulate themselves as they followed previously taught routines, and end class about 30 minutes later with edible food. From the demonstration kitchen at the front of the room, Ms. Sanchez called out additional instructions as needed, but the students generally understood the assignments and cooperatively completed it.

When I asked Miss Sanchez how this organization and cooperation happens with 13- to 14-year-old students, she gave two answers: clear expectations and caring

relationships.

At the beginning of the semester, I tell them my expectations...for the first two weeks, during the first two cooking labs, I drill on the routines. “Hey, you need to do this...now you need to be boiling water, now you should be....” I pace them. But honestly, they know my expectations. It’s a constant reminder, but I want to think it is the relationships that we develop, that they know I care for them and they know that if they don’t meet my expectations, I’m sad, I’m not mad. So they don’t want to disappoint me.

Ms. Sanchez believed that the students sensed that she cared about them and they wanted to please her. Her evidence is their behavior and the food that is prepared after each class period.

Ms. Sanchez’s care for her students resulted in an interesting way that she speaks to the adolescents in her class: “Welcome to class, *children*,” “Okay, *children*, let’s move into the kitchens now,” or “*Children*, please listen...” When asked about this word choice and why middle-school students did not protest being referred to as “children” she said:

There are certain kids that, you know, the typical kid who will say like, “I’m a preteen” or “we’re not children...” The times that I’ve had students say that, I’m like, “I feel like you’re my children...I love calling you guys ‘children.’ To me, you’re my children.”

Ms. Sanchez shared the following anecdote that illustrates how the students come to rely on this term of endearment and the message it sends.

One time I had to leave and I said, ‘Okay, guys, be really good,’ and one of the students said to me, ‘Are you mad at us?’ I said, ‘No, why?’ [He replied,] ‘You didn’t call us *children*.’ ...They just know...it’s our little thing.

It was her loving explanation that made being called “children” acceptable to the students. They recognized her words as reflections of genuine feelings; they rang true and did not sound condescending.

An ongoing part of the foods class curriculum is the “guest chefs” that come to

demonstrate favorite recipes to the class. She invites parents or grandparents of the students, and other community members, to share their cooking skills. The students are excited to have their parent or grandparent come and share a bit of their home culture with their teacher and their classmates.

During one of my observations, Miss Sanchez completely changed the planned lesson, springing a fairly difficult baking lab on the students. She began class by reminding the students of the earlier school-wide announcement about the death of a classmate's brother. She talked for a few moments about the accidental death, choking up a bit as she related how sad she felt for the student and how she cared what happened in all of her students' lives. She then announced that she decided they would do something to let their classmate know they were thinking of him; they were going to bake cookies that she would deliver to his house. This is a very typical response in this community; to acknowledge a death in the family, neighbors and friends bring food to the home. She then announced that each group would be making a different recipe, so the gift would include a variety of cookies. She quickly passed out the six different recipes and the students moved into the lab and began the project. By the end of class time, at least one group had a pan of baked cookies, two or three groups had them in the oven with the timer set to let the teacher know when to take them out, and the rest had cookies on the pan, ready for the oven.

Critical Analysis

Culturally responsive pedagogy. Ms. Sanchez's strengths were her ability to use CRP and to build empathetic relationships. Ms. Sanchez intimately knew the culture from

which many students or their parents came; she was able to respond and teach her Latina/o students in a culturally relevant manner. Her cultural fluency helped her build empathetic relationships.

She spoke Spanish, her first language, fluently. If a student needed to hear the directions in Spanish to fully understand an assignment, she could provide that. If she knew a student was a novice English speaker, she could give him or her a daily respite from English immersion by speaking to him or her in Spanish while in her class. When she wanted to know if the students had learned the uses of the kitchen utensils, the language of the terms was not crucial and code-switching was allowed. In effect, she was saying, “I understand that it can be hard to remember the term ‘whisk,’ but as long as you remember the correct utensil for stirring a pudding, I don’t care if you call it a *whisk* or a *batidor*.” In several cases, the use of Spanish was a practical application of a cultural skill, but it was also a demonstration of empathy.

Another example of CRP is the practice of inviting “guest chefs” to demonstrate for the students. I asked Ms. Sanchez if she did this because she knew that making connections with the culture of the students was an important part of CRP or if she was purposefully attending to the funds of knowledge that Gonzalez and colleagues (2005) advocate.

I know those terms from [college] but what I do is what just makes sense to do and comes naturally to me. I know that parents want to be involved if given the chance and if their schedule and time permit. Everybody cooks; it just made sense to me. I decided to do it when I wanted to have more parent involvement and when I wanted them to also be exposed to other careers. The parents (or other community guests) come and, as they are cooking, they tell us about themselves, their careers, struggles in school or company that they own, etc. Not only are my children learning how cooking is a needed skill and a part of life, but [they] also

learn about each other's parents or community members. (E. Sanchez, personal communication, September 18, 2014)

The process of the invitation, calls to parents, confirming details with the student, and the respect accorded the visiting chef, also helped to build empathetic relationships.

Empathy. Ms. Sanchez consciously built her relationships with students and believed that these empathetic relationships are responsible for the students' on-task behavior. In a study of exemplary teachers in segregated schools of the southern U.S. (prior to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision), Walker (2000) concluded that because of the hard work and dedication of African American teachers, "students did not want to let them down" (p. 265); it seems that Ms. Sanchez had a similar effect on her students. She intentionally created an environment that was conducive to building empathetic relationships. She openly communicated care and concern for her students in familial terms. She shared the "tender feelings of compassion" that Davis (1994) cited as criterion for an empathetic stance. The student who questioned if she was mad at them when she once neglected to call the students "children," demonstrated the power of Ms. Sanchez's stance. He had come to believe her tender feelings as expressed by her words. Knowing that the teacher thought of the students affectionately as *her children*, helped them want to behave and perform, whether or not she was present.

Teaching is about establishing and maintaining caring relationships (McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Milner, 2007), and Ms. Sanchez's care for students is very much like that of community *othermothers* and children, discussed by Collins (1991). Though Collins wrote specifically about the relationships between African American women and children, Ms. Sanchez's use of "family language" (p. 191) is reminiscent of Collins's idea

that teachers who provide *othermothering*, “mother the mind” and go “beyond that of providing students with...technical skills...” (p. 191). Some teachers, as Milner (2005) wrote, “seemed to embrace the idea that their students were like their own biological children, and they wanted the very best for all their students” (p. 403).

The lesson in which the students made cookies for their bereaved classmate is a good example of Ms. Sanchez’s cultural competence and CRP. It demonstrated how she communicated her empathy and care for her students, and simultaneously illustrated the effects of her high expectations of academic achievement and independent classroom behavior. Ms. Sanchez’s willingness to share tender feelings with her students, about a death in the family of another student, helps to explain how she built such close, caring relationships. Her students knew that she really loved them, because when one of them had a personal or family tragedy, she too, was affected. Her ability to take that care and translate it into a educationally sound and culturally appropriate action for her community, is evidence of the cultural responsiveness that Ladson-Billings (1994) thought was crucial to demonstrating cultural competence.

The compassion Ms. Sanchez felt and shared, rang true for the Latina/o students. She was able to use her innate cultural knowledge to build bridges between the curriculum and her students, leading the students to learn at high levels, and incidentally adhering to two of the tenets of CRP: holding the students to high academic standards and supporting and increasing the students’ own cultural competence. The third tenet, helping students develop a critical consciousness with the goal of challenging the status quo, was not overtly attended (Ladson-Billings, 1994). She did not organize students to

demand more authentic fare in the cafeteria nor suggest they use their academic or culinary skills to demand change. However, by being an example of a Latina of academic attainment, expecting and guiding her students to high levels of achievement, and with her work in the Latinos In Action program, she was challenging the stereotypes and deficit thinking often imposed on Latina/os in popular media and in the minds of many.

Geraldo Torres, Choral Music

Introduction

Geraldo Torres, 31, was from Texas, of Mexican American heritage, and referred to himself as *Hispanic*. He grew up hearing and understanding a great deal of Spanish between his parents, grandparents, and other family members, but he did not become fluent in the language as a child. It is a difficult struggle for Spanish-speaking parents and grandparents to help children gain fluency in their heritage language while simultaneously expecting them to become adept in English. The school system in the U.S. rarely supports this and children soon become deeply aware of the stigma attached to non-English languages. Mr. Torres finally gained Spanish fluency when he spent 2 years as a religious missionary in Honduras.

Music was important in Mr. Torres's life from an early age. His father taught him to play the piano when he was still in elementary school and he later played the trumpet in his high school band. Mr. Torres said that school bands were a "very big deal" in his area of Texas and he studied music with the idea of becoming a school band director, but choral music is where he is currently finding his niche. In addition to introducing him to

music, his parents stressed that he needed a college education, adding “a Hispanic person needs a master’s degree.” Mr. Torres has not yet added the master’s degree, but says he plans to do so.

The semester that I observed his classes, Mr. Torres was teaching seventh-grade chorus, eighth-grade girls’ chorus, and eighth-grade concert choir; in the 3 years that Mr. Torres had been at Central Middle School, the choral music groups had become so popular that he no longer had room in his schedule for seventh-grade “general music,” which was transferred to the orchestra or band teacher. When asked about his teaching philosophy, Mr. Torres talked about “loving what you do” and loving the kids, but also about holding students responsible for their actions. “I tell kids, ‘you have to believe in what you’re doing.’” Mr. Torres also endorsed the idea of teamwork in a choir, saying, “it is not the individual voices that are important, but what you can accomplish as a group.”

Reasons for inclusion. With just 3 years teaching experience, Mr. Torres was the youngest and least experienced teacher in the group of educators selected for the study. He received the second highest number of parent nominations, as well as strong recommendations from the faculty and administration, who cited his Latino heritage and ability to speak Spanish as helpful with the Latina/o students. Comments from the administration mentioned that his outgoing and entertaining personality helped him to develop relationships and make connections with students. An administrator also noted that “his strong male presence is helpful [in] reaching our Latino students.”

Classroom environment. Mr. Torres’s classroom was a cavernous room with

two dry-erase boards, a few small posters, an area with multiple framed awards from past music festivals and competitions, and a bulletin board with very large letters, simply announcing “choir.” The posters included one that touted “teamwork” as necessary for success, one that listed classroom procedures and rules, and another that paid homage to the district-mandated posting of “learning targets.” Large and noisy heating and cooling vents overpowered the limited attempts at décor.

Front and center was a grand piano. The floor was stepped/risers (typical for choirs), covered with carpet. During my observations, the classes were all on their last days of concert preparation and the chairs were usually stacked in the corner; the students practiced while standing in position, with soloists and small groups moving to the front of the group during and between numbers.

Teaching examples. As class began for the concert choir, Mr. Torres played the piano and the students gathered around for warm ups. Other classes began with the students seated or standing in position on the risers. Mr. Torres often used hand signals and a pitch note on the piano to focus the students’ attention before beginning a practice number. If the class were particularly talkative, he added, “Focus in 5 [seconds],” adding “4, focus position in 3, 2, 1,” if needed. As might be expected, most of the class periods I observed were spent singing, usually the same song or a problematic portion of a song, multiple times. Each rendition was followed by additional instructions or corrections. When a piece was nearly perfect, Mr. Torres would smile and comment, “I have nothing to say,” after which the group would move onto another selection.

What I observed in Mr. Torres’s music classes differed greatly from the other

classes. The nature of music classes is distinctive from that of other content areas: students are generally responding “in chorus” to instruction from the teacher. This is even more predictable at the end of a term when the students have largely learned the music and the group is fine-tuning their performance for a concert. This was the case when I observed Mr. Torres’s choral music classes. There was little individual instruction and few opportunities to see Mr. Torres interact with individual students. The students and teacher rarely asked each other a question. Several times, students left the room without permission and returned a few minutes later. These incidents took place during the concert choir and girls’ chorus classes—both eighth-grade advanced classes. I can only assume that the students were previously instructed to quietly leave and return (if, for example, they needed to use the restroom or get a drink of water) without disrupting the teacher or the class. This situation limited my ability to observe key interactions between the teacher and students. Generally, I was only able to see how the teacher interacted with all the students at once.

When choosing music for classes to learn or perform, Mr. Torres followed a curricular plan for the four school terms of folk, holiday, choral literature, and pop music. I observed his classes during the third term when they were studying choral literature and I noted that most of the pieces the choirs were rehearsing had religious messages; I asked Mr. Torres if students or parents ever complained about that. He said:

Choral music almost always has a religious message and I don’t try to avoid that. If someone asks, and occasionally they do, I just explain it. Most choral music comes from religious traditions. I choose the music for the musical elements, such as harmony, that the students need to learn, not for the message. It is the same with orchestral music, but it is not as obvious, because there are no words.

However, Mr. Torres did explain the significance behind some pieces.

I think it is very important to tell [students] the “why.” Then it means more to them and they’ll put more effort behind it. Music is more than just going from the first measure to the last. What you do in the middle, that’s music.

If individual singers understand the underlying message of a song, they are better able to perform it with the appropriate emotional nuance—they can put *feeling* into it.

For example, the Girls’ Chorus was practicing an African American slave lullaby and Mr. Torres, when introducing the piece, briefly touched on the poignancy of the situation, explaining, “it was when there was still slavery” and that “the mother is singing to her master’s child and then to her own.” Mr. Torres reported, “it was the first time that I had done that song as well, so we kind of learned about it together” and that the girls found the story behind the song to be very sad, saying things like “that’s kinda depressing,” but they also said they really enjoyed singing it.

The thing that I do remember about it...we did have one girl that really related to it...her biological mother had died and she said, you know, that is the song her mother sang to her. That seemed kind of interesting because she’s Polynesian. They’re from Samoa, so I’m like so ‘they have that song.’ It’s made it that far, over there. I thought that was really interesting.... So, she really related to that. She would cry in class sometimes, but I understood. She really enjoyed singing that song. There were many good memories.

After every concert, Mr. Torres’s students are assigned to write reflections on their experience. Most of the girls wrote that they liked the lullaby, saying things like, “It was haunting in a way, it was about slavery and all, but, it’s still a beautiful song just because it is a lullaby, you know.”

Another number was entirely in Latin and, as the girls learned that song, he called his Spanish-speaking students into service to help translate and to demonstrate correct

pronunciation. The class had “a group discussion kind of thing” as they worked out the translation and modeled pronunciation for the rest of the class. They also corrected the other girls’ pronunciation and encouraged the others, saying “it’s not that hard” and praising them as they improved. Mr. Torres took part in the discussion, translation, and pronunciation, but sometimes he also needed help: “If I was saying it wrong (because Spanish is my second language not my first), so if I said it wrong [a girl would say], ‘Oh, Mr. Torres, it’s this way.’” According to the teacher, the student interpreters “were just very, very helpful” and it was a positive class experience.

When selecting students for choirs and solos or small groups for concert performances, Mr. Torres says he never takes ethnicity into account. His choirs are all capped at 42 students, who must apply for positions and invariably some are unable to get in. The students had already been in seventh-grade chorus, so he knew their musical ability, cooperative spirit, and work ethic, and he selected for those characteristics when putting together these specific groups. As he made choices and eliminations, he also made exceptions for students who “need the experience,” as recommended by the counselors or administration. As far as Mr. Torres knew, these were not decisions based on ethnicity. The semester that I visited, perhaps 12% of the concert choir was ethnically diverse (with noticeably more boys of color) and perhaps 20% of the girls’ chorus; the school as a whole had a 30% ethnic minority population.

At the concert I attended, none of the small groups or solos were performed by Latina/o students, nor by any students of color. When asked about this, Mr. Torres said that he announced tryouts for the special numbers and he selected strictly on ability,

never even encouraging specific students to audition. He explained, “They know when tryouts are and I explain the benefits of the tryout experience, but it is up to the students to decide if they want to do it.” He added that he had one Latino soloist the previous year.

Mr. Torres said that he had occasionally used cultural referents, jokes, stories, and his ability in Spanish, to make connections with his Latina/o students. But he believed that after the initial impression has faded, students are quick to know if teachers really care and are genuine. He said his classroom door was always open for chatting, eating lunch, singing or playing the piano, and sometimes for crying.

I’ll have kids come in here and talk to me and, I’m not their choir teacher any more...it’s not about music.... For me to know that sometimes kids feel safe enough to come talk to me about things, if they’re having a bad day, they know they can come in here and cry, that makes me really happy because that’s what I want my room to be.... For me that’s gratifying, that they feel safe in here. It’s stuff about life issues or just little things, but they feel safe coming and talking to me about.

He told a story of one Latino boy who had a bad day in the middle of what had obviously been a very bad year. Following a lockdown procedure, he was found cowering and crying in a corner. Another day, students came to tell him that same boy was crying in an empty room near the choir room. Mr. Torres left his class to rehearse on their own, while he talked to the troubled student. He later came to understand, through the parent liaison

that it really meant something to him, that I would spend that time with him, instead of in class. It really got to me that they are not just students, not just numbers on a page, they’re kids. They are just kids. Sometimes, in my opinion, there is something more important than the classroom.

However, Mr. Torres said those moments are rare. Doing well in school is important and he expects students to work diligently. They learn pretty quickly that he is “willing to have hard conversations when necessary.” By *hard conversations*, he meant

reprimanding them for doing less than they are capable of. Mr. Torres held high expectations for student achievement.

I don't accept excuses for not putting in the work needed to succeed. When it's necessary, I will tell them stories of living on rice and beans, and of working more than 50 hours a week while taking over 20 credits in college.

He believed students were willing to do hard things if they knew he understood their situation and that he cared.

A lot of times the Latino students, they'll look at me and say, "you have a lot of money because you're a teacher." I tell them, I grew up in the same kind of neighborhood you guys did. You know, the wrong side of the tracks. I went to the school on "that side of town." But, if you just put your head down and get to work and make those right decisions, you can get out of there. But a lot of 'em don't really understand that or know that's a possibility.

He told a story of one mother and daughter that came for an afterschool conference:

[The girl] was getting in with the wrong crowd...you could tell Mom was frustrated with her daughter. I looked at Mom, and Mom looked at me, and we kind of had [the] same thought. And I said, "Look at where your mom is." And, Mom didn't take any offense. And I asked her, "What does your mom do for work?"

Well, she's a maid.

That is backbreaking work. Think about how hard your mom works for you and how you're acting up. You know you should give your mom that respect for working so hard for you.

I mean, the kid had an iPhone and everything. I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. She said she wanted to be a nurse. And I said, "The way you're acting right now, that ain't gonna happen." She was a smart kid, I told her.

You have a chance to do well, to break that cycle, go to school, go to college.

What if I don't have no money?

Well, there are ways, you can get a scholarship....

Mom agreed. And I was worried about what Mom was going to say. But Mom

said the same thing, “You have a chance to be better than your parents.”

After such conversations, Mr. Torres’s students understood that he now expected a little more from them, that he might be a bit tougher on them in class because “we had a conversation.” Before our interview ended, he added, “I don’t expect perfection, I just expect them to do their best. Not just in music, in life. If you do your best, everything will work out.”

Critical Analysis

Cultural relevant pedagogy. With an understanding born of his life experiences, Mr. Torres made cultural connections with his Latina/o students and helped them to bridge between their home environment, family values, and the mainstream culture of the school. Occasionally speaking in Spanish or telling personal, cultural stories, which particularly resonated with his Latina/o students, demonstrated this connection.

The self-reported incident of using the expertise of the Spanish-speaking students to help the others learn to pronounce the Latin lyrics of a song is an excellent example of CRP and validation of the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005) that students bring from home. Accepting the students’ expertise and allowing his errors to be corrected is very gracious. This was a respectful and effective way to publically acknowledge student skills and abilities.

Another hallmark of CRP is expecting, and helping students attain, high levels of academic achievement. Mr. Torres exemplified high expectations when he introduced an all-Latin piece of music to middle school students. Teaching the students the connection between Spanish and Latin is knowledge that most probably did not know and had the

added benefit of elevating the status of Spanish. Another example of Mr. Torres's high expectations and the students' ability to fulfill them, is the self-management that was evident as the students quietly came and went from the classroom, without disrupting the rehearsal.

Critical race theory. When Mr. Torres introduced the slave lullaby to his students and made sure they understood the hard story behind it, that the mother was singing first to her master's child and then to her own, he was using CRT. His goal was to help the students make an emotional connection that would affect their vocal interpretation, facilitating their ability to put feeling into their performance. Though his motivation was musical interpretation, it should be noted that his illustration did not shy away from an explicit explanation of the situation, nor from the racist roots of our society.

Empathy. Mr. Torres's willingness to spend extra time talking to students (and parents) about matters other than the music curriculum helped him to build caring, empathetic relationships with students. He was willing to share personal stories that communicated to students that he understood where they were (psychologically, academically, etc.) and helped them move to the next level. This is one explanation of how empathy, or building empathetic connections, helps students to learn (Ladson-Billings, 2006; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Young, 2010). The ability to communicate genuine care and empathy for students often results in student willingness to work harder. Communicating empathy is often enough to induce students to engage with the curriculum and achieve academically (e.g., Milner, 2010; Saunders, 2012; Seltzer-Kelly,

2009; Warren, 2012).

Mr. Torres had a reputation at Central Middle School as a good teacher, one that made connections with many students, as evidenced by the growth of the choral music program during his short tenure on the faculty. His relative youth may have helped the students to see him as a friendly presence—rather like a trusted and admired older brother. As an educated Latino who holds high expectations for students, he was a critical example. He understood the possibilities of making a positive difference in students' lives. I think it is for these reasons that the faculty and parents of Central Middle School named him as a successful teacher of Latina/o students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This was a study of six middle school teachers who were deemed successful for Latina/o students, identified as such by triangulating the results of a survey of the major stakeholders of the school: the principal and administrative team, the teaching faculty, and Latina/o parents. The survey simply asked which teachers were successful with the Latina/o students and followed with a request for any reasons the nominators might share that would shed light on why they suggested those names. No definition was given for “successful.” I was curious to know what the stakeholders would consider as criteria for success of teachers of Latina/o students. Also, the study was not designed to determine if the nominated teachers were successful in helping the students reach any specific learning target or to change behavior; it was designed to determine what teaching practices and attitudes were held by the nominated teachers.

The results of this study of successful teachers of Latina/o students indicated that the teachers selected for the study were all caring individuals, committed to educational excellence and to building relationships with students. Though I found some evidence of the interrelated elements of critical social theory that informed my research, the overarching theme that I uncovered was that caring and empathetic teachers were driven to discover teaching practices that worked with their Latina/o students, helped the students to engage more with their schoolwork, and increased their learning; many of the

teaching practices they used fit into the multiple theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches that I identified under critical social theory.

Multiple Theoretical Framing

The literature review for this research project began by introducing multiple theoretical frames that can be explained as interrelated elements of critical social theory: culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), empathy and false empathy, critical studies in Whiteness, and critical race theory (CRT). I envisioned the orderly Venn diagram illustrated in chapter three, with CRP overlapping empathy, which overlapped with Whiteness studies, and so forth. As the study progressed and I observed and analyzed the work of each teacher, it became very apparent that there are multiple overlaps between all of the theoretical approaches and the teacher practices did not speak equally to each of the approaches.

The approaches and practices overlapped and intersected with each other in a very tangled manner. For example, when the Spanish teacher, Mr. Abbott, asked students about terminology specific to their countries of origin, I immediately noted it as an example of supporting the students' cultural competence, an element of CRP, the pedagogical approach that was most readily apparent across all the teachers' practices. But, it is also indicative of helping the students fight against stereotyping and deficit thinking that is attached to so many minority languages and dialects and is often explained under the umbrella of CRT. Noting and acting on a student's perspective on the curriculum is also an example of empathy. Similarly, when Ms. Sanchez, the FACS teacher, allowed and engaged in code switching, she was using CRP in a very practical,

supportive way; later I realized that was also a way in which she demonstrated empathy and built relationships. Care and empathy seemed to over- or under- lay all of the other ideas and were the driving factors, leading teachers to incorporate teaching practices that, in hindsight, can be tied to the theoretical approaches, the most prominent of which is CRP.

Research Questions

One major research question and several subquestions guided my inquiry. The answers to these questions each intersected with one or more of the major theoretical perspectives on which the study was based. First seen in Chapter III, I repeat the questions here.

1. What are the teaching practices and underlying attitudes of the successful teachers of Latina and Latino students whom I studied?
 - a. How do the successful teachers connect the content curriculum to students' language, culture, family background, and community?
 - b. Do successful teachers of Latina/o students connect personally to the students' community, history, and culture (e.g., are they Latina/o themselves, do they speak Spanish, etc.)? If so, how is this manifest?
 - c. What do the teachers do to facilitate home-school connections?
 - d. Are the successful teachers empathetic to the students? How do they communicate empathy? How do they appropriately build caring relationships with students?
 - e. Is there a common thread that runs through a diversity of teachers and

teaching styles that leads to success for the Latina/o students in their care?

If so, what is it?

After analyzing the findings of my research, I discovered that the answers to all of these questions overlapped and the common thread that runs through all the teachers and teaching styles is empathy. Again, empathy is the underlying attitude which drove all of the teachers to find teaching practices that resonated with the Latina/o students, and to make curricular-, personal-, and home-school connections. Many of these teaching practices resonated with the ideas of CRP and many exemplified the empathy the teachers bring to their work.

I chose to create a Venn diagram (Figure 2) to illustrate this tangled web of questions and answers. It is not as orderly or uniform as the diagram in chapter three because, like the pedagogical approaches, some questions loomed much larger during the observations and in the analysis. The largest circle is the one illustrating the question about care and empathy. That is appropriate because, as previously stated, that is the strongest theme that I found; the successful teachers were all caring and worked to build empathetic relationships with the students. The second largest circle, almost completely eclipsing the care and empathy circle, illustrates the question, “What are the teacher practices and underlying attitudes?” The underlying attitude was, once again, empathy, and the most common teacher practices resonated with CRP. The smaller circles illustrate the other questions, those that asked about curricular-, personal-, and home-school connections. The answers to all those questions helped to explain and illustrate the teachers’ CRP practices and supported empathetic relationships. For these reasons, I

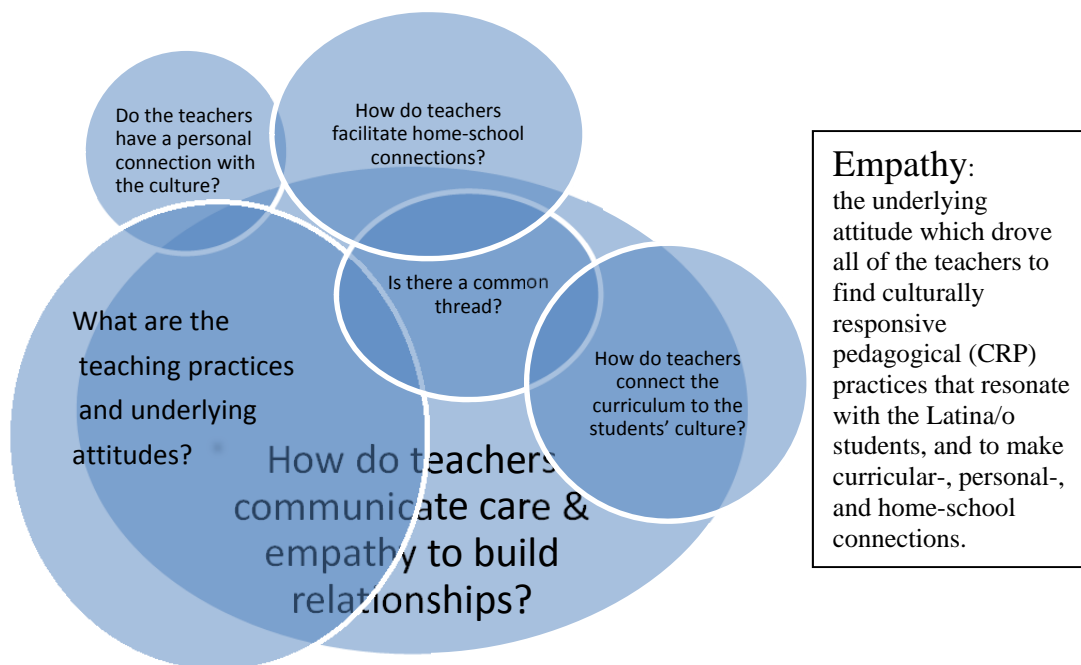


Figure 2. Venn diagram, showing the interrelated research questions; includes an accompanying sidebar with a definition of empathy in educational contexts.

organized the analysis under one major heading, empathy, and showed how empathy led to various practices of CRP. I also attempted to recognize where critical studies in Whiteness, CRT, and the research questions, intersected and overlapped. It was very difficult to tease apart the different elements, but greater understanding resulted from the attempt.

Empathy

Teaching Practices and Underlying Attitudes

As I observed multiple class sessions at Central Middle School, I struggled to find a common thread across the six teachers I was studying. Their personalities and teaching

styles varied greatly. The learning activities and classroom management methods they employed were so different, at first it was hard to see how they could all have been nominated as successful teachers. The most obvious reason for this variety is the diverse subject areas in which they taught: biology, English, foods, music, physical education, and Spanish language.

Not much similarity exists between the learning activities that take place in English and foods classes, nor between biology and physical education. The biology and Spanish teachers, Ms. Barton and Mr. Abbott, respectively, both taught almost exclusively teacher-centered lessons, but the similarities ended there. After a lecture period, the Spanish language students worked independently to complete assignments, though they could help each other and a great deal of casual conversation between students and teacher could be heard. Ms. Barton kept the students focused on activities at the front of the room almost the entire class period and she kept the topic of conversation almost exclusively on the lesson of the day, although with a very affectionate way of talking to the students. The English teacher, Ms. Fernandez, often had students working in cooperative groups, as did the P.E. teacher, Coach Hartvig. Of course, in English students were reading and writing together and in P.E. the students were playing sports on athletic teams, or lifting weights with a partner/spotter. In Ms. Sanchez's foods class, the students usually worked in small groups, collaboratively creating a food product; in the choral classes, under Mr. Torres, the entire class worked together to make music.

There were, however, similarities in attitudes between the teachers. Eventually, I began to notice that, no matter that their words, tone of voice, and teaching practices were

different, they were all very invested in making connections with students, helping them to learn, helping them to do their best. In fact, the underlying attitude of all the teachers is also the overarching theme that has resulted from the research: the teachers were all caring and empathetic. In interviews, the teachers invariably talked about the students affectionately, as *my* students (or, in the case of Ms. Sanchez, as “my children”), and talked about enjoying, liking, and even loving the students. The common thread running through the narratives of the teachers in this study was the caring and empathic positions of all six. They were really quite unlike in teaching style, classroom management, and cultural skill sets, but all six were able to communicate to students that they care; all six reached out to students to build empathetic relationships.

The teachers’ attitudes toward the students were very caring and empathetic. All the teacher participants cared deeply about the students they taught, more than they cared about their curriculum, certainly more than they cared about test scores. They also empathized with the students. Empathy does not have a precise academic definition that all scholars agreed on, but McAllister and Irvine (2002) posited that empathetic teachers “take on the perspective of another culture” (p. 433). I am reminded of Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), who told Scout, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (p. 30). Empathetic people try to understand what the other person sees and feels. For empathetic teachers, this means trying to see things from the student’s point of view and explain lessons and design classroom activities that will resonate with the student’s experiences, making learning more enticing and engaging.

Just as there is not a firm definition of empathy, there is not an agreed-upon distinction between caring and empathy. Davis (1994) defined empathy as intellectual and emotional; Warren (2012) said the emotional side of empathy is *empathic concern*. Milner (2005) implied that empathy was the practical, *doing*, side of care. In “The Language of Care Ethics,” Noddings (2012) tried to make sense of the different terminology, distinguishing between “natural caring” and “ethical caring” (p. 54). According to Noddings, “natural caring is the work that occurs regularly in congenial homes, schools, and workplaces” and demonstrated by people “by inclination...not out of duty” (p. 54). A caring person listens attentively to the perspective of another and Noddings concurred with Slote (2007), that the feeling that follows such receptive attention is empathy. This is the care that I saw at Central Middle School and the explanation that I am using.

Both Kincheloe (2004) and Milner (2007) discussed the problem of care needing to be received as such. Many teachers say they care about their students, but their words and their actions must communicate care to the students (Kincheloe, 2004). Milner (2011) also discovered that students need to get to know the teacher before they trust him or her enough to accept the care and empathy being offered and begin to build relationships. Discussing miscommunication problems between caring, empathetic people and the *cared-for*, Noddings (2012) recommended that the “biblical injunction to do unto others as we would have done unto us” be altered to “Do unto others as *they* would have done unto them” (p. 55).

Communicating Empathy and Building Relationships

All of the teachers in this study conveyed their care and empathy in different ways. Mr. Abbott sought opportunities to spend extra time, many hours, building relationships through casual conversations with students, getting to know them, and letting them get to know him. He saw and called appropriate attention to the students' uniqueness, but also saw them as part of the whole, "our students." Like the White teacher in Milner's (2011) study of CRP, over time the Latina/o students came to realize that Mr. Abbott understood them and did not essentialize their culture to a limited stereotype.

Ms. Fernandez could and would use Spanish when it would help students comprehend and learn. At the beginning of the school year, she purposefully shared information about her personal life so that the students understood her perspective and could begin to trust her.

Ms. Barton gave time and energy outside of class to help students succeed academically. She was willing to work with students nearly every day after school and on some Saturdays. Whether it was with her affectionate words or with candy, she worked to sweeten the study of science concepts, hoping that the enjoyable atmosphere would lead to learning, now and in the future.

Coach Hartvig demonstrated empathy with his actions: he understood that students like to hear their names pronounced correctly; to have a turn listening to music of their choice during workouts in the weight room; to have their ideas and values held up as examples for all.

Ms. Sanchez was an “othermother” (Collins, 1991), who openly told the students that she thought of them as “her children.” She made a point of separating curricular knowledge from knowledge of English, allowing Spanish to be used on assignments and assessments, and demonstrating care while teaching the students to also do so.

Mr. Torres, who described himself as a teacher who “[doesn’t] accept excuses” and is “willing to have hard conversations” with misbehaving or non-productive students, still made time to talk to students about their personal lives and was willing to set aside the curriculum and planned learning activities when necessary, to spend a class period talking to a student who really needed a listening ear. Demonstrations of care and empathy, and the ability to build relationships with students, are as diverse as the teachers themselves.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

All of the Central Middle School teachers in this study incorporated practices and attitudes, that touched on CRP, but not all equally attended to the three criteria enumerated by Ladson-Billings (1994) for CR pedagogues: teaching and expecting academic excellence; building and sustaining the culture of the students; and helping the students learn to take action against the injustice they see the world. In various ways the Central Middle School teachers also attended to the themes that Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) identified to explain how CRP can increase the learning for all students. They supported the identity and achievement of students. They were aware of developmental levels of middle school adolescents, taught to the whole child, and understood the value of student-teacher relationships. Each of these aspects of CRP, as observed in the six

teachers of this study, are described below.

Academic excellence. To varying degrees, the teachers in this study practiced in ways that led to academic excellence. CRP is not just about feeling good about one's place in the world. "Culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers attend to students' academic needs, not merely make them 'feel good'" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Both Freire (1970/1993) and Ladson-Billings (1994) emphasized the need for teachers to expect and lead their students to academic excellence and the Central Middle School teachers also saw that as an important goal. Ms. Barton worked hard to help her students master scientific knowledge, seldom letting the class discussions veer away from the academic topic of the lesson. She willingly sacrificed personal time to help students learn and worked with a counselor to address reading deficits, an area that a science teacher might not think is her responsibility, Mr. Torres expected all students to do their best, regardless of excuses or circumstances and communicated this expectation regularly. Ms. Fernandez did not limit the teaching of ELLs to simple or concrete knowledge, just because the students were still limited in English proficiency.

In fact, Ms. Fernandez was on the forefront of the Central Middle School faculty in holding students to academic excellence, working to ensure that her students increased their literacy skills. As she adapted the "honors English" curriculum for the ELL students, she demonstrated her belief in their ability. As Ladson-Billings might put it, Ms. Fernandez "attended to" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160) the students and their needs. The remediation of the curriculum for students of color and language minority students, denying them the opportunity to learn to think in complex and critical ways is an example

of what can occur when deficit thinking is the norm (Garza & Garza, 2010; Moll et al., 1994; Solórzano, 1997). Ms. Fernandez did what she could to counter the over-placement of minority students in special education and remedial programs (Kohli, 2008) and the dearth of college prep or gifted programs in schools that have large numbers of ethnic and language minority students (Rogers & Oakes, 2005), when she taught essentially the same lesson to her honors students and her ELLs, and sometimes moved students directly from ESL class to honors English. She believed her ELLs had the ability to think at the same level as her honors English class and she was not willing to wait for their English proficiency to improve, before stretching their cognitive abilities. This is a clear example of the academic excellence component of CRP. Such belief in student ability is valuable on its own, but it is more likely to be embraced by the student when the teacher also values and sustains a student's culture.

Building and sustaining student culture. With her extensive background knowledge of Latino cultures, Ms. Fernandez did not assume that every story featuring characters with Spanish names would be an enticing read for all Latina/o students. As she tempted students into reading with a focus on authentic cultural connections, she increased their literacy skills and their ability to succeed in all academic areas.

Mr. Abbott understood that, although the majority of the Latina/o students in the school were of Mexican heritage, it was important to acknowledge that not *all* were, and he was careful to let the students know that he understood and valued the distinct cultures and different dialects of Spanish found in Spain and the various Latin American countries. When Mr. Abbott asked a student about specific Spanish terminology, he was

asking students for authentic information that only they knew. Mr. Torres acted similarly when he taught about the connection between Latin and Spanish. By asking his Spanish-speaking Latinas for help in translating and teaching the pronunciation of Latin to the English-only speakers, he demonstrated the relevancy of the girls' native language and its academic value.

Mr. Abbott and Mr. Torres were both sustaining student cultural knowledge. This kind of teacher-student interchange honors the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992) that students bring with them to school. A teacher that honestly asks for information helps the student (and the other students) to realize that he or she possesses unique knowledge, knowledge that they learned outside of school (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). Such information gleaned from everyday life has also been called *experiential knowledge* (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

When the teacher demonstrates respect toward a student's culture, giving voice and value to other ways of thinking and being (Apple, 2004/2012; Duncum, 2010; Eisner, 2002), the student is not being asked to *subtract* from his or her identity (Valenzuela, 1999) in order to succeed in school. This respectful attitude of the teacher contributes to the likelihood that you will listen and learn what he is teaching and a cyclical pattern is revealed. Though, teaching and expecting academic excellence may be considered the first tenet of Ladson-Billings (1995) CRP criteria, respecting and sustaining student cultures, the second tenet, increases the likelihood that the first will occur.

Ms. Sanchez moved seamlessly between Spanish and English, helping all students to feel at home in her classroom. She also supported the home cultures of her students

with her “Guest Chefs” program, in which students could invite family members or others to come to the school, teach the students a cooking technique, and share a recipe.

Ms. Fernandez, Mr. Abbott, Mr. Torres, and Ms. Sanchez, all helped students maintain and build their cultural competence. They did this in ways that made logical, academic sense within their curricula. The practices were not onerous add-ons that many teachers imagine when they consider how they might incorporate CRP (Sleeter, 2012) and they belie the impression of many teachers that to be good at CRP is extremely difficult (Young, 2010).

Taking action and challenging the status quo. The third aspect of CRP, as outlined by Ladson-Billings (1995), is the importance of teaching students to understand political power and take collective action toward equity (also, Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011) and social justice. Though generally done in subtle ways, this was also present in the classrooms of Central Middle School. Like the other tenets of CRP, this one, too, overlaps and is part of a cyclical pattern. CRP is not a list of teaching strategies, but a systematic way of thinking about teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore you cannot completely separate the results of one practice from another.

For example, Ms. Sanchez “Guest Chefs” program, described above as an example of sustaining student culture, is also a practice that challenges the status-quo. When a parent from an ethnic minority group or a working class family comes to school to share specialized knowledge, it helps to break down the stereotyping that is all too common of “accepted perceptions of working-class families as somehow disorganized socially and deficient intellectually; perceptions that are well-accepted and rarely

challenged....” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 134). Mr. Torres gave similar support to a skill that is often erroneously seen as a detriment to academics, when he elevated knowledge of Spanish as a bridge to Latin pronunciation and comprehension.

It is not exactly revolutionary, but Coach Hartvig set an example of changes that can be made by a dedicated individual when he organized an after school futsal¹ league that involved parents and other community volunteers as coaches and referees. He also approached the local council of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and assisted in the organization of a local Hispanic Boy Scout troop. The BSA has a strong presence in this area, so this does not challenge the prevailing culture, but it does send a message of inclusion.

Mr. Abbott helped his students to recognize stereotyping and expected them to watch for such incidents and to share examples in class discussions. Starting with examples from the textbook and text-related videos, this was a profound way of teaching the students to question and challenge the injustice in their world. Coach Hartvig’s figurative embrace of the Latino students and their cultures also sent a positive message that challenged the status quo. Additionally, the academic achievement sought by Ms. Barton and the high expectations of Ms. Fernandez provided students with the skills that make it possible to challenge the world around them, making a difference for themselves and others. Without the skills and knowledge taught by teachers who see students as capable of learning at high levels, students cannot hope to change the world of the future. As mentioned in Chapters II and III, the city and county where this study took place is extremely conservative, both politically and socially. The ways that the Central Middle

¹ Futsal, *not futbol*, is a specific variety of indoor soccer.

School teachers challenged the prevailing attitudes may have been subtle, but they were also meaningful and intelligently planned. The prevailing culture is strongly family-oriented and when Ms. Sanchez invited family members to visit and teach the class, she was breaking down stereotypes at the same time as she was sustaining a community value. Likewise, with Coach Hartvig's analogies between successful families and success in sports, he connected to the strong family values of both the Latino community and the long-time culture of this area, helping students to see the similarities, where perhaps previously they saw only differences. Mr. Torres's use of Spanish as a bridge to Latin and traditional choral music, elevated a language that often has low social prestige, again helping students to look at the world in new way.

Critical Studies in Whiteness

Whiteness is not a pedagogical approach, but it affects teaching all the same. Whiteness permeates everything in our society, including schools and curriculum (Apple, 2004/2012). It is the cultural medium in which society exists, a nearly invisible medium, particularly to White people (Aveling, 2004; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). It is invisible to Whites in the same way that it is difficult for one to hear his or her own accent when speaking (Marx, 2006). An analogy that compares the near invisibility of Whiteness with spoken accents helps some people make sense of this point.

A spoken accent is commonly thought to be something that other people have. In the U.S., when listening to English speakers, many regional accents can be heard. There are, for example, accents particular to the southern and eastern U.S., in addition there are Canadian, British, and Australian accents, and the accents of people who learned English

as an additional language. But often, one does not recognize his or her own accent—it is believed that accents are only heard from people who come from some other place. It is the same with the culture of Whiteness. Whiteness is just seen as the normal operation of life, it is other people who have cultural traits and traditions (Aveling, 2004; McIntosh, 1990). And, just like the newcomer who clearly hears the local accent, non-Whites are much more able to discern White culture (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013).

The culture of Whiteness permeates Central Middle School. It makes up the largest portion of the school culture, everything from the bell schedule and content of cafeteria lunches, to the required courses and content of the textbooks. Two common ways that Whiteness is manifest in teaching is through *deficit thinking* (Moll et al., 1992; Solórzano, 1997) about communities of color and in the subtractive educational policies (Valenzuela, 1999) that are rampant in schools. Deficit thinking (Ronda & Valencia, 1994) is evident in the denigration of particular ethnic groups as less concerned about schoolwork, academic success, and futures of their children. It is also seen in the rampant problem of stereotyping. The racism of lowered expectations and subtractive schooling can be seen and heard in macro and micro ways in schools, whether in the visual curriculum (Duncum, 2010; Eisner, 2002), the textbooks, or the negative words and attitudes of students and teachers (Delpit, 1992; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Solórzano, 1997). Subtractive education refers to practices that seem to have the goal of stripping student of the culture of their home and heritage, to be supplanted with the dominant culture. Some educators undoubtedly think they are giving the students the tools necessary to succeed in society, but they do not seem to realize the lessons of CRP. The

student who senses respect and appreciation for who he is and where he came from, can more easily learn new skills and uncover previously unknown aptitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Subtractive educational policies not only make it more difficult to learn what the teacher or curriculum requires, they remove the possibility of learning *additional* skills and becoming bicultural and bilingual.

Structural racism undoubtedly exists at Central Middle School, as it underlies nearly every institution in the U.S., but it was not overt. While I understand that much deficit thinking can be hidden and unrecognized, even by the offender (Galman et al., 2010; Marx, 2006), and subtractive education can be committed with positive intentions, little evidence existed of these manifestations of racism in the words or practices of the six teachers I studied. There is the description, in Chapter III, of Mr. Abbott's incomplete work to expose and challenge stereotyping. In addition, Ms. Barton was heard to lament that students rarely completed homework, followed by, "If I were a parent..." but it was unclear whether or not she was castigating a specific ethnic group of students or parents.

Outside of the classrooms of the six teachers studied however, two interesting incidents that relate to deficit thinking were brought to light. Mr. Torres, in his initial interview, mentioned that his parents impressed upon him that not only did he need to go to college, but that to compete for jobs, "a Hispanic person needs a master's degree." This parental guidance indicates that his parents were aware of the deficit thinking that their son would encounter; they understood that to counter this deficit thinking from society, he needed to do more than a White person would need to do, in order to prove his ability and succeed. Another possible example of deficit thinking can be found in the

comments on the survey used to nominate teachers for the study. One of the administrators made a uniquely similar comment on every single male teacher he or she recommended:

- his strong male presence is helpful [in] reaching our Latino students
- strong paternal influence...especially important to our Latino boys
- male presence...helpful for Latinos--many of whom don't have a father figure.

This same administrator also wrote “maternal connection” beside one of the women that did not make the triangulated list, but not by the names of Ms. Sanchez or Ms. Barton, both women that I would describe as very maternal in their relationships with students. Interestingly enough, this particular survey did not recommend Mr. Torres, the one Latino male on the faculty. Rather than deficit thinking, these comments could all point to the patriarchal, religious paradigm to which a majority of the local population adheres, but the exclusion of Mr. Torres's name makes me think otherwise.

Critical Race Theory

Three of the Central Middle School teachers seemed cognizant of the presence of race and racism and actively worked against it. Coach Hartvig sent subtle antiracist messages on a daily basis. His respectful attitude, acceptance, and inclusion of diverse students and their interests, was a continual example of a White ally (Aveling, 2004). A couple years after leaving Central Middle School, a White student, now in high school, returned and told the coach, “you taught me how *not* to be racist.” A comment like this does not indicate an understanding of the pervasiveness of Whiteness, nor of CRT, but it does indicate that students noticed what Coach Hartvig did and said, and that his

antiracist stand provoked some thought, perhaps a beginning of understanding and personal change.

Mr. Abbott sent an antiracist message with the visual curriculum of his classroom (Duncum, 2010, Eisner, 2002), where all of the signage was in Spanish and which included a couple items of cultural realia, (a sombrero, a poncho, and a few woven baskets). In addition to the curricular support for his Spanish language classes, he was, in effect, saying, “this language, these items, are worthy of serious academic study.” Solórzano (1997) suggested that teachers “challenge race, racism, and racial stereotypes in our classrooms” (p. 14) and Mr. Abbott took up that challenge as he taught his students to recognize and challenge racial stereotypes in popular media, textbooks and other school materials, and in their personal lives. However, by continuing to use those same films, he inadvertently sent a second message: “eliminating stereotyping when you have the power to do so isn’t really that important.” Cultural stereotypes are a scourge of deficit thinking (Delpit, 1992; Solórzano, 1997) and encourage the trivialization of cultures (Sleeter, 2012). Leading class discussions on stereotyping and helping students learn to identify it is an important step, but Mr. Abbott’s Whiteness seemed to be limiting his ability to understand the importance of expunging it where he could (Marx, 2006; Solórzano, 1997; Tatum, 1997).

Ms. Sanchez accomplished similar demonstrations of respectful inclusion when she allowed students to answer questions in Spanish and when she invited parents, grandparents, and other community members to share cultural cooking techniques and foods. Like Mr. Abbott, she was supporting the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al.,

2005; Moll et al., 1992) that students access at home.

Implications

Recommendations

For teachers and administrators. When I first began to formulate the plan for this research, I wanted to know if only Latina/o teachers were able to make close connections and have the greatest success with Latina/o students. I also wondered if fluency in Spanish were required for success with this population. As a White, monolingual teacher of ELLs, I cared deeply about my students, approximately 70% of whom were native Spanish speakers. I knew that I had developed caring relationships with many students, but I wanted to be successful teaching them and guiding them to future life success. I was curious to know if it was impossible for me to be as successful as I could be if I were a Spanish-speaking Latina.

The success of Mr. Abbott, Ms. Barton, Ms. Fernandez, and Coach Hartvig are a testament to the ability of White teachers to have a positive impact on Latina/o students. Mr. Abbott and Ms. Fernandez did speak Spanish, but the effort they put into making meaningful connections with students, went far beyond their language skills. Their Spanish ability undoubtedly gave them the cachet of a positive starting position with the Spanish-speaking students and parents, but this initial advantage lasted only until students and parents got to know them and determined that their cultural respect matched their technical language ability.

Ms. Barton, who spoke only English, was known by parents, administrators, and

fellow teachers as a caring educator who built close relationships with students. I observed the classroom behaviors that likely led to this success. She truly cared about the students and demonstrated that care with affectionate words that indicated how well she knew the students and understood their perspectives. Ms. Barton also cared about student acquisition of science knowledge and spent time after school and on weekends to create more possibilities for that to occur.

Coach Hartvig, while essentially mono-lingual and mono-cultural, worked hard to bridge the gap between his perspective and that of the students. He learned and used accurate pronunciation of Spanish names and some Spanish words and phrases. He also learned and validated the home values of the students and worked to ascertain and meet some extracurricular needs. After many years as a successful teacher, Coach Hartvig understood that he needed to learn new practices if he wished to continue having the positive impact that makes teaching middle school a rewarding career.

As the U.S. student population becomes more diverse, and the teaching force becomes more homogenous, teachers and administrators who wish to build the empathetic relationships that encourage engagement and increase learning can learn from the examples of the Central Middle School teachers and others like them. They need to examine their beliefs about students that are culturally diverse, examine their classroom practices, and work to make the changes necessary to reach those students. However, the examples of the teachers in this study suggest that there are multiple ways to do this, multiple ways to be successful in teaching Latina/o students.

During the hiring process, administrators need to look for teachers with

empathetic and caring attitudes, teachers who understand and employ the teaching practices and attitudes that are successful with Latina/o students. The answers to interview questions should give an indication of this. When asked about strategies to help students who come from diverse backgrounds, the answer would at least give an indication whether or not the candidate has ever considered the issue. Of course, teaching candidates can always say the right things, spout strategies and jargon, and not actually be able to follow through, but an empathetic attitude that expresses care and love for the students and not just the curriculum, is important as a starting point. And, while empathy and CRP are crucial, hiring a teaching force that is diverse in language skills and ethnicity is also desirable.

Suggestions for Future Research

This is a rich area for further research. I determined that an empathetic stance toward Latina/o students drove teachers to discover the CRP practices that encouraged students to engage with their schoolwork, but which experiences or knowledge helped the teachers become empathetic and not just sympathetic? How does one become empathetic? Is this a teachable stance? If not, how can we determine which teacher-candidates are empathetic?

How is CRP best taught? I am particularly interested in the outcome differences between preservice and inservice professional development. Which one is more likely to result in changes in teacher practices? How can we help teachers understand that CRP is not an onerous add-on, but an intrinsic paradigm? Research that considers the student point of view would also be interesting. Which teachers would the Latina/o students of

Central Middle School have nominated as successful and what reasons would students have offered? What, if any, lasting effects did the teachers have on their students? Were there any effects that will be noticeable as they move into high school and beyond? These and other research questions need to be explored as we strive to find the best way to prepare students to take their place in the global community and improve the world for all of us.

Conclusion

This research study has been an attempt to determine the teacher attitudes and practices that are successful in reaching the Latina/o students, a growing population in U.S. schools, and a population that has struggled to find academic success. The indications of this study are that empathetic and caring teachers are often driven to find culturally responsive practices that encourage and increase student engagement and learning.

The six teachers that participated in this study were not similar in style or personality and none of them were perfect teachers, if there is such a being. There were many times as I observed them teaching, that I thought of a different way that I would approach lesson plans or situations. That is an empowering message for all teachers. There are multiple ways to be a successful teacher and multiple ways to demonstrate your care and empathy. Every teacher and every student is different and the varieties of interactions innumerable.

There are many factors that influence student engagement and achievement in

school; teachers are but one. Latina and Latino students are intelligent and capable and, like all students, they deserve the best education possible. They deserve teachers that respect them and their families, and have faith in their ability to succeed. The success and improvement of our communities and our world, rest on the ability of all our children to learn and to grow intellectually, socially, and humanely. This success will be aided by each empathetic relationship between a teacher and a student.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Administrator and Teacher Survey

Survey² to Administrators and Teachers

Who are the successful teachers for your Latina and Latino students?
Please circle the names.

Please share any reasons or criteria that you used to answer the question, using the back of the paper, if necessary.

CTE/FACS

English

Health

Math

Music/Performing Arts

Physical Education

Science

Social Studies

Special Education

Visual Arts

World Languages

² Department names were followed by names of faculty members; all names have been removed for anonymity.

Appendix B
Parent Survey

Survey³ to Parents

Who are the successful teachers for your Latina and Latino students? Please mark the names.

If you do not have reason or evidence to suggest any teacher on the list is particularly excellent, you may leave all names unmarked.

¿Quiénes son los mejores maestros para los estudiantes latinos? Por favor, marque los nombres.

Si en su opinión, ninguno de los maestros(as) mencionados son excelentes maestro(as) para los alumnos Latinos, no es necesario marcar un nombre.

Please share any reasons or criteria that you used to answer the question.

Por favor agregue el criterio o la razón por la cual eligió a algún maestro.

CTE/FACS

English

Health

Math

Music/Performing Arts

Physical Education

Science

Social Studies

Special Education

Visual Arts

World Languages

³ Department names were followed by names of faculty members; all names have been removed for anonymity.

Appendix C

Parent Email Letter

Email Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Queridos Padres,

My name is Glori Smith. I am a _____ teacher and a student at Utah State University. I am conducting research on excellent teachers and I am asking parents complete a very short survey on the successful teachers for Latina and Latino students at _____ Middle School. Please click on this link to complete the 5-10 minute survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T7NXJGH>

Thank you!

Mi nombre es Glori Smith. Soy una maestra y enseño en _____. También soy un estudiante en la Universidad de Utah (Utah State University). Estoy conduciendo un estudio de las/los maestros(a) excelentes y estoy pidiendo su ayuda para que contesten una pequeña encuesta basado en su opinión, quienes son los(a) maestros(a) excelentes para los estudiantes Latinos de _____ Middle School. Por favor haga clic al enlace adjunto para completar la encuesta de 5-10 minutos.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T7NXJGH>

Gracias!

Appendix D

Parent Letter of Information

Letter of Information (to parents)

Introduction/ Purpose Dr. Sherry Marx and Glori H. Smith, a graduate student, are conducting a research study to find out more about the teaching practices of successful teachers of Latina and Latino students. Your student will be involved as a secondary participant in a classroom where only the teacher is being observed. Approximately 8 teachers will be observed.

Procedures Teachers will be observed and filmed in six class sessions. This observation will include interactions with students. Though the researcher will attempt to film only the teacher, students are likely to be inadvertently filmed and recorded. All data will be kept confidential and students will not be identifiable in any reports of the research. Though the observations will take place during regular school hours, class time will proceed as usual, with little or no interruption.

Risks There is minimal risk to this study. Students are not the primary participants being observed, however the inadvertent filming may be considered a small loss of privacy. Students will not be identified in any report of the research, so the risk of loss of confidentiality is small. Even so, I will take steps to reduce this risk, such as keeping all notes and recordings in private, locked cabinets and destroying all such materials as soon as the report is complete.

Benefits Researcher hope to learn the key practices and underlying attitudes that can contribute to the research literature, allowing other teachers to learn from them as they teach Latina/o students in the future.

Explanation & offer to answer questions Glori H. Smith has explained this research study to your student and has provided information to you through the use of this Letter of Information. If you have research-related questions, you may contact Dr. Sherry Marx at (4335) 797-2227 or by e-mail at Sherry.Marx@usu.edu or Glori Smith at (801) 362-9392 or by e-mail at glorihsmith@gmail.com

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. If you have any concerns please feel free to contact the researchers.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the researchers will have access to the data which will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer in a locked room to maintain confidentiality. The final report is estimated to be completed by August 1, 2014. If your student's face can be viewed in the video recording, his/her face will be blurred and images made unidentifiable. Video recordings of class interactions will be seen only by the Dr. Marx and Glori Smith. The video recordings will be destroyed no later than August 31, 2014.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any

questions or concerns and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu to obtain information or to offer input.

Investigator Statement “I certify that the research study has been explained to the students, by Glori Smith and that this Letter of Information has been provided to the parents.

Sherry Marx, Ph.D, Principal Investigator
435-797-2227
sherry.marx@usu.edu

Glori H. Smith, Student Researcher
801-362-9392
glorihsmith@gmail.com

Appendix E
Letter of Informed Consent

Letter of Informed Consent

Introduction/Purpose Dr. Sherry Marx and Glori H. Smith, a student researcher, are conducting a research study to find out more about the teaching practices of successful teachers of Latina and Latino students. You have been asked to take part because you were identified by the school administration, faculty, and parents as successful in teaching Latina/o students. There will be approximately five (5) total participants in this research.

Procedures If you agree to be in this research study, you will be formally interviewed two times and observed and filmed while teaching six class sessions. You will be asked to read the interview and discussion transcriptions to check for clarity and given the opportunity to add any additional information that you think is relevant. It is expected that participation in this research will take at least five hours of your time, outside of class observations, for which there is no monetary compensation.

Risks Participation in this research study may involve some limited risks or discomforts. Discomforts include the inadvertent time required when an observer attends your class (e.g. some conversation, minimal disruption of class procedures, student questions) the time required for two interviews in which you will be asked about your teaching practices and philosophies. Though you will not be identified in any report of the research, there is a small risk of loss of confidentiality, but the researchers will take steps to reduce this risk, such as keeping all notes and recordings in private, locked cabinets and destroying all such materials as soon as the report is complete.

Benefits While there are no direct benefits from participation in this study, an indirect benefit to you is the confidence that likely results in knowing that colleagues and parents identified you as a successful teacher of Latina/o students. Benefits to others include illuminating key practices and underlying attitudes that may contribute to the research literature, allowing other teachers to learn from them as they teach Latina/o students in the future.

Explanation & offer to answer questions Glori H. Smith has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Marx at (435) 797-2227 or by e-mail at sherry.marx@usu.edu or Glori Smith at (801) 362-9392 or by e-mail at glorihsmith@gmail.com

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits. After the study begins, if you choose to withdraw, please contact Glori Smith by phone or email (801) 362-9392 or glorihsmith@gmail.com). Information already gathered will be destroyed and eliminated from any reports of the study.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the researchers will have access to the data which will be kept in a

locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer in a locked room to maintain confidentiality. To protect your privacy, personal, identifiable information will be removed from study documents and replaced with a study identifier. Identifying information will be stored separately from data and will be kept until the final report is made, approximately August 1, 2014, then the study identifier will be destroyed. Until faces can be digitally blurred and images made unidentifiable, video recordings of class interactions will be seen only by the researcher, Glori Smith. Video recordings will be destroyed no later than August 31, 2014.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at Utah State University has approved this research study. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury and would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu to obtain information or to offer input.

Copy of consent You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and keep one copy for your files.

Investigator Statement “I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.”

Sherry Marx, Ph.D, Principal Investigator
435-797-2227
sherry.marx@usu.edu

Glori H. Smith, Student Researcher
801-362-9392
glorihsmith@gmail.com

Appendix F

IRB Letter of Approval



Institutional Review
Board
USU Assurance: FWA#00003308
Expedite #7
Letter of Approval



FROM:

Melanie Domenech Rodriguez, IRB
Chair

True M. Rubal, IRB Administrator

To: Sherry Marx, Glori Smith

Date: November 27, 2013

Protocol #: 5457

Title: Learning From The Teaching Practices Of Successful Teachers Of Latina And Latino Students

Risk: Minimal risk

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under expedite procedure #7 (based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, November 9, 1998):

Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of this research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of this research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

Appendix G

Teacher Participant Interview Guide

Teacher Participant Interview GuideLearning from the Teaching Practices of
Successful Teachers of Latina and Latino Students

Name:

Age (voluntary):

How many years have you taught?

Subjects taught?

Grade levels?

Locations?

Have you always lived in Utah? Please tell me a bit about your background.

Tell me about your path to becoming a teacher. (Did you always want to teach? How did you decide on the secondary level and on a subject area?)

What do you think is the most important knowledge and/or skills of a successful teacher?

Do you have a teaching philosophy?

Any specific management practices?

Why do you think you were identified as a successful teacher for Latina and Latino students?

What is it that helps you make connections with Latina/o students?

CURRICULUM VITAE

GLORI H. SMITH

1452 West 1050 North • Provo, UT 84604 • glorihsmith@gmail.com
Home 801/374-0639 • Work 801/221-9720 • Cell 801/362-9392

Education

Ph.D., Utah State University, Logan, UT. Curriculum and Instruction. Specialization: Multicultural Education, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Dissertation: <i>Learning from the Teaching Practices of Successful Teachers of Latina and Latino Students</i>	2015
M.A. Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. Film and Media Literacy Education. Thesis: <i>Learning English Through Interactive Weblogs: Student Experiences Blogging in the Secondary ESL Classroom</i>	2009
B.A. Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. History Teaching.	1990
Additional Teaching Endorsement: Russian Language, English Language Arts, English as Second Language	2002
Additional Training and Certifications SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Training CITES (Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schools) REACH (Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage) Trainer Seminar	2004 2000 1998

Teaching Experience

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT	2011-2014
Clinical Faculty Associate ScEd 353, Multicultural Education TELL 440, Integrating Content and Language Instruction ScED 276R, Exploration of Teaching Student Teacher Supervisor, Advising and Evaluating Secondary Education committee member	
Timpview High School, Provo, UT	1990-Present
Russian Language and Culture United States History English as a Second Language AP United States Government and Politics English Language Art Dynamic, challenging environment in multiple subject areas. High expectations for all students, learning and social interaction through rigorous and creative classroom activities, individual differentiation, and cooperative learning strategies	

University of California, San Diego

June-July 2010

Imperial Valley College Upward Bound Program
Designed/taught writing course to first-generation collect students

Awards

2002 Timpview Teacher of the Year, selected by colleagues

Grant Writing

Smith, G. H., Ortiz, M. (2005), *Spanish Language Library*, Utah State Office of Education, \$1000 (funded)

Smith, G. H., Van Wagoner, K., Scott, D. (2013) *La Conexión Latina*, Kellogg Foundation, \$716,000 (submitted)

Publications

Smith, G. H. (2009). *Learning English through interactive weblogs: Student experiences blogging in the secondary ESL classroom*. Electronic thesis published by Brigham Young University. Available online at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/ETD/image/etd3000.pdf>

Smith, G. H. (2009). Obtaining, processing, and constructing English: Blogging in the ESL classroom. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. Available online at <http://www.jmle.org/index.php/JMLE/article/viewFile/37/8>

Presentations

Savova, L., Hastings, A., Smith, G., Murphy, B. (2012). *Using video/digital media tools to teach the big four skills*. Academic Session at the 2012 International Conference of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Smith, G. H. (2009). *Media literacy for English language learners*. Multimedia presentation at the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) Conference, Detroit, MI. Also presented at the Provo School District ESOL training meeting in October 2009.

Smith, G. H. (2004). *Helping English language learners across the curriculum*. Workshop presented at Provo School District Curriculum Conference. Provo, UT.

Smith, G. H., & Schoonmaker, T. (2001). *The Immigration Project*. Presented at the 2nd annual BYU CITES Conference, Sandy, UT.

Leadership Committees and Positions

Provo School District Mentor	2007 – 2011
Timpview Professional Development Team	2005 – 2010
Timpview At-Risk Task Force	2005 – 2009
Provo District ESOL Strategic Planning Team	2003

Provo District Curriculum Development Team	2002
Provo District Standards and Benchmarks Team	1997 – 2001
Timpview Diversity Team, Chairperson	1996 – 2002

Professional Memberships

National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), manuscript reviewer	2009 – 2011
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)	1997 – present
National Association of Multicultural Educators	2014