

DIVERSITY PREPARATION: A CASE STUDY OF AN URBAN
UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Beth Hattier Laderer

December 2012

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Abstract

The population of students enrolled in schools across the United States is rapidly becoming more diverse, yet teacher demographics remain fixed. The widening gap between students and teachers, both inadvertently and deliberately, causes the creation of unequal learning environments for students. Teacher preparation programs, like Quality Urban Education for Students and Teachers (QUEST), housed in the University of Houston, have a responsibility to prepare teacher candidates for their work with diverse students in order to create a learning environment where each student can grow and discover in a way that celebrates and respects individual differences. This critical case study investigated the perceptions of nine teacher candidates enrolled in the final semester of their preparation, the student teaching semester. Using dialogical interview data, teacher candidate beliefs about teaching diverse student populations, the socially constructed nature of diversity, and personal viewpoints on the preparation received during QUEST were investigated. The study included program document analysis as well as observations of QUEST teacher candidates interacting on their field campuses. The study utilized Carspecken's (1996) process of reconstructive analysis as well as Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yasso, 2006) to draw conclusions during data analysis. The findings suggested that teacher candidates, while demographically diverse themselves, maintain and perpetuate views of student success consistent with the established definition of achievement regardless of student difference. Their teaching was strongly affected by their past experiences in school particularly

considering personal treatment by individual teachers. Additionally, authentic field work had a strong positive impact when paired with a high-quality mentor teacher. This study may expand the knowledge of practices for preparing teacher candidates for diversity as well as providing information for potential improvement of the QUEST program.

Keywords: teacher preparation, diversity, multicultural education, critical qualitative case-study

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In order to investigate the nature of diversity preparation during the Quality Urban Education for Students and Teachers (QUEST) program, this study explored the beliefs and perceptions of teacher candidates who were enrolled in the program's final student teaching semester, QUEST 3. In addition, this study examined documents that were used during the program to evaluate teacher candidate competencies and to communicate program expectations.

Background of the Study

It is no secret that national demographics, and those quantifiable data routinely used to describe students in public education, are perpetually changing. The students in school today are not the same children enrolled fifty years ago, nor will they be the same even five years hence as the United States continues to become more diverse culturally, linguistically, and economically. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that by 2019 there will be increases in the Hispanic public school population by 36%, Asian American by 31%, and American Indian by 13% (U. S. Department of Education, 2011). Additionally since 2000, the number of children living in poverty has increased by 2.5 million, totaling 14.1 million in 2008 (Children's Defense Fund, 2010). While the make-up of the student population is shifting, teacher demographics have remained fixed. In fact, nationally, almost 85% of public elementary and secondary school teachers are white and from middle-class backgrounds (Assaf, Garza, & Battle, 2010; Aud, Hussar, Kena, Bianco, Frohlich, Kemp, & Tahan, 2011).

These statistics tell of a growing population of students with diverse backgrounds, a phrase replete with multiple meanings. The lack of consensus about what it means to be diverse among scholars, public figures, and those in education, has led to a breadth of research but little forward movement or change to address inequities in our nation's school rooms (Cochran-Smith, 2003). For example, Grant and Gibson (2011) present findings based on an extensive review of historical and present day literature about what it means to be diverse. They explain that diversity is "largely synonymous with race, ethnicity, and/or culture" (p. 23) as well as socioeconomic status and language, but they found little evidence in the extant research about how students are religiously, sexually, and ideologically diverse. Grant and Sleeter (2010) additionally make the point that even while education has the tendency to categorize its students and teachers based on race, gender, and the like, it is important to note that categories overlap and oftentimes a person interacts with many diverse categories, which may even be contradictory.

These researchers illustrate the many ways a student can be categorized as diverse, which brings to light some central questions for the field of education. What happens to the learning process for teachers and students when there is a cultural, linguistic, ethnic or economic gap between them? What is the result of the lack of understanding and connections between students and those responsible for facilitating connections with previous knowledge and experience? How is trust established when a teacher is viewed as an outsider? In general, these beliefs can create a negative learning experience for students of diverse backgrounds resulting in an academic achievement gap or dropping out of school early (Madrid, 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011).

Blindly citing national statistics sheds only a superficial light on the overall transformation of our nation's people, but it neglects to tell the whole story and historical truth of the children who have been educated in this country. Historically, education has sought to create a model student who represented certain beliefs about success. These beliefs coincide with white majority in the United States, which controls the definition of excellence for all students in schools. In order to be considered successful, a student with diverse background experiences has had to adapt to this meaning of achievement, often without regard to that which makes him or her diverse. Ladson-Billings (1999) noted that diversity, in the past, was considered a disadvantage requiring a minority student to conform to the prescribed culture of whiteness.

The goal of education, as perceived by the general public, is to facilitate every student's intellectual, emotional, and social growth; yet, the cultural, linguistic, and economic differences between teacher and students have resulted in a significant achievement gap for students with diverse backgrounds (García & Guerra, 2004; Madrid, 2011; Rowley & Wright, 2011). Milner (2011) explains that "because white teachers and students of color, in some ways, possess different racialized and cultural experiences and repertoires of knowledge and knowing both inside and outside of the classroom, racial, and cultural incongruence may serve as a roadblock for social success in the classroom" (p. 336). The disparity is especially evident when an educator, deliberately or inadvertently, acts in ways that further alienate diverse students. Documented cases include teachers who hold deficit views (Delpit, 1995; Scott & Ford, 2011; Settlage, 2011), believe in assimilation to white norms (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Hollins, 2011), lack cultural competence (Ball, 2009; Brown, 2004), and perpetuate the notion that education

is colorblind (Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Powers-Costello, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 1995). However, this roadblock is not insurmountable; Ladson-Billings' (2003) research suggested that a teacher is able to develop a "worldview that differs from the dominant worldview" by directly analyzing and challenging the teachings and experiences of his or her own schooling that were meant to create beliefs consistent with those in power (p. 399).

Deficit Thinking. Deficit thinking is the belief that minority students are less capable of success because they have different experiences than what has been historically valued by the white majority. The concept has been studied by numerous scholars in the field of multicultural education. They have found that minority students are perceived, sometimes intentionally or unknowingly, by white educators as academically and emotionally deficient when compared to white students, which results in unequal learning opportunities and treatment in the classroom (Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Laughter, 2011; Sleeter, 2008). Schools and educators who retain deficit views often fail to recognize or reflect on these beliefs because being white and middle class is the expected norm of society, constructing a standard that appears "natural" to those groups and are applicable to all individuals. Therefore, blame is placed on the children and families who are different and whose background experiences stray from the norm. Deficit thinking creates tension between education and the children it strives to serve because it perpetuates failure (Delpit, 1995; García & Guerra, 2004) while producing a learning environment devoid of trust and common understandings between student and teacher (Duncan-Andrade, 2007).

Deficit thinking is further responsible for the low public perception of the work done in schools. According to mainstream stereotypes, changing demographics are posing a particular “problem” for today’s schools ranging from student disobedience, irresponsibility, lack of motivation, low standardized test scores and teacher ineffectiveness (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans, 2011). Deficit thinking can also be blamed for minority students receiving more discipline and punishments at school than their white counterparts (Losen, 2011). Yosso (2002) and Madrid (2011) likewise support that deficit views are responsible for creating less access for minority students to educational experiences required for the knowledge which is necessary to seek higher education. Tacit or overt beliefs and labels such as these continue the historical deficit view of minority students and those with diverse life experiences.

Assimilation. Additionally, the notion that schools are factories meant to create students who are similar in nature forces those who are different to assimilate to established norms to create a cohesive society (Apple, 2001; Marvasti & McKinney, 2011; Sleeter, 2008). Students of diverse backgrounds are often taught that white norms are the expected standard of achievement. If a student does not hold up to these expectations, they are perceived as unreachable (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Jay (2003) likewise supports this idea in stating that “schools, through their organization, structure, and curriculum (both formal and hidden), aid in the maintenance of hegemony by acculturating students to the interest of the dominant group and the students are encouraged and instructed, both explicitly and implicitly, to make those interests their own” (p. 7). Ladson-Billings’ research likewise supports the notion of minority children

only achieving success when properly “trained” in the skills needed to succeed in mainstream American society (1995b, p. 476). Sleeter and Grant (2009) offer a unique example about the process of assimilation to white norms when describing diversity in textbooks. These scholars explain that textbooks might represent readings and examples from those of diverse backgrounds, but they do “not necessarily [present] diverse viewpoints” (p. 23); instead, these diverse authors convey similar messages as the white norm. Because assimilation occurs in subtle ways, it is difficult to isolate and even harder to change.

Colorblind Society and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Apart from deficit thinking and assimilation, there are those in this nation who would say that racism is no longer a problem, so it should not be at the forefront in present day America. It has been found that many white, middle-class teachers believe that they are immune to discussions of race, racism, and multicultural awareness because they teach “all students” and not to any one individually or differently (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gordon, 2005; Schofield, 2010). Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its scholars cite this colorblind treatment as problematic in American society and its schools. While this theory has its roots in the legal justice system in this country, theorists have forged connections between the unjust treatment of those under the law as well as in education. CRT explains that racism is normal in our society, and formal equality under the law cannot account for everyday unequal treatment of minority cultures (Delgado, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Yosso, 2006). Lynn & Parker (2006) put forward:

This type of racism can be characterized as those mundane practices and events that are infused with some degree of unconscious racial mal-intent. It can also be

described as those institutional policies and practices that are fair in form but have a disproportionately negative impact on racial minority groups...Furthermore, everyday racism, in the form of microaggressions, is incessant and cumulative as practiced in the everyday actions of individuals, groups, and institutional policy rules and administrative procedures. (p. 260)

CRT attempts to uncover hidden forms of racism including the colorblind perspective practiced by many teachers. Even though the name “Critical Race Theory” denotes race as a primary focus, the theory has progressed and extended through the years to also include issues of gender, ethnicity, culture, language, sexuality, and other categories marked as different to include ways that diverse people are dominated through mainstream society all with the goal of creating a more equitable society.

Teacher Preparation

When considering a teacher candidate’s preparation for working with students, there are significant problems with the approaches of deficit thinking, assimilation or being colorblind. Ignoring a student’s racial and ethnic composition or creating even a slightly negative environment makes a teacher less likely to meet that student’s needs academically and emotionally thus perpetuating the status quo where “people of color trail their white counterparts on virtually every indicator of social, political, and economic well-being” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 183). Ignoring or blaming a person’s difference creates rampant inequities in schools and does not address how to incorporate more students into their own learning.

While there have been explicit calls for diversity to be valued in society, there are continued implicit ideas conveyed that do not support this viewpoint. Cochran-Smith

(2003) highlights that “No Child Left Behind” (U. S. Department of Education, 2001) is guilty of framing the education discussion in terms of equity and equal treatment yet infused in this document is a tacit understanding that minority students are in need of help to meet standards of whiteness. Duncan-Andrade (2007, p. 618) writes that “an equal education attempts to provide the same education to everyone, which is not equitable.” National education policy is feigning arguments of equality when not delivering.

There is no denying that problems have persisted in education; still, teachers have the ability to understand their own identities and teaching practices as socially constructed to become better educators for all of their students. Each teacher has the ability to be successful with each of her students regardless of her background, culture, ethnicity, or race (Delpit, 1995; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Nieto & Bode, 2008). Teachers possess the power to become agents of change within their schools in order to democratize education by honoring multiple perspectives, belief systems, and experiences when provided with theoretical coursework and positive urban field experiences (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Duncan-Andrade, 2007, 2009; Sleeter, 2008).

Successfully preparing teachers to connect and engage diverse students requires a special set of skills that can be cultivated during undergraduate preparation by actively engaging, critically reflecting, and gaining cultural sensitivity during coursework and field experiences (Nieto, 2000; Nieto & McDonough, 2011). From Banks’ (2009) theory, multicultural education is not only a conceptual idea replete with an examination of culture, language, traditions, beliefs, and understanding of individual differences, but it is also a *process* of giving respect to those individual differences and engaging in the ways

of social justice to create a more equitable and democratic society. By making a legitimate and sincere space for our students to freely connect their lived experiences with curriculum content, students will be confident in their acceptance in the classroom community and more apt to strengthen their contributions and knowledge.

Changing demographics present an opportunity for educators to deeply examine underlying assumptions about diversity, personal beliefs, social norms, and the interplay of these factors to determine the impact on the lives of students in classrooms. Duncan-Andrade (2009, 2011) explains that students experience a loss of hope in their lives because of repeated inequities if teachers do not take the responsibility of turning their lives around. Therefore, the examination of tacit beliefs about diversity must take place to create equitable educational opportunities. It should be a chance for those of us in education to take the time to reflect on our own racial identities and lived/taught ideologies in order to create a more just society that is not blind to color or race (Ball, 2009; Grant & Gibson, 2011; Sleeter & Milner, 2011); rather, we make a nod to difference and talk about it openly without fear of reprisal and retribution to understand how our perceived notion of reality impacts the lives of those we teach. This trend toward a multicultural America is an opening for those of us in teacher education to create a program geared at preparing teachers to meet diversity without fear but with acceptance, care, love, and courage, or the rights of young people and the ideals on which this country was founded will be lost.

Reflection of My Teacher Identity

In reflecting on the nature and meaning of this research study, I was reminded of my own experiences as a growing educator so many years ago. I was and still am very

influenced by events that occurred in my courses and fieldwork during my years as a graduate student seeking secondary certification. In the action of this reflection, I was curious to know what had changed in the past ten years since I graduated in order to further perceive my own biases about the topic of this research study. How have my own past experiences shaped how I view this research and the role of the university in creating opportunities for teacher candidates to succeed with the students they teach?

The result of this reflection is a bit of confusion and chaos. I hesitate to say, but teacher identity and the process of thinking through experiences and beliefs is messy and, as research would have it, contextual. I am many things in many areas. Olsen (2011) writes that teacher identity is flexible, situated, and a “relation between some kind of core identity and multiple selves” (p. 259). My identity is mixed and entangled in my own expectation and social expectations. Identity, as I see it, becomes embroiled in interpretations, desires, and relations. Consequently, I feel the need to give a small disclaimer. At any given moment the following identity characteristics and reflection are subject to change with regard to the circumstance at hand; therefore, it produces not a completely different individual, rather a further combination of possibilities. However difficult the process may be, I am all too aware of its necessity. It is impossible to be entirely unbiased and detached from experiences, social stereotypes, and my upbringing, but beginning an analysis of where I came from can help in determining the beliefs that played a role in this research and the possible effects those beliefs could have on the teacher candidates and conclusions for this research.

Rather than move too far backward in time telling memories and experiences from my childhood, I will start with August, 2012. During this month, I drove through

Slidell, LA, my previous home and backdrop for thirteen years of education. I passed through familiar streets while thinking about the past and, almost unknowingly, my reflection began. This burgeoning city provided the foundation for my educational experiences, and while I cannot leave this home behind, I am embarrassed by the social lessons established by my schools as I can see them today, after years of advanced education. For example, when I entered high school at the fresh age of fourteen, I believed the entire world to be Catholic! How did I get through so many years of education and believe that I was just one of the masses of practicing Catholics—the religion that was moral, just, and natural. I was brainwashed, legally, by my Catholic elementary and middle school. They experimented on me, and there was no committee to say that the experiment was ethically wrong and socially misleading. Had I continued in Catholic school, who knows what I would be doing with my life? I do not want to denounce that I am Catholic; however, the faith I have and practice today is often very problematic for me. I have a difficult time justifying the hypocrisy of the past that still remains and the proclamations of self-righteousness in a world full of diversity.

My embarrassment includes high school experiences as well. I attended a racially diverse public school in a conservative part of Slidell. While there were racial divides within our academic classes and entire campus, I did not notice any problem at the time. Only upon reflection do I understand why there was only one African American in my high school AP English class. As a student in that school, I saw only that I must succeed academically, which meant listening to teachers and reciting material back to them; I did not question the status quo. I learned the lifestyle, and I learned it well. These lessons limited my way of knowing the world and did not give me a choice to question or resist.

In fact, I made a right-hand turn onto the street where my high school is located. I could not resist; I had come so far already. I remembered that once I graduated with my master's and earned certification, I was offered a teaching position at this school. I was pleased to have a job offer, but the principal and his associates did not feel the need to interview me or discuss what type of education I had received, my teaching philosophy, or even that I had a master's degree. The only reason why I was going to receive the job was because I was a graduate of this wonderful school (read with sarcasm)—I was a perfect student by my high school standards, and they wanted me back because I was a product of this environment. I almost took the job, familiar and comfortable. But, I reflected on what it would mean for me to teach there. I would become a purveyor of dominant ideology repressing the marginalized and preaching test scores. I just could not do it. I had learned too much about reflection and critical pedagogy during graduate school. Thankfully, reflection kept me from making a decision that would make me ultimately miserable and unsatisfied.

So, after high school, I was off to college—a nineteen-year-old who was socially naïve, politically unfit, and individually malleable. What had I gained during all those years of education—perhaps the fundamentals of writing or math equations, of course I passed the state required tests and received a scholarship. But really, how much of that did I retain? Was it worth it? What did I gain? My first year in college I spent in near depression, partly because I left home and had to become someone apart from my mother. I am her daughter. She is a go-getter of education, advocate for strong women, survivor of a messy divorce, and steadfast conservative. I laughed when I think of my last year living under her roof (May, 2001). I could not discuss political issues with her

because should would just stare at me. I later discovered that she believed me to be too freethinking and yet oppressive in my opinions. Imagine that! I learned a valuable lesson. I can retain my views, but do not be so adamant that I silence those who are entitled to take part in the discussion.

My second year in college, I was told that I should not be an English major. I was devastated. I was meant to study literature. I wanted to have conversations about novels at dinner parties with colleagues (what a figment!). This experience is still the stuff of legends. When discussing the difficulties in learning to write well, I always tell my students the story of the professor who made me cry in his office because he said I was an unfit writer. I did not drop his course although I was sorely tempted. Instead, I endured and successively received better marks on each paper until the final exam—an essay that was to discuss the historical debate concerning the theory of the self and “I.” I showed how strong-willed I could be and wrote words that were professionally scathing, but I turned the essay in knowing I would never have contact with this man again. I received a “B” in this class by some miracle, and I thought I had finished and put this behind me.

That was until I sat in the quad one day at LSU and heard his voice calling me from about a hundred feet away. I reluctantly followed him to his office where he proceeded to tell me how proud he was of my new awakening, voice, and strength in thought and words. He talked of how this essay was the first where he could hear me and my connections and my anger. I made an A on that paper, and to this day, I still keep it and smile when I come across it to remember the pain and triumph. I’ve made copies of it as a reminder of what I learned from this man. Although I do not like to admit the influence he had, it was tremendous. I felt more confident in my ability to break away

from the experiences I had in high school that taught me to fit into a certain mold that did not accurately portray who I was. I learned to be accepting of failures because they are part of life and opportunities for growth and transformation. Following this encounter, my third year in college was enlightening, my fourth even more so. What had made the change? Why was it such a turning point in my life? Was it only due to this professor who took a hard line with me?

To begin, I changed my concentration to “Writing and Culture.” I did not know it at the time, but I wanted to know more of the “whys,” the reasons individuals and groups in our society used literature and other forms of communication and expression. I did not want to know the facts or professor criticisms about a particular piece of literature that seemed so irrelevant. I felt more invested in the belief that fiction is worthwhile in that it offers an opportunity to look into lived experiences and people’s lives instead of a work of “new critical” text. I wanted to understand literature as a human element not removed from the author or the context in which the piece was written. This concentration let me break through the barrier of tradition in order to explore concerns in my own life and that of society. This was the stuff of real people.

In “Writing and Culture,” I discovered cultural theory and criticism. Several courses allowed me to become more involved in making sense of the life I lived. I had thought that my life was natural and meant to be without question. I never looked deeply into my economic status or my gender or my sexuality. I just assumed a role that I was taught to live. But here, my writing came alive, and I was actually becoming involved as an independent thinker in my own education—no, my own learning.

Why did I become so involved? I felt that I was part of my surroundings instead of just going through the motions, learning what I had to learn to get by, to make the grade—all those bourgeois culture, high achievement standards. But “I” was not in it. The “I” that I describe here is one who wants to be socially involved; the I who wants to be more than something of a book worm; the “I” who longs to make some” kind of mark in the lives of others. This “I” is one who wants to be an active questioner of the assumptions of society and the origins of those assumptions. One can see with these thoughts, that becoming an educator would eventually be my goal. I graduated in four years with an English degree, and French minor for what that was worth, and enrolled as a master’s student of education.

How can I better describe my social awareness fruition than with my master’s education program? This program, while laborious and challenging, gave me the tools to look at life and society as something that I was part of and interacted with daily, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by events around me. But, interaction is too simple of a word. I feel that any student who enters into a classroom can be given the opportunity to see the world and learning differently than the views established by the status quo. I was able to break away after many years, but I wanted to give students the opportunity that I never had.

During my master’s years, I became not only a reader of social and educational theory, but one who took the first steps to learning how to use critical pedagogy. I delved into some traditional coursework concerning secondary English methods and classroom management, but the real work happened in courses taught by two professors who were both social activists and researchers. These professors brought light to the individual and

institutional experiences, especially that of the underserved and disadvantaged. With these two, I was able to take a broad look at education and a specific investigation of how English education can be transformed into the reading and questioning of society and culture, thus avoiding teaching students to blindly follow established norms.

While attending classes at night, I was able to engage in fieldwork during the day. I was first placed at a suburban school, much like the one I attended while growing up. I saw little diversity in either students, by the traditional definition, or teaching methods. Although my mentor teacher from this school has gone on to receive awards for her excellence, such as teacher of the year, she was very traditional. I tried to mimic her teaching style while teaching *Macbeth*, but it just did not feel right. The discomfort could be that I was still a novice and nothing would feel comfortable, but I could not help but think about how reading a play line by line and stopping to explicate each phrase was not the best way to go about the study of this work.

From there, I moved to an urban school out the outskirts of downtown Baton Rouge and placed with a teacher who would, in her words, “only take the best.” I believed this to be a compliment, but why was I considered so good? I had succeeded in the previous semester of overcoming my jitters, but all I had done was imitate my mentor teacher and try to follow her advice. “I” was missing from the classroom—my old failing had reappeared. Initially, I was scared. Of course, these were new students, but their school was surrounded by a barbed wire fence that closed once school was in session. The building was in great need of repair, the students tended to mill around going to class late, and they looked different—99% African American. I admit that I found myself guided by negative stereotypes; I had a preconceived notion of the students I was going

to teach, and it was not fair. Did I know these individuals, their hobbies, their interests, their stories? No. So I listened. My mentor teacher was, to say the least, unconventional. She taught from behind her desk (a result of a physical disability she had since birth) yet commanded attention as her students flocked to her class. I wondered why they came to her class when they were tardy to every other class. What I found is that she listened. She cared. She valued her students' contributions in a way that I did not see in any other teacher. In fact, she spent more time in class talking with them about their lives than she did with the content, but it worked. She caught their attention then supported them with readings that represented their own lived experiences. She was a true master in the classroom. I was so fortunate to be able to watch her work and to be part of the lives of her students.

In this teaching context, I was able to conduct my thesis research project. I wanted to explore meaning making and student perceptions of media stereotypes. For eight days, the students watched movies or current television episodes (which aren't so current anymore) and responded to issues of subject matter, character portrayals, stereotypes, and beyond. While not all of the responses and conversations seemed very involved, I would not trade those moments when the students made larger connections and spoke against (or for) their own "natural ideas." Questions were raised and issues were put out there for all to consider.

At the end of that program, it is very challenging for me to relate what my experience taught me about myself. I found myself in a place I did not think I could be, especially, in front of a classroom. My first mentor teacher can attest to that first day of student teaching and the traumatic experience. How very hidden I was, my face in the

paper, not looking up for a second because at any moment they might decide I was a fraud, a phony, just looking to get out of school. But, I did learn to be more confident, more in tune with the context and the surroundings, and more comfortable with the role and identity I had assumed with students who were very different from me. I learned that I have a genuine problem with the separation of school and home. Separating the lessons learned in the classroom alienates students from the value of learning and increased social awareness. Students become numb to school, numb to teachers, and indifferent to others. Needless to say, that master's program was revolutionary.

In moving to my role at the University of Houston, I continued to think about this current study with the prompting and blessing of my research advisor. For a few months, I was able to work for the University of Houston as a QUEST 2 Facilitator. I would travel into the field and observe teacher candidates in their very first experiences teaching a class of students and then talking with them to reflect on these experiences. I witnessed mentor teachers finishing lessons or office administration engage in dialogue with students and parents. But while observing these teacher candidates, it was apparent that there is an increased culture of testing and one standard for all. I will thank NCLB and the state of Texas for that, but I wanted to see the questioning of assumptions that were so important to me through my teacher education program, but I did not. I wanted to see students being empowered through their education, not taught standardized testing for the masses. I wanted to see “the ability to teach the historical and present-day circumstances that are complicated by issues of race, gender, and class...a substantial knowledge of diverse cultures...or an attention to community contexts” (Chapman, 2011, p. 245). I realized these were extreme expectations for novice student teachers, but they enrolled in

QUEST—Quality *Urban* Education for Students and Teachers. These QUEST 2 students were diverse themselves; many would identify themselves as minorities in race, religion, or age. Doesn't that mean they would understand the difficulties faced by students who have had no advantage in school? Don't their own experiences assist them in wanting to create something different and equitable for the students they are working with during the semester? Or, are they so indoctrinated into the "system of school" that they remain unaware of the harm in not connecting with their students? These are heavy questions.

Although these teacher candidates were in the field, they seemed to be enacting lessons learned from not only their own schooling experiences but also their course of study during the QUEST program. This program is influential in determining what they understood about their own identities, as I learned from my master's program and learning to teach, as well as about teaching individuals who are different from themselves (Hollins, 2011). By seeing these teacher candidates struggle with new teacher identities and motivating students who represented difference, I wondered about the nature of teacher preparation. I knew it must be possible to be transformed because I was, but I wondered what the QUEST program does to support teachers to be able to teach in a way that can bridge the difference gap. Thus, this research study was born.

Program Description

QUEST is an undergraduate degree program housed in the University of Houston's College of Education. This program aims to prepare teacher candidates for the work they will do as educators, but the work teachers do in the field is continually changing to respond to the needs of students. While perpetual change is a challenge for veteran teachers, it also becomes a challenge for teacher education programs to maintain

the same rate of change within their coursework and field experiences to effectively prepare its teacher candidates to negotiate these variations after graduation. One change that needs to be addressed during teacher education is the changing nature of the student population. The population of the country, and Houston especially, is growing more and more diverse (City of Houston Planning and Development Department, 2011), and these demographic changes make it necessary for teacher education programs, like QUEST, to examine the methods used when preparing future educators. Therefore, this research will investigate the beliefs and perceptions of teacher candidates who are currently enrolled in the program as well as the methods employed by QUEST to prepare teacher candidates to work in diverse, urban environments like the city of Houston.

To provide a complete picture of the context for this study, it is necessary to describe the unique features which earned the QUEST program recognition as the *Distinguished Program in Teacher Education* in 2007 from the Association of Teacher Educators (University of Houston College of Education, 2011). QUEST sets forth two broad goals for teacher candidates enrolled in the program. Through coursework and field experiences, the candidates are to 1) create a culture of professional responsibility and 2) create a culture of inquiry. The QUEST Teacher Candidate Handbook (2011) identifies activities that represent professional responsibility such as conferring with academic advisors to keep abreast of program requirements and working deliberately to grow as educators by actively engaging in academic classes and public school placements. Actively building a culture of inquiry includes activities such as employing reflection as a means to learn about personal teaching and gathering data about students from multiple sources in order to more completely understand their learning.

In addition to these two broad program goals, the students are expected to abide by and represent the “Twenty Professional Attributes” of good teaching during their courses and in their teaching (QUEST Teacher Candidate Handbook, 2011, p. 8). Some general categories include personality and responsibility characteristics and communication and professional relationship skills. Specific traits within these categories include cooperation, maturity, rapport with students, awareness of individual differences, and reflectivity. The document describing the attributes is lengthy, so only the diversity component will be highlighted in this research; however, a complete account of the attributes is provided in Appendix A.

In the “Twenty Professional Attributes” of the QUEST Teacher Candidate Handbook (2011), diversity is described as “Awareness of Individual Differences: The candidate recognizes and empathizes with human differences in ethnicity, gender, physical ability and intellectual ability, and demonstrates sensitivity to social expectations in varied environments” (p. 9). This characteristic is assessed by program facilitators and instructors when teacher candidates are in the field and completing their student teaching, but it is unknown how teacher candidates engage with the topic and prepare for field experiences during coursework.

The program serves teacher candidates who want to teach both elementary and secondary subjects. For elementary certification, an education major is offered. For secondary certification in various subjects from English to social studies, the program offers an education minor while candidates work toward a major in their content area. Regardless of the designation, he or she progresses through coursework in educational theory, teaching methods, educational psychology, technology in the classroom, special

education, and multicultural studies. The teacher candidates also develop their applied teaching practices through three phases of the program out in the field.

QUEST 1 takes place over two semesters¹; here candidates gain practical experience while observing teachers doing their everyday work. The candidates are required to gather practical knowledge by observing teachers as they carry out professional tasks including: classroom management, content area methods, professional development, record keeping, and assessment. QUEST 2 is the second phase of field experience. It requires a candidate to not only observe but also to interact with a cooperating teacher and the classroom students for a total of eleven weeks during one semester. The candidate completing QUEST 2 is required to teach two full lessons; one is observed by a university facilitator, and one is video-taped for analysis between the teacher candidate and a second university facilitator. Both lessons are used for reflection, growth, development, and preparation for the following semester's student teaching. Additionally, a candidate enrolled in QUEST 2 completes methodology coursework that is directly applicable to the semester's field experiences.

After successful completion of QUEST 2, the teacher candidate must apply for admission into QUEST 3, the student teaching semester. During this phase, the candidate is immersed in the work of teaching alongside a cooperating teacher. This student teaching experience is a full-time job requiring the candidate to engage in planning lessons, conferencing with parents and students, grading, attending meetings and

¹ QUEST has undergone significant changes to the undergraduate teacher education program since this study began. However, the study's participants were not included in the changes to coursework or fieldwork, so information consistent with the experiences of the participants is included here. Chapter 5 considers some of the changes made to the program when making suggestions for the program based on this research.

professional development. The candidate is not meant to take any additional courses or work during this part of the program since he or she will be fully engaged in teaching. The teacher candidates are observed by their university instructors during this phase of the program to assess growth according to the “Twenty Professional Attributes” previously noted.

Problem Statement

Because of the demographic disparities between teachers and students, it becomes necessary for teacher education programs to examine its methods for preparing teacher candidates to be successful in facilitating academic, emotional, and social growth of all students, especially those of diverse backgrounds. Teacher education programs are responsible for cultivating teachers who not only recognize the difference of others but who are also prepared to deconstruct socially constructed identities and stereotypes in order to avoid hidden acts of discrimination.

There is a need for research addressing concrete examples of how teacher preparation can aid teacher candidates in reaching out to students with diverse backgrounds. There is research about the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs that suggest ways to assist teacher candidates to be successful, but to date research has not been conducted to investigate how the QUEST program prepares teachers or if the program is effective. We already know that there is a gap in the demographics between students and teachers. We know that this gap can cause subtle and overt problems for both teachers and students, and we also know there are ways to combat these inadequacies. But is QUEST implementing practices that will be successful in the urban

Houston context, and what do the teacher candidates believe about the preparation they are receiving during the program?

The Purpose and Professional Significance of the Study

Since the QUEST program seeks to have teacher candidates graduate with the best possible opportunity for success in today's world of education, this study took a closer look at how teacher candidates perceive their learning experiences with QUEST during courses and fieldwork as well as their beliefs about diverse student populations. To develop a more detailed illustration of the candidate's impressions, this study also considered representative program documents used to facilitate and evaluate the growth of a successful, urban educator. Consequently, the research questions were

- How do teacher candidates in QUEST 3 define and describe their own beliefs and experiences concerning diversity and teaching diverse populations?
- What are the perceptions of teacher candidates currently enrolled in QUEST 3 about their diversity preparation?

The results of this study may be used by program administrators and instructors to reflect on and improve coursework and field experiences for teacher candidates. The study process and subsequent conclusions can also be fundamental in forging relationships with community members and school district officials by providing them with well-equipped teachers and opening a line of communication to discuss the current needs of the district. QUEST's unique location in an urban locale creates easy access to a steady stream of qualified teacher applicants for Texas's largest and most diverse school districts.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

As stated previously, Critical Race Theory (CRT) attempts to uncover subtle and overt forms of racism. This theory is particularly relevant for this dissertation study because it strives to create educational equity by providing diverse students with a means to be successful, which are not consistently implemented in the educational system today. While there are many levels of inequity in schools such as funding and policy decisions, CRT considers it all. However, for the purposes of this research, CRT will be used to frame the discussion of QUEST and teacher candidate beliefs without delving into the QUEST program philosophy or the state regulations which guide it. As student success is directly impacted by teachers, it is imperative to expose those attitudes and values that could be harmful to diverse student populations.

CRT relies on four fundamental claims, which are useful here. Yosso (2006) summarizes the main beliefs of the theory:

- “The Intercentricity of Race and Racism” accounts for the overwhelming presence of racism in our society and how it is socially constructed and carried out through institutions of this country.
- “The Challenge to Dominant Ideology” argues that impartiality and objectivity are disguises for privileging majority groups. As such, education, which claims equal treatment and neutrality toward all students, is false.
- “The Commitment to Social Justice” recognizes that schools are places which carry out a political agenda including subtle subordination of minority groups. Committing to social justice actively seeks to transform these social institutions.

- “The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge” seeks to legitimize the experiences and voices of minority groups by openly seeking out personal experiences and stories from these groups that can form a counter narrative to established norms.
- “The Interdisciplinary Perspective” searches for multiple methods for understanding the experiences of these minority groups including taking a look at the history of oppression and discrimination. (p. 7-8)

In using CRT to frame the discussion, this study assumed that diverse student populations have been and are currently set at a disadvantage in the current system of education.

Therefore, the study sought to uncover instances of the tacit use of dominant ideology in order to locate areas of transformation and personal growth in addition to creating a space for legitimizing the voices of the diverse participants in this research.

The following chapter reports on the research that has informed the field of multicultural education and preparation for teachers to be successful in diverse, urban environments.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a large quantity of literature, spanning at least six decades, concerning teacher education and the preparation for teaching diverse populations. The field is broad, and researchers and theorists have had their fair share of debate and controversy over key questions in America's system of education concerning who should teach diverse children, the qualities of a successful teacher for diverse populations, the methods used to instruct future teachers, and the fundamental goal of education (Grant & Gibson, 2011). Few concrete answers have been identified despite extensive research in the areas of diversity and multicultural education.

This review of literature attempted to create a synthesis of the historical context and current research surrounding the area of undergraduate teacher education as it pertains to preparing educators to become successful with diverse populations of students. It goes without saying that teacher education has a complex agenda when preparing teachers, including state standards and social expectations; however, diversity cannot be ignored with the growing number of minority students in today's schools. Furthermore, diversity inclusion should be a chief concern in teacher education so as to fulfill the needs of students who are historically underserved and subsequently failed by the current education system.

This review of literature is organized thematically around concepts that have been studied both in the past and the present by scholars in the field. The thematic sections include empirical research and theoretical stances on diversity which describe how

human difference impacts the learning that happens not only with teachers in the classroom but also the students. Diversity is a social issue, so the effects are broad reaching with implications beyond the classroom. First presented are the various definitions of diversity in schools, teacher education, and society at large. Secondly, the characteristics of a successful teacher for diverse populations are illuminated followed by the methods used by teacher education programs to prepare that successful teacher. Following the methods section, the review explains challenges for teacher education programs that strive to incorporate diversity and multicultural education. Lastly, laced throughout this literature review are the connections between the research and theory which contextualize and support this study of QUEST.

Diversity

The Definition. Understanding the various constructions of the word *diversity* is important to recognizing the nature of much of the controversy surrounding the inclusion of diversity and multicultural education in K-12 schools and teacher education. For the purposes of this research, exploring the perceptions of diversity for those involved in teacher education and the teacher candidates themselves will better prepare the QUEST program for adapting instruction and methods to meet the needs of the teacher candidates. On the surface, diversity simply evokes ideas of difference and multiplicity; however, there are more complex ideas. These ideas are historically framed and referential which consistently influence an individual's impressions and expectations of another.

Most often, it had been found that diversity pertains almost exclusively with issues of race (Lyon, 2009). Lyon surveyed teacher candidates about what it means to be diverse and found the majority of answers dealt primarily with race and those living in

urban areas. While problematic, this conclusion was not surprising since nationally most teacher candidates are white females who define difference based on outward characteristics. Similarly, Laughter's (2011) research examining teacher education and diversity acknowledged this reality; she explained that when considering issues of diversity there are beliefs about race that are based on historical social mores. She mentioned that race is the most prominent description of diversity because individuals notice others' physical characteristics at first glance, although this impression often gives an incomplete and inaccurate portrayal of race. Montagu (1997) and Banks (2010) went on to explain that race is a problematic category of diversity because differences in physical characteristics are linked, historically, to deficiencies in mental capabilities. Deficit thinking is discussed further in this review under the "Challenges" section. Suffice to say here that physical appearances have been the leading element upon which differences are measured.

Grant and Gibson (2011) equally contributed that race is often synonymous with diversity especially in schools when there is a tendency to categorize students for the reporting of standardized testing and academic achievement gaps. These categorizes give the public a way to increase scrutiny of the differences in academic success among demographic categories. They further argued that such a limiting view of diversity is problematic since there are many factors that define one's individuality and identity. Race is usually construed as being situated contextually, socially, and politically, yet it is often not investigated for its intangible nature within various contexts, and an individual's inclusion in specific categories is socially constructed (Banks, 2010). When describing racial categories, Banks made clear that the social category of race often

“reflect[s] the social, economic, and political characteristics of a society” (p. 18) regardless of an individual’s personal characterizations. The fundamental issue here is a tacit propensity for human beings to classify others based on physical characteristics.

Apart from racial categories, the current research suggests that education has expanded its categories to include the differences of nationality, gender, health, age, geographic region, social class, sexuality, religion, social status, language, and ability/disability (Banks, 2010; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2003; Grant & Gibson, 2011; Laughter, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Expanding diversity into this range of characteristics gives more freedom for an individual to define herself based on separate historical and contextual experiences; however, the fact remains that socially constructed categories are simplified and one-dimensional portrayals of a person’s unique features and attributes. For the purposes of this research, I will use the idea put forth by Pang & Park (2011) that diversity is the “social context of race, culture, religion, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and disabilities” (p. 64). This notion of diversity recognizes and emphasizes that categories are constructed and, while society uses them to define “others,” they do not necessarily represent the totality of an individual’s identity. The superficial categorization of individuals can cause the creation of unjust stereotypes for teacher candidates who have had little experience with diverse individuals.

Ultimately, there is no one definition of diversity, although it continues to expand itself as more and more understanding of an individual’s identity is explored, understood, and respected. It is important to recognize the many facets of diversity because this research delved into the nature and preparation of teacher candidates for their work with students who are diverse and who have been placed in categories that may or may not

accurately define them. Understanding how teacher candidates perceive and interpret diversity is a key to their growth as educators who not only recognize difference but who also respect and enrich learning within classrooms and school communities for the betterment of society.

Diversity in Education Policy and Standards

Among the number of definitions of diversity, it was likewise essential to contextualize the national, state, and institutional policies and standards that frame a teacher education program like QUEST at University of Houston. Using this frame of reference gave background information as to the standards which guide the undergraduate program's expectations of teacher candidates.

No Child Left Behind-the National Standard. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was passed as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. When passed, it had bi-partisan support from legislators in our nation's Congress, and it was meant to bolster accountability for states and schools in promoting success for students and closing the academic achievement gap for disadvantaged students. Title I of the act states, "The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 15). The emphasis in the law is on the words "all children." Grant and Gibson (2011) argued that this phrase is problematic because it simplifies and overlooks a deeper understanding of the identity make-up of "all students," essentially categorizing them based only on their demographic difference (p.39).

Additionally, Grant and Gibson explained that NCLB prioritizes teacher influence on the academic achievement of students by mandating that each core content area

classroom be staffed by a highly qualified teacher. This highly qualified educator is one who holds a bachelor's degree, demonstrates content proficiency by passing a state exam, and maintains state certification for the content area in which they are instructing (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). There is no mention that a highly qualified teacher is able to teach "all students." Instead, the policy appears to take a somewhat hypocritical stance towards diversity and its impact on a student's education. While the policy claims that all students should be successful, there is no acknowledgement that highly qualified teachers should understand multiculturalism and diversity; rather, content knowledge is considered the sole predictor of a highly qualified teacher (Howard, 2006).

NCLB has ushered in an era of testing and accountability (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Whether intentionally or unintentionally, this education policy has created a system that emphasizes a narrowly defined set of skills for the measured success of students and teachers. Educators, schools, districts, and states feel the pressure of increasing standardized test scores thereby taking some focus away from the skills students need that are not objectively testable, such as being democratic, reflective, and caring. Banks (2010) went as far to say that "the world's greatest problems do not result from people being unable to read and write [instead] being unable to get along and to work together to solve the world's problems..." is the true failing of this system of testing (p. 5). As a result of NCLB's ambiguous language about diversity and its focus on highly qualified content teachers, the education system has undervalued the power of multicultural education and diversity in exchange for categorizing and simplifying students and teachers based on their demographic labels.

State Teacher Certification. While NCLB determines some laws the states must follow, the majority of education policy, including teacher certification, is determined by the state. Examining state teacher certification standards provided a clearer understanding of the practices and guiding principles of teacher preparation programs. Programs like QUEST endeavor to graduate teachers who hold the characteristics, knowledge, and skills required to pass state certification tests.

Akiba, Cockrell, Simmons, Han, and Agarwal (2010) conducted a review and analysis of state teacher certification and teacher education programs. The analysis found that while all states included some type of diversity language, most of the language presented only a vague outline that teacher education programs could then interpret for their own purposes. The study analyzed the standards using Sleeter and Grant's (2007) five approaches to multicultural education. These researchers uncovered that most states, including Texas, were characterized as endorsing the "human relations" and "exceptional and culturally different" approaches; this position proves problematic for teacher education programs striving to develop teacher candidates who will be successful in urban settings. They also found that almost half of the states took a deficit view of diversity when subscribing to the "exceptional and culturally different" approach; in other words, these certification standards convey that minority students need additional or remedial skills to be successful in mainstream America. It is worth mentioning that this research was published in 2010, but the data was collected in the 2005-2006 academic year. Texas certification standards were revised in 2008; however, the language remains consistent with the "human relations" and "teaching exceptional and culturally different" approaches as subsequently described.

Texas Standards for Teachers “Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities” (State Board for Educator Certification, 2008) have four overarching standards for all teachers, elementary and secondary, seeking certification in the state of Texas. Assumedly, these are the standards and goals that guide the QUEST program in graduating students who are ready for certification. Two of the standards address individual differences and diversity, so they are noted here; see Appendix B for a total list of the certification standards.

1) Standard I: The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment.

2) Standard II: The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence (p. 1).

These standards represent a similar perspective as the NCLB legislation in describing a teacher who is able to design instruction and learning environments for “all students” without any consideration to individual differences thus creating further marginalization and disadvantage for diverse groups. Chapman (2011) explained, “Although many states require students to have multiple fieldwork experiences and some course work focused on diversity, their teacher licensure standards do not discuss the teachers’ need to understand race and racism, marginalization, classism, or sexism as an integral set of skills for teaching children in the United States” (p. 250).

Undergraduate Teacher Preparation. Finally, the QUEST program evaluates its teacher candidates on attentiveness to diversity within a classroom setting and wider

school community using the “Twenty Professional Attributes” (see Appendix A for entire list). The QUEST Teacher Candidate Handbook (2011) states,

Awareness of Individual Differences: The candidate recognizes and empathizes with human differences in ethnicity, gender, physical ability and intellectual ability, and demonstrates sensitivity to social expectations in varied environments.

Implementation: The candidate will be evaluated on this attribute in all interactions in the program, including coursework, meetings, and field experiences. He or she will be aware that the general expectation may require alteration of his or her customary behavior by changing that behavior to meet the expectation, whether it be in appearance, dress, language, or some other dimension of his or her social presence. (p. 39)

While simply being stated here, there has been no research to date to determine how this program’s diversity expectations have been implemented in the program’s courses and field work or even how teacher candidates are assessed on this particular attribute.

Successful Teachers of Diverse Students

Determining the characteristics of a successful teacher is difficult, and researchers have been asking and arguing the same question since educational research began (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Grant & Gibson, 2011; & Ladson-Billings, 1995a & 1999). However complicated it is to map out these features, teacher preparation programs benefit from structuring coursework and field experiences around these characteristics to ensure quality graduates, much like the QUEST program’s “Twenty Professional Attributes” (Appendix A). These attributes serve as a guide and lend themselves to more accurately judging the potential success of teacher candidates once in the field. If a

teacher candidate acquires these attributes, the success of students in the classroom increases, given that teacher quality has been repeatedly linked to increased student achievement academically and socially (Ball, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Duncan-Andrade, 2007). So what are the characteristics that should be used to evaluate whether a teacher has been or will be successful, especially in diverse, urban settings?

At first, when considering attributes of successful urban educators, general perception sometimes leads to stereotypical and simplified versions of such teachers presented through media and films such as *Freedom Writers* or *Stand and Deliver* (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). These educators are courageous, demanding, indefatigable, compassionate, and trustworthy. They seem, according to Duncan-Andrade, to possess a “mystical gift that allows them to reach the unreachable” (pp. 1620-1621). These teachers may appear to work magic and possess a certain *je ne sais quoi*, but research provides examples of successful teachers whose stories are not told on the big screen but are equally as compelling. Examining these characteristics and implementing instruction and field work that shape these attributes can facilitate the development of successful teacher candidates and teacher education programs.

The National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) organized the teaching profession as the intersection of three professional practices: knowledge of learners and their development in social contexts, knowledge of subject matter, and knowledge of teaching (p. 11). These components are emblematic in this age of accountability and testing; teacher candidates can be tested and measured on all three of these aspects. But a score on a certification

test does not equate to successful teaching. There are other characteristics that need to be explored. Darling-Hammond (2006) later explained that quality teachers demonstrate knowledge about teaching and learning theories, language, and culture. This active knowledge can impact a student's individual experiences on learning and can increase teacher reflection on his or her own teaching in order to build upon previous practice to develop stronger learning opportunities. This set of skills requires a teacher to be able to communicate across differences and to be able to form relationships with students who may have wholly distinct life experiences. However, the trend to deem a teacher successful solely on the basis of a standardized test is problematic according to Chapman (2011) and Yosso (2002) who explained that these tests cannot measure empathy, the ability to critique inequities in society, the capacity to build relationships with students and community members, or the understanding of cultural contexts.

Duncan-Andrade (2007) also reported on teacher attributes, based on research of a three-year program aimed to encourage and assist urban teachers who are dedicated to social justice education. He used qualitative methods of observation, interviews, and group discussions to develop ideas about the characteristics of successful urban educators. By working with a group of twenty teachers for three years, he discovered that all truly successful teachers possessed five similar characteristics, or "pillars." They include (1) critically conscious purpose, (2) duty to students and community, (3) preparation for lessons and materials, (4) Socratic sensibility (or lifelong learning), and (5) established trust with the students. Although these pillars appear to be nearly inaccessible, Duncan-Andrade was confident they can be taught, though he does not offer suggestions for how they should be taught during teacher preparation.

Duncan-Andrade presented some interesting facets of a teacher's personality that predisposes him or her to be successful; these facets were also supported by the research of Ladson-Billings (1995b). While this is an older study of teacher attributes, she presented some findings that are still relevant to teacher education today, especially for those teachers who are seeking to teach in diverse, urban environments. During her critical qualitative study of successful teachers, she queried the parents in the school community wherein teachers were the most successful with the students, and then she sought to discover what characteristics made these teachers so successful with the students. Along the way, she not only found common characteristics, but she was also able to formulate a theory of culturally relevant teaching. Teachers needed to build the skills of culturally relevant pedagogy, including skills to help "students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). She suggested there were several theoretical underpinnings of CRT because individual teachers are different while maintaining some degree of belief in the following ideas. CRT teachers maintain "conceptions of self and others," which is a category encompassing high expectations for students, artful teaching, strong links and relationships within the community, and caring for that community. The second proposition is "social relations" that consists of a flexible classroom organization for teaching from students, a strong relationship with each student in the classroom, a developed community of learners, and a classroom collective. Finally, a CRT teacher has a critical "conception of knowledge," meaning that he or she believes knowledge is socially constructed. Knowledge must be viewed

critically to question inequities that might exist; teachers must be enthusiastic about learning to provide scaffold instruction and practical assessment.

Kinloch (2011) had a different scheme for discovering what characteristics are important for urban educators—ask the students. She brought twelve teacher candidates and eighteen high school students together in order to facilitate a conversation about what it meant to teach and learn in urban society with the assumption that dialogue is often missing between these two groups. She sought to account for students' academic interactions and understandings to convey the ideas to preservice teachers. During the qualitative research study, Kinloch found that the high school students often felt misunderstood by teachers who are different than they are. For example, her students talked of needing teachers who “reject negative characterizations of urban students' intellectual capacities” or those who maintain “deficit views” (p. 159). Students also felt that teachers and students needed to work together during planning and learning to build a democratic community of learning with authentic lessons based on lived experiences.

Furthermore, Howard (2006) suggested that empathy is necessary to be successful with diverse students. He writes,

Empathy requires the suspension of assumptions, the letting go of ego, and the release of the privilege of non-engagement. In this sense, empathy is the antithesis of dominance. It requires all of our senses and focuses our attention on the perspective and world to step outside of dominance, to see our social position in a new light, and connect with the experience of others who see the river of diversity from a different perspective. (p. 77-79).

Much like Duncan-Andrade (2007, 2011) and Howard (2006) described characteristics of teachers which cannot be tested on state certification exams. The ability to possess empathy or to instill hope comes from something much deeper in a teacher's personality.

There truly are a number of qualities that a good teacher possesses, and it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to promote the growth and development of these attributes. But how are all of these attributes to be cultivated during the short number of undergraduate years? Some scholars contend that these characteristics cannot be taught; rather, the qualities are intrinsic that enable some to become good teachers and others, who do not possess the personality or life-experience, will be failures (Haberman, 1995; Morrier, Irving, Dandy, Dmitriyev, &Ukeje, 2007). Others argue that it is more important to emphasize the "process and purpose behind a teacher's pedagogy than to the person carrying it out" (Duncan-Andrade, 2007, p. 620); these seemingly unattainable attributes can be learned through the process of becoming an educator. This idea is an important assertion because if the sole measure is by innate personality characteristics, then we give more support to the illusion of a super-hero-like teacher that no one can become. If this is the case, what will happen to our students? Regardless of the natural characteristics or lived experiences of the individual who wants to be a teacher, there are characteristics that can be developed during teacher education. So how are teacher preparation programs facilitating the success of urban teachers? These scholars have set forth a challenging agenda for teacher education programs to facilitate the growth of a future teacher that encompasses all of these traits.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory began as a lens by which to examine the “objective” nature of the laws and regulations of this country. It was not necessarily meant to connect to education specifically, although these legal scholars contend that the theory is interdisciplinary. There are connections between the two, especially when analyzing education and racism. Legal scholars, for example, view *Brown vs. Board of Education* as a reconfiguration of the unequal status of African Americans instead of a total dismantling of a broken system. Bell (2004) explained that *Brown* is a “magnificent mirage” that served to feign only a superficial change to the status quo of education. Almost sixty years after what was thought to be a landmark case, schools continue to be segregated, especially in urban areas (Bell, 2004). While *Brown* was mostly about African Americans receiving equal treatment under the law, the same notions can be applied to other minority students who immigrated to this country, especially in urban areas like Houston. Bell (2004) even states, “The statistics on resegregation...painfully underscore the fact that many black and Hispanic children are enrolled in schools as separate and probably more unequal than those of their parents and grandparents attended under the era of ‘separate but equal’” (p. 114). Urban schools are repeatedly understaffed, underfunded, and underachieving.

In order to explain the failure of this case, Bell described the idea of “interest convergence.” He states “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policymaking decisions. This convergence is far more important for gaining relief than the degree of harm suffered by blacks or the character proof offered to prove that harm”

(p. 69). This act is an unspoken contract between the two parties that profited a country, historically, when its international reputation was at stake in fighting against spreading Communism. Bell argued that policy-makers of the time were concerned over promoting the image of American democracy rather than truly granting necessary rights and treatment to citizens of the country. The interests converged between African Americans and whites to create the decisions of the court in this case of equal education. This case used a revised rhetoric to mask the true consequences of the case instead of honestly changing the shape of American education and society (Milner, 2008).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) further established a connection between the historical use of critical race theory, stemming from legal scholars, and applying its foundations to that of education. Although this article was written in 1995, their arguments remain valid primarily in that race and racism continue to be important issues in our nation's schools. Other scholars have continued the argument after this original article including Dixon and Rousseau (2005) and Lynn and Parker (2006) among others. One facet of the critical race theory argument is that of "whiteness as property". Usually property is considered based on a person's material objects and possessions, including the size of a bank account or house; however, in this country critical race theorists contend that "property is a right rather than a physical object" (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005). Further, Harris (1993), a legal scholar, explained that "the legal legitimization of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (p. 1715). The right of property includes the right to exclude as historically demonstrated by the exclusion of people of color from schooling, then creating separate schools, and now it is shown as

people of color are grouped in large urban schools with low amounts of public funding and staffed by unqualified teachers. Furthermore, it has been studied that African Americans and other minorities are repeatedly pushed into lower tracks in school, including special education, while excluding them from the academic rigors of college track courses.

The six facets of critical race theory help to frame the discussion of treatment of minority students in schools. More specifically, they are

- 1) Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
- 2) Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy.
- 3) Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law...critical race theorists...adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
- 4) Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
- 5) Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
- 6) Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6)

Even though this theoretical tradition began with legal studies, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) brought it to the forefront of education studies because of the importance of eradicating racism in schools to create a more just society by giving voice to those

experiences that do not fit the traditional norm. However, just lending an ear is only a first step to creating a more just schooling system. Critical race theorists also advocate for action once a situation is understood and acknowledged. Howard (2006) suggested that America's system of education will not change unless its teachers are prepared to transform themselves; "There will be no meaningful movement toward social justice and real educational reform until there has been a significant transformation in the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of white Americans" (p. 6).

College of Education Requirements

First, an institution housing a teacher education program must have a commitment to promoting the values of multiculturalism not only by formulating a mission statement reflecting such belief but one which is also evident at every physical setting and carried out during all interactions. The institution should recruit diverse instructors and students, include multicultural components of coursework, participate in diverse community outreach, and strive to embrace diverse experiences (Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998; Gay, 1997). In other words, diversity should be situated in every facet of university life, respected at every turn, and held in the hearts of individuals conducting the business of education (Grant & Gillette, 2006). However, this is a lofty goal to reach.

Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang, and MacDonald (2005) conducted a survey of 116 teacher educators to examine their views about multicultural education and diversity within institutions of higher learning. The researchers found that the faculty believed diversity to be an important asset as well as an important factor in their teaching, yet they expressed differing opinions about how to approach guiding and teaching future educators in respecting diversity to become inclusive educators in their own classrooms.

These researchers concluded with a call for continued research in the development of a shared vision of diversity among faculty members who teach in the program.

Assaf, Garza, & Battle (2010) conducted a qualitative study of their teacher education program specifically focusing on the instructors who work directly with teacher candidates. They wanted to determine the level of diversity coherence among faculty members. Using interviews, focus groups, and documents from courses the faculty taught, such as syllabi and assessments, the researchers found four themes concerning diversity inclusion among faculty members. The instructors conveyed a belief that it is important for teacher candidates to gain understanding and experience working with diverse populations, but they differed on the best ways to incorporate such a study within their own courses throughout the program, much like the Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang, and MacDonald (2005) study. The disparity represents a lack of program coherence which is essential in establishing a teacher candidate's growth as a future educator through continuous and varied coursework.

Bruch & Higbee (2002) also conducted a study of developmental education faculty members' beliefs about diversity and multicultural education. The survey went out to 67 faculty members, but only 10 surveys were returned. With the small number of data sources, the researchers found the faculty members all believe that diversity is an important issue in the development of a successful teacher, yet, much like the previous studies here, the faculty members were not optimistic that they were adequately prepared to guide their students in reflecting and approaching diversity for themselves. Although the faculty believed diversity was important, some surveys regarded that they felt their

peers held deficit views of minority students in their classes and did not represent a good model for their students of multicultural inclusion.

Milner (2005) made the added suggestion that faculty members in colleges of education are not prepared to guide their students in incorporating diversity into methods and courses in pedagogy so that students can explore and understand issues of diversity in lesson preparation and delivery. He states, “We cannot assume that faculty members who teach our education students have a commitment for teaching for diversity, possess a superior form of knowledge about diversity, or even believe that covering such issues is central to improving the learning opportunities for all students in public schools” (p.782), yet he explained that it is necessary for these faculty members to engage in such studies during their courses in order for future teachers to gain more advanced knowledge about curriculum and diversity than gained during a single foundational multicultural education course. Additionally, as is noted in the multicultural coursework section following, further consideration and reflection is needed for a teacher candidate’s growth than just a single course in order to engage change and transfer learning theories (Kyles & Olafsen, 2008).

In addition to the fundamental beliefs which guide the teacher education program, the institution must also fund projects which increase development of a multicultural curriculum and establish research endeavors which study institutional practices and multicultural curriculum. Teacher educators all hold individual beliefs about diversity and how to incorporate the study of it within curriculum, but it is essential to have a shared vision of inclusivity throughout a college of education in order to grow successful teacher educators.

Multicultural Coursework. Research has provided mixed results when examining the impact of multicultural courses in isolation within an undergraduate curriculum mostly because there is little transfer between the lessons learned within these courses to how experiences occur in reality (Gay, 2009). Yet, there is a tremendous need for multicultural coursework which closely examines race, class, gender and culture because if there is a deficiency in this area, or if it is poorly executed, future teachers and teacher education programs risk perpetuating inequality in schools (Chapman, 2011). Additionally, Dixson and Dingus (2007) explain that if multicultural education is exclusively the responsibility of a single, stand-alone diversity course for teacher candidates “students may not have the opportunity in their courses to further interrogate their understanding of and discomfort with the issues and topics in the token multicultural course (p. 650).

Akiba (2011) conducted a quantitative study of 243 pre-service teachers who were enrolled in a foundational multicultural course. Her goal was to examine if there were changes in teachers’ views on diversity and minority populations as a result of engaging in coursework and topics of multiculturalism. Additionally, she strove to incorporate how these pre-service teachers’ personal characteristics played a role in their beliefs and the amending of these beliefs to ones that are more equitable. She used pre- and post-course surveys to determine personal characteristics and beliefs of diversity. She found that there were three engagements necessary within the course which were helpful to students in adapting their professional beliefs: learning communities, instructor modeling of culturally-responsive teaching and constructivism, and field experiences. It was interesting to note that pre-service teachers’ opinions were positively

impacted about diversity within a professional teaching context; however, there were no significant results for their beliefs changing in personal contexts. Akiba (2011) concludes that changing professional beliefs was not enough for a teacher to be successful with diverse populations; a complete belief overhaul is necessary in both personal and professional domains; therefore, she recommended that her education program should adapt its teaching focus to include methods for both personal and professional confines. “What matters is the quality of such [reflection] opportunities such as the nature of discussions using scenarios, cases, or action research. Measuring the quality of opportunities requires classroom observations and interviews with pre-service teachers” (p. 691).

Brown (2004) presented findings based on a carefully designed study of four different multicultural courses for undergraduate students. The mixed methods study strove to uncover the impact of instructional practices on white students enrolled in the diversity courses. One group was made up of two multicultural courses and served as a treatment group where constructivist methods of delivery were applied and group two served as the control group where traditional methods of delivery were presented. The study found a relationship between methods used by a course and changes in beliefs held by preservice teachers. The method of delivery for the first group included group activities, discussions, field experiences, self-examination, research products and classroom communities proved to be more successful than simply reading about research demonstrating how minorities are affected by prejudice and lack of awareness. The first group was encouraged to be active participants in the relearning of social identity constructions for themselves and for others; whereas, the second group’s members acted

as more passive participants and demonstrated more resistance to the message of the course thereby reinforcing previously held beliefs about diversity and colorblind/deficit teaching. Overall, Brown found that a single multicultural course with the right methods was successful in amending the beliefs of teacher candidates although further research would be needed to determine the longevity of the results of the course.

Middleton (2002) developed a multicultural course aimed at having prospective teachers identify their beliefs about diversity, understand the impact of such beliefs in their teaching, and process these beliefs in order to alter them to be more equitable. She used both quantitative and qualitative methods to gauge students' pre- and post-course opinions about diversity. This course was required as part of the undergraduate degree and certification of the participants. Through this research, Middleton was able to develop a framework for "facilitating positive multicultural experiences" (p.350) for students in order to decrease resistant attitudes often encountered when students are forced to think a certain way. This framework for building a successful multicultural course included four themes: "(1) level of awareness and assessment capabilities, (2) the circumstances by which they were applied, (3) the authenticity of the speaker and the situation, and (4) the accountability of being held responsible for multicultural practices" (p. 351). She recommended that instructors, when designing multicultural courses, should consider the previous four themes in order to create a successful course although student may feel cognitive dissonance.

Milner (2005, 2006) described his experience designing and conducting a course on multicultural education to pre-service teachers and the qualitative study that resulted in his course experience. His goal in designing this course was to better prepare his

students to develop skills and beliefs necessary to teach diverse student populations and to test course interactions between him and the other students in the class. When writing about the results of the study of his course, he reported that his master's level students showed mixed results when considering a change in their belief systems. Some students presented a great change, and others remained unaffected about if diversity even mattered in their teaching, also presenting a color-blind attitude about students. Milner (2006) further reflected on this research study and formulated a "developmental typology," like Middleton (2002), which consisted of three different types of interactions from the students. The first set of circumstances necessary for building a more successful urban teacher was that of "cultural and racial awareness" which Milner described as a preservice teacher developing an understanding for the significance for even studying diversity. Milner stressed that this engaging in this interaction will promote student awareness of the social and political nature of schooling and diversity groups. The second interaction was "critical reflection" where the preservice teachers engage in a critical reflection on their own identities and perceptions of the world based on their past experiences. In addition, the students were encouraged to position-take and provided analysis for "relational reflection" to understand another's experience. The third "theory and practice" was a bridge between theories discussed within classroom walls and applied to field experiences. Milner (2006) reported that his fourteen participants described "new levels of enlightenment, awareness, and knowledge as a result of the course" (p. 369) even though some did not alter their personal beliefs.

On the other hand, Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton (1999), when conducting research about their own multicultural courses, found their students only had

moderate changes in their attitudes and beliefs about diversity. This qualitative study sought to investigate students' perceptions of diversity and the change in this perspective throughout a foundation's multicultural course. The team of researchers collaborated together to structure activities that would allow them to know their students and to gauge their previous experiences with diversity. They found more resistance and less change from their students than they originally thought.

Field Experiences. Research has suggested that pre-service teachers “see clinical experiences (including student teaching) as powerful—sometimes the single most powerful—component of teacher preparation” (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002, p. 17). If this notion is true, then it becomes necessary to create urban field experiences that will positively influence future teachers who often lack cross-cultural experiences (Brown, 2004; Nieto, 2006; Nuby, 2010). Gaining knowledge and understanding in the urban community is important for several reasons. First, teacher candidates learn important lessons in the community where they explore their individual subjectivity because they are not the majority and are not able to retreat to the “comfort zone” of a classroom or a place where they can feel at ease with familiar surroundings (Lawrence & Butler, 2010; Sleeter, 2000). Second, these experiences provide teacher candidates with a place to examine personal prejudices by working with diverse populations and the challenges that they face (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007) and creating increased cultural sensitivity.

Conner (2010) reported when teacher candidates were placed in urban schools they came to realize that

Urban youth are intelligent or insightful bespeaks a prior assumption or expectation that they would not be. The recurring nature of this theme...highlights the critical importance of disrupting pre-service educators' beliefs about the students with whom they may one day work by creating opportunities for them...to recognize and then reconsider how they see these young people. (1174).

By deepening their relationships with individuals, teacher candidates have the ability to break down more generalized stereotypes to form impressions of their own. Furthermore, Assaf, Garza, & Battle (2010) found that teacher educators at the university believed that field experiences overshadow and are more important than “their own abilities to teach for diverse populations and offered authentic opportunities for multicultural education” (p. 124).

However, Zeichner (1998), Cipolle (2004), and Sleeter (2008) explained that often these community experiences can serve to reinforce deficit thinking and negative stereotypes. Sleeter (2008) accounted for this experience because single community encounters without in-depth relationships and connections between teacher candidate and the community can serve to solidify negative ideas about diversity. In other words, teacher candidates, without a deep personal, understanding of individuals, will be guided by social stereotypes, prior beliefs, and experiences without transforming their perceptions of individuals.

To study field experiences more specifically, Causey, Thomas, & Armento (2000) used mixed methods to study changes in preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity during the field component part of a required multicultural course. The participants were

in the final year of their preparation program and were charged during one semester with studying diversity for six weeks, working in the field in an urban setting for three weeks, and then returning the university course to reflect on their experiences in the field.

During the initial six weeks of coursework, the participants wrote autobiographies to situate their diversity experiences and personal identities in order to chart any changes in belief structures. One important note was that the field placements were made very deliberately so that the preservice teachers were placed in schools with the lowest socioeconomic status and standardized test scores. In addition, the participants were to focus on the obstructions observed to equitable learning and recording these observations in a journal and to critically reflect on observations in order to avoid possible continuation of negative stereotypes. Many of the participants were able to deconstruct stereotypes and experiences dissonance with the ones she previously held.

Bleicher (2011) completed a three-year, longitudinal study of pre-service teachers to determine the effectiveness of an intensive, week-long immersion in urban classrooms. The study utilized mixed methods to understand the pre-service teachers' expectations and perceptions of the urban environments in which they were placed as well as to measure any changes in beliefs based on their experiences. Bleicher found teacher candidates expectations to be very negative including the state of the facilities and the diverse students who are enrolled in these schools. The participants also cited crime, drugs, and gangs as obstructions to learning and safety in school. At the end of the study, the participants reported that their fears and expectations were unfounded and unjust; they admitted to enacting certain stereotypes.

Cochran-Smith (1995) reported on her work with student teachers in their fifth year of Project START in elementary education at the University of Pennsylvania working in urban schools. Using qualitative research methods, she gathered interview data, observations, and written responses from student teachers who were engaged in inquiry practices on their campuses. This program sought to provide experiential opportunities for teachers in urban areas in order to collect information about the school, community, and historical context of such in order to more deeply understand the social context in which it is situated. Cochran-Smith noted that an important part of this inquiry activity is that the information is gathered from individuals living in the community rather than from preconceived perceptions of the student teachers. This process created a sense of the political nature in which the school itself operates.

Rhoades, Radu, and Weber (2011) conducted a study which sought to explore the relationships among pre-service teachers, their cooperating teachers in the field, and their university supervisors. There were nine participants who took part in semi-structured interviews after selecting their school placements and beginning their student teaching semester. The participants were able to describe their relationships with their mentor teachers, and most cited negative experiences primarily because the mentor did not share a similar teaching philosophy; instead, the mentor opted for beliefs and methods that were more traditional. The researchers noted that while pre-service teachers should be able to disagree with mentor teachers, their practical experience was more negative because they did not feel comfortable in acting on their own beliefs while teaching in someone else's classroom. This restricted performance limited the student teacher's growth and development into an independent teacher. Another important relationship

factor was the amount of feedback offered by the mentor teacher. If the mentor teacher did not have some level of comfort with the student teacher, then he or she did not provide constructive feedback to the student teacher, again, limiting growth and development of the student teacher.

While it has been recognized as an important part of a teacher candidate's teaching knowledge, Grant & Gibson (2011) explained that there has been a gap in the research about the potential of using field experiences as practical spaces for learning, applying theoretical knowledge, and gaining experience especially in the area of researching the role of the cooperating teacher in facilitating a teacher candidates growth overall and especially with their multicultural stance.

Challenges to Diversity Education

Objective Knowledge. In the past three decades, there has been a major shift in how America measures student academic success using standardized testing procedures; likewise, teacher education has followed suit by instituting teacher certification assessments that have been deemed representative of the skills necessary for good teaching. These testable attributes focus mainly on content knowledge and greatly lessen the value of equity-oriented and democratic teacher education (Weiner, 2007) as well as a teacher's personality attributes, empathy, and ability to understand the community culture (Sleeter, 2001). The standardized testing craze has also changed school curricula by scripting and controlling the content and methods teachers use to teach, and the lowest performing schools are usually ordered to follow the most rigid of these scripts (Sleeter, 2008). It is assumed, in these cases, that the academic content standards, or the knowledge being assessed, are appropriate for all without the need to question the

legitimacy or equity of such teachings, especially for groups who have been historically underserved. But, who is responsible for teaching? Whose knowledge gets taught? How is that knowledge taught? These questions can be answered using critical race theory that explains that the white majority in this country is almost subversively attempting to create a docile society devoid of individualism while touting the nation's tenet that this is the land of the free.

Furthermore, the content standards are viewed as independent from the political and contextual nature of our society. Chapman (2011) described this notion as

Philosophies of education contain hierarchies of official knowledge and assimilationist goals for cultivating America's future workforce. The hierarchies of official knowledge are sustained through traditional curricular discourses that serve to maintain racial, gender, and class inequality...[and] normalize particular values, behaviors, and ways of knowing the world. (p. 239)

From this perspective, it becomes a challenge to study teacher education because of the supposed universality of the standards taught during course and fieldwork. However, using a critical race theory approach to deconstruct these norms and perceived objective view of knowing creates a method of preparing teachers for their work with diverse populations (Yosso, 2002).

Deficit Thinking and the Colorblind Society. White, majority teachers are found to have colorblind attitudes toward education and America's students "that further submerge issues of race and racism in the curriculum" (Chapman, 2011, p. 248). This means that teachers ignore diversity and treat all students "equally;" the ironic part about this notion is that the way teachers treat students is in a "white" way regardless of the

background and lived experiences of the student. Rousseau and Tate (2003) found the teachers who participated in their study denied that race had anything to do with differences in academic achievement; instead, they rationalized the gaps by blaming socioeconomic status and background experiences as the culprits. These teachers neglected to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs about their roles in society as white teachers. Treating diverse students in the hegemonic way causes rifts between student and teacher, isolates a student, and forces him or her to conform. These behaviors can impact a student's perception of his or her identity and self-concept.

Solorzano (2001) explained that students of color portray their self-doubt, exclusion, and feelings of isolation which are effects of the subtle "microaggressions" of a colorblind society that accepts whiteness as the norm. In using critical qualitative research, Solrzano was able to create a space for college students of color to have their voices heard including expressions which "challenge the anti-affirmative action ideology of college as an equal, colorblind, and race-neutral institution" (p.72). Milner (2006) described this view in the findings about the connections between diversity preparation within university coursework. He contended that teachers who willingly or unconsciously ignore race are those who will perpetuate unfair practices (p. 352). Finally, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explained their doubt about multicultural education for future teachers. While they admit multicultural education has its merits, mostly it fails future teachers by producing only a superficial empathy on the part of white, female teachers, and it might not instill that action is necessary to change the status quo.

In the following chapter, I will explain the methods used to collect and analyze data as well as incorporating a description of each of the teacher candidate participants who participated in the study.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction: Rationale for Using Qualitative Methods

A qualitative approach was used for this case study in order to gain a more complete understanding of a teacher candidate's personal and contextual experience in a classroom when considering interactions with diverse student populations. Attempting to quantify classroom experiences, personal choices, and responses to events is a one-dimensional way to view complex human behaviors and emotions; therefore, qualitative methods were more suitable because, as Carspecken (1996) explains, "Qualitative researchers are more readily forced to examine the nature of action, experience, and their conditions as part of their methodological framework" (p. 26). When endeavoring to understand a teacher candidate's experiences with diversity in the classroom, it was essential to allow for explanations and descriptions of contextual and historical information. Using quantitative research methods would not allow for the freedom of communication and deviation from the defined variables of quantitative methodology because "actions are conditioned by many things, but they are not determined" (p. 26). Since I was interested in engaging in a conversation with teacher candidates regarding their personal beliefs about diversity and their preparation during the QUEST program, a methodology for exploring complex human nature was crucial. This conversation was indeed complicated, and rich, deep answers were only available when utilizing qualitative methods.

The remainder of the chapter includes further description of the research methodology including the critical qualitative process according to Carspecken (1996) and an example of Horizon Analysis, the method that was used as reconstructive data analysis. A description of the QUEST program, which served as the primary research site although the teacher candidates were student teaching throughout the Houston area, individual participants, design and collection techniques, as well as the process for analyzing the data are also explained.

Critical Qualitative Research

To collect and analyze the data necessary to answer the questions guiding this study, I employed methodology put forth in Carspecken's *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research* (1996). Critical qualitative methods are central to understanding the relationship between knowledge and power, to uncovering social norms that inadvertently lead to oppression, and to supporting research efforts that will result in a more democratic society. The main goals of this methodology were appropriate for this study because history and Critical Race Theory have suggested that education has continuously underserved diverse, minority populations, especially in urban schools (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Chapman, 2011; Yosso, 2006), and it has been well documented that teachers play an important role in changing the structure of education to one that is more just and equitable (Ball, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Duncan-Andrade, 2007). Furthermore, these methods were relevant considering the tenets of Critical Race Theory, especially "The Intercentricity of Race and Racism," "The Challenge to Dominant Ideology," and "The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge" (Yosso, 2006). This study sought to uncover hidden beliefs about diversity and give teacher candidates a

voice in describing their experiences freely. For these reasons, critical qualitative methods were appropriate for examining how a teacher candidate creates connections with diverse individuals and how she establishes learning opportunities during undergraduate courses and fieldwork to create a more just schooling environment.

The goal of this methodology is to explain and expand on an individual's tacit behaviors, actions, and speech by engaging in a communicative dialogue with an individual about the events in a teacher candidate's life. The purpose is to take a holistic impression and explore its underpinnings to uncover unspoken meanings and then develop a broad impression of the meaning's relationship to established social norms. The cycle of reconstructive analysis proved especially appropriate for this study because it can expose particular beliefs that are considered "natural" by any one individual even though the belief may be harmful to others. Because teachers are influential in the lives and education of young people, it was vital to understand how belief systems and social norms impact the teaching and learning of students.

Additionally, this methodology relies on the importance of communication; it does not depend on the traditional idea of visual sense perception or the notion that "seeing is believing." The reason is an individual's perception of an object, event, or person is flawed and does not represent one truth or reality. Each individual involved has his or her own retelling based on key factors of context and personal history. Therefore, this methodology seeks to understand occurrences using a communicative approach involving discussions of these perceptions created by the individual from a holistic experience. Three types of "truth claims" create a perception of an object, event, or person; they include subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative claims. Subjective

claims represent an individual's state of mind and are only accessible to that individual unless explained to another with the assumption of sincerity. Objective claims are available to all individuals; therefore, anyone present in the same situation could verify the existence of an object or event. Finally, normative-evaluative claims are those that represent what an individual should believe about what is right or appropriate in a given situation. These types of claims are grounded in an individual's personal experience and consensus or conflict with social norms.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews. Dialogical Data Generation took place by interviewing the nine participants of the study in the beginning of their student teaching experience and at the end. This stage was meant to democratize the research study by giving participants a greater level of involvement in explaining, illustrating, and examining behaviors. Before beginning the interviews, I created an interview protocol containing lead-off questions, follow-up questions, and covert categories. The interviews were semi-structured in that I compiled two to five open-ended, lead off questions to initiate a discussion. The interview was able to stray from the initial lead-off question with no detriment to the interview. I also provided concrete scenarios that were observed and asked the participant to describe the occurrence from his or her own perspective. I was then guided by the participant's responses to ask for further clarification and elaboration on ideas and descriptions. In addition to the lead-off questions, I compiled a list of possible follow-up questions. Not all of these questions were asked, but they proved useful as guidelines in case I needed to elicit more detail about an idea from a participant. Finally, I composed a list of covert categories to further guide questioning. While I do not directly state the

topic, these covert categories act as a reminder of information that needed further investigation.

Since interviews lend themselves to the illumination of subjective states of an individual, it was necessary to check for reliability in responses from participants. One technique used to confirm the trustworthiness of the data was consistency checks during an interview. I asked, on more than one occasion in one interview or several, for a participant to describe or explain a certain idea in various ways. Finally, the interview protocol, especially during a second interview, established a way for me to check for honesty in that carefully constructed questions will support previous interview responses and observation behaviors. Non-leading questions were important to the interview protocol as well because the participant was less likely to give an answer she thought I wanted to hear. Using a peer debriefer to check the interview protocol was helpful before beginning an interview to eliminate potential problems with the questions.

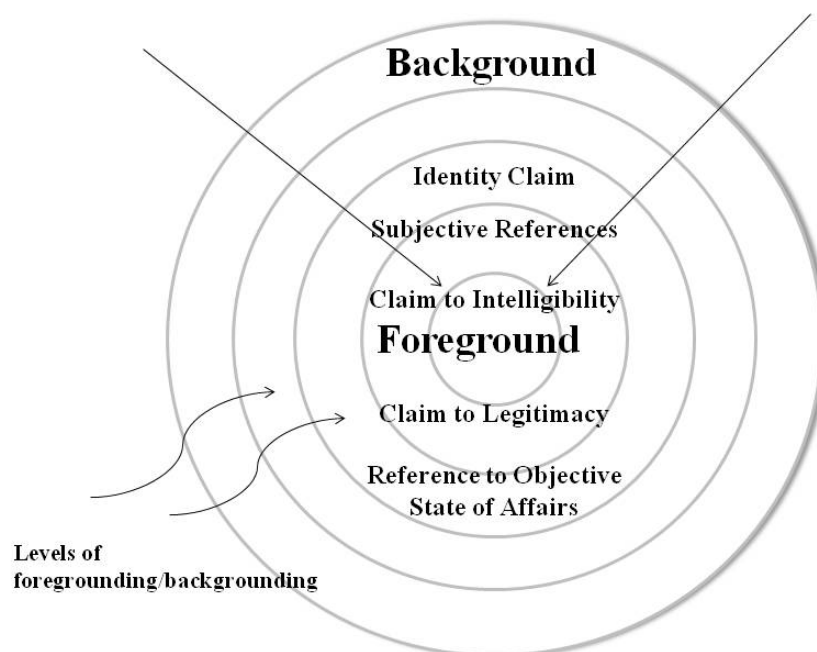
Reconstructive data analysis. Preliminary Reconstructive Analysis began the analysis of data that was collected during the first set of interviews and collected program documents. This analysis was cyclical and continued to occur during interviews, observation, and document analysis. The goal of reconstructive analysis was to “articulate those cultural themes and system factors that are not observable and that are usually unarticulated by the actors themselves” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). Meaning is understood in holistic and unspoken ways, so it was up to me to break that awareness into different components and to critically analyze them with a range of techniques to make conclusions about tacit understandings on the part of the participants. The following represents steps in the cycle of reconstructive analysis.

The first step in this stage was to read and reread the primary record to gain knowledge of the holistic meaning of events observed. During this stage, I mentally noted any underlying meanings conveyed by the participant. Reading through this record repeatedly naturally highlighted significant sections of the record over others. It was necessary to be meticulous when selecting segments for two reasons. The first was that these segments were to be analyzed in great detail, so it was important to narrow down the field of possible occurrences. Secondly, segments were meant to represent noteworthy actions and behaviors and also those that spoke for routine actions and behaviors in order to get a more informed sense of repeated patterns.

Next, I began low-level coding to roughly categorize occurrences during the observation time or on the program documents. I chose several illustrative segments to examine more closely then proceeded through the selected segments line-by-line to create meaning fields which gave a range of possible “discursive articulations” to gestures, behaviors, actions, and speech acts made by a participant or document (Carspecken, 1996, p. 95). Once the initial steps were completed, I applied deeper analysis to understand contextual motivations for such occurrences. While engaging in the following Pragmatic Horizon Analysis, only the previously selected primary record segments or documents were included for deep analysis, although the primary record served as support for conclusions drawn from the deeper analysis of selected segments.

During Pragmatic Horizon Analysis (see Figure 1), two main axes of reconstruction were important to consider when analyzing tacit meanings communicated

Figure 1

*The Pragmatic Horizon*²

by an individual. The first was the paradigmatic axis, which not only delineated subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative claims, but also examined which details of the context were subconsciously chosen as the most or least important on the part of the individual. Analyzing the possibilities associated with each portion of an act was essential to “understanding meaning...the reason an actor could provide to explain expressions....Reasons will also differ from each other according to how immediately they are referenced in the original act (foregrounded) or how remotely they are referenced in the original act (backgrounded)” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 111). The second axis was temporal in that an individual’s gestures, behavior, and speech acts were

² Carspecken, 1996, p. 105

analyzed as reactions to events that happened in the past and expectations of future events. The temporal axis was important to analyze because all acts are contextual with situated experiences of events previously occurring during an event and an individual's reaction based on what was expected or predicted in the future.

After I drew initial conclusions about the unstated purpose for speech acts and behaviors, I conducted member checks during the second interview so that the participant could confirm or challenge my conclusions. If there were questions about my inferences, I searched for further support during the selected segment and returned to the original primary record to review the original basis for a conclusion and possibly additional evidence.

This mode of analysis proved useful during the study because deeply comprehending an individual's words and actions concerning diversity and human difference was a complex task complete with multiple levels of interacting meaning wrapped into one gesture, one speech act, or one behavior. This study sought to investigate how the QUEST program prepared its teacher candidates and how the teacher candidates perceived their preparation; therefore, there was a need to be aware of not only the possible root factors that constitute an individual's actions but also how those actions related to the communication with others. This was not to say that the conclusions drawn from such analysis were consistent with all students in the program; rather, the methods and conclusions were able to facilitate a teacher candidate's reflection on human difference and provide considerations for the QUEST program.

The Teaching Context

The QUEST program was chosen as the site for this research project because of its position as the number one place of recruitment for the metropolitan area of Houston. This city is one of the largest in Texas and is home to more than 203,000 students in one district alone in 2011 (Houston Independent School District, Research and Accountability). Not only is it impressive in its magnitude, but it is also home to very diverse student and teaching populations. The majority of students enrolled in HISD are Hispanic, representing 61.9% of the student population followed by 26.2% African American, 7.8% White, and 3.1% Asian. Over 80% of the students in HISD are considered economically disadvantaged.

In addition, HISD has become much more diversified with their teaching staff in the past decade. Texas teacher demographics are consistent with national averages describing teacher demographics with 63.9% white, 23.7% Hispanic, and 9.3% African American, but HISD is quite different. The teaching staff in this district is made up of 36.5% African American, 31.1% White, 25.9% Hispanic., and 4.4% Asian (Houston Independent School District Research & Accountability, 2011). HISD does, however, employ 74.1% female teachers and 25.9% male teachers, which is in line with the state and national averages for teachers. These demographic statistics demonstrate the growing diversity of Houston and its largest school district; as a result, the QUEST program is a most important component of student success in this area because of the teachers it graduates every year.

Participants

Nine participants³ volunteered for this study from a pool of elementary and secondary teacher candidates enrolled in the final phase of the QUEST program who were completing their student teaching in HISD and surrounding districts. Considering the definitions of diversity from Chapter Two and the notion that humans have a tendency to categorize each other based on outward physical characteristics, I sought participants from all of QUEST 3 regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, or social status. Diversity is the “social context of race, culture, religion, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and disabilities” (Ooka & Pang, 2011, p. 64). This understanding of diversity explains that categories are socially constructed and used to define “others” superficially because they do not represent the entirety of an individual’s identity. Students are different from their teachers in some way, externally or internally. It was the work of this study to investigate how the teacher candidates consider diversity, perceive their preparation, and interact with diverse populations regardless of their own demographics.

Since the teacher candidates were enrolled in QUEST 3, they had already completed the first two phases of the program, which included education foundation courses, content methods, classroom management, and, possibly, a single multicultural studies course. In addition to coursework, the teacher candidates had also completed at least forty hours of field observation during QUEST 1 and approximately 140 hours of observation and interaction on a campus during QUEST 2 before gaining admission into QUEST 3.

³ Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants to protect confidentiality.

Table 1

Participant Descriptions

| | Gender | Languages Spoken | Age | Certification | District placement | Race/Ethnicity |
|------------------|--------|------------------|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Adalia | F | 2 | 23 | Elementary Bilingual Generalist | HISD | Hispanic |
| Cody | M | 1 | 26 | Secondary Social Studies | HISD | African American |
| Deniz | F | 2 | 25 | Secondary English | HISD | Eastern European |
| Emily | F | 1 | 21 | Secondary English | Klein | White |
| Farzana | F | 4 | 21 | Secondary English | HISD | Indian |
| Juliana | F | 2 | 22 | Elementary Bilingual Generalist | Deer Park | Hispanic |
| Katherine | F | 1 | 21 | Elementary Generalist | Lamar Consolidated | White |
| Marcela | F | 2 | 21 | Elementary Bilingual Generalist | Alief | Hispanic |
| Rita | F | 3 | 27 | Elementary Generalist | HISD | Iranian |

In order to engage in this research, I asked for volunteers in mid-August during the QUEST student teacher orientation before the school year began. There were nine students who volunteered, and all nine participated in these interviews. Each of these teacher candidates represented diversity on some level, considering the traditional definition of diversity explained in Chapter Two. When looking closely at the data for teachers across the United States and Texas, they show a teaching force which is monolingual and White. The teacher candidates who participated in the study represented a new teaching force—one that is worthy of a diverse, urban environment like that of Houston. Table 1 reports a simplified summary of the teacher candidate's subject matter and demographics to show, at a glance, just how diverse they are.

Because of the nature of a qualitative research study, these teacher candidates were absolutely vital and as such should be acknowledged for their commitment to the study, the QUEST program, and the students they will guide in the future. I hope that these short descriptions lend some context to each of their personalities without categorizing them unfairly. I feel deeply indebted to each of the nine because without them, this study would have no voice. They are listed in alphabetical order below to facilitate finding their details while reading this chapter and the rest of the study.

Adalia. Adalia is a twenty-three year old, bilingual education generalist teacher candidate. When we talked, she was initially somewhat reserved and distant when responding to the questions. She was the biggest challenge to interview because I needed to amend the protocol so that she would give more details and explanations for her statements. Her answers showed her to be a dedicated and involved educator. She pointed to the classroom decorations she had made for instructional purposes and the different stations around the room. In addition, she described challenges she had to overcome in the past including having a baby while still in high school, being expelled during her sophomore year of high school, and going to college while trying to work simultaneously. She is from Houston, and she was able to continue school in the same neighborhood where she began except for completing her junior high years at a KIPP school. She was placed for her student teaching at an elementary school in HISD. When she and I talked, she was with a 4th grade, GT/generalist mentor teacher. She was scheduled to complete her bilingual education portion of student teaching in late October and November with a kindergarten mentor teacher.

Cody. Cody is a twenty-six year old History major seeking certification through a minor in education. He is an outgoing and open teacher candidate who prides himself in knowing all of his students and using humor to forge stronger relationships. Growing up mostly in New Orleans, LA he moved around quite a bit, including twelve different schools before entering college. The reason for this constant movement was that he would change residences to live between his mother and maternal grandmother. He moved to Houston because of Hurricane Katrina. He maintained good grades in high school, which he calls his “refuge” from his home life, and he mentioned how he wished that he would have had someone to confide in at the school. He was also involved extensively in football, which won him a scholarship to play in college at a Division III school. When he and I talked, he was completing his student teaching at an HISD campus in a sophomore World History class.

Deniz. Deniz is a twenty-five year old English major and education minor student. She is sociable during interviews and very open with her responses. She shows a strong desire to improve her teaching all while demonstrating a lack of confidence in her abilities. She and her family moved to the United States right after she graduated from high school, which required that she spend almost two years developing her English before enrolling at the University of Houston. While she maintained good grades in her country’s education system, she explains that she learned much more slowly than her classmates, which frequently made her teachers berate her for not being able to keep up the pace. She shows a passion for languages, including English, and a genuine interest for her own students’ progress through their 8th grade study. She was completing her student teaching at a junior high campus in HISD with an 8th grade mentor.

Emily. Emily is a twenty-one year old English major and education minor. She shows confidence and easiness during our interviews when describing the students that she interacts with daily or the team of teachers with whom she works. While she is planning on graduating in December, her plan is to immediately enroll in a master's program in English in order to continue her preparation for teaching. She aspires to one day teach English in a university setting. She also explained that teaching is always what she has wanted to do since she was teaching her stuffed animals when she was five. She was an exceptional student ultimately graduating in the top five percent of her Texas high school's graduating class. She is from Houston, and she plans to stay here during her career. She was completing her student teaching in Klein ISD with an English III mentor teacher.

Farzana. Farzana is a twenty-one year old teacher candidate who is pursuing a dual major at the University of Houston in English and Anthropology while working on a minor in education. During our interviews, she was somewhat hesitant with her answers, but I found this to be because she was thinking deeply before voicing her responses. I needed to give her more time to construct her responses. Consequently, she also demonstrated a high level of in-depth thought about each response. She and her family moved to the United States from India when she was six, so she was formally educated only in this country. She explains that her family moved here because of the economic and education prospects. She has lived in Houston ever since and graduated in the top ten percent of her class from a high school in HISD. She explained that after graduation, she plans on enrolling in a master's program to continue her own education. She was completing her student teaching in English II and reading on a campus in HISD.

Juliana. Juliana is a twenty-two year old bilingual education major. She is outgoing and opinionated in her work as an educator and her experiences throughout school. She takes pride in the delivery of the content in her class and also in teaching students to be responsible for themselves and others. She began her work at The University of Houston in engineering, but she found, after three years and some work as a bilingual aide in an elementary school, that she had no passion for engineering. She then changed her major to education so that she could spend more time in schools helping students achieve the same level of success that she did. Juliana grew up in the southeast side of Houston in Deer Park ISD, and she was completing her student teaching in the same school where she attended elementary school.

Katherine. Katherine is a twenty-one year old, elementary generalist major from the Fort Bend area. She demonstrates a strong personality and readily speaks her mind during her responses to my questions about teaching and the QUEST program. She is open and frank. She graduated ranked number four in her high school class and immediately enrolled in the University of Texas after graduation. There she studied architectural engineering for almost four years before becoming too sick to continue. Even with this set-back, she explains that her ultimate goal was always to pay off her student loans and go into teaching, even after attaining an engineering degree. She cites her strong family ties and desire to start a family as the reason for this career change. She was completing her student teaching at an elementary school in the Lamar Consolidated School District in a 4th grade classroom.

Marcela. Marcela is a twenty-two year old bilingual generalist education major. She began her college studies in nursing, but after traveling to Peru, she explained that

she had no enthusiasm or interest in the career any longer. After two years, she switched her major to education to make a difference in the lives of her students. She is bilingual, but she explains that her confidence when teaching in Spanish is not nearly as high as when she teaches in English. She showed herself to be open and honest during our interviews by relating her troubles with her mentor teacher and her difficulty in passing state certification exams. She was completing her student teaching in Alief ISD, the same district from which she graduated. Since she is in bilingual education, she began in a bilingual first grade class, and she was scheduled to finish her student teaching in a regular education third grade classroom.

Rita. Rita is a twenty-seven year old elementary generalist education major. She showed herself to be open and candid during our interviews when describing her schooling experience in a number of different countries and her feedback about her QUEST experience. She was born in France, but she and her family continued to move around when she was younger between Iran, Germany, and the United States. She is fluent in Farsi, French, and English. She explained that moving from country to country taught her to cope with learning new languages but only on a superficial level, which caused her to hate having to read out loud—a challenge she explains that she still has today. She has a vibrant personality, and her love of anything yellow is admired by her students. She was completing her student teaching in a first grade classroom in HISD.

Design

This study began with one semi-structured interview with each teacher candidate during their first two weeks of student teaching in early September. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. These interviews established a

foundation and baseline perception of the teacher candidates' definitions of diversity, their feelings toward their diversity preparation from the university, and their ability to connect with diverse students. In addition, the interviews were able to populate the context and background for each teacher candidate, including illustrations of their own schooling background and status in society along with an establishment of their belief system about diversity and experiences with diverse populations. Interviewing current teacher candidates provided some information about coursework and the methods employed by the university to prepare the teacher candidates as well as the perceived applicability of coursework in the diverse, urban landscape of Houston area schools. These interviews took place on elementary and secondary school campuses across the Houston area, at coffee shops, or on the campus of The University of Houston. I used an audio recorder to record participants' responses during the interviews while I took notes in a journal. My notes included details about speech acts, gestures, and tone of participant responses. Although these were semi-structured interviews, during the interview I made certain to recap and rephrase statements made by the candidates to ensure clarity and focus for the questions that followed.

Next, I ventured to observe the teacher candidates in a school setting while each was engaged in student teaching. The purpose of these observations was to gather data which illustrated the ways a teacher candidate interacted with students who are considered diverse. I was able to observe six of the nine teacher candidates for an hour prior to their second interview. During these short observations, I recorded notes in a journal about the teacher candidate's actions and behaviors with the students in a general

way. The data here were too limited to draw any real conclusions, but it provided some concrete material to discuss during the second interview.

I conducted a second interview with each teacher candidate in late October; each of these interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to almost an hour and occurred on each teacher candidate's field-campus location. This interview provided a space for the teacher candidates to elaborate on additional events that have occurred in the classroom since our last interview while providing me with more detailed information and examples which illustrated the teacher candidate's beliefs and feelings about diversity. This interview also served to verify or confirm my interpretations of events discussed during the initial interview as well as during the observation. To perform these member checks, I brought in segments of the first interview and asked the teacher candidate to say more about the meaning behind the segment. After the candidate gave more detail, I was also able to engage in dialogue about my conclusions from the initial interview based on Carspecken's Horizon Analysis. The teacher candidate was free to agree or deviate from my conclusions. This interview served as a good time to discuss the conclusions because, personally, I felt much more comfortable during the interviews, and I believe the teacher candidates felt much more at ease with me as well.

In addition to interview and observational data, I investigated documents associated with the QUEST program, such as the QUEST teacher candidate handbook. I used Carspecken's analysis for this part of the study to determine support or opposition for interview and observation themes. The purpose for using these documents was to gather further information about the methods used by the program to establish diversity awareness and how teacher candidates engaged based on program requirements and

personal ideas. These documents increased credibility and provided triangulation for some of the qualitative research data. Documents from QUEST represent the program and the individuals creating them, yet they are unaffected by the presence of a researcher as are human participants. Document analysis also added insight into methods used by the program to address issues of human difference (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis began this past summer once program documents were gathered. The specific documents included the QUEST Teacher handbook, a draft of the elementary certification degree plan, and the mission statement for the College of Education at The University of Houston. These documents were found on the College of Education's web-site and were easily accessible. Once printed, I coded for general themes using Carspecken's low-level coding to create "explicit discourse, [from] cultural and subjective factors that are largely tacit in nature" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 93). This process was recursive, but began by reading and rereading these documents to select sections which pertain directly to this research. Once chosen, these selections went through Horizon Analysis (an example Horizon Analysis is shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2

Example Horizon Analysis

From pages 6-7 of Interview #1

Beth: *So, I've heard you talk a lot about your experience in the field so far, especially here on this campus. What has been the most important lesson that you have learned in your experience?*

Katherine: *Well...what is funny is that I was always very scared to be in the [QUEST] program because of the "U."* [IC: Katherine seems to be honest and open about her fears] *Yes, some places are urban...you should be teaching kids from wherever they come from. The only thing that changes between [Elmwood] and the kids that I have now are their schema. So my job right now is to build my kids schema.*[IC: Katherine appears to want to help her students reach her definition of success] *You don't have to do that [at Elmwood], which is the only difference that I can see over there. Your expectations and goals should be the same for every kid. But that was never taught.* [IC: She shrugs her shoulders and looks as if she expected something else from her

university preparation]

Possible Objective Claims:

Foreground: My field placement school is full of students with diverse backgrounds.

Background: I teach lessons to build background knowledge for the students I teach based on our content.

Possible Subjective Claims:

Foreground: All students have the same expectation, but some need more remediation than others.

Intermediate: The students at this urban elementary school are lacking in experience compared to students in a suburban school of Elmwood.

Background:

Possible Normative-Evaluative Claims:

Foreground: I am graduating with a teaching degree; therefore, I should feel more prepared to teach all students.

Background: The students at this school should find the content easier to understand, but their background experience has them at a disadvantage.

Possible Identity Claims:

Foreground: I am a caring teacher who wants her students to be successful.

Background: I am accepting of all students for who they are.

After collecting documents, I conducted the first round of interviews in early September. I met with each teacher candidate to discover background details and the nature of the teacher candidate's contextual education experiences. Once I transcribed the interview, I printed and began low-level coding to establish which segments represented illustrative occurrences for each candidate. Immediately following, I engaged in Carspecken's Pragmatic Horizon Analysis (example above in Figure 2) in order to determine foregrounded and backgrounded claims made about the subjective, objective, and normative-evaluative understandings of an event or occurrence. The example in Figure 2 is representative of the analysis which took place on illustrative segments of interviews 1 and 2 for each teacher candidate.

If it was possible based on teaching schedule, observations for the nine teacher candidates occurred immediately before the second interview was conducted. These observations only transpired for six out of the nine participants. While the timing was not

conducive to deep Horizon Analysis before interviewing the teacher candidate, they were helpful in providing concrete examples that the teacher candidate could use to illustrate perceptions of diversity and preparation. The observational data was not subjected to the same rigorous analysis as the interviews; however, they were used to inform and support assertions made by the teacher candidates during interviews. Additionally, there was not enough raw observational data with which to draw any clear, valid conclusions about the teacher candidate's interaction with diverse student groups; therefore, the teacher candidates described the events themselves during the interview and from this, I drew conclusions.

Limitations

Carspecken (1996) advocates a systematic approach for analyzing qualitative data to make strong, supported conclusions from observation, dialogical, and contextual data. However, observational data was collected on a limited basis during the course of this study. School district paperwork, which was submitted in a timely manner, was not processed as quickly as I had hoped. The time for observations swiftly passed leaving this study to rely on dialogical data and interviews. By increasing the number of participants, I sought to compensate for the lack of consistent and meaningful observational data.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through this research, it was my desire to investigate teacher candidates from the QUEST program in order to understand their beliefs about diversity and their teacher preparation with the QUEST program. These candidates completed all coursework requirements for the program and are completing their degrees by working through a semester on a campus acting as student teachers. By talking with these teacher candidates, I discovered more about the QUEST program itself and the ways these candidates perceive students who are diverse. Although it cannot be said exactly where the perceptions were formed, in personal lives, academic, or professional, this study helped reveal some considerations that could be taken into account when making program decisions, especially in preparing teachers for diverse, urban environments. Likewise, I had the chance to investigate the nature of diversity in the real lives of the teacher candidates who volunteered to participate in the study. I was able to get to know them, their beliefs, and how they wanted to interact with diversity in their teaching and personal lives. In conducting this research, my hope was to provide the QUEST program with feedback concerning its methods of teacher development to continue to support the students in schools around Houston.

What follows is a report of the findings based on each research question and a discussion of what these findings mean for the QUEST program and its teacher candidates. In addition, I provide information about the QUEST program requirements along with the teacher candidates' evaluation of the program.

Research Questions

The study's research questions sought to explore the nine teacher candidates' perceptions about diversity and the degree to which the QUEST is preparing teacher candidates to be successful with forging academic and personal connections and relationships with students who represent difference. Specifically,

- How do teacher candidates in QUEST 3 define and describe their own beliefs and experiences concerning diversity and teaching diverse populations?
- What are the perceptions of teacher candidates currently enrolled in QUEST 3 about their diversity preparation?

The Participants

As discussed in Chapter Three, there were nine participants who volunteered to take part in this study during an orientation meeting prior to the start of the school year. It was important to note that these volunteer teacher candidates did not fit neatly into the national teacher demographics, which signify that teachers are primarily white females. Instead, they represented a new teaching force—one that was worthy of a diverse, urban environment like that of Houston. As shown in Table 1 in Chapter Three (p. 68) these teacher candidates were classified, in the simplest terms, as diverse themselves. They not only had a multitude of background experiences and history, but they also represented diversity in the characteristics that traditionally define people as diverse such as race, ethnicity, gender, language, and age. These teacher candidates embodied diversity in all of these categories and yet, even in their difference, they were not the same as the students they will teach once they graduate. Their personality composition, learning style, interests, and passions were different from their students. Thus remains the heavy

task of learning to communicate across that difference in order to forge strong academic and social bonds with students to help them excel.

Olsen (2011) explained that teacher identity is “always both unique and like others in multiple ways...teacher identity foregrounds a view of all teachers as always diverse in intersecting, complex, but identifiable ways” (p. 267). This reality was important to the research study because the accumulated data show, for the most part, that these teacher candidates already live on the margins due to their diverse backgrounds and minority status. These teacher candidates were open about their personal understanding and experiences with being different and feeling secluded because of that difference whether because of race, language, or religion. In the findings and discussion that follow, more information about the candidates is offered as support for the importance of this study because the teacher candidates have felt the injustice of an education system that did not understand who they were as individuals and sought to redefine them based on established norms.

During the time of the interviews and observations, these teacher candidates were all enrolled in QUEST 3, or the student teaching semester. In order to arrive at this stage of the program, the candidates had to fulfill coursework and field requirements of the program. QUEST 3 was the last semester before graduation, which required complete focus on the practical learning of how to teach including working with students every day, just as a veteran teacher would.

How do teacher candidates in QUEST 3 define and describe their own beliefs and experiences concerning diversity and teaching diverse populations?

In seeking answers to this research question, I wanted to discover the contextual history for each teacher candidate with the intention of providing clues to understanding the past experiences that informed their teaching. According to Olsen (2011),

We and our experiences are inextricably blend[ed] together...it is impossible to understand a human being independent of the world he or she inhabits...[identity] captures teachers as always engaged in situated interactions that rely on prior iterations of a self while at the same time recreating themselves as professionals in relation to others. (p. 257-259)

This notion proved especially important to the teacher candidates who took part in this study because their perceptions of diversity and education were influenced by previous experiences in their own lives.

Importance of Prior Experiences. When interviewing the nine teacher candidates, all presented a version of their former selves; their past experiences and identity construction were influential in shaping how they approached diverse student populations and teaching. These teacher candidates were direct descendents of what they have learned and believed in the past; therefore, their identities and teaching philosophies were born of former experiences and practice. As a result, each described current feelings and behaviors based on experiences from the past while seeming to disregard any current lessons or transformations brought on through coursework with QUEST.

This above assertion appears quite negative, and it brought forth a question about why these teacher candidates were so rooted in past experiences, especially after

completion of at least four years of courses and fieldwork during QUEST. Research about teacher education suggested that teachers were able to learn and transform to be more empathetic to the experience of others (Delpit, 1995; Duncan-Andrade, 2007, 2011; Howard, 2006), but how was empathy to develop when an individual's actions was informed more by past schooling experiences than by those gained during undergraduate teacher preparation? Accordingly, Olsen and Anderson (2007) explained that past experiences of teacher candidates proved mostly resistant to lessons taught during undergraduate teacher programs. In fact, teacher identity was "a recursive process of negotiation among personal but often unexamined 'life themes'" (Olson, 2011, p. 258). What if, as a teacher candidate myself, I had not had the opportunity to reflect on my perceptions of the individuals of the world?

When asked to explain the reasons and thinking behind their decisions to go into teaching, several teacher candidates mentioned their previous teachers and school experiences. By focusing on their own school experiences, whether positively or negatively, the candidates were demonstrating a reaction to past events and expectations for what education should be. Hollins (2011) explained that "it is difficult to overcome years of a socialization process that has been central to identity formation. This socialization process inculcates in individuals the beliefs and perspectives through which new knowledge and experiences are filtered and appropriated" (p. 117). The powerful occurrences have carved understandings in each teacher candidate that only more powerful experiences could transform or at least negotiate some change in insight.

For example, Deniz, who was born in an Eastern European country, discussed her experience in school and how her teachers made her feel foolish and unintelligent. She spoke specifically about one teacher when describing her thinking. She said,

[teachers] were very disrespectful to the students, like they were just coming to fill out the day and make sure that [the students] were doing some work...uh...I don't know if I was a bad student. I had some struggles in math and numbers and I uh...but I had this teacher. She told my parents, in a parent's meeting, that they needed to take me from school, and they are a little like our institutions where you graduate from and have a job at the end...what do you call that? A mechanical or training school. Yes, they could put me in a training school" (Interview 1, p 1).

A bit later in the dialogue, she further described that teacher as being hard on her because she was a slower learner than her classmates. Deniz's animosity toward that teacher reached a pinnacle during a trip back to her home country. Deniz recounts that she stopped this teacher on the street and "said some stuff that made her upset" (Interview 1, p. 1). This teacher impacted Deniz in such a negative way as to help shape Deniz's teaching philosophy. Without this teacher, Deniz would not be the teacher she wants to be in the future. In fact, Deniz explained that she is going into teaching in order to "play an important role in someone's life...I wanted to be a good teacher so that kids can...uh...be in school and have fun and learn at the same time" (Interview 1, p 1).

Rita also expressed similar opinions about her teachers during her early years in school. She, like Deniz, was born in Europe, although Rita travelled extensively and lived in a variety of countries while going through school including France, Germany, and Iran. She explained that she chose teaching the elementary grades because she liked

“to do a lot of hands on” activities with the students because she is that type of learner. Rita also explained that she wanted to teach in order to be a stable and supportive force for her students, the type of force that she did not have growing up when she says, “a lot of people just didn’t understand, I spoke languages, but I never really understood reading because I kept moving around and learning new ones. I had my own making sense mechanism, and the teachers thought I was slow because I didn’t understand” (Interview 1, p. 1). These two teacher candidates seemed to want to transform experiences of students because of the poor educational experiences they had as students.

Juliana also was a notable teacher candidate for this theme in the way she explained her ESL education experience. She consistently referred to one particular teacher who helped her transition from a full bilingual program to ESL in third grade. This educator influenced and motivated Juliana to pass the state standardized test written in English. She had such a motivating influence on Juliana that Juliana returned to the exact school where all of this took place many years ago; coincidentally, this educator was still teaching at the school. She even introduced me during the interview as this teacher walked by because “she said ‘I told you, you could do it,’ and I remember. It was a personal connection” (Interview 1, p. 1). Furthermore, Juliana related, “I feel like I got a lot from [being here] and like I’m the person I am here because of the teachers I had here. No matter if I was in bilingual or something else. The English now I can do it and teach other kids to be like that. You know? I can be the teacher that I remember from here” (Interview, 1, p. 1). Because this teacher was supportive of Juliana’s success outside of school hours and making the effort to forge personal connections, Juliana maintained that she wants to be the same type of teacher for her students.

Adalia also described one high school English teacher that particularly inspired her to go into teaching because of his style and methods of delivery. Farzana likewise explained her positive education experiences with remarkable teachers, but what was more significant in her story is that she is the oldest female in her family with three younger siblings and one older. She said she “ended up tutoring [my younger siblings] or helping them get started with homework because my parents were so busy and then once I got involved in Sunday school at our mosque. I would teach little kids how to read, not English, but Arabic and write Urdu” (Interview 1, p. 1).

It was important to note that a teacher’s identity was shaped and molded from previous experiences and expectations of the role they will play as teachers in their own classrooms. These examples demonstrated both instances of treating students with disrespect or contempt as well as with care and support. These subtle or overt behaviors on the part of past teachers have influenced the teacher candidates’ perceptions of what it means to be an educator. In Deniz and Rita’s cases, being an educator meant not being judgmental and treating students as if unintelligent or incapable of valid, important work. With Juliana and Farzana, being an educator included supporting students where they are academically and socially while helping them overcome obstacles. Both instances brought about similar conceptions of teacher identity. There may be events in a teacher candidate’s experience which can impact another student’s education or social well-being. Hollins (2011) relates that the way a teacher candidate “understand[s] subject matter and the appropriateness of pedagogy when learning to teach is influenced by their early education and socialization...” (p. 113) and that teacher candidates must be aware

of their social identity construction and experiences in order to examine its relationship to teaching diverse students and the implications for knowledge conveyed in a classroom.

Defining Student Success. Eight out of the nine teacher candidates who were interviewed stated similar characteristics of student success similar to Hollins' (2011) assertion that "teacher candidates framed meaningful achievement of their students in a particular way, and students from diverse backgrounds were less likely to display the behaviors that mainstream teacher candidates viewed as 'smart' or 'ready for school'" (p. 117). More specifically, a student was only successful when she is actively listening and attentive to instructions being given by the teacher or authority in the room. This student might not be an academic superstar, but if there was effort put forth to try, then she will be successful in class. This type of classification further established assimilation on the part of students who did not represent mainstream behaviors. If a student does not assimilate to expected behaviors, he or she was considered to be a challenging student with which to work.

For example, Marcela said a good student was one who "listens, he helps others..." which was not so astonishing, but she also went on to relate, somewhat jokingly as she laughs, that "he is attentive to everything that I say and finds what I say astonishing I guess" (Interview 1, p. 4). In her interview, Marcela described the atmosphere of her mentor's classroom particularly of one student who she finds a challenge to work with because he often did not fulfill the expectation of success. On the same day as the interview, she experienced some trouble with a student who does not follow her instructions. She explained,

today he threw things...I saw him throwing things and going underneath the table. He likes to play a lot. He has a twin who is in the next class, and they are separated. They are polar opposites; she is very calm and quiet, and he likes to run around and make noise especially animal noises...but I need him to listen to me as he listens to my mentor. (Interview 1, p. 6)

Marcela might attempt a joke about the characteristics of a successful student, but she demonstrated her concern about a student who she thought was not going to achieve in the class because of his behavior, not academic capability. Much like Marcela, Katherine related that a successful student, “is someone who is on top of it. They don’t have to be smart as long as they are attentive and their behavior is good, you can teach” (Interview 1, p. 4). These behaviors for students were situated in the history of education in that the teacher provides the knowledge for students to absorb and follow.

Emily, Deniz, and Adalia discussed successful students as those who actively make connections between the content and their lives. More specifically, Adalia said, “a successful student...does not need to come in motivated and ready to learn because kids are not going to be that way. It is [the teacher’s] job to make it engaging and make it real” (Interview 1, p. 4). Her perspective showed that she expected a student to be engaged, but here she also acknowledged a teacher’s role in the education process as one that creates concrete connections for the students to bridge the personal and academic content divide which might be present. Juliana offered a similar statement about her view of students. She said, “I do not think there are any specific qualities in any kid because they are all different. I think...they need to be flexible to adjust to whatever is going on...[a teacher] just needs to kind of put that little effort on that one kid so that

they can be successful” (Interview 1, p. 3). While it was unclear how students can be “flexible,” it was obvious that Juliana believed a teacher to have the responsibility to help students relate a lesson to their own experiences.

Cody explained his belief that all students can be successful as well although he discussed certain students who were more challenging to work with. He said, “the only kids who are difficult are the kids who have just like problems that you can’t help with. I think that is like the biggest thing when you have a kid who has a jacked-up family life and there is no helping that...you just have to figure out how I am going to motivate you” (Interview 1, p. 6). Taking a closer look at this statement, it appeared that successful students were those whose homes lives are relatively stress-free.

Diversity as Difference. When considering the meaning of diversity, the teacher candidates defined it as difference, in the most general sense. The teacher candidates did not describe diversity as based on the typical characteristics of difference such as race and language; rather, they pointed to all types of difference from the students they teach such as interests and talents instead of offering definitions like that of Grant and Gibson’s (2011), which considered diversity as defined too narrowly by race, gender, and age. The limited definition usually categorizes a person based on outward appearances while ignoring even more individual traits. However, Critical Race theorists would argue that “most teacher educators espouse more color-blind than color-conscious ideologies that further submerge issues of race and racism...” (Chapman, 2011, p. 248). By not acknowledging race in the discussion, a teacher candidate could create a colorblind society perpetuating inequalities (Yasso, 2006).

For example, Farzana articulated her experience on her QUEST 3 campus.

I've just found that many students have different backgrounds. They come from different families and different experiences and that what makes them who they are and not just who they are as a race, and they are all different ages too. We have 14 to 19 years olds in our classes and that makes it a huge challenge.

(Interview 2, p. 2)

By stating that race and family experience made the students who they were ignored historical and contextual inequalities in education. It was also interesting to note that with Farzana she was struck at the lack of diversity in the high school where she is student teaching. She reported that her school is 98% Hispanic, but only a small portion of the students in her classes are bilingual. Since Farzana's definition of diversity comes from her past experiences, she was surprised at the percentage of students who were Hispanic. She had previously described how she graduated from a high school in Houston that represented many cultures, languages, and races, which became very familiar for her. However, at her QUEST 3 campus, the students were, in her mind, similar because they were 98% Hispanic. This proved problematic for her though when she questioned her students about how many languages they spoke. She said only a few admitted to being able to speak Spanish even though they were of Hispanic origin. This was an assumption of hers that all Hispanic students must be bilingual, yet at this high school that was not the case.

Rita, who is placed in a first grade classroom, explained that diversity is based in student interests and some culture. She described her students as diverse because,

Their interests are very different. It is also cultural and religious. We have some that don't eat pork which is different, but when they come to sit on this carpet,

they are all very equal. They are all fun and they all want to learn and be praised and feel safe. They don't want you to make them feel dumb. They have their differences, but they are all very equal. (Interview 2, p. 2)

Rita further explained how she and her mentor teacher help a student identify which foods at lunch contain pork so that her student was able to remain true to her religion. While this action was indicative of acknowledging difference, the other portion of her statement described all students as having the same needs and wants. Rita had placed the students in the same category. This was not to say that each student does not want to “feel safe” in school; rather, it represented a superficial understanding of how the students are different. I questioned her about the methods she used to connect with students' home lives during her lessons, and she explained that the students do not want to talk about their experiences because they do not have the vocabulary yet to express themselves. It brought me to question if this truly was the case, how do teachers know about and acknowledge their students' diversity?

Deniz described diversity as not being only cultural or ethnic group. Diversity is um...having different students. What do I mean by different? I mean we are all different if you are to think about it. Some of us are fast learners or slow learners like me. We are all coming from different backgrounds. We might be white or Christians but still we have different personalities. I sort of connect diversity with personality. I'm not sure if that is right but that is how I think of it. (Interview 2, p. 3).

Deniz was quick to include her own experiences as a diverse student while lacking confidence in her perception of diversity.

Marcela said, “there is no race. There is no color” (Interview 2, p. 2). The teacher candidates who approach diversity from this angle were prone to a colorblind way of thinking. According to the research in Critical Race Theory, if a teacher does not see or acknowledge race or language or socioeconomic status as diversity, then those students who are part of that culture will be at a disadvantage for academic success (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Lynn & Parker, 2006). Marcela attempted to achieve equality in her classroom by overlooking outward physical characteristics of her students. However, Howard (2006) tells of the “negative impact that our imagined goodness and narrow sense of normalcy have on others who do not share the demographic advantages that have favored [a] group” (p. 120). In other words, by maintaining a “colorblind” perspective in her class, Marcela was ignoring a great part of how her students are different. These differences might be challenging to discuss for her, but without approaching the topic, she, inadvertently, was making her students believe that it is not important in life.

Rapport with Students. Over the course of the semester, the teacher candidates had gotten to know their students much more deeply by talking to them in the hall or outside of instruction time, asking for personal connections during instructional time and observing students and their friends. Since some teacher candidates teach elementary, they learned about their students differently than the secondary teacher candidates. Regardless of the method, all teacher candidates felt they had a much better relationship with their students built on trust. Research about successful teachers of diverse students explained that these teachers are willing to give the students a voice to be themselves while challenging and motivating them specifically where they need it (Duncan-Andrade,

2007). Quijada Cerecer (2011) also explained that creating relationships with students enabled an educator to understand and empathize with a culture that is unfamiliar. In doing so a teacher will continually be able to bridge connections between the content and the curriculum with the home lives of her students which results in a legitimacy for students that did not exist previously. While all candidates believed that connections with their students are essential, several described students who they found more challenging to get to know.

Deniz called these students “unmotivated who don’t seem to care” (Interview 1, p. 5). Deniz seemed outspoken when describing a student who is unmotivated. She further explained during the second interview that

It seems like they do not care and they don’t want to be here. They are either late and they don’t have a pass. They use every excuse to get out of class to drink water or whatever, their work is always late, and I have to chase them during advocacy. It could be a district test or something. I feel like they are not...like they don’t care, I kind of push them, but I don’t know how long or how hard to try to push them. And nothing seems to motivate them. I use the same lecture, same examples, same videos for every class, and they go for each period and most connect with those talks but some do not. (Interview 2, p. 4)

In this utterance, Deniz demonstrated an expectation that all students are the same and should be engaged in similar activities when, in fact, this was not the case. She found it more difficult to approach students on an individual level when they were resistant to her lessons and those activities which she found exciting.

Emily, who was placed in a suburban school to the north of Houston, discovered it was equally difficult to engage with students who were quiet, but she explained her personal goal of getting to know each student's interests including sports, hobbies, music, and the like. However, during the second interview, she explained

I can't seem to get through to this one student. He is in my second period, which is a gifted and talented English class. He is the most uncouth student I have ever met, and his mother is the same way. I didn't know in the beginning of the semester, but he has serious ADHD. I felt at a real disadvantage because I was not informed. Although he has hurt my feelings on numerous occasions, I guess I know better now...you know? I know that he doesn't have a filter, so I try not to be too hurt by it anymore.

Emily, in describing this particular student, showed how often teachers were unaware or misinformed about student individualities. While it was the legal responsibility of the school system to relay this particular information about her student's ADHD, how often do teachers not know about personality factors that were not the legal responsibility of the school? Emily was able to adapt her perspective concerning this student, but this occurrence highlighted how a preconceived notion of a student's behavior impacted a teacher's ability to connect with and teach students. This can include behaviors that were not considered the norm.

Katherine described these students as "quiet and withdrawn" (Interview 2, p. 3), and Farzana explained them as "difficult to understand when they are quiet" (Interview 1, p. 2). Farzana went on to say that she did not "know how to ask my students personal questions...I didn't know if I was allowed to ask that kind of questions or how he might

relate to me. So, I'm still learning how personal to get with the students and what kinds of questions to ask" (Interview 1, p. 2). Since Farzana was placed with a secondary teacher with almost 155 students, she believed that she would never get to know all of them on a personal level although she would like to. It was important to see the practical struggles of these teacher candidates as they negotiated their teacher actions; however, it was equally important to create a sense of classroom belonging and community where each student had the opportunity to make a contribution. In order to achieve this end, a teacher must create a trusting relationship with all students so that they feel unconditional acceptance and comfort to put themselves at risk to contribute (Howard, 2006).

What are the perceptions of teacher candidates currently enrolled in QUEST 3 about their diversity preparation?

The Infinite Value of Fieldwork. The teacher candidates referred to fieldwork as being the biggest authority in their learning how to be a teacher. Fieldwork was eye-opening, and it taught the teacher candidates what challenges and successes students were really having as well as the constant negotiation between state expectations and the needs of the students. Fieldwork was the epitome of learning because it was authentic and real. For example, Rita says "This, right now, is the best experience ever, and I see the routines" (Interview 1, p. 2). Because Rita was able to observe and practice in an authentic setting, she will be much better equipped to conduct her own classroom routines after graduation.

Additionally, Juliana said, "Field experience, there is nothing like living it. I have seen it with my classmates...I feel like these girls have really good grades in the courses, and they get the concept, but when they are there, they are like 'I hate it. I can't control

the kids. I can't do that” (Interview 1, p. 2). Farzana said, “I think the field work was the most helpful...because I was...not so confident about being a teacher. I liked how it started out small and gradually grew into something really big” (Interview 1, p. 4). Emily explained that she was

so nervous about being responsible for so many students...I had a horrible first day of student teaching, but that lesson really opened my eyes, and I'm totally different now...like I'm more confident and able to be myself and be more comfortable because I was actually in it. It was much more real than what we do in class in the closed environment of a classroom with our friends... (Interview 2, p. 6)

While fieldwork was the most important aspect for students as far as they were concerned, they mentioned that coursework played a smaller role especially with lesson plan writing and content methods. Rita and Katherine were very outspoken when it came to describing their coursework experiences. These two teacher candidates both expressed their dislike of doing busy and repetitive work even though some of the professors were supportive. For example, Rita reported that, “Honestly, what we learned in the class...half of it was redundant, and it was just not useful. You don't have the time to sit there and write a five page lesson plan and go through the whole thing” (Interview 1, p. 2). Katherine said, “I can tell you that my first semester in QUEST was pointless. One of my courses used the same book as a community college course I took. Same stuff. Pointless. Why do I need to go? Things I don't care about because it didn't matter to teaching” (Interview 1, p. 6). Ladson-Billings (2011) supported this notion when suggesting “that foundations courses...are ‘irrelevant’ and unrelated...that methods

courses...are little more than activity courses that fail to consider the actual experiences students will encounter as teachers” (p. 391).

Juliana offered a different perspective when she said, “[some] do help because my course taught me how to do like workshops and testing like running records, you know, I hated it during class, but then I come here, and I know how to do it, and they are like ‘oh my gosh’” (Interview 1, p. 4). Farzana mentioned that

we have taken a lot of classes that can just teach how to deal with students like this and classroom management...I’ve had teachers tell us to change the lesson plan or get down and dirty with the students if you need to...the QUEST program encourages us to be more human with the students and not to be just a figure in the classroom that demands respect. (Interview 1, p. 4)

Deniz highlighted that coursework is not enough to prepare a teacher. She said, “we learned theories...it is important, but uh, and there are aspects which are really informative...but we needed to really learn how we were going to implement them into actually doing it” (Interview 1, p. 4). Only Adalia explained that coursework was more important than fieldwork. She said, “coursework because the whole lesson planning and you are able to create lesson plans” (Interview 1, p. 1).

Mentor Modeling. In figuring out how to be a teacher, these teacher candidates frequently referred back to teachers they had observed, student taught with, or modeling they had witnessed from university professors. The teacher candidates were moved by observing mentor teachers go through the motions of a typical day and interacting with students. There can be drawbacks, however, when mentor teachers were not of a quality which inspired teacher candidates to ask questions and try out new ideas. Chapman

(2011) explained “teacher education programs suffer from a lack of exemplary cooperative teacher placements where students can observe quality pedagogy” (p. 249).

Cody explained,

The main thing that helps with the fieldwork is having a great teacher. Last year, I had an awesome teacher to learn from. Sometimes, having a bad teacher is just as good because this year I don't have an awesome of a teacher. He isn't as good as my teacher last year, so I'm learning things not to do. My teacher last year, he never berated kids in front of everybody and yelled at them in front of the class...(Interview 1, p. 5)

Farzana mentioned a teacher she observed during her QUEST 1 observations.

“The teacher that I observed was a very good example of a managed classroom. His classroom was always very well organized, and the students know exactly what to do and the students are always prompt with their assignments. Ever since then I always told myself that my classroom was going to be like that” (Interview 1, p. 4). Rita spoke particularly highly of her mentor teacher this semester. She said,

I have a really good teacher. She tells me everything and discusses things with me. We have a student that doesn't speak English, and she was concerned that he wasn't keeping up with the class, so I followed her around and pulled his file...she took me through those steps. I would have never known that...they don't teach you that in the classroom. (Interview 1, p. 2)

Deniz, during the first interview, described her mentor as “supportive and knowing that and feeling that positive energy from her makes my day...she is

constant...she models activities, she models for me and for the students using the elmo” (Interview 1, p. 2).

Katherine explained that she was part of a tutoring program in HISD before beginning her student teacher semester. She described that her mentor “was just there because she got paid...she told me that. She would sit there and work on her computer and have me walk around and teach something” (Interview 1, p. 3). Marcela had a difficult mentor teacher during her first seven weeks of student teaching. She described her mentor as working only for his own reputation and not for the gain of the students (Interview 2).

The chapter that follows will consider implications for the QUEST program and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR QUEST

This study aimed to discover how teacher candidates enrolled in the QUEST program study, engage, and interact with diversity during coursework and field experiences. The conclusions that were drawn from the data hope to aid the teacher education program in making future decisions about the impact of its program. At this point in time, it is necessary to provide the reader with a brief summary to clarify and remind about the dissertation study's research problem, methodology, and conclusions. Once this review has been presented, the implications of the study will be discussed along with suggestions for further research in this area.

Statement of the Problem

Because of the differences between teachers and students, whether it be race, economic status, age, gender, and so on, it is necessary for teacher education programs to examine its methods for preparing teacher candidates to be successful in facilitating academic, emotional, and social growth of all students, especially those of diverse backgrounds. Teacher education programs have a heavy responsibility in cultivating teachers who not only recognize the difference of others but who are also prepared to deconstruct socially constructed identities and stereotypes to avoid hidden acts of discrimination. When considering the task of Critical Race Theory, Hollins (2011) explains that “the quest for social justice is about changing the institutions that allow manifestations of whiteness to maintain power and disrupting the uncontested discourses that prevent radical and necessary reforms in teacher education that would help preK-12 children reach their full academic potential” (p. 243). To date, research has not been

conducted to investigate how the QUEST program prepares teachers to negotiate diversity or actively dismantle inequity in the education system. Are we implementing practices that will grow successful teachers for the urban environment and the Houston context?

Summary of the Methodology

As explained during Chapter 3, a critical qualitative approach was used for this study in order to gain a more complete awareness of a teacher candidate's contextual experiences in a classroom when considering interactions with diverse student populations. Critical qualitative methods were central to understanding the relationship between knowledge and power, to uncovering social norms that inadvertently lead to oppression, and to supporting research efforts that will result in a more democratic society. The goal of this methodology was to explain and expand on an individual's tacit behaviors, actions, and speech by observing, and examining the context of an event as well as engaging in a communicative dialogue with an individual about the event. The purpose was to take a holistic impression and explore its underpinnings to uncover unspoken meanings and then develop a broad impression of the meaning's relationship to established social norms. The cycle of reconstructive analysis put forth by Carspecken (1996) proved especially appropriate because it can expose particular beliefs that were considered "natural" by an individual even though the belief may have been harmful to others.

Using this premise, the study collected data through documents from the QUEST program and interviews from teacher candidates currently enrolled in their last semester of the program, QUEST 3. Nine participants volunteered for the study during student-

teacher orientation at the beginning of the school year, and each was interviewed twice during the Fall semester. One interview was conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork experience and one at the end. Each interview ranged in time from forty-five minutes to an hour in length. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Carspecken's Horizon Analysis described in Chapter 3. Documents were analyzed using the same methods. Once the initial interviews were transcribed and portions were analyzed for their illustrative nature, the members invited to engage in member checks during the second interview as a way to enhance the credibility of my conclusions.

Some observations were also conducted immediately prior to the second interview. The observations served to create concrete events for the teacher candidate to discuss during the interviews. While I kept notes in a field journal recording behaviors and speech acts of the teacher candidate, these observations were not tape or video-recorded. Therefore, I did not analyze using the same rigorous methods as the interviews.

Summary of the Results

Throughout this study, it became very clear that these teacher candidates felt very strongly about teaching all students. Their care and enthusiasm for the growth of their students led them to participate in a study regarding preparation for teaching diverse students. In other words, they felt this study could be a way to further enhance their own teaching practice. Many candidates mentioned passion for their work with students and a dedication to being the best teacher they could. Nevertheless, "all students" is a problematic statement because, even though it acknowledges the importance of students as a whole, it ignores individual difference by categorizing all students together under the

guise of equality. This belief creates unequal treatment since it can cause an individual student's needs not to be met if different from the established norm or those who do not represent the middle road.

In addition, teacher candidates seemed very rooted in their background experiences. This statement seems clichéd since all our beliefs and behaviors are somewhat governed by past experiences; however, these teacher candidates directly related their more current teaching practices to that of their own schooling in the past or their experiences with diverse people in their personal lives. Rarely was there any mention of changing beliefs based on coursework or fieldwork during the program. In fact, their personality characteristics and learning style were the most powerful driving forces behind the type of teacher these teacher candidates wanted to become. Bodur (2012) explained that "Preservice teachers' beliefs are important factors, as they impact the extent to which preservice teachers learn and internalize the content presented to them in teacher education programs" (p. 43).

The teacher candidates' perceptions of a successful student were based on the traditional notion of student behaviors and achievement. The candidates framed student accomplishment around listening to the teacher, being attentive, respectful, and active while making connections between content and background knowledge. However, students' intelligence was determined to not be a factor in their success as long as that student was hard-working. In America, the hard-working always prevail, right? It is the reality that if students do not exhibit this behavior, negative stereotypes will be formed, and those students will be labeled as reluctant or unable.

Fieldwork appeared to have the biggest impact on these teacher candidates. Working daily with the complexities of the subject matter and human nature imparted lessons that could not be taught during the coursework of the QUEST program. However, if the teacher candidates were not placed with a mentor who possessed strong rapport with students, a positive attitude or passion for the career, and innovative methods for teaching the content, the teacher candidates felt unsatisfied with the lessons they were learning while in the field. Mentor teachers appeared to have a large influence when it came to changing the thought patterns of teacher candidates who already have preconceived notions of students' attitudes and behaviors.

Implications for QUEST

QUEST is an established teacher education program with a long history of helping teachers reach their goals of graduation and beginning a career as an educator. The program strives to self-reflect by asking its teacher candidates to provide evaluations at the end of each semester. QUEST takes these considerations and the needs of the Houston community to heart because, even since this study began, major changes have occurred in the program. For example, teacher candidates enrolled in what used to be QUEST 1 is now called Pre-Education. Previously, students would only observe on campuses around Houston for forty hours. The effective change, for this year's teacher candidates, is increasing the field time on a campus from forty hours to one day a week during the length of the semester. This equates to at least sixty hours of observation and interaction with students. As discussed previously, the program was separated into four phases. While the essentially, remains the same, the field work requirements for each

portion have increased thus creating more practical learning time with a mentor working in the authentic environment.

By increasing the amount of field time, the QUEST program seeks to create a teacher candidate who has a wealth of hands-on experience before gaining full-time employment in a school. As this research has shown, field work has the largest influence on a developing teacher. However, increasing the amount of field work will give a teacher candidate more experience working with students, the experience could do more harm than good if attention is not paid to selecting mentors to exemplify success in urban environments. All too often, the teacher candidates in this study described events during their field work which created negative impressions of working with diverse students all because of their mentor teachers. It can be true that watching a mentor teacher who is not successful could demonstrate what *not* to do with students, but the much bigger lessons are learned from watching teachers who are able to break through to students who previously seemed unreachable. Being part of a classroom environment that seeks to not only gain knowledge and skills based in content, but which also strives to give students voice and power in their education is life-changing.

These urban educators exist in Houston. The QUEST program simply needs to begin forging a network of successful mentor teachers who are willing to provide examples for teacher candidates in the field. I was able to witness some of this happening with the secondary social studies majors. This segment of the QUEST program would actively try to place their teacher candidates with mentor educators who have success with diverse student populations in urban schools in order to avoid what Ladson-Billings calls “culture of poverty” (2011, p. 392) or blaming students and their

families for low academic achievement. I suggest that this action needs to happen across the QUEST program. Creating a successful urban educator network not only ensures that the teacher candidates will have positive field experiences which serve to change stereotypes, but it will also form the foundation of a strong community base between the university and the schools it tries to provide with educators who are prepared to teach. Duncan-Andrade (2011) also supports this belief and goes even further by evaluating mentor teachers using a teacher quality index and community nomination in order to select teacher based on quality and not those who are the favorites of principals (Ladson-Billings, 2011) or assumed to be the best. Further his viewpoint extends to including an apprenticeship model which would take place over a number of years and not simply a semester (p. 323).

Secondly, coursework is another facet of the program that has been revised since the beginning of this research study. Current degree plans for incoming teacher candidates have not been published yet, so it is unknown what changes have taken place. Regardless, the research in this area suggests that coursework and fieldwork are closely linked to each other in order to allow a space for teacher candidates to reflect on experiences and events happening in the field. By pairing fieldwork with a specific university-based class, teacher candidates have the space to recreate their understandings socially with their peers who are going through the same experiences. Coursework that is too far removed from the realities of the classroom, this study has shown, is ineffective with teacher candidates. All too often, the candidates in this study complained about the impractical nature of certain classes. Firmly grounding coursework in the experiences of

the field will help teacher candidates make sense of what they are observing with the idea that at the university they can find meaning in those events.

Finally, this research has suggested that it is necessary to give opportunities for teacher candidates to critically reflect on their constructed identities in order to examine beliefs which they had considered as “natural” (Nieto & McDonough, 2011). Even though the teacher candidates in this study would be considered diverse using the categories of national statistics, they held many beliefs which are consistent with the majority in power such as the description of a successful student explained in Chapter 4. Teacher candidates first need to be taught how to critically engage in self-reflection, and then they need a space to consistently reflect on their personal identities in order to understand how their beliefs could affect their students and their methods of teaching. As Olsen explains (2011), “Teacher education research that starts from the premise that teachers actively, often automatically, negotiate among past and present, personal and professional strands of influence to construct their professional selves should yield important, case-sensitive findings” (p. 264). Implementing and researching this reflection is a process and is best applied consistently throughout a teacher education program. While providing this space for reflection, teacher candidates would profit from constructive feedback. The QUEST program provides reflective feedback on some self-evaluations completed by teacher candidates, but not all, as explained by Katherine in Chapter Three. It is unclear how or when teacher candidates are engaging in reflection throughout the QUEST program.

Suggestions for Future Research

When making suggestions for further research, I would first like to say that this particular study would have profited from more time. Although I feel that I know the teacher candidate participants well, there is always so much more to learn and discover about their experiences and perceptions. I can envision this same study extending and reaching out to the same teacher candidates as they enter their careers and continuing the conversation with them about their experiences and opinions of their preparation now that they are solely responsible for their own students. What lessons transferred from their university experience? In addition to further questioning, the current study lacked real, in-depth observational data. Having observational data would greatly add to the picture of how teacher candidates and first-year teachers interacted with diversity rather than just relying on the teacher candidate's account of how he or she engaged with the topic. Any future study needs to see beliefs in action.

Additionally, since a teacher education program seeks to expand a teacher candidate's previously held beliefs, it would be essential to investigate more closely how these changes occur during a university degree program. It is undeniably true that the teacher candidates in this study come from very diverse backgrounds and cultures, but they still maintain beliefs that might not break the tide of educational inequality. Some teacher candidates referenced that they had tried everything they could to motivate students, but nothing seemed to work; therefore, they became resigned to disconnecting with that student. This notion is deeply rooted and will not change the ways of education. It is because of ideas like this one that teacher education programs need to teach teacher

candidates ways in which to not give up and empower the students who have suffered the most at the hands of a failing education system.

The teacher candidates in this study also have not been transformed into truly investing and believing that they can change the state of education as it is now even though they persistently mentioned how passionate they were about their chosen careers. They mentioned powerlessness when it comes to speaking and planning with mentor teachers. They mention the false behaviors and methods of teachers from whom they were learning. If field work is the biggest teacher of their career then mentor teachers could likewise be the biggest influencers of their career. It is he or she they will model and strive to be or not be, but even with a bad example, these teacher candidates are not learning ways to navigate the waters of sensitive students and how to help them move beyond the stereotypes. Not only would a more long-term research project on the nature of the mentor/student-teacher relationship be explored, but also ways to create a network and community of quality, urban mentor teachers with area schools.

Finally, these teacher candidates believe that diversity exists on a very fundamental level; however, they are not doing enlisting any specific instructional techniques in their classes which marks diversity, acknowledges it, or even talks about it on a broader social scale. When questioned, these students explained that they believed students to be different and needed different instruction based on learning style and ability but as far as cultural differences or differences in background and upbringing, there seemed to be nothing extraordinary in their treatment of the subject except listening to personal experience and valuing where they come from. They are still performing to the same expectation and standard for all the rest of the students. “Challenges facing

educators in meeting the needs of multicultural students include, but are not limited to, developing cultural awareness, identifying pedagogical approaches, and adjusting the curriculum content (Taylor, 2010; Banks, 2010). Further investigation into methods courses and transfer into fieldwork would be beneficial in understanding how teacher candidates can implement these methods during their student teaching semesters.

In all, this dissertation research can provide a source of discussion about the methods and practices of QUEST; however, it has not exhausted the possibilities. I merely scratched the surface of what it means to provide good teachers for students who struggle in an education system that claims equality while providing inequitable treatment for students who are considered diverse. During this the process of this research, my perspective on the challenges and victories of teacher candidates was extended, and I feel honored to be able to be part of their lives if only briefly.

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Appendix A:
Twenty Professional Attributes of Good Teaching⁴

| CRITERION | <i>Characteristic Definitions</i> |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Physical Characteristics | <p>1) Health and Ableness: The candidate has the physical and mental characteristics, sufficient motor coordination and energy, adequate visual and auditory acuity, and otherwise good health needed to effectively and independently implement the instructional and managerial duties associated with teaching the levels and fields for which the candidate is being prepared.</p> <p>2) Appearance: The candidate takes pride in his or her personal appearance and presents him/herself in manner of dress and hygiene professionally appropriate to the age students being taught.</p> |
| Personality Characteristics | <p>3) Cooperation: The candidate works cooperatively with peers, site teachers, and faculty; contributes constructively to group objectives; disagrees courteously, avoids sarcasm, makes constructive suggestions; accepts suggestions and constructive criticism; and modifies behavior appropriately.</p> <p>4) Tactfulness: The candidate recognizes the implications of words and actions upon others and avoids situations which offend institutional and community mores.</p> <p>5) Flexibility and Patience: The candidate displays a willingness and ability to adapt to changes in events, conditions, activities, and tasks, and an overall patience for circumstances and human interactions.</p> <p>6) Organization: The candidate monitors and controls time, materials, and product expectations.</p> <p>7) Enthusiasm: The candidate displays energy and enthusiasm and responds appropriately to humor.</p> <p>8) Creativity: The candidate synthesizes theory and practice into new personalized adaptations and applications.</p> <p>9) Initiative and Risk-Taking: The candidate displays independence and motivation in undertaking activities and assignments.</p> |
| Responsibility Characteristics | <p>10) Responsibility: The candidate undertakes and completes assigned tasks, meets University and program requirements and deadlines, anticipates problems and plans ahead, and adapts to professional standards and policies.</p> <p>11) Attendance and Punctuality: The candidate is present and punctual for class and appointments; arranges ahead of time with all necessary individuals for unavoidable delays or absences; and does not solicit exceptions for any but very special and legitimate circumstances.</p> <p>12) Maturity: The candidate displays poise in task completion and personal interactions, acknowledges his or her own responsibility and culpability, and does not attempt to transfer fault or blame to others or to rationalize his or her own inadequate or missing performance.</p> |
| Communication Skills | <p>13) Oral Communication: The candidate's oral communication reflects appropriate voice and speech delivery; clarity, fluency, and grammatical correctness; use of standard English and understandable accent; appropriate</p> |

⁴ From QUEST Teacher Candidate Handbook. (2011). Retrieved from http://www.coe.uh.edu/about/quest/_pdf/QUEST_handbook8_29_11.pdf

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>formality to any situation; and verbal flexibility allowing rephrasing or translating of ideas or questions until instruction is clear to students.</p> <p>14) Written Communication: The candidate's written products reflect appropriate and accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, format, and English usage; and demonstrate organization and composition that effectively communicate ideas, directions, explanations, lesson plans, messages, and other teaching-related written products.</p> |
| Professional Relationship Skills | <p>15) Demeanor: The candidate demonstrates positive attitudes in interactions with other professionals; collaborates with peers; relates easily and appropriately to those in authority; complies with rules and reports problems with school and university operations with reference to specific evidence and reasonable courtesy.</p> <p>16) Rapport: The candidate relates easily and appropriately to children, youth, and others responsible to him or her, providing leadership or direction while involving others and listening to and incorporating their desires and concerns.</p> <p>17) Awareness of Individual Differences: The candidate recognizes and empathizes with human differences in ethnicity, gender, physical ability and intellectual ability, and demonstrates sensitivity to social expectations in varied environments.</p> |
| Commitment for the Teaching Profession | <p>18) Professionalism: The candidate recognizes, seeks, and applies the best theory, research, and practice in professional activities, is proud to assert his or her intention of becoming a teacher, and demonstrates a commitment to education as a career.</p> <p>19) With-it-ness: The candidate exhibits simultaneous awareness of all aspects of the learning environment.</p> <p>20) Reflectivity: The candidate reflects and evaluates professional experiences with constructive criticism.</p> |

Appendix B

Texas Certification Standards⁵ Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities

Standard I. The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment.

Standard II. The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence.

Standard III. The teacher promotes student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques, instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, and timely, high-quality feedback.

Standard IV. The teacher fulfills professional roles and responsibilities and adheres to legal and ethical requirements of the profession.

⁵ State Board for Educator Certification. (2008). Pedagogy and professional responsibilities standards. Retrieved from <http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/sbeconline/standtest/standards/allppr.pdf>

Appendix C

Interview Protocol #1

The purpose of this interview is to establish background of participant (family, schooling, life experiences) and to garner information about the participant's notion of classroom diversity and how she believes she will address this during her upcoming student teaching.

Topic One: Personal History

Lead-Off Question

What made you decide to go into the teaching profession?

Covert Categories

Contextual background, personal schooling history and possibly familial background, and teaching philosophy

Possible Follow-Up Questions

You mention teacher X, can you describe more about what made this teacher have such an influence on your decision? Do you emulate this teacher in your own teaching? Can you describe how?

You mention that you want to help students achieve success? Can you explain this a bit further? How do you think this will happen in the future? What will be your role?

Topic Two: Classroom Teaching Experience

Lead-Off Question

You are entering into your student teaching semester, so you've had a lot of classroom experiences already during QUEST 1 and QUEST 2. Can you describe a particular experience you had with a student who was struggling and you helped him or her to be successful?

Covert Categories

Background classroom experiences, beliefs about students, specific strategies used with students, teaching philosophy, beliefs about diversity

Possible Follow-Up Questions

How did you help this student be successful?

How did you learn the strategies you used with this student?

Can you please describe this student's attributes more specifically? For example, what kind of student was she?

Based on your experience, are there students that are more challenging to work with?

Topic Three: Beliefs about Diversity

Lead-Off Question

Thinking about your classroom experiences, can you describe a teacher who you believe worked successfully with individual differences? What specifically did that teacher do that worked or didn't work?

Covert Categories

Definition and beliefs about diversity, personal interactions and experiences with diverse populations, participant background

Possible Follow-Up Questions

[Describe a successful teacher of diverse populations of students.]

Have you had any experiences which would help you prepare to be a successful teacher of diverse populations? Please describe one.

Topic Four: Preparation for establishing equality in the classroom

Lead-Off Question

You are almost finished with the QUEST program, and graduation is right around the corner. What do you think best prepared you for working with students? What about working with students of diverse populations? Please explain your experiences.

Covert Categories

Perceptions of QUEST preparation and program, opinions about field work vs. coursework, background experiences

Follow-Up Questions

What are the best ways you think you can help your students succeed?

How are you preparing for the upcoming student teaching semester?

Can you describe a certainty about next semester or a fear you might have about running your own classroom?

Topic Five: Defining success

Lead-Off Question

We all have different ideas of what it takes to be successful in this life. Can you describe some qualities that you believe in? What are some qualities that students need to demonstrate in order to be successful?

Covert Categories

Perceptions of students, indirect observations and beliefs of diversity

Follow-Up Questions

Please describe student who has characteristics that will make him/her successful?
 What about a student who would not be successful?

Interview Protocol #2

The purpose of this interview is to gain an understanding of how teacher candidates perceive their behavior toward students who represent diverse backgrounds and experiences. The participants in this study themselves represent a range of experiences, so it will be important to distinguish how students are different from the teacher candidate.

Topic One: Teaching self-assessment*Lead-Off Question*

How would you describe your teaching style?

Covert Categories

Level of interaction with students, possible connections between student home life and academics

Possible Follow-Up Questions

What made you the teacher that you are today? Can you pinpoint a seminal experience that cemented what type of teacher you are?

Topic Two: Relationships with students*Lead-Off Question*

You have a full classroom of students. Which one do you feel that you know the best? Why do you feel like you know him or her more than the others?

Covert Categories

Awareness of diversity or educational status quo, methods used to connect with students (possible those that are diverse)

Possible Follow-Up Questions

What kinds of activities do you incorporate which help you know the students better? Are these deliberate activities or are they spontaneous? What do you do when students are completely different from you, can you form a connection?

Topic Three: Definition and Perception of Diversity

Lead-Off Question

How would you define diversity? Can you describe a student in your class who fits that definition of diversity? Do you approach him or her differently?

Covert Categories

Definition, illustration of a student who is different, possible color-blind attitude, or deficit thinking

Possible Follow-Up Questions

Please describe a student or two who represent diversity to you. How would you define equitable education; what does it look like? Do you approach a diverse student differently than a similar student?

Topic Four: Preparation for teaching diverse students

Lead-Off Question

What has helped you the most when considering how to teach all students? Why was it so helpful?

Covert Categories:

Reflection, fieldwork, coursework opinions and possible transfer of university work to interactions with students on a campus

Possible Follow-Up Questions

What is your opinion about the University's coursework concerning diversity? Did you take any of the CUST (Cultural and Urban Studies) courses? CUST 3320 Multicultural Environment or Dr. Dao or Dr. Radigan?