Exploring the beliefs, expectations, and practices of effective teachers of Latino students in high poverty high schools

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Author
Del Rosario, Roman

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Exploring the Beliefs, Expectations, and Practices of Effective Teachers of Latino Students in High Poverty High Schools

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership by Roman Del Rosario

Committee in charge:
California State University of California, San Marcos
   Patricia Stall, Chair

University of California, San Diego
   Luz Chung
   Amanda Datnow
   Carolyn Hofstetter

2011
The Dissertation of Roman Del Rosario is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

California State University, San Marcos

2011
DEDICATION

To my wife, Cheryl Ann Bayley; you have been my greatest love and support in all things. To my son, Liam Richard Del Rosario; I will strive to leave you a world that is just. To my parents, Richard and Enedina Del Rosario; you instilled in me my values and moral character. To all my students in South Los Angeles, Chula Vista, and National City; you have taught me so much.
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VITA

EDUCATION

California State University, San Marcos
University of California, San Diego
   Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership, 2011

National University, Los Angeles
   Master of Science in Educational Administration, 2005

University of California, Irvine
   Bachelor of Science in Biological Science, 1998
   Bachelor of Arts in Social Science, 1998

TEACHING & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Sweetwater Union High School District
   Sweetwater High School
      Principal
   National City, CA
   2010-Present

Sweetwater Union High School District
   Castle Park High School
      Assistant Principal
   Chula Vista, CA
   2007-2010

Los Angeles Unified School District
   Fremont High School
      Assistant Principal
   Los Angeles, CA
   2005-2007

Los Angeles Unified School District
   Local District 7
      Secondary Science Specialist
   Los Angeles, CA
   2004-2005

Los Angeles Unified School District
   Fremont High School
      Science Teacher/Department Chair
   Los Angeles, CA
   1999-2004

New Alternatives Inc.
   Level 14 Residential Treatment Facility
      Child Development Counselor
   Chula Vista, CA
   1998-1999

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Educational Research Association
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
National City Board of Directors
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring the Beliefs, Expectations, and Practices of Effective Teachers of Latino Students in High Poverty High Schools

by

Roman Del Rosario
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership
California State University, San Marcos, 2011
University of California, San Diego, 2011
Patricia Stall, Chair

Nationally, the problem of our persistent achievement gap between Latino students and their White counterparts has proven to be an issue that is not easy to remediate. The problem takes on added urgency when considering the rapid growth of the Latino population. Although the problem is complex, it is known that teacher quality is central to student learning.

This study focuses on exploring the beliefs, expectations and practices of highly effective teachers working in high poverty high schools serving predominately Latino populations. To address this purpose, two primary research questions are explored:
1. What are the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students?

2. Are there patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?

The effective teachers are interviewed using an interview protocol based on the research of Martin Haberman. Teacher responses are analyzed and reveal significant findings of the importance of caring relationships and attitudes from teachers to ensure success of their Latino students, referred to as *Pillars of Caring*. The findings have implications for administrators and policy makers with respect to educational preservice programs, professional development, and hiring practices.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

Academic achievement among Latinos has been a topic of interest among educators for many years. Much of this interest has centered on the achievement gap and educational disparities that exist between members of this group and their White counterparts. Evidence of the achievement gap can be found in scores of math and reading proficiencies (Jacobsen, et al., 2001), grade point average and SAT Reasoning Test scores (College Entrance Examination Board, 2008), and school dropout rates (Laird, DeBell, Kienzl, & Chapman, 2007). In an attempt to further explore academic achievement for these groups, I will examine and seek to identify the qualities and characteristics of effective teachers of Latino students attending predominantly Latino high schools with high poverty rates.

Historically, poor Latino students are more educationally disadvantaged than their White counterparts. Latino students attend schools with weaker curriculum, ill-prepared teachers and dangerous environments (Moreno, 1999; Solarzano, 1995). Along with these issues, students’ cultural and personal assets are often not valued or are overlooked by staff (Poliakoff, 2006). This dismissive attitude causes students to become disengaged in the learning process and not value or respect the role of educators. By the fourth grade two-thirds of the African-American and Latino students are reading below grade level and at an eighth-grade level when leaving high school (Haycock & Jerald, 2001). These achievement levels dramatically limit the occupational opportunities of these students. College is a non-existent option and their future is one of little promise or hope of a better life.
While law makers have debated the merits of the current Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) known as The No Child Left Behind Act (2001), most agree that it succeeded in increasing accountability by exposing the gap between student population groups. NCLB’s increased accountability and attention to minority populations, as well as the introduction of California state standards in the mid-1990s, began the trek toward higher expectations in the classroom, a journey that has intensified as we approach 2014 when all students are required to be proficient in English Language Arts and Math.

There are nearly 50 million students in our nation’s public school system, 8.5 million of whom are Latino (U.S. Census, 2007). Latinos are the fastest growing population in the United States; despite the efforts of NCLB and the standards movement, however, there is a notable and persistent gap in achievement between Latino students and their White counterparts (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Garcia, 2001). If current trends continue, the United States will be home to a growing population of undereducated Latinos—an undesirable outcome with great economic and social consequences for our nation.

The achievement gap between Latino students and their White counterparts takes on enhanced significance when one considers the rapid growth of this population. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that Latinos have outpaced the rest of the nation’s growth by roughly four times, increasing to 50.5 million as of the 2010 census, or 16.3 percent of the estimated total U.S. population of 301.6 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). As this population increases in size, the magnitude of the problem of low student achievement increases and becomes a serious societal problem.
Currently a disproportionate percentage of Latino students come from low-income households and attend poorly funded schools due to the districting patterns within the school system. These schools in lower-income districts tend to employ less-qualified teachers, have fewer educational resources, and less access to high-level curriculum (Green, 2002; Oakes, 1985). Compounding this issue is the fact that Latino teens are more likely than Whites to attend the largest public high schools, with the highest concentrations of poor students and highest student-teacher ratios (Fry, 2005). As the cultural composition of our country becomes more diverse, so do our student populations. Dramatic U.S. demographic changes in the Latino population demand that we reexamine the manner in which we serve this growing minority. With demographic projections predicting that by the year 2050 Latinos will comprise one fourth of our country’s population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), it becomes paramount that we establish more effective ways to educate our Latino students as a critical part of a greater comprehensive reform movement of public education.

Research tells us that the causes of the achievement gap are multidimensional and multifaceted (Moreno, 1999; Solarzano, 1995). Despite the complexity of this social issue, what remains clear is the role teachers’ play in closing this persistent gap (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002). School administrators, parents, and students themselves widely support the notion that teacher quality is vital to student achievement, despite the lack of evidence linking achievement to observable teacher characteristics (Rockoff, 2004). Studies that estimate the relationship between student achievement and teachers’ characteristics, including their credentials, have produced little consistent evidence that students perform better when their teachers are highly qualified as defined by NCLB
These data are all the more puzzling because of the potential upward bias in such estimates—teachers with better credentials may be more likely to teach in affluent districts with high performing students. These studies have led many observers to conclude that, while teacher quality may be important, variation in teacher quality is driven by characteristics that are extremely difficult to ascertain and study (Figlio, 1997). Despite these difficulties, understanding the influence teachers have in overcoming the achievement gap is critical.

**Statement of the Problem and Rationale for the Study**

Despite the complexity of the achievement gap present in education, research on teacher effectiveness has demonstrated that teachers play an influential role in mitigating this problem both negatively or positively. Eric Hanushek, an economist at Stanford, estimates that the students of a very bad teacher will learn, on average, half a year’s worth of material in one school year (1997). Conversely, students in the class of a very good teacher will learn a year and a half’s worth of material. That difference amounts to a potential loss of one year’s worth of learning in a single school year. Teacher-effects dwarf school effects: a student is better off in a bad school with an excellent teacher than in an excellent school with a bad teacher. Teacher effects are also much stronger than class-size effects. One would have to cut the average class almost in half to get the same boost that one would get if a student switched from an average teacher to a teacher in the eighty-fifth percentile (Hanushek, 1997). With our current teacher evaluation systems, a good teacher costs as much as an average one, whereas reducing class size by 50% would require the establishment of twice as many classrooms with twice as many teachers.
According to Hanushek’s statistical analysis, if one ranks the countries of the world in terms of the academic performance of their schoolchildren, the U.S. is just below average, half a standard deviation below many high-performing countries like Canada and Belgium. Hanushek goes on to state that the U.S. could close that gap simply by replacing the bottom six percent to ten percent of public school teachers with teachers of average quality. After years of worrying about issues like school funding levels, class size, and curriculum design, many reformers have come to the conclusion that nothing matters more than finding people with the potential to be great teachers. But this is where the problem lies: it is unclear what a person with the potential to be a great teacher looks like. Furthermore, do certain teacher characteristics lead to the higher achievement of specifically Latino students?

Teacher belief constructs and the racial underpinnings of teacher-learner transactions are discussed within the broader context of teacher effectiveness literature (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Delgado, 1995). This literature, along with the analyses of Critical Race Theory, helps educators better understand the relationship between teacher beliefs and the academic outcomes of their Latino students. A social justice perspective, one which critiques society as unjust toward disenfranchised minority groups, also supports research that could help teachers be more aware of their own beliefs and help them understand how their beliefs can influence the achievement of their Latino students.

**Teachers Matter**

Few dispute the importance of quality teachers in education (Haycock, 1998; Hanushek, 1971), but there is an ongoing debate about the specific qualities and
characteristics of teachers who have success with traditionally marginalized student groups. A growing body of research suggests that schools can make a difference, and a substantial portion of that difference is attributable to teachers. Recent studies of teacher effects at the classroom level have found that differential teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning, far outweighing the effects of differences in class size and heterogeneity (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997). Students who are assigned to several ineffective teachers in successive years have significantly lower achievement and smaller gains in achievement than those who are assigned to several highly effective teachers in sequence (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). These studies also identify troubling indicators for educational equity (Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997) noting that minority students are nearly twice as likely to be assigned to the most ineffective teachers and half as likely to be assigned to the most effective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). These studies did not, however, examine the characteristics or practices of more effective teachers versus ineffective ones.

**Background of the Study**

Variables presumed to be indicative of teachers’ effectiveness, which have been examined for their relation to student learning, include measures of academic ability, years of education, years of teaching experience, measures of subject matter and teaching knowledge, certification status, teaching behaviors and cognitive processes in the classroom. The results of these studies have been mixed; some trends, however, do emerge in an examination of the literature.
Studies have found a consistently positive influence of education coursework on teachers’ effectiveness. Ashton and Crocker (1987) found significant positive relationships between education coursework and teacher performance. Other studies have found that students achieve at higher levels and are less likely to drop out when they are taught by teachers with certification in their teaching field, by those with master’s degrees, and by those enrolled in graduate studies (Sanders, Skonie-Hardin, & Phelps, 1994). In addition, other studies of the effects of teacher experience on student learning have found a relationship between teachers’ effectiveness and their years of experience (Murnane & Phillips, 1981), however this relationship is not always strong or entirely linear. The benefits of experience appear to level off after about five to seven years (Rosenholtz, 1986).

While these and other related studies suggest that there are aspects of teaching effectiveness that may be related to teacher education, certification status, and experience, they do not reveal much about what it is about teachers’ behaviors or abilities that make the difference in how their students perform. Ethnographic studies in diverse school environments propose that for students from ethnic minority backgrounds, academic achievement is increased when the educational program is responsive to their differing communication styles, socialization patterns, and culturally normed values and beliefs. Through ethnographic and qualitative methodology, and the conception of teaching as a thoughtful profession, teacher education researchers have demonstrated an interest in certain aspects of teacher cognition and their relationship to sound pedagogical practices in the classroom (Fang, 1995).
Teachers’ beliefs influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn affect their behavior in the classroom. Consequently, understanding belief structures of teachers is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices (Ashton, 1990; Nespor, 1987). The study of teacher beliefs has received attention in recent years. Though this research is valuable, limited studies are available on the relationship between teacher beliefs and student learning, particularly with respect to Latino students.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which teacher cognitive constructs such as beliefs and expectations are related to the academic achievement of Latino high school students who have been historically marginalized by society at large. The study examined espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students at high poverty schools. The primary research questions were:

1. What are the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students?

2. Are there patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?
Overview of the Methods

In order to control for various confounding variables, the California Department of Education’s databases were used to identify high schools with similar student composition with regard to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language proficiency. After narrowing the search to a small number of similar schools, principal recommendations were obtained to determine what teachers consistently produce high achievement of the Latino students as measured by the STAR achievement data. Focused semi-structured interviews of these teachers were conducted. Interview questions utilized appreciative inquiry techniques exploring the constructs described by Haberman’s Urban Teacher Selection Interview (Haberman, 2005). Interviews were transcribed and analyzed with NVivo 8 software using a priori coding units established from constructs discussed in the review of the literature. Hand coding and NVivo 8 software was also employed for further analysis, cross-checking and the identification of further constructs. Critical Race Theory provided the lens to further understand emergent themes with respect to teacher belief constructs.

Significance of the Study

Frederick Douglas (1886) once stated, “Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.” Over one hundred years later, we are still engaged in the same struggle that threatens to widen the gap and hinders full participation in our democracy by denying equitable access to education. This study will focus on the achievement gap, but more
specifically I will try to understand the impact of teacher beliefs and expectations on the academic outcomes of their Latino students.

Research has shown that teachers’ own beliefs represent an important component of their desire to join the teaching profession. These beliefs are complex, but they form a critical construct in teacher education. The challenge for researchers is to uncover teachers’ beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning to understand how these beliefs interact with course content, pedagogy and Latino students’ learning. Having acknowledged the importance of teachers’ beliefs, constant deliberate attempts should be made by teams of educators, policy makers, researchers and administrators to map out an authentic multi-pronged approach to develop top quality teacher education programs, hiring processes, and professional development plans. The next challenge for teacher education institutions would be to keep abreast of research, practices and issues in teacher education. Although current research has attempted to better understand teachers’ beliefs, it should increase its focus on helping teachers become more aware of their own beliefs and other associated factors so that teachers can better understand how their own beliefs can influence their teaching and learning as well as the learning of their students. Such research efforts would contribute to a strengths-based approach in improving the effectiveness of educators in schools that serve Latino populations.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The current Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) known as The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the current debate over its reauthorization has once again put accountability on the forefront of the nation’s education agenda. State education systems have an obligation to educate all; there is, however, a notable gap in achievement across the country between minority and disadvantaged students and their White counterparts. The "achievement gap" in education, a disparity in academic performance between groups of students, is used to describe the discouraging performance gaps between many African-American and Latino students whose achievement ranks at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Latino White and Asian counterparts whose achievement ranks at the higher end of the scale. We see the gap in grades, course selection, standardized-test scores, college completion rates and dropout rates (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Garcia, 2001; Moreno, 1999; Rumberger, 1991; Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Valencia, 1991).

Effective Teaching

The purpose of the study was to examine the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students at high poverty, predominantly Latino high schools. Analysis of the data revealed patterns and relationships that emerged in the beliefs or expectations of successful teachers of Latino high school students.

Latino students are currently the nation’s largest minority. According to the latest census report, Latinos have outpaced the rest of the nation’s growth by roughly four
times, increasing to 50.5 million as of 2010, or 16.3 percent of the estimated total U.S. population of 308.7 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In general, Latino students tend to come from low-income households; meaning Latino students are more likely to attend poorly funded schools. Schools in lower-income districts tend to employ less-qualified teachers, have fewer educational resources, and less access to high-level curriculum (Green, 2002; Oakes, 1985). In addition, Latino teens are more likely than Whites to attend public high schools that have the most students, the highest concentrations of poor students and highest student-teacher ratios (Fry, 2005). As the cultural composition of the United States becomes more and more diverse, so do the student populations.

Dramatic U.S. demographic changes in the Latino population demand that we reexamine the manner in which we serve this growing minority. Demographic projections predict that by the year 2050, Latinos will comprise one fourth of the country’s population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Furthermore, according to the same projection study, Latinos had a higher concentration of children under the age of five than any other racial or ethnic group in 2004. Considering these statistics, it becomes a priority to establish more effective ways to educate Latino students as a critical part of a greater comprehensive reform movement of public education.

Popular explanations for the Latino achievement gap often focus on deficiencies among parents and students (Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Dysfunctional families, lazy and unmotivated students, and the culture of poverty in inner-city neighborhoods are frequently cited as causes of the gap (Payne, 2003); what is often overlooked and unaddressed, however, are the conditions under which children are educated and the quality of schools they attend. Popular explanations often determine the types of
remedies used. Renewed commitment to closing the achievement gap has, therefore, not included an examination of the underlying problem: inequality in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

The causes of the achievement gap are multidimensional and multifaceted. Despite the complexity of this social issue, the critical role of the teacher is undisputed. Research confirms that good teaching matters, and that effective teachers are critically important, arguably the single biggest factor in student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Jordan, 1997, Sanders, 1996). This chapter concentrates on examining the influence teachers have in overcoming the achievement gap. More specifically, I will examine the literature on teacher expectations, teacher attitudes, and teacher beliefs through a social justice lens that adopts, as complementary, the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT). A foundational component of CRT is the belief that racism is pervasive and structurally endemic in U.S. society, including its schools.

**Teacher Quality and Teacher Valued Added**

There is nearly universal agreement that teachers matters in terms of student achievement (Goe, 2007; Darling-Hammonds & Youngs, 2002), but there has been no clear consensus on which aspects of teacher quality matter most or even what a useful definition of teacher quality might be. The growing availability of longitudinal, student achievement data linked to teachers has allowed researchers to calculate sophisticated value-added models that attempt to isolate an individual teacher’s contribution to student learning. These studies consistently find substantial variation in teacher effectiveness. For example, the findings of Rockoff (2004) and Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005) both
suggest a one standard deviation increase in teacher quality improves student math scores at least 0.1-0.15 standard deviations. Aaronson, Barrow and Sander (2007) find similar results using high school data. In comparison, this suggests that a one standard deviation increase in teacher quality, as measured by a value-added approach, improves contemporary student test scores as much as a four- to five-student decrease in class size. The results of these studies have led many researchers and policymakers to promote policies to increase the effectiveness of classroom teachers, such as compensation policy and tenure reviews (Doran & Izumi, 2004; McCaffrey, et al., 2004).

The inherent optimism of this literature is captured by an oft-cited statistic that matching a student with a stream of good teachers (one standard deviation above the average teacher) for three to five years in a row would be enough to completely eliminate the achievement gap between poor and non-poor students (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005). Given the poor record of single year test scores (Kane & Staiger, 2008) or even administrative evaluations of teachers (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008) in differentiating among certain regions of the teacher quality distribution, the increasing use of value added measures seems likely wherever the data requirements can be met. However, measurements linking specific contributions of teachers to student achievement is only one strand of a broader literature utilizing value added estimation.

Value added analysis is additionally useful for correcting bias in research that examines teachers’ impact on student achievement. Because knowledge tends to be cumulative, a current test score is in fact a function of student characteristics combined with the characteristics and policy innovations of all schools and classrooms the student has been in to-date. This creates a serious risk that unmeasured past factors will bias
estimates of any non-experimental intervention. The most common response since Boardman and Murnane (1979) has been the value added approach whereby the researcher accounts for the past achievement of a student, either by using a within-student model differenced across time, or by controlling for a lagged test score measure. This type of specification was widely believed to substantially reduce the chance of bias due to historically omitted variables (Hanushek 2003).

**Characteristics of Effective Teachers**

While many studies attest that some teachers contribute more to their students’ academic growth than other teachers, research has not been very successful at identifying the specific teacher qualifications, characteristics and classroom practices that are most likely to improve student learning, particularly in Latino populations. In reviewing the literature, several categories surfaced as indicators of teacher effectiveness. These include teacher qualifications, teacher practices, and teacher characteristics (Goe, 2007). Teacher qualifications refer to credentials held, knowledge, and experience that teachers bring with them when they enter the classroom. Included in this description are coursework, grades, subject-matter education, degrees, test scores, experience, certifications, and evidence of participation in continued learning. Teacher practices refers to the classroom practices teachers employ, that is, the ways in which teachers interact with students and the teaching strategies they use to accomplish specific teaching tasks. This includes such practices as aligning instruction with assessment, communicating clear learning objectives and expectations for student performance, providing intellectual challenge, allowing students to explain what they are learning,
using formative assessment to understand what and the degree to which students are actually learning. Finally, teacher characteristics refer to attitudes and attributes that teachers bring with them when they enter the classroom. These include expectations for students, beliefs about student race and gender, and other cognitive structures that will be discussed later in this literature review.

As far back as the 1940s, researchers have found small, and usually statistically insignificant, positive correlations between teaching performance and measures of teachers’ intelligence (usually measured by IQ) or general academic ability (Skinner, 1947). In addition to aptitude, subject matter knowledge is another variable that one might think could be related to teacher effectiveness. While there is some support for this assumption, the findings are not as strong and consistent as one might suppose. Studies of teachers’ scores on the subject matter tests of the National Teacher Examinations (NTE) have found no consistent relationship between this measure of subject matter knowledge and teacher performance as measured by student outcomes or supervisory ratings (1994). Most studies show small, statistically insignificant relationships, both positive and negative (Haney, Madaus, & Kreitzer, 1987). Byrne (1983) summarized the results of thirty studies relating teachers’ subject matter knowledge to student achievement. The teacher knowledge measures were either subject knowledge test scores (of standardized or researcher-constructed tests) or the numbers of college courses taken within subject areas. The results of these studies were mixed with 17 showing a positive relationship and 14 showing no relationship. It is intuitive that knowledge of the material to be taught is essential to good teaching, but research indicates that returns to subject matter expertise grows smaller beyond some minimal essential level that increasingly
exceeds the demands of the curriculum being taught. This interpretation is supported by Monk’s (1994) study of mathematics and science achievement. Using data on 2,829 students from the Longitudinal Study of American Youth, Monk found that teachers’ content preparation, as measured by coursework in the subject field, is positively related to student achievement in mathematics and science but that the relationship is curvilinear, with diminishing returns to student achievement of teachers’ subject matter courses above a threshold level (which in Monk’s study was five courses in mathematics). In a multilevel analysis of the same data set, Monk and King (1994) found both positive and negative, generally insignificant, effects of teachers’ subject matter preparation on student achievement.

While it seems that the relationship between subject matter preparation and student achievement would be linear, studies have found a somewhat stronger and more consistently positive influence of education coursework on teachers’ effectiveness. Ashton and Crocker (1987) found significant positive relationships between education coursework and teacher performance in four of seven studies they reviewed, a larger share than those showing subject matter relationships. Evertson, Hawley, and Zlotnik (1985) reported a consistently positive effect of teachers’ formal education training on supervisory ratings and student learning, with 11 of 13 studies showing greater effectiveness of fully prepared and certified versus uncertified or provisionally certified teachers. With respect to subject matter coursework, on the other hand, five of eight studies they reviewed found no relationship, and the other three found small associations.

Consistent with these findings, Desimone and colleagues found positive relationships between the extent of teachers’ professional education coursework and their
teaching performance, including their students’ achievement (Desimone et al., 2002). In their three-year study of over 200 teachers, they found that professional development focused on specific instructional practices increases teachers' use of those practices in the classroom. Furthermore, they found correlations between those receiving quality professional development and student performance. It may be that the positive effects of subject matter knowledge are augmented or offset by knowledge of how to teach the subject to various kinds of students. That is, the degree of pedagogical skill may interact with subject matter knowledge to bolster or reduce teacher performance. The National Assessment of Educational Progress has also documented how specific kinds of teacher-learning opportunities correlate with their students’ reading achievement. On average, in the 1992 and 1994 assessments, 4th grade students of teachers who were fully certified, who had master’s degrees, and who had had professional coursework in literature-based instruction did better on reading assessments than other students (NCES, 1994). While these relationships were modest, the relationships between specific teaching practices and student achievement were often quite pronounced, and these practices were in turn related to learning opportunities the teacher had benefit of.

Other studies have found that students achieve at higher levels and are less likely to drop out when they are taught by teachers with certification in their teaching field, by those with master’s degrees, and by those enrolled in graduate studies (Sanders, Skonie-Hardin, & Phelps, 1994). However, like the NAEP analyses described above, these are simple correlational analyses that do not take into account other school resources or student characteristics like poverty or language background that may affect student performance.
Other studies of the effects of teacher experience on student learning have found a relationship between teachers’ effectiveness and their years of experience (Murnane & Phillips, 1981), but not always a significant one or an entirely linear one. While many studies have established that inexperienced teachers (those with less than three years of experience) are typically less effective than more senior teachers, the benefits of experience appear to level off after about five to seven years (Rosenholtz, 1986). A possible cause of this curvilinear trend in experience effects is that more experienced teachers do not always continue to grow and learn and may grow tired in their jobs. Furthermore, the benefits of experience may interact with educational opportunities. Veteran teachers in settings that emphasize continual learning and collaboration continue to improve their performance (Rosenholtz, 1986). Similarly, very well prepared beginning teachers can be highly effective. Other more recent studies have similar findings that defy our conventional assumptions about the impact of experience on student achievement and point out that correlations between experience and student achievement are highly susceptible to the influence of other teacher characteristics (Rockoff, 2004).

Certification or licensing status is a measure of teacher qualifications that combines aspects of knowledge about subject matter and about teaching and learning. The value of certification varies across the states because of differences in licensing requirements, but a standard certificate generally means that a teacher has been prepared in a state-approved teacher education program at the undergraduate or graduate level and has completed either a major or a minor in the field(s) to be taught plus 18 to 40 education credits. Most states now also require one or more tests of basic skills, subject
matter knowledge, and/or teaching knowledge or skills as the basis for the initial or continuing license or for admission to teacher education. While most states have been increasing their standards since the 1980s, more than 30 states still allow the hiring of teachers who have not met their licensing standards. This practice has been on the increase in some states as demand has grown in recent years. Some states allow the hiring of teachers with no license. Other states issue emergency, temporary, or provisional licenses to candidates who, depending on the state, may or may not have met varying requirements.

While these studies suggest that aspects of teaching effectiveness may be related to teacher education, certification status, and experience, they do not reveal much about the particular teacher behaviors which correlate with student performance. Research on teachers’ personality traits and behaviors has produced few consistent findings (Druva & Anderson, 1983) with the exception of studies finding a recurring positive relationship between student learning and teachers’ “flexibility,” “creativity,” or “adaptability” (Walberg & Waxman, 1983). Successful teachers tend to be those who are able to use a range of teaching strategies and a range of interaction styles, rather than a single, rigid approach. This finding is consistent with other research on effective teaching, which suggests that effective teachers adjust their teaching to fit the needs of different students and the demands of different instructional goals, topics, and methods (Doyle, 1985). In addition to the ability to create and adapt instructional strategies, strong research support has linked student learning to variables such as teacher clarity, enthusiasm, task-oriented behavior, variability of lesson approaches, and student opportunity to learn criterion material. Teachers’ abilities to structure material, ask higher order questions, use student
ideas, and probe student comments have also been found to be important variables in what students learn (Good & Brophy, 1986). No single instructional strategy has been found to be unvaryingly successful; instead, teachers who are able to use a broad repertoire of approaches skillfully (e.g., direct and indirect instruction, experience-based and skill-based approaches, lecture and small group work) are typically most successful. The use of different strategies occurs in the context of “active teaching” that is purposeful and diagnostic rather than random or laissez faire and that responds to students’ needs as well as curriculum goals (Good, 1983).

Teachers’ abilities to handle the complex tasks of teaching for higher-level learning are likely to be associated, to varying extents, with each of the variables reviewed above: verbal ability, adaptability and creativity, subject matter knowledge, understanding of teaching and learning, specific teaching skills, and experience in the classroom, as well as interactions among these variables. Considerations of fit between the teaching assignment and the teacher’s knowledge and experience are also likely to influence teachers’ effectiveness (Little, 1999). In addition, teachers’ effectiveness is supported by conditions such as teachers’ individual teaching and the additive effect of teaching across classrooms, such as class sizes and pupil loads, planning time, opportunities to plan and problem solve with colleagues, and curricular supports including appropriate materials and equipment (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

**Effective Urban Teachers**

Haberman (1995) reported that “having effective teachers is a matter of life and death. These children have no life options for achieving decent lives other than by
experiencing success in school” (p. 1). Supported by current research, having an effective
teacher in every classroom should be first priority for high-poverty schools and is critical
for improving urban schooling (Dill & Stafford-Johnson, 2003; Haberman, 1995, 2005;
Kincheloe, 2004; Stafford & Haberman, 2003). Representing more than four decades of
ongoing research in urban teacher education, Haberman’s Star Teachers: The Ideology
and Best Practice of Effective Teachers of Diverse Children and Youth in Poverty (2005)
and Star Teachers of Poverty (1995) identified 15 characteristics of effective urban
teachers. These characteristics include (a) protecting children’s learning; (b) persistence;
(c) approach to at-risk students; (d) theory into practice; (e) professional/personal
orientation to students; (f) fallibility; (g) emotional and physical stamina; (h)
organizational ability; (i) explanation of teacher success; (j) explanation of children’s
success; (k) real teaching; (l) making students feel needed; (m) the material versus the
student; and (n) gentle teaching in a violent society. He referred to those educators who
possess these characteristics as “star teachers” and pointed out that it is their ideology that
separates them from teachers who are not successful teaching in urban school settings.
For example, how a teacher approaches working with at-risk students is a powerful
indicator of their potential success in the classroom (Haberman, 1995, 2005). Star
teachers are able to capture the spirit of learning for all students regardless of their
socioeconomic status, background, life circumstances, or life experiences.

Other scholars have also focused their research on those attributes of teachers that
make them successful in the urban classroom and working with at-risk students. The
work of Baron, et al. (1992) identifies nine behaviors and practices of effective urban
teachers and organizes them to encompass both internal (classroom practices) and
external (outside school) practices. A few of their findings include active teaching and knowledge of urban and multiethnic society (Baron et al., 1992). Additionally, McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) triangulated data from three focus groups made of up parents, teachers, and students to identify the necessary characteristics and practices of high-performing teachers in high-poverty schools. They concluded that (a) building trusting relationships with both students and families; (b) communicating frequently with families; (c) demonstrating high expectations; and (d) integrating students’ cultural knowledge throughout the curriculum were the characteristics and practices identified as essential for teacher and student success. Foster’s (1994) research identified (a) a disposition of cultural congruency; (b) skills of cultural compatibility in communication patterns; (c) a disposition to focus on the whole child (intellectually, socially, and emotionally); and (d) the dispositions and skills to connect classroom content with the life experiences of students as the functions necessary for effective urban teachers. Clearly, the findings of these researchers illustrate considerable correspondence and alignment.

**Teacher Beliefs**

Just as the realm of modern psychology reaches far beyond its roots in behaviorism, so too, does modern educational research. Influenced by the advances in cognitive psychology, the popularity of ethnographic and qualitative methodology, and the conception of teaching as a thoughtful profession, teacher education researchers have demonstrated an interest in certain aspects of teacher cognition and their relationship to sound pedagogical practices in the classroom (Fang, 1995). According to Clark and
Peterson (1986), the process of teaching involves two major domains, teachers’ thought processes and their observable effects or their actions. Teachers’ thought processes are meta-cognitive, thus unobservable. The phenomena involved in the teacher action domain include teacher behavior, student behavior, and student achievement scores, all of which are readily measurable and more easily subjected to empirical research methods than the phenomena involved in the teacher’s thought domain. Clark and Peterson (1986) categorize teachers’ thought processes into three fundamental types: (a) teacher planning; (b) teachers’ interactive thoughts and decisions; and (c) teachers’ theories and beliefs.

The beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn affect their behavior in the classroom. Consequently, understanding the belief structures of teachers is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices (Ashton, 1990; Nespor, 1987). The study of teacher beliefs has received attention in recent years. Though this research is valuable, very little research is available on the relationship between teacher beliefs and student learning. Much of the research in this area stems from the seminal work on teacher expectations and student achievement of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). They hypothesized that disadvantaged students underperform in school because that is what their teachers expect of them. They tested this by seeing whether teacher expectations influenced student achievement. In their research, they led teachers to believe that Harvard Researchers had developed new IQ test that could predict intellectual blooming. The teachers were told that some students in their class had been identified by test as the bloomers--students who would have large gains in IQ during year. The students were then selected randomly. These students were no different from other students except for their teachers' positive expectations. The
results were that the randomly selected students had greater gains in their IQs than the other students. Further research on expectancy theory can offer valuable information on student achievement, particularly the achievement of historically marginalized groups, such as the Latino student.

Teacher expectations have been identified as one contributor to the ethnic achievement gap (Ferguson, 1998; Rist, 1973; Weinstein et al., 2004). According to this account, teachers sometimes base their expectations for student achievement on student ethnicity, with teachers expecting more from White and Asian American students than from their African American and Latino peers (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985). Expectations that are differentiated by ethnic group contribute to mean ethnic differences in children's achievement through three causal paths. First, teachers may provide higher quality instruction to students from whom they expect more. Children from groups who are the beneficiaries of higher expectations will benefit from greater exposure to high-quality instruction. Second, students may perceive cues about what the teacher expects, internalize the expectation, and become motivated and achieve in a manner that is consistent with the perceived expectation (Brophy & Good, 1970; Darley & Fazio, 1980; Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979). Third, children from academically stereotyped ethnic groups may, in the face of a low teacher expectation, become concerned about being judged on the basis of the stereotype, increasing susceptibility to negative expectancy effects (McKown & Weinstein, 2003; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Student learning is a notoriously ambiguous term. Though education decision makers are able to sidestep the ambiguity by catering to the public's fascination with technical measurement,
the fact remains that student learning looks different when analyzed in behavioral, cognitive, or humanistic terms.

Teacher beliefs and expectations are particularly important when the teachers’ students are Latino. In the next section, I will examine these relationships using a critical framework. As a global construct, belief and attitude do not lend themselves easily to empirical investigation. However, beliefs have been examined within a number of disciplines using a clear definition. Using these models to study beliefs, educational researchers can also undertake an examination of teacher beliefs. Although by nature belief constructs are both internal to the holder and must be inferred, methods for gathering evidence of beliefs include concept maps, belief statements, analysis of language used in the classroom, behaviors related to belief, and experimental tasks that require thinking aloud. Over 30 years ago, Fenstermacher (1979) predicted that the study of beliefs would become the focus for teacher effectiveness research. A decade later Parjares suggested that beliefs ultimately will prove to be the most valuable psychological construct to teacher education (Parjares, 1992). Nevertheless, educators’ interest in and fascination with beliefs have not become explicit, either in educational practice or in research endeavors, and studies aimed at understanding the beliefs of teachers have been scarce (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Nespor (1987) argued that:

in spite of arguments that people's "beliefs" are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience . . . little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers’ beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools they work in. (p. 317)
When viewed through a critical lens, one can see the connection between teacher beliefs and the achievement of Latino students. Furthermore, an analysis of the impact of societal marginalization on Latino students may be invaluable in developing a new framework for understanding motivational factors that contribute to learning and achievement of Latino students.

The Marginalized Latino Learner

The statistics derived from test scores, dropout rates, and college attendance are clear indicators that Latinos in the United States are not full participants in the benefits of this society, and they are prevented from contributing to this society in more meaningful ways. The Latino educational situation is not unlike that of other marginalized populations, such as Appalachian Whites, urban African Americans, and Native Americans. Hence, the typical explanations for Latinos’ poor performance in school that center on the use of the home language and culture are not sufficient explanations of Latino students’ educational attainment. A more comprehensive approach that includes and reaches beyond the language and culture issues is required.

An important body of qualitative data suggests that the price of excluding a child’s home language and culture from the school’s program is very high. Such evidence suggests there are more complex explanations for the gaps we have noted. It is axiomatic that all students, rich and poor, minority and majority, must feel connected to the culture of the schools. It can do no good for young Latinos and their families to see themselves consistently near or “at the bottom” in almost all measures and assessments and to see their home language systematically excluded. It becomes very easy for Latino
students to feel inferior when the overall performance of their group is consistently judged to be below par. When we take an approach that seeks to completely exclude Latino culture and language, unwittingly or otherwise, we may be ensuring that the Latino population stays at these levels (Valenzuela, 1999).

When asked if education is important, Latino parents will invariably say yes (Monkman, Ronald & Theramene, 2005). However, when asked, “What’s important about it?” and “How do you get it?” some parents cannot articulate a clear response. One likely reason may be because many Latino parents have also had the experience of not being successful in American schools. Many parents may not have attended school in the United States at all, and many others were dropouts in a prior generation. Consequently, they have not figured out how to help their children succeed and do not understand fully how the schools (and their culture) function (González, 2002). From all indications, public education in the U.S. does not work well for poor people, as evidenced by the 2007 U.S. Census which reported that nearly 3 of 10 Latinos, including recent immigrants, were dropouts (27.5 percent). Since a high proportion of Latino families are poor, we can assume that the values that prevail among the poor also play a role in Latino family life.

Too often educators assume that Latino students’ expectations of themselves are related to low ability. Educators may attempt to help their students by lowering their own standards for the level of schoolwork they will consider acceptable (González, 2002). Low expectations may also be the result of the system’s inability to admit that the factory-model-design of high schools has outlived its usefulness. The effects of the marginalization of Latino students creates a demand that the schools review their own
curricula, instructional practices, and core belief systems and values in order to meet the needs of today’s diverse youth, one in which Hispanics form an important and an increasingly large sector.

The education of Latino children and youth is not a temporary problem that will go away on its own. What is needed is a comprehensive approach that includes many actors and coordinates multiple strategies, rather than relying strictly on a single, special program or intervention that focuses on only a part of the problem. Everyone in the community, not just Latinos, stand to lose a great deal—economically, socially, morally, and ethically—if we do not change how Latino students experience education in this nation.

The Latino population now constitutes the largest block of educational “have-nots” in the country. Latinos are over-represented in every negative measure, and under-represented in every positive one. When we focus on experiential differences as a source of Latino students’ continued dismal academic performance in school and in college, it follows logically that providing experiences to mitigate those differences will also serve to improve Latino students’ academic achievement in school and in college (Solarzano & Yosso, 2000). Overcoming the condition of marginalization within the Latino educational experience requires all stakeholders – Latinos and non-Latinos – to examine their beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions.

**Racial Underpinnings of Teacher-Student Transactions**

Many recent studies have used various critical lenses to analyze the dynamics between teachers and minority students. The associations among child demographic
variables, teacher perceptions of parent–teacher and student–teacher relationship quality, and teacher perceptions of children’s academic abilities were explored in a recent study of 607 academically at-risk first grade children (Hughes, Gleason & Zhang, 2005). Teachers rated their relationships with White and Hispanic children and parents more positively relative to African American children and parents.

Several possibilities may explain the observed lower social relatedness by teachers to their Black students and their parents. African American children in the early grades exhibit more active and assertive interactional styles. Initial differences in African American children’s behavioral styles may contribute to less satisfactory connections across home and school and within the classroom through a transactional process which led to diminished teacher perceptions of child ability. White teachers and African American parents are a second possibility for lower teacher relatability for African American students and parents. When parties do not share a common culture, it becomes a greater challenge to build trust by establishing shared understanding. The finding that ethnic congruence between teachers and students is associated with higher teacher ratings of closeness and lower ratings of student conflict and dependency has implications for the perpetuation of the achievement gap, considering the normative role of “whiteness” in society.

children, teachers tended to use personal explanation of youth problems. There were a wide variety of explanations within these broad categories. The most frequently occurring teacher explanations for White youth problems were statements such as, “The child has problems at home.” (Jackson, 2002, p. 318). For African-American and Hispanic-American youth problems, the most frequently occurring teacher explanations were statements such as, “The child has become disrespectful, hostile and aggressive and is not taking responsibility” (Jackson, 2002, p. 318) and “The child is unmanageable.” (Jackson, 2002, p. 318).

Critical Race Theory and Attribution Theory both suggest that race was a factor in shaping the perceptions and explanations teachers reported. The findings suggest that an increased understanding of the cultural inflection in teachers’ perceptions of youth problems is important to discussions about student discipline and their possible applications. The need for school reform must include policies to address social inequalities. These policies would welcome social and political reform efforts that attempt to halt the understanding of non-White youth problems as psychologically motivated and recognize that youth problems are the reflection of our social and political climate.

Although the normative role of Whiteness shapes the dynamics of expectations, some mitigating factors have been observed in recent studies. The role of classroom contexts in moderating the relationship between child ethnicity and teacher expectations was examined by McKown and Weinstein (2007). This study suggests that under some conditions such as classrooms with high levels of ethnic diversity and high levels of teacher differentiation, teachers expect more of children from non-stereotyped ethnic
groups than children from stereotyped ethnic groups with similar records of achievement. This study also found that under other conditions such as low levels of ethnic diversity and low levels of differentiation, teacher expectations are similar for children from stereotyped and non-stereotyped ethnic groups who have a similar record of achievement. Under highly diverse low-differential treatment conditions among single-grade classrooms and in highly diverse low differential treatment mixed-grade classrooms teachers held similar expectations for all students with similar records of achievement.

Why might teacher expectations be related to child ethnicity? In the United States, racial attitudes favoring members of some ethnic groups over others have a long history. Although openly acknowledged, behaviorally obvious prejudice appears to be waning. Recent sociological surveys (Bobo, 2001) suggest that overt racial prejudice persists. Bobo found that African Americans and Latinos are the targets of negative stereotypes about intellectual ability while Whites and Asian Americans are the beneficiaries of neutral or positive stereotypes about intellectual ability. In addition, a growing body of experimental evidence suggests that individuals may hold latent stereotypes and prejudices that are largely out of their control even in the face of overtly egalitarian racial attitudes (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Greenwald, et al., 2002). These studies conclude that a great deal of variation exists in adult racial stereotyping, even among people with egalitarian values. Teachers, like everyone else, vary in the extent to which ethnic stereotypes about intellectual ability color their view of students. Sometimes, ethnic stereotypes may shape teacher expectations.

At a time when tensions between groups around the country and the world are running high, it is disquieting to learn of evidence of ethnic bias in a setting as critical to
our children's future as the American public school. One of the important lessons from these studies is that ethnic bias is not pervasive or inevitable: in two studies including 83 classrooms and 1872 students, many teachers held unbiased expectations (McKown, 2007). Others expected more of children from non-stereotyped ethnic groups than their peers from stereotyped ethnic groups with similar records of achievement.

The impact of attitudes, expectations, and beliefs was explored in a recent survey at a California school in which most of the teachers were White and most of the students were Latino (Thompson, 2004). The research points out that although the teachers seemed to truly care about the students, survey data that had previously been collected from researchers revealed several disturbing facts about these teachers. They did appear to have a positive attitude towards their students but they had very low expectations and offered them very little challenge in curriculum. When the teachers were asked, they explained that research had shown that many Latino students drop out of school in ninth grade. Therefore, the teachers assumed that challenging them too much would be futile. There was a combination of pity and resignation in their responses to the inquiry. They clearly felt sorry for the “pobrecitos” or “the poor little things” who had such bleak futures. Often these assumptions become self-fulfilling prophecies. The subsequent tracking and cycle of low expectations and substandard instructional practices begins a cycle that will largely determine these students’ academic fate.

In order to examine the issue of teacher expectation from a strength-based perspective, I turn to a 2007 study by Brown. The authors analyzed the roles of school climate, teacher expectations, and instructional practices in one elementary school in South Carolina that produced effective achievement outcomes with poor and minority
students. They used classroom taping, survey data, and interviews with teachers to identify school characteristics and instructional behaviors of six exemplary teachers. The school was characterized by high student expectations, cohesiveness of staff, engaging instruction, parent involvement, and a multiculturally integrated curriculum. These practices are consistent with the literature on effective schools, and the practices are key aspects to the instruction of poor and minority children.

**Critical Race Analysis**

In general, references to race in the United States mean people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). One major marker of disenfranchisement in Western civilization is race: people of color are disproportionately poor and locked out of full participation in society. As a hierarchical society, we rank groups according to their anticipated contributions and participation in society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). We value one group over another in terms of tax dollars generated, and in turn we allocate that group greater or fewer resources to support basic needs, including education. The implicit understanding that those who have more in a capitalistic order will receive more translates directly into how educational dollars will be disbursed. As previously noted, many studies have documented that disenfranchised groups routinely receive substandard K-12 education and have less access to quality education. For disenfranchised learners, the consequences of a system that parcels out educational benefits based on privilege can be demonstrated in several ways. For instance, such systemic practices could result in libraries, community centers, and community colleges being built in areas that are not proximate to their communities. As a result, race can affect the quality of minority learners’ education
well beyond the boundaries of tax-based mandatory education and intrude into the realms of self-selected higher education and lifelong learning. Despite the barriers to educational access historically grounded in race, educational disenfranchisement and the disparate privileges accruing to races are rarely discussed in tandem. Frequently missing in discussion of the poor and undereducated is the fact that enfranchised learning and privileged students are the measure of comparison. Researchers often present data on one group and represent the other group in silent absentia. However, in order for any discussion on education to be complete, the examination must not only provide statistics on who participates, how they are instructed, and how they learn but must also include comparative data about those who do not participate or who seldom participate, how they are instructed, and how they learn. Research on teaching and learning in education acknowledges the delicate dance between teaching and learning but does not extend the conversation by examining the possibility that even in a sociopolitical climate that demands educators place a high value on diversity and multiculturalism, the interconnectivity between teaching and learning remains deeply complicated by race.

Brookfield (1986) states that the teaching-learning transaction “is a highly complex psychosocial drama in which the personalities of the individual involved, the contextual setting for the educational transaction, and the prevailing political climate crucially affect the nature and form of learning” (p. 212). Yet missing from the complexities that Brookfield and others have explored is the enigmatic nature of race in American society as an important part of this “psychosocial drama.” This psychosocial drama has been conceptualized through critical frameworks that discuss the implications of positionality and White Privilege.
Positionality and White Privilege

The concept of postionality has emerged in the literature to define people, not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships. The study of positionality posits that relationships are inherently mutable and as mobile phenomena can be detected and analyzed (Ladson-Billing, 1998). The premise of the argument is that dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen can emerge for educators when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others’ racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world. In one study, Tisdell (1993) notes that classroom power dynamics between instructors and learners and between learners and their co-learners are often affected by racial differences. Teachers and students have varying sets of experiences that may be determined by their race, economic status, and language skills, as well as their personal experiences and these are reflected in their classroom interactions.

In another study, Milner provides a framework to guide education researchers into a process of racial and cultural awareness, consciousness, and positionality (Milner, 2007). Although empirical studies of the effect of positionality are mostly done in the context of research, I would argue that the classroom is similar to the lab in that a teacher has a hypothesis of what type of experience will lead to student learning. Subsequently this hypothesis is operationalized into a method called a lesson plan that is tested and evaluated by the teacher. How education research is conducted and how classes are taught may be just as important as what is actually discovered in a study and what is learned in the lesson. Moreover, who conducts the research or teaches the lesson may be essential to what is learned. In particular, the knowledge that researcher or teacher
brings, along with the nature of his or her critical racial and cultural consciousness (i.e.
their views, perspectives, biases) matter. Intimately associated with the concept of
positionality is the research on White Privilege, the rights and advantages enjoyed by
White people beyond the common advantages offered to society in general.

Beverly Tatum states that we need to continually break the silence about racism,
whenever and wherever we can, to raise consciousness and lead to effective action and
social change through meaningful, productive dialogue (Tatum, 2005). In her article, she
reports that fear keeps us from talking about racism. She shares students’ opinions about
their different fears which kept them silent when involved in dialogue on racism. White
students often fear their own ignorance; because of limited experience with people of
color they fear they will ask naïve questions or make offensive remarks that will anger
people of color. She also observes that white students’ fear of honesty creates
insecurities, ignorance, vulnerabilities, and hard to admit weaknesses. Tatum claims that
White people speak in racial code, using communication patterns that encourage White
racial bonding. Going against this bond produces the risk of losing other individuals’
approval, friendship and company. Because of the prevalent White culture of silence,
there has been little discussion about racial issues as well as little practice in overcoming
the inhibitions to speak.

Because racism is a lived and embodied experience conferring privilege and
imposing harm, people of color who suffer most from it are perhaps more fluent in its
practices and discourses. Like White students, many are fearful to engage in racial
dialogue but learn to break the silence in order to survive. Both White students and
students of color reported anger and frustration when sharing feelings about racism and
communicated the fear that they would give up rather than risking exposure and criticism. However, meaningful dialogue requires that fear, anger, and isolation give way to risk and trust. A leap of faith must be made, and it is not easy. Progress in equalizing systemic problems such as White privilege depends on individuals undergoing second-order change, or change that represents a fundamental or significant break with past and current practices. When people use their awareness, knowledge and skills to take action, the paradigm shift that characterizes second-order change will finally be realized. The easiest way to initiate this transformation is through dialogue. Fostering honest, cross-cultural dialogue is the first way to build alliances which can then transform people and systems and turn intention into action, thus slowly changing the persistency of White privilege.

**Equity and Diversity**

A social justice perspective compels us to take a moral position that critiques society as unjust toward minorities and other disenfranchised groups and calls for the field to remember its mission to work toward inclusion and equity within our democratic framework. This position highlights the moral imperative and commitment of educators and works to empower all learners. Focusing on the workings of power as a force that drives society and the classroom, social justice advocates urge practitioners to examine the embedded privilege in classroom practices and the curriculum. According to Cunningham (1996), if we are not working for equity in our teaching and learning environments, then educators are inadvertently maintaining the status quo. Other scholars (Rocco and West, 1998; Tisdell, 1993) write specifically about dialogue and the
use of voice as analogous to how power and privilege are manifested in routine classroom workings: students who feel powerful and validated by the teacher or the curriculum talk, and students who feel neglected or ignored by the teacher or the curriculum remain silent. Rocco and West (1998) and Tisdell (1993) also cite race as a major location of power and privilege in society and in classrooms.

A diverse and equitable society is one where all people have the same access and status regardless of race, gender, class, ability, or creed. It involves the fair, moral, and impartial treatment of all persons. The lack of access to housing, health care, education, employment opportunities, and status creates a society that excludes people from full and equal participation in what we, the members of society, perceive as being valuable, important, personally worthwhile and socially desirable. So why do the espoused values of justice and equality written into our constitution by our founding fathers still face such strong resistance?

In a year-long qualitative study conducted in an urban high school, where 77% of the students were Latino and 100% of the teachers were White, most teachers held exceedingly deficit views about the students’ home lives, cultures, and families (Marx, 2008). CRT and Whiteness theories examine color blindness as a limitation in progress toward a diverse and equitable society. Rather than enabling race to be discussed as an obstacle to teacher–student relationships, color blindness insures that addressing the topic is not even a possibility. As a result, segregated, “minority–majority,” low income school districts are not problematized by difficult social realities. Schools where all the teachers are White, the majority of students are Latino, and not a single teacher in the school speaks the native language of most students tend to be schools where race is not
discussed. Suggestions that there might be issues of racial inequity inherent in these very structures often provoke great upset and resistance among White parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Such suggestions are often criticized as “racist” themselves for naming race as a possible contributor to inequity and marking the usually unmarked characteristic of Whiteness as racialized. Color blindness insures that critical discussions of structural racism do not take place and, as a result, helps maintain structural racial inequality. The seriousness of the predominance of Whites in the profession of education and its necessary limitations must give us all food for thought.

In order to eliminate racial inequality in America we must recognize the extent to which change is possible. It is more likely to occur in education than in any other sector because, despite its faults, public education remains the most democratic and accessible institution in the country. There are schools where no achievement gap exists, and there are students who achieve at high levels despite the incredible odds facing them (Haycock, 1998). These bright spots of success reveal what might be possible if we lived in a society that truly valued children and was genuinely committed to equity and high-quality education for all. Realizing such an ideal would require a comprehensive effort to reverse the effects of racial and economic inequality in the classroom.

**Teacher Beliefs and Practices in Schools Serving High Poverty Populations**

Educators and education researchers have been concerned for many years about the education of children from economically deprived backgrounds. Since the publication of "Savage Inequalities" (Kozol, 1991), however, there has been increased attention given to the status of education in poor communities as compared with that in
more affluent ones. While visiting inner-city schools in East St. Louis, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and New Jersey, Kozol finds black and Hispanic school children isolated from white schoolchildren and shortchanged educationally. Only by closing the gap between rich and poor school districts through the distribution of tax money spent on education, Kozol contends, can we give poor minority children an equal chance. To show just how high the barriers to learning are when there is inadequate school funding, Kozol paints a bleak picture of severe overcrowding, dilapidated school buildings, a shortage of supplies and learning aids, and teacher salaries so low schools can’t attract good teachers or do without substitute teachers. He repeatedly contrasts inner-city austerity with the bounty of suburban schools.

The present findings generally confirm that students in poor communities receive not only fewer of the basics but also less engaging kinds of education (such as cooperative learning). Teachers in such schools see the school climate as less positive and stimulating and believe they have less influence (Solomon, 1997). Teachers in high-poverty schools generally keep tight control of students and afford them less autonomy and less opportunity to interact with one another. Yet just such opportunity for meaningful participation has been shown, in other research, to be an important correlate of students' attachment to school and academic motivation and engagement in both high- and low-poverty settings (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Kim, Solomon & Roberts, 1995). There is a widespread belief that greater teacher control is needed in high-poverty schools because the students in them lack inner controls; however, the evidence from these and other correlational studies (e.g., Bryk & Driscoll, 1988) raise doubts about this belief. These studies provide suggestive (but not
conclusive) evidence that when schools or classrooms are structured in ways that help students feel that they belong, are valued, and have effective influence, students are able to take on meaningful levels of responsibility and autonomy.

The approaches to teaching least evident in high-poverty classrooms are similar to those that Knapp and Associates (Knapp & Associates, 1995; Knapp, Shields, & Turnbull, 1992) found to be most effective with disadvantaged children. Their research involved 140 experienced elementary school teachers, their classrooms, and large numbers of students from low-income families. They found that certain instructional approaches were more successful, including emphasizing meaning and understanding, embedding skills in contexts, forging links between subject areas and between school and outside life, and creating opportunities for students to discuss and interact. These approaches produced greater gains over the course of a school year in math understanding and problem-solving proficiency, reading comprehension, and writing competence than did more conventional approaches that emphasized decontextualized skill development. Most of these enhanced gains were maintained, although at slightly reduced levels in a subsequent testing the following fall.

These findings suggest the need for a radical change in the way education is generally provided to disadvantaged students. Further research examining this issue and possible conditioning factors is urgently needed. Taken together, these findings indicate that the most effective approaches with children from disadvantaged backgrounds are the least used in current common practice. If these findings are confirmed, wider efforts to reorient our teaching practices will be necessary however the challenge involved in helping teachers move to new modes of teaching--a difficult and slow process in general-
may be particularly difficult with teachers in these circumstances. Clear examples of the effectiveness of autonomy-enhancing and meaning-centered approaches to teaching with disadvantaged children and supportive settings that enable teachers to experiment with their use will be important.

**Effect of Affect on Children Living in Poverty**

Children and adolescents living in high-poverty urban environments are faced with numerous obstacles. Personal accounts, as well as large-scale research investigations, have documented many of these challenges which include high rates of violence, increased levels of stress, poor-quality schools, dangerous neighborhoods, high rates of drug and alcohol addiction, limited opportunities for meaningful employment, and poor-quality health care (Barton, Coley, & Wenglinsky, 1998; Brooks-Gunn, Brito, & Brady, 1993; Commission on Behavioral & Social Sciences in Education, 1993; McLoyd, 1998). Exposure to these and the many other stressful conditions present in many high-poverty urban settings can have sustained, negative effects on the health and well being of individuals living in such settings (Luthar, 1999; McLoyd, 1998; Rankin & Quane, 2002). Youth with emotional and behavioral problems who live in poverty are faced with even greater challenges because these individuals are at an even greater risk of experiencing poor adjustment and poor long-term outcomes (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Malmgren, Edgar, & Neel, 1998).

Despite the challenges associated with living in poverty, some children and youth who are exposed to multiple risks make adjustments and have positive outcomes. These children and youth appear to have individual traits as well as familial, school-
community-related experiences that help to buffer the negative impact of risk experiences and promote positive adaptation (Garmezy, 1991; O’Donnell, Schwab-Stone, & Muyeed, 2002). One finding that has consistently emerged from this work is that supportive adult–child relationships can promote social, emotional, and academic adjustment among children and youth exposed to multiple risks (Dubow, Tisak, Causey, Hryshko, & Reid, 1991; Gore & Aseltine, 1995; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezrucko, 2000; Werner & Smith, 1989).

To date, research regarding the characteristics and importance of adult–child relationships has focused primarily on relationships between children and their primary caregivers. However, emerging theories have expanded this focus beyond the family context to include relationships with teachers (Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). Although empirical support for these theories is only beginning to emerge, the results of numerous correlational and longitudinal investigations conducted in different geographical locations with students in various developmental stages suggest that teacher–student relationship patterns are associated with social, emotional, and school related adjustment and functioning (Goodenow, 1993). Other studies found that students with emotional and behavioral problems may be at an increased risk of experiencing poor teacher–student relationships (Murray & Greenberg, 2001; Murray & Murray, 2004). Some evidence suggests that conflict in early teacher–student relationships is more strongly associated with the long-term outcomes of children who are experiencing early behavioral problems than it is with children who are not at risk (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Finally, adolescents who are performing poorly in school may rely more heavily on
teacher support than high performing students (Plybo, Edwards, Butler, Belgrave, & Allison, 2003).

Chapter Summary

The research compiled in this literature review indicates that there is a need to reform aspects of the educational system to better serve all students. Particular attention should be given to the role of teachers’ expectations, beliefs, and behaviors toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The literature reviewed demonstrates that teachers play an instrumental role in closing the achievement gap, and it points to teacher effectiveness and expectations as the sites of plausible solutions. In particular the literature suggests that increasing teacher expectations for Latino students yields the greatest hope for adequately preparing all students for success.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Latino students are the fastest growing sector of the United States population, especially among students attending public schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). They also register some of the lowest levels of achievement and highest dropout rates (Chapa & Valencia, 1993; Garcia, 2001). In much of the literature and policy rhetoric, there tends to be a focus on the achievement gap and the deficiencies of Latino students (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995; Delgado, 1995). Clearly, this is a deficit model (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). This primary focus on student achievement seems to minimize the effects of high quality teachers on student success regardless of the students’ socio-economic status or ethnicity of the students. These challenges demand that we identify the characteristics and kinds of educational practices used by teachers who are highly effective in enhancing Latino student learning.

The goal of this study was to add to the limited research on effective teaching of Latino students. This study employed a qualitative case study using a strengths-based approach in an effort to uncover beliefs, expectations, and practices of effective teachers of Latino students. *A priori* and emergent coding inflected by a critical lens were used for the purpose of generating a theory about teacher effectiveness with respect to Latino high school students attending high poverty schools. The remainder of this chapter presents the purpose and research questions, the study design, the selection of participants, the process of data collection and analysis of the data.
Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students at high poverty, predominantly Latino high schools. To address this purpose, I explored two primary research questions:

1. What are the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students?

2. Are there patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?

Study Design

Focused semi-structured interviews were conducted over a 80 day period in the summer of 2010. Participants were interviewed for a short period of time (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990), using open ended questions in a conversational manner. I asked all participants the same set of questions for purposes of systematic inquiry and analysis as described by Straussian grounded theory (Strauss, 1987). Interview questions utilized appreciative inquiry techniques exploring the constructs described by Haberman’s Urban Teacher Selection Interview (Haberman, 2005), an instrument which identifies central attributes of good urban teaching. Haberman has used this instrument for three decades to select candidates for various nontraditional teacher-preparation programs that
emphasize practical, on-the-job training. He claims that the interview has proved highly effective at predicting would-be teachers' professional potential in the classroom.

The purpose of semi-structured interviews using Haberman’s constructs was to obtain rich descriptions of the participants’ peak experiences in teaching and learning contexts (Kvale, 1996). In this context the term “peak” refers to a teaching event in which a teacher felt he or she reached his or her highest capacity. Peak experience is not to be confused with peak performance. Peak experience is an isolated, emotionally positive, intense experience; whereas, peak performance may occur without the company of peak experience (Privette & Bundrick, 1991). The purpose of identifying peak experiences is to allow prevalent practices, beliefs, and attitudes to emerge as the basis for theoretical development. The questions and protocols were piloted with non-participating teachers in order to ensure the questions and protocols were related to teachers’ peak experiences in a teaching and learning context. For example, one question was, “Can you recall a time at school when your perseverance with a student was exceptionally rewarding? Describe this experience.” During the interviews, participants were encouraged to provide additional comments, stories, or information.

To identify a purposeful sample of effective high school teachers of Latino students for study, a three-step selection process involving distinct selection criteria was used. The first step was to identify appropriate high schools in a specific school district in Southern California with a large population of Latino students. The next step was to identify effective teachers of Latino students in the selected schools. The final step was to solicit teachers to participate in the study.
Identifying schools for participation required a preliminary screening of several schools’ demographic profiles. This information was accessed online through the published School Accountability Report Card, or SARC as reported by the California Department of Education website (CDE, 2009). Selection criteria for schools included comprehensive high schools with over 1500 students, at least 70% of whom were Latino, 75% qualifying for free and reduced lunch, and 40% or more designated as Limited English Proficient.

Based on district data, there were seven schools that met these criteria (Table 3.1). The schools ranged from 1,579 to 2,670 in population. (Pseudonyms replace real names of these schools for the purpose of confidentiality).

Table 3.1. *Schools Selected for Study Based on Large Populations of Latino Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total and % Latino</th>
<th>Total and % Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Total and % Limited English Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cactus High School</td>
<td>1,579</td>
<td>n= 1,383</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>911</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 87.6%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dune High School</td>
<td>2,670</td>
<td>n= 2,184</td>
<td>2,137</td>
<td>1,378</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 81.8%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oasis High School</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>n= 1,214</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>743</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 71.5%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prickly Pear High School</td>
<td>1,637</td>
<td>n= 1,318</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>931</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 80.5%</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattlesnake High School</td>
<td>2,469</td>
<td>n= 2,254</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>1,799</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 91.3%</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadrunner High School</td>
<td>1,721</td>
<td>n= 1,530</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 88.3%</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumbleweed High School</td>
<td>2,443</td>
<td>n= 1,979</td>
<td>2,235</td>
<td>1,472</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% 81.0%</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert School District</td>
<td>41,465</td>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principals at these seven schools were contacted, the study was explained, and their input was sought to identify possible participants for the study or teachers who met the following criteria. The teacher:

- is currently teaching a core subject included in the California Standards Test (CST).
- is currently teaching a student population that is at least 50% Latino students in grades 9-12.
- has demonstrated effectiveness in teaching Latino students as evidenced by their students’ California Standards Test results.

All seven principals of these schools were personally contacted and asked to identify all of their school’s teachers that match the stated criteria. There was no stated maximum or minimum number of teachers requested per school.

Although research suggests that many principals have a difficult time evaluating teachers for reasons ranging from lack of knowledge of the subject being taught to disinclination to upset working relationships (Halverson, Kelley, & Kimball, 2004; Nelson & Sassi, 2000; Peterson, 2000), other studies suggest that evaluations of teacher performance do predict effectiveness (Murnane, 1975; Armor et al., 1976; Gallagher, 2004; Kimball, White, Milanowski, & Borman, 2004; Milanowski, 2004; Milanowski, Kimball, & Odden, 2005). In one recent study, Jacob and Lefgren (2008) compared principal assessments with measures of teacher effectiveness based on gains in student achievement. The researchers concluded that principals are quite good at identifying teachers whose students make the largest and the smallest standardized achievement gains in their schools but are less able to distinguish between teachers in the middle of the
distribution. In this study, the principals did not have to tell the teachers how they were rated and the ratings had no consequences.

Once the broader pool was narrowed by respective principals, teachers who were identified were contacted by e-mail to solicit their participation. The email explained the purpose of the study and invited them to participate. The letter of consent informed the teacher that they had been recommended because of their success in helping Latino students succeed and explained that the purpose of the study was to document their successful practices. The goal was to have a minimum of 15 participants who represented all of the core subject areas and all of the school sites.

**Demographics of Participants**

Demographics of the respondents were obtained through teacher demographic profiles. Information on gender and age range, cultural heritage, Spanish fluency, childhood residential environment, teaching experience, and faculty status was collected and disaggregated (Table 3.2).
Table 3.2. Summary of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 10</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 12</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 13</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 14</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 15</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 16</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 17</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 18</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 19</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 20</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 21</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 23</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 24</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 25</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 26</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 27</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 28</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 29</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collection and Analysis**

I conducted interviews in order to identify relationships, or consistent themes, between and among teacher practices, beliefs and expectations. Participants invited to the interviews were given some possible dates and times for the meeting. Some participants suggested an alternative date and time for the interview. I arranged to
interview the participants in a location they chose to ensure convenience and an acceptable comfort level. The scheduling of interviews proved to be non-problematic for participants, and no phone interviews were necessary. Once the dates were established, I sent confirmation emails prior to the interviews.

The skills or constructs covered by the interview were:

- Persistence in teaching practices: Teachers exhibit creativity in problem solving and internalize their responsibility of finding ways to engage students in learning.
- Protection of students’ learning: Teachers place value on preservation of learning over preservation of order.
- Use of theory in practice: Teachers create classroom environments in which children are busy in constructive ways. They can explain the purposes of the activities and their ideological underpinning.
- Approach to at-risk students: Teachers constantly seek more effective teaching strategies, regardless of students’ backgrounds or the obstacles they face.
- Professional vs. Personal Orientation- Teacher demonstrates orientation of caring, respectful relationship around what is best for children, not in terms of satisfying their own needs or preferences.
- Burnout: The Care and Feeding of the Bureaucracy- Teacher exhibits sensitivity to the realities of education bureaucracies.
- Fallibility- Teacher demonstrates the ability to recognize and attempt to correct serious mistakes of judgment and human nature (Haberman, 2005).
In addition, the interview included responses to specific statements informed by critical race theory to determine beliefs and expectations related to the targeted population, Latino students. Using Critical Race Theory as a lens, I was able to explore themes elicited by the following prompts:

- When I see more Latinos in my classroom, I think…
- Latino students come alive in the classroom when…
- When Latino students fall short of my expectations, I…
- The reason Latinos drop out of high school is due to…
- I see the role of the Latino community in education as…
- Ultimately, my responsibility to Latino students is…

I derived these statements from various research studies (Haberman, 2005; Reyes et al., 1999; Romo & Falbo, 1996; Steinberg, 1989). Prior to the beginning of the interview, I reminded each participant about the purpose of the study, and gave each person the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. In addition, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were recorded digitally, which allowed me to focus more closely on the participants’ nonverbal behaviors. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in duration. Once the interviews were transcribed, the teachers were invited to review my tentative interpretations for plausible results, a strategy recommended by Merriam (1998) to enhance the credibility of findings. This process provided a member check to increase the reliability of the study.

After the interviews, the transcripts were analyzed using NVivo 8 software in order to distill topics or units of data. This phase of analysis involved repeated listening to the audio interviews and re-reading the transcriptions, which allowed emerging themes
to appear. By filtering responses through a critical race theory lens, I was able to code and systematically compare and contrast emergent themes in order to create complex and inclusive categories. Immersion in the data and repeated sorting, coding, and comparisons characterized the case study approach. Grounded theory techniques were employed to ascertain both common and individual experiences and practices among the group of teachers. The analysis began with open coding which allowed me to identify categories, their properties and dimensional locations with respect to CRT (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In addition to emergent coding, a priori coding schemas were used in the analysis of interview transcripts (Weber, 1990), based on the constructs from Haberman’s research (Haberman, 2005).

**Chapter Summary**

These methods of data analyses supported the primary purpose of this study and allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the teacher-participants’ beliefs regarding teaching, their expectations for student learning, and their thoughts concerning the racial or ethnic differences or similarities between themselves and their students. The analysis was not aimed at causalities, determination, prediction, or generalization (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Instead the analysis attempted to understand and illuminate the underlying beliefs and practices of the participants. Chapter Three has presented research questions, population and sample information, demographic information of participants, return rates, instruments, and data collection. Chapter Four will present the findings based on the research questions.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSES

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs and practices of highly effective teachers of Latino students at high poverty high schools. Although numerous studies have documented urban educational inequality (Kozol; 2005; Oakes, 1985; Valenzuela, 1999), the efforts by law makers to reverse the problem have largely resulted in examples of unfulfilled promises as discussed in chapter 2. Specifically with respect to the mandate of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that every classroom be staffed by a “highly qualified teacher,” the expectation has been unattainable because of three major shortcomings in our dialogues concerning effective educators: (1) we have not clearly defined the core indicators of a highly qualified teacher; (2) we have not clearly established the significance of urban social context for this definition; and (3) we have failed to develop effective professional supports, school cultures, pre-service training and educational policies that reflect knowledge of effective pedagogy in urban contexts. This chapter presents findings from the data collection process and analysis of that data to answer the research questions:

1. What are the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students?

2. Are there patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?
The research identified belief constructs and how these relate to student achievement. The teachers in the study discussed their beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and practices. Using the methodology design described in chapter 3, the researcher employed interview questions including Appreciative Inquiry (AI) techniques. Interview responses were organized into four general categories; (1) beliefs and attitudes about the teaching profession; (2) beliefs and expectations about students; (3) belief and attitudes about the teacher-student relationship; and (4) description of practice. Within each of the categories, teacher beliefs, attitudes and expectations were examined by asking questions that were appreciative, as well as more critical questions that required reflection of challenging scenarios. The analyses of the data collection reveal distinct similarities with respect to teacher beliefs attitudes and practices.

Data Presentation & Analyses

Context

The participating urban high school district included seven high schools with larger percentages of English learners and higher percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch compared to other schools in the district and the state (Table 3.1). The 29 participants in this study were purposefully selected through the recommendation of their site principals based on the value-added student achievement observed by the site principal. The participants represented a diverse group based on race/ethnicity, gender, subject matter taught, and years of teaching experience (Table 3.2). Of the participant group, 3.4% of the study’s participants identified themselves as Asian, 3.4% as Black, 3.4% as Indian, 3.4 % as Persian, and 3.4% as Filipino. Additionally, 10.3 % identified
themselves of mix race; 17.2% self-identified as Latino/Latina, and 55.2% identified themselves as White/Caucasian. The participant group consisted of 69% females and 31% males. The participants’ subject matter taught were; (1) English-34.5%; (2) History-24.1%; (3) Math-24.1%; (4) Science-17.2%. Participants’ years of teaching experience ranged from 3 to 24 years, with a mean of 9.2 years and a mode of 6 years.

Procedure & Findings

The researcher analyzed the transcripts of all 29 participants using NVivo 8 software in order to distill topics or units of data. This phase of analysis involved repeated listening of the audio interviews and re-reading the transcriptions, which allowed for analysis of emerging themes. The secondary and tertiary analyses were used to connect selections of dialogue from the teacher interviews to representative codes. This process included analysis through organization of data by chunking ideas, words, or phrases of the participants with codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The use of open coding allowed the researcher to identify categories, their properties and dimensional locations with respect to theoretical framework discussed in chapter 3 (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In addition to emergent coding, a priori coding schemas were utilized in the analysis of interview transcripts (Weber, 1990), based on the constructs from Haberman’s research (Haberman, 2005) discussed in chapter 3.

Coded responses were then placed into four categories: (1) attitudes related to teaching as a profession, (2) beliefs related to students, (3) beliefs related to teacher-student relationships and (4) descriptions related to practice. Within each of these categories, responses were organized under two opposing subcategories. The first
subcategory was based on appreciative inquiry questions related to peak experiences.

The second subcategory was based in relation to critical questions which referred to situations when circumstances are not ideal. Tables 4.2 a and b are correlated to the first research question: What are the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students?

Table 4.1.a. Codes and frequencies related to attitudes about teaching as a profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for entering profession</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Teacher burn out</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role models</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Demands of job</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience teaching</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of duty</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1.b. Codes and frequencies related to beliefs about students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good teachers believe…</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Latino dropout</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students can and want to learn</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Cultural capital</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal loci/ self-efficacy</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring facilitators</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Low expectations</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding students</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 4.2 c and d are correlated to the second research question: Are there patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?

Table 4.1.c. Codes and frequencies related to beliefs about teacher-student relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal relationship</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>When mistakes happen</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun vs. strict</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach/mentor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Fallibility</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.1.d. Codes and frequencies related to description of practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging students</th>
<th>Strategies for challenging students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally relevant curriculum</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization of learning</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Interpretation

The research conducted revealed many reasons why effective teachers enter the teaching profession, as well as the reasons why teachers leave the profession. The most prevalently cited reasons for entering the teaching profession include the influence of role models, experience teaching in various settings, and a sense of duty. Effective teachers also believe that many teachers leave the profession due to the demands of the jobs and the lack of support.

**Teacher Beliefs about Teaching Profession- Reasons for Entering Profession**

**Role Models**

Many effective teachers in this study entered the teaching profession as a result of one or more teachers in their own lives who became their role model. One teacher recalls one of her most powerful influences, which began at a very young age: “When I was in third grade, I came back to my first grade teacher to help her. And ever since then, all my summers...I would go and spend time with the kindergarten classes. It was always in me. There was never another option” (Interview, July 12, 2010). This teacher’s conviction that teaching was the profession for her came directly from the positive experiences she had with one of her own teachers. Similarly, several respondents relayed stories which
highlighted the belief that their teacher role models exposed them to new frontiers of possibilities and thus inspired them to enter the profession. One teacher commented, “I had some really inspirational teachers in high school that took us to Baja California for marine biology research. We did a lot of outdoor education. Those experiences helped me identify, define who I was in the sense that I like nature, I like being outdoors, I like learning, I like the social process of education” (Interview, June 29, 2010). The social, human element of motivation and inspiration transferred by effective teachers to young people within their sphere of influence seemed to have life-changing potential for teachers in this study.

In some instances, teacher role models were present during specific times of academic tribulation, such as the story of an academic struggle many students have in math. When the respondent was a senior, she had failed two years of math, but had made up the credits and was poised to go to college. However, having failed in high school, the fear of failure in college was so prominent that delaying college seemed like a viable option. The role model would have none of it.

She kicked everyone out of her office and she sat me down for an hour and lectured me. She said, no, you’re going to go. And she kept me in her office all day because that was a deadline day. And I had to fill out my application and write my personal statement all in one day (Interview, July 26, 2010).

Several teachers interviewed indicated that their most motivating and memorable experiences came from times when teachers went above and beyond the regular academic requirements of a school day and invested in them in some meaningful way. Many of the teachers interviewed cited an authentic, caring relationship between teacher and student,
the impact it had on them, and their desire to provide that type of caring to other young people as a strong experiential reason for joining the profession themselves.

While for some respondents, there was a single teacher who served as a role model, several responses indicated that instead of one pivotal individual teacher, it was a collection of teachers over time that inspired a sense of service. One teacher clarified, “I think, in part, I had a handful of really great teachers when I was in high school and college that motivated me to do that. When I graduated [from] college I had a sense of public service or community service” (Interview, July 20, 2010). For many of the teachers in this study, the memory of the power of a great teacher became the foundation of their devotion to the profession. One teacher commented that she enjoyed how she can “affect [students’] lives the same way so many teachers affected [hers]” (Interview, July 17, 2010).

The impact of teacher role models was pervasive among these teachers. It not only influenced them to enter the profession, but continued to manifest itself in how they conceptualized their roles as a teacher. For this group of teachers, their role models did not focus solely on teaching the curriculum. The students of these role models learned life lessons that, evidently, remain with them to this day. One teacher remembered,

When I was in eighth grade, I had a teacher [who] reminded us about doing what's right, about making good choices, about how unique and special everyone was and how we have a purpose in life... She was able to teach us a lot about ourselves and about the world, and how there's a bigger picture out there. And she had a really huge impact on me in eighth grade (Interview, July 9, 2010).
One of the biggest testaments to the holistic nature of a teacher’s influence is the number of interviewees who cited not just teachers, but teachers who were family members, as being powerful forces shaping their life choices:

I grew up in a family of teachers. As a young child I remember my mom coming home and sharing her experiences with her students... of her personal interactions with the students and making a difference. I remember being at a grocery store as a little kid, and my mom would run into a student that maybe had already graduated. And the student would say, ‘Oh, Ms. [Last name], you inspired me. You changed my life. You made me a better person. You made me have more respect for myself.’ And that was embedded in me (Interview, June 14, 2010).

In many cases, teachers cited strong emotional memories of a family member acting as a role model. Parents and family members are already in a position to influence children, and it is interesting that in several cases, interviewees described this influence as coming from family members who were teachers. One of the teachers interviewed had memories of a family member and non-family member whose combined efforts created great influence. Her mother had been an elementary school teacher. Watching her mother get ready for teaching initially ignited her interest in the profession. Then, in high school there was an English teacher who inspired her to love reading, love the class and follow her into teaching English for herself (July 27, 2010).

Teachers who grew up with a parent who was a teacher often seemed to recognize the many similarities in authentic caring and support structures between the two roles of parent and teacher. Teachers who were consistently supported and encouraged by teachers and/or parents as teachers during their own schooling seemed to have a strong desire to enter the teaching profession for reasons connected to these positive memories.
Anton A. Bucher asserts that “models are one of the most important pedagogical agents in the history of education” (Bucher, 1997, p. 620). Effective teachers in this study emphasized the value and implications of role models in their lives and decisions. This relationship between a young person who is inducted into the world of adulthood with the help of a voluntarily accepted older and more experienced guide, can help ease the young person through that transition via a mixture of support and challenge (Hamilton, 1991). This potential impact should enlighten educators tremendously as to their capacity to influence students. Educators could be considered to have a similar status as the children’s own parents. Children, when faced with prized models, will latch on to chosen mentors and their ideals, and fully consider them as role models.

A shared sentiment among the teachers in this study found their formidable years to be significant in their career choice and influence of role models in their lives. Role models were essential in establishing their values which was then manifested into becoming a teacher.

**Experience with Teaching**

Beyond the positive imprinting by role models, many of the teachers in this study had teaching opportunities earlier in their lives that served as a catalyst connecting them to their consideration of teaching as a profession. As one teacher stated, “I started working at the Y.M.C.A. I was a counselor in the Summer Program. Then I went into running an after school program, and I found that I just really liked it. So I set up the whole structure: set up work time, and we had this time, and...I really liked it” (Interview, July 13, 2010). Through these early experiences, two broad themes emerged: an affinity
towards working with youth, and a self-efficacy around the ability to teach. As one teacher noted,

Every job that I had from my freshman year of high school through college has always been tutoring, mentoring, doing outreach. Even my first job out of college, I was a college peer advisor... I always enjoyed helping young people realize their potential, being a bridge to the possibilities that life has to offer. It was that moment that I felt that this is what I am called to do (Interview, July 27, 2010).

Through early experiences, these effective teachers began to see the promise that teaching could hold. While some teachers enjoyed their experiences working with youth, others really enjoyed aspects of tutoring or coaching. Several of the teachers in this study referred to these pre-teaching experiences as “fun.” While some knew that they wanted to work in the teaching profession since they were very young, others describe the surprise and the fulfillment that an unexpected step into teaching gave them.

I was always really excited about learning biology. In college, I didn't know I wanted to be a teacher. I considered it, but I was more interested in research. I was in Costa Rica for a while, and I called up my professor there. I'm like, "Hey, I want to travel around for a while. Are there any jobs in Costa Rica?" He said, "Well, yeah. You can teach my students, or my kids." And so, I got to teach my professor's students, kids. And I just fell in love with teaching them. It was a bilingual Quaker school in the middle of the rain forest and I ate it up. I loved it. So, I decided [that] education is my passion (Interview, June 16, 2010).

Others gained experience teaching as adults, beginning their work under the guidance of a more experienced teacher or in a limited capacity. As one teacher explained, “I worked with Montessori school as a teaching assistant. I was younger then, but I really enjoyed it. I mean, the day went by like that. I really enjoyed interacting with the students and the parents” (Interview, June 14, 2010).
A commonality between many teachers interviewed is that their first experiences with teaching revealed a passion for working with youth and a growing confidence in themselves as educators that they never had anticipated. The initial enthusiasm is evident in their words. Even in cases where teaching was a second profession, entered into later in life, some teachers still drew upon earlier, analogous work experiences as reasons for their motivation to pursue the profession:

When I decided to no longer practice law, I thought about what I enjoyed. I realized what I enjoyed the most was trial work. And I thought about why I enjoyed trial work, and the reason was [that] I was active, I was presenting. I was presenting information to people. I was getting people engaged, I was getting people involved. And then it hit me, what am I really doing? I’m teaching the jury about my client’s case. Teaching. Oh yeah. And then I thought back in my life and it hit me that five, six, seven times, even in my prior career I had an opportunity to teach in very small environments. And when that happened, I loved it. I enjoyed it (Interview, July 20, 2010).

Early experience was a recurring theme, and lends credibility to the observation that it is those experiences, whether they occurred at age fifteen or fifty, that became the fertile ground for discovery of how teaching is a fulfilling profession for certain types of personalities. As one teacher put it, “When I went to the University I volunteered at [School Name] High for tutoring. I really liked it. I was like, ‘Ah, this is what this is all about.’ After that, I thought I would give teaching a shot” (Interview, July 9, 2010).

Many interviews seem to articulate something inherently fulfilling about working with young people, describing a feeling of personal self-efficacy as well as of service to the community.

In many of the teachers’ stories, teaching experiences strengthened their belief in their own teaching ability. A major component to self-efficacy is one’s own perception
of competency and ability. Intrinsic motivation exists when the source of motivation lies within the individual or student. Tasks that are intrinsically motivating fulfill a want, rather than a need (Brophy, 1998), and are experienced as enjoyable or worthwhile (Ormrod, 1999). Intrinsic motivation focuses on positive elements of motivation such as the delight of an intellectual discovery, pride in a job well done, and an appreciation for what is being learned (Covington & Dray, 2002). Intrinsic motivation is one element among many that contributes to learning in both young people and adults alike. Learners form ideas about their self-efficacy from their actual performances, observational experiences, forms of persuasion, and physiological responses (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Based on the statements of interviewees in this study, teachers seem to gain a great deal of self-efficacy and corresponding intrinsic motivation when they have experienced initial successes in the role of teaching. This feeling seems to be the force that motivates many teachers to commit themselves to the profession.

The forces that build self-efficacy in teachers are the same forces that build self-efficacy in students. As children get older, many of them begin to attribute their successes and failures to intelligence and/or natural talent, factors they believe to be stable and beyond their control (Ormrod, 1999). If someone is usually successful at a particular activity, he/she comes to believe that he/she has a high ability and thus develops a high sense of self-efficacy for this task. In the classroom setting, if students often experience failure in school activities, especially if they attribute it to low natural ability rather than low effort or poor strategies, they often develop low self-efficacy for academic pursuits (Schunk, 1991). Self-efficacy, then, has close ties to social cognitive theory, which examines human learning based on interactions between behaviors, beliefs,
and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). As evidenced in the teacher interviews, many teachers’ initial enthusiasm and attraction to the profession grew into an enduring sense of self-efficacy and fulfillment if teachers felt successful in their introductory experiences to the profession.

**Sense of duty**

Having role models is not necessarily enough motivation to enter the teaching profession. Respondents in this study also felt a sense of duty. Duty is often defined as a social force that binds one to a course of action that is demanded by the highest authority, be it law, religion, or education. In the hearts and minds of the highly effective teachers in this study, duty takes on a number of profound connotations that honor the traditional meaning of the word, and more importantly, enhance and enrich the lives of students.

One teacher explains this personal sense of duty:

> I have a deep desire to be a positive influence... For me, being a teacher, that's the best way I can do that. I'm in these kids' lives for an hour a day, every day. Someone once told me that teaching is like planting seeds. And you rarely get to see the flower right away; it takes a long time. But I believe that I'm doing positive things. I don't need test scores to tell me that. I know I'm being a positive influence (Interview, June 25, 2010).

Over and over, these effective teachers of Latino students expressed a profound sense of duty that was characterized by a sense of caring. As one teacher stated, “I interact with my kids every day... Seeing the changes in their lives and watching them grow, that's what I think it's about for me” (Interview, June 29, 2010). The sense of duty articulated by so many effective teachers is related to intrinsic motivation. These teachers seem to have a sense of duty that does not originate from school, district, or state pressures, but from an internal understanding of what they feel they need to do as
teachers in order to best affect students’ lives. Teachers characterized the feeling of a fulfilled sense of duty as rewarding, and referred to their job using phrases such as “positive….maybe a little selfish” and “enjoying the work….loving teenagers” (Interview, June 23, 2010).

One effective teacher discussed a sense of duty in relation to a prior career. Dissatisfaction in a prior career served as a catalyst to spark a change which led to teaching.

I wanted to do something positive to contribute to the world. That's the bottom line. I was in business for 10 years, and that wasn't fulfilling my heart and soul. I really decided that what I wanted to do with the rest of my life was help people, and there's a lot of different ways to do that. And I felt my skills lent themselves to... Being a communicator, hopefully being a good motivator, being an organized person. Bottom line, I wanted to contribute something to humanity (Interview, July 13, 2010).

Teachers who had professions previous to teaching often articulated a desire to contribute to society in what they considered to be a meaningful way, explaining their sense of duty and choice to change professions in the context of public service. Other teachers were even more explicit in stating that teaching is different from most other professions because the sense of duty that effective teachers experience transcends the day to day and extends globally.

So, I decided education is my passion. And I see it as essential for society to be sustainable. It's essential for our own government structure to have social mobility between social classes. It's that vehicle. So, for that, I guess, promise of opportunity to exist, this is where it's at. When I first went into education, I was like "Well, it's not applied, like I really want to use the information that I have." And in retrospect, I think it's the most powerful profession (Interview, July 29, 2010).

The sense of duty often becomes the lens through which teachers evaluate the day to day. Although teachers may not feel successful every day, the sense of duty provides
the perspective of a bigger goal, a broader view that serves to correct and refine their focus on the road map to student achievement. One effective teacher recounted talking to senior students on their last day. Through this brief encounter she realized the manner in which she was affecting their lives. She reflected, “I am part of changing the pattern of dropping out. I feel like a whole group of us here on this campus are really starting to change that paradigm in which we are having students get into college. We are having students who are staying in college and doing something different. I think I really like being part of a group of teachers who are all have that focus, like-minded, on a mission” (Interview, July 27, 2010).

Sense of duty, in some cases, was based on the teacher’s perceived identity as a role model, most notably when the role model represented a traditionally under-represented group in higher education. One teacher explained, “In my undergrad I was often the only Latina in chemistry classes of 300. I wondered why that is, and I realized I have to do something about it. I knew becoming a teacher I would touch so many different lives and ignite that interest in science and higher education” (Interview, June 23, 2010). This teacher went on to explain how important it is to her to be a role model, especially considering how few Latinas there are in science. In this interpretation of a sense of duty in teaching, teachers take on the responsibility of representing themselves as successful products of public education, using their own successes as one more reason for students to believe that they can succeed too. Other teachers also expressed a sense of duty towards Latino populations. As one teacher stated, “I knew I wanted to teach math, but I wanted to really make a difference. I wanted to teach at a school where I knew I was needed. I wanted to work with kids that needed positive interactions with especially
younger females. I felt I could make a difference, especially with Latina females” (Interview, June 29, 2010). This sense of duty goes beyond an intrinsic desire to impact individual students’ lives and considers the social and political context in which these teachers’ students find themselves when they enter higher education and the work force.

A strong sense of duty and caring was repeated in several forms, often characterized by the feeling of love, as evidenced by the following four excerpts:

1. The students are a key part of why I keep teaching. It’s just something that’s so rewarding, and I think it’s the students. They keep me here because I feel like they are calling out, longing for someone to love them, and accept them, and believe in them. I really think that’s the relationship I have with my students (Interview, July 19, 2010).

2. I love, not just helping kids like [Male First Name], who are going to just naturally do well anyway, but taking a kid that could go either direction and get him to be, a small part, you're not the whole reason it happens but to get to say, "You are smart and you're capable and I know that you're going to do great things," and when you get to do that, it's awesome (Interview, July 1, 2010).

3. I love being around adolescents... I really seriously think it’s the only profession on the planet where you have gratifications in everything you do (Interview, July 15, 2010).

4. I started subbing and found I just loved working with students. Initially I got hooked because I loved the students. Only later did I fall in love with my subject matter (Interview, June 28, 2010).

A sense of service and an affinity towards students was often expressed in terms as strong as “love,” something that effective teachers repeatedly mention in relation to their perception of their duty as a teacher. This moral compass is often driven by the desire to close the achievement gap. There are schools where no achievement gap exists because there are students who achieve at high levels despite the incredible odds facing them (Haycock, 1998). Effective teachers in this study consistently aspire to be a part of
more stories of success. They continue to hone their pedagogy, both academically and personally, in an attempt to close the achievement gap.

The teachers in this study support the notion of closing the achievement gap. In a 2003 national opinion poll on Americans' attitudes toward public education conducted by Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup, ninety percent of those polled believed that closing the achievement gap between white, on the one hand, and black and Hispanic students on the other hand, was somewhat or very important. Although most people think the gap is a result of factors unrelated to the quality of schooling, a 2001 poll revealed that more than half thought it was the responsibility of public schools and educators to close the gap (Rose & Gallup, 2001).

The effective teachers in this study readily recognized societal factors such as socioeconomics, cultural capital, health care and nutrition as factors that can contribute to lower academic performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2000a; Viadero, 2000). Other teachers also pointed directly to factors within the school, such as peer pressure, student tracking, negative stereotyping, and test bias. While nearly seventy percent of non-Latino teachers discussed the role of race in their discussion of closing the achievement gap, the remaining thirty percent were neutral in their view of race and their sense of duty to close the achievement gap. In contrast, all of the Latino teachers in this study emphasized the role of race as central to their sense of duty. All of the Latino teachers interviewed viewed their own race as one of the most critically influential factors in the service of their Latino students.
Teacher Beliefs about Teaching Profession- Burn out

Every year, U.S. schools hire more than 200,000 new teachers for that first day of class. By the time summer rolls around, at least 22,000 have quit (NEA, 2003). Even those who make it beyond the difficult first year are not likely to stay long: about 30 percent of new teachers flee the profession after just three years, and more than 45 percent leave after five years. Students from the lowest-income families suffer the most. Inexperienced teachers (those with less than three years on the job) frequently land in classrooms with the neediest and often the most challenging students. Beginning teachers frequently start their careers at hard-to-staff schools where resources may be scarce—in other words, urban schools—simply because there are more jobs available there.

The U.S. Department of Education confirms that teacher turnover is highest in public schools where half or more of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches (2005). In California, for example, students in schools with large minority populations are five times more likely to face an "under-prepared" teacher than are students in schools with low percentages of minority students, according to a study conducted by SRI International and sponsored by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning in conjunction with California State University and the University of California (2006).

This dark landscape, a far cry from effective teachers dedicated to their work and enthusiastically engaged with their students, was explored in this study as the teachers discussed with the researcher their beliefs about why so many teachers leave the profession. In their opinions, these teachers most frequently cited the demands of the job and the amount of support received as the most significant reasons why so many teachers burn out. Not one of the effective teachers involved with this study reported symptoms
of burnout, despite the fact that all of the participants work in school settings where students require attention, support and extra time far beyond the last bell of the day in order to achieve success.

Demands of Teaching

Even though the teachers in this study did not report their own burn out, they commonly cited the demands of the job as the primary reason for teacher burnout in general. The following three teachers cite the physical demands, the time commitment, the high level of attention to both the curriculum and the students themselves, and the emotional commitment that teachers make to their students as examples of common demands that teachers face.

1. It's a lot of work to be a good teacher. …if you're going to be an effective teacher, there is so much work that goes into planning the lessons. It's not enough. You have to know your students. (Interview, June 28, 2010).

2. Part of it is burning out from the number of hours. I think people who are not teachers do not understand the tremendous amount of work and stamina that is required. I think to do the job right, 10-hour days are normal. (Interview, July 19, 2010).

3. I think it's just because it's such a difficult job. You have to be on all the time. …It's a lot of work. I think it's more than just teaching. It's all the other parts of the job. …If you really get invested in the students' lives... it's rewarding, but it also can be a little more emotionally taxing, if you want to do a good job. I think some people probably decide that it's not for them because they realize if they want to do a good job, it's a lot more work than you realize and [they] just don't want to do the amount of work (Interview, July 5, 2010).

Focus on this issue was more sharply drawn by another teacher who characterized two types of teachers: those who are overwhelmed and those who just exhaust themselves:
It's a lot of work. I could burn out every day. It's hard. It's very hard. It's very draining. I believe that there [are] two types of teachers. There's the type of teacher that perhaps doesn't have as much energy to put into the kids in the classroom, and so it burns you out because you have all kinds of other things going on in your life, and that extra pressure and stress kind of burns you out. Then there's the other teacher like myself and other colleagues that I know that are so passionate and dedicated about our job that it just burns us out. I am on my feet, and I am interacting with the kids. I'm up and down the aisles until the bell rings, I literally just need to sit and fall. Teenagers really, I think, just suck this energy out of you. It's a different mental type of energy. I think it's because you need so much time (Interview, July 6, 2010).

It is interesting that in every statement, a contrast is drawn between less-effective and highly-effective teachers. Each teacher interviewed gave specific examples of behaviors that they consider to be less effective, and other examples of what they consider to be most effective. In these teachers’ opinions, there seems to be a vast difference in behavior between what might be considered a minimally competent teacher and what certain teachers seem to be regularly willing to devote in time and energy to their daily practice. These effective teachers’ explanations of their jobs present an almost contradictory point of view. While they acknowledge that much of their work is ultimately voluntary, they also repeatedly state that without it, they would not be effective at what they do.

Teachers also often cited that becoming overwhelmed is directly attributable to the wide range of stresses that arise in the day-to-day work of the profession. As one teacher stated, “It is stressful. There is so much on our plates, in terms of dealing with scheduling, dealing with everything, dealing with lesson plans, and grading” (Interview, July 26, 2010). Similarly, another teacher remarked: “It's overwhelming. I could have been one of those burned out teachers very easily. When I first got here I was teaching
full time, coaching after school. I didn't have a girlfriend and I lived by myself. I put just about every waking minute into this job and it's overwhelming” (Interview, July 12, 2010). Another teacher reiterated how overwhelming the demands of the job can be especially during the first years of teaching. This teacher partially related burn out to an inability to effectively manage time and tasks. Earlier in his career, the teacher made the mistake of taking home too many papers to grade and trying to do too much of the work himself rather than having students do the work.

In addition to an overwhelming workload, many of these teachers discussed what they categorized as a perceived lack of appreciative feedback with respect to the result of their work. One teacher stated, “It's a lot of pressure. There's a lot of pressure with testing. There's a lot of pressure with parents. It's just pressure and almost thankless” (Interview, July 13, 2010). Another teacher echoed this sentiment: “And a lot of times it's not like a job where you're going to see the rewards. You're not going to see all the positive things that you've done. It is as if every single day you're selling a product to people who don't want to buy it. And that can be tiring” (Interview, June 14, 2010). A lack of feedback is another regularly-cited reason for teacher discouragement and burnout.

Additionally, some of the participants surmised that the road map to burnout was clearly marked by the disconnection between what teachers had expected the experience of teaching to be and the reality of what it is. They acknowledged the difficulty of the career, developing both emotional and physical stamina necessary to stand up to the long days and the public and often tactless scrutiny from students.
One teacher attributed this dissonance to a lack of self-reflection concerning expectation and experience.

I think it's very easy for teachers to burn out when they bring to the job false expectations. You hear teachers say, ‘[Students] don't study. They don't do their work. They don't do this. They don't care and I think they are not going to do their homework.’ Fine. You don't want to give in to them. Find different ways of doing it. I think people are so quick to blame others and that's why they are not successful because they don't turn around and look at themselves (Interview, July 9, 2010).

Many teachers’ statements alluded to the need for relevant teacher training and preparation that might include topics such as creating efficient grading systems, maintaining a safe and equitable classroom environment, and finding a meaningful way to continually reflect on their practice in order to address issues that commonly contribute to teacher burnout.

The subject of job difficulties leading to burn out was often discussed in tandem with the additional political aspects that are now inextricably woven into the fabric of education. As one teacher stated, “It's a tough job. If it were only teaching, it might be easier, but politics get involved. We do so much more. I feel like the teachers who really care, we're involved in sports, we're coaching advisers, and then we're caring for the students” (Interview, July 12, 2010). Another teacher also discussed politics and how it might influence distribution of class assignments. “I suppose if you combine the outside politics with student scheduling, sometimes teachers get into situations where they have very difficult classes and very difficult students. If that were to occur maybe coincidentally on a regular basis for a few years, I can see somebody getting really burnt out” (Interview, June 16, 2010). Another teacher discussed politics through a broader lens when they said, “Society wants more and more out of education but is willing to pay
less and less. I think all of us in education realize that there comes a point where you can't stretch that dollar any further. That, I think, is a burnout for teachers. I am trying real hard in my career not to get too caught up in that stuff, because you know how it is, it can drive you nuts” (Interview, June 21, 2010).

Teacher responses in this study were supported by other findings in the literature: schools that serve poor and minority children--often urban schools--have limited funding for teacher salaries, educational materials, and general maintenance of the educational environment. As a result, the demands of the job are more than those of other teaching situations. In addition, besides common salary differentials between urban teachers and teachers in surrounding suburban areas, urban teachers work under greater bureaucratic constraints than do suburban or rural teachers; they tend to teach more students a day, and they have historically done so while lacking basic materials such as books, desks, blackboards, and paper (Council, 1987). At the same time, their students often bring into the classroom the social problems that plague their inner-city communities.

Nevertheless, good working conditions--even more than students' socioeconomic status--are associated with better teacher attendance, more effort, higher morale, and a greater sense of efficacy in the classroom (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988). Yet, the very schools where students most need excellent teachers are the schools which often have the greatest difficulty hiring and retaining the best teachers.

A consistent sentiment of never-ending work was reiterated throughout the teachers’ responses in this study. There was a distinct difference between how experienced and less-experienced teachers responded to questions referring to the demands of teaching. In general, many teachers who had taught for more than ten years
responded with an emphasis on the need for a balance in life. Their responses stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between teaching, family, and friends. On the other hand, many of the teachers who had taught less than ten years responded with overwhelming feelings of how their lives were encompassed with curriculum planning, tutoring and grading. This pattern could suggest that for effective teachers, the necessarily difficult and time-consuming work in the first years is clearly offset by the rewards of teaching, the sense of duty and purpose. Later in their careers, effective teachers know how to combat the effects of burnout by seeking balance in their lives.

Support

Teaching in high poverty schools is challenging. As discussed in chapter 2, schools in large urban centers are places where teachers are faced with a plethora of challenges that range from poverty, violence, and cultural diversity to a multitude of languages. In response to reasons for teacher burnout in such challenging environments, teachers in this study frequently cited the importance of support structures. The structures described by the teachers manifested themselves in various forms.

One teacher discussed the lack of new teacher support from personal experience: “I think sometimes if they don’t support the new teachers as much as they should. I feel I learned to teach from trial by fire. I had an experience when I was new where I had four preps. I was working 16-17 hours a day. I’m not sure if that’s the greatest way to learn.” (Interview, June 19, 2010). In this instance, the local school site principal’s role in determining schedules was described as significant in the support of new teachers. Several teachers seemed to articulate a belief that, because teaching positions differ so
widely, and because newer teachers are often more likely to begin with less desirable schedules, focused support for new teachers would help to counterbalance some of these inherent factors that initially work against a teacher’s overall effectiveness.

In addition to the negative effect of teaching multiple preps, one teacher described the lack of new teacher support in terms of its impact on isolation. This teacher went on to discuss the need for mentoring for new teachers and his positive experience in receiving that support. “When I first got here I was going from a middle school to a high school, and fortunately my brother was here, and some of his friends were here, and so I had that support. (Interview, July 13, 2010).”

Another teacher discussed the need for mentorship as a means to assist new teachers with issues such as classroom management that are typical to the new job. They also highlighted one of the challenges of mentoring, which is creating teams whose skills are complimentary, whose personalities align, and whose desire to grow coincide: “You have to establish the mentorship. You have to find those teachers who fit really well with specific teachers for the needs that they need.” (Interview, June 17, 2010).

One effective teacher discussed how, in an effective mentoring situation, they have seen mentoring and coaching impact the disposition of even some more experienced teachers. As this teacher explained, “I know one teacher that I had an impact on who I worked closely with this year and I have seen the change in her.” (Interview, June 23, 2010). Teachers seemed to acknowledge the high level of resources and personal commitment required by a mentoring program, but also repeatedly alluded to the profound impact that such a support program can have on a teacher’s practice.
Various teachers also mentioned the necessity of a more informal type of mentoring, in the form of collegial support, as an important tool in preventing burnout. Often that support takes the form of social friendships and gatherings. Even when in social situations, the support afforded to colleagues may end up in professional initiatives. As one teacher described,

> In the beginning I felt so isolated. You don't know what resources are on campus. You don't know who to go to when you have a problem. And I think that a lot of people never find that group of teachers within that community that supports them. In order to be in a school like this, or any school with high poverty or whatever issues are going on, you really have to have that community that supports you. (Interview, June 20, 2010).

The importance of feedback as a form of support was also discussed. As one interviewee described, “Many teachers teach between 150-200 students a day, and to try to do everything for every student is challenging. Then add to that how little feedback teachers get from their administrator’s or colleagues. It can take a toll” (Interview, July 9, 2010). Teachers seemed to allude to different types of effective feedback in their narratives about support: Whether they mentioned formal institutional feedback, the more informal working relationships they had with their administrators and support staff, or the day to day support afforded by mentoring relationships and coworkers who work closely together, all made it clear that a network of consistent support and feedback dramatically affected levels of teacher motivation and burnout.

As discussed previously and supported by many of the teacher responses, urban schools can lack structures of support and resources to accommodate the needs of a higher number of inexperienced teachers (Kozol, 1991). An observed ability among the teachers in this study was that despite the structural limitations, these teachers had a filter
of perseverance. This skill was driven by a desire for equity and empathy for the institutional situation. According to Cunningham (1996), teachers who are not working for equity in teaching and learning environments, then are inadvertently maintaining the status quo. In discussing why teachers enter and leave the profession, valuable insight was gained by analyzing the belief structures of these effective teachers. A deeper level of teachers’ beliefs specific to their students and their role as teachers is discussed in the following section.

**Teacher Beliefs about Students and Teachers- What Good Teachers Believe**

**All Students Can and Want to Learn**

The frequently repeated reform mantra, *all children can learn*, was a recurring theme with many of the effective teachers interviewed for this study. Of course all children can learn, but the tough questions are: what can they learn, when can they learn it, and what format is best suited to learning? Often the battle cry of, “All students can learn,” proves to be empty rhetoric when confronted by learning outcomes. The participants in this study acknowledged that there is no single silver bullet that will result in eliminating gaps in achievement. The review of literature discussed in chapter two aligns well with the views of many of the participants in this study with respect to what effective teachers believe. More importantly, the larger question which was raised by participants is whether educators are prepared and willing to act on the often-expressed view that all children can learn. As one teacher stated, “I feel like even if you start off from low, even if you're just good enough, there is the possibility and the opportunity to be better” (Interview, July 6, 2010).
This belief in students’ ability to learn was typically coupled with the belief in hard work and high expectations. As another teacher put it:

I think all teachers need to believe that their students can succeed, that they can do it. And that the bar needs to be set high. Given that appropriate support, they can succeed. I think the students know when you don’t believe in them. They're not going to succeed because students can read every little nuance that your facial expression or your ... I guess they read into your words. They’re smart. And they can tell if you don't believe in them. So, you're setting yourself up for failure if you don't believe in them (Interview, July 15, 2010).

This characterization of students intuitively sensing teachers’ belief in them, and the function that this plays in student learning is significant, and was echoed by other teachers as well. One teacher explained that even when students don’t believe that they are bringing something of intellectual value into the classroom at the start of the year, as the year progresses they begin to change their opinion of themselves in accordance with their teacher’s opinion of them. “So I've really seen students react well to the idea that I'm going to treat you as a professional student, as an intellectual, somebody that has something to say about the world” (Interview, June 27, 2010).

For effective teachers, “all students can learn” moves from mantra to methodology. One teacher identified the practice of offering students multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery as representative of an unqualified belief in his/her students:

I believe that all students can learn. And as long as they're in my class every day, they're going to learn... I believe that all good teachers believe that. ... We don't hesitate [to] teach on Saturdays or after school, or give students multiple opportunities to show mastery. If it takes them a little longer, that's okay (Interview, June 14, 2010).

Several other teachers also echoed the belief that demonstration of mastery was not tied to a fixed point in time, but could occur along a continuum of opportunity.
Statements such as, “My entire class can succeed,” and “I almost am not going to let them fail. I mean really, I'm going to give them chance after chance to show their stuff” further demonstrate a specific characteristic of an effective teacher: a consistent, almost unrelenting encouragement of student success, and corresponding systems within the class that make this success possible for students (Interview, June 29, 2010).

Once the belief in student ability is embraced, it gives rise to the corollary that all students have an intrinsic desire to learn. Effective teachers in this study described how these beliefs build a foundation for students’ achievement. As one teacher stated:

I think that teachers believe that all students want to learn and that they want to be successful, even that student that you have confrontations with. I believe that they all want to be successful, but a lot of them don't know how to get there. They haven't had that feeling. So, good teachers are patient. They are understanding. They are loving. They are here for the student. That's their first priority, and a good teacher is going to do whatever they can, because they believe in the potential of their students (Interview, July 2, 2010).

Even in cases where large differences in ability were acknowledged, teachers often cited their belief in students’ desire to learn. One teacher articulated this belief by stating that their job is to help students “hone in on what their strengths are,” and more, “believing that every student has strengths” (Interview, July 16, 2010). A teacher’s belief that students want to learn, and the reciprocal student belief that they can learn and are even good at learning, create what seems to be a mutually reinforcing cycle of positive learning outcomes.

The belief in students’ ability to succeed was also described as a mechanism to override traditional views of failure. Effective teachers adopt an attitude where excuses
related to socioeconomics and/or stereotypes are not accepted. Their attitudes often run counter to traditional justifications for lack of achievement, such as living in households with drug and alcohol abuse, single parent homes, and poverty. Rather, these teachers concentrate on what they can control—their own classrooms. They make sure those classrooms are safe places with rich learning experiences.

Time and time again, the effective teachers in this study discussed the importance of looking beyond the reasons why students should not succeed, and focused on the abilities students have to realize their potential. Sentiments such as, “All good teachers believe that all kids are good kids,” “All have something unique and special about them if we take the time to get to know them,” and “They’re here because they want to achieve. They may not come right out and say, I’m here to learn. I want to learn. But they do” echo a fundamental sense of equity in the classroom, where teachers’ preconceived notions about student success apply to every student, regardless of what other factors might be present in the student’s life. This positive reinforcement on the part of the teacher seems to significantly contribute to both qualitative and quantitative student growth over time (Interview, July 19, 2010).

One of the most significant and commonly-held beliefs of teachers in this study is a deep certainty of the potential within all students. This tenet mirrors the humanistic psychological perspective described by Rogers (1959) and Maslow (1968), and describes a holistic approach to human existence through investigations of meaning, values, freedom, tragedy, personal responsibility, human potential, spirituality, and self-actualization. As one teacher stated,
Good teachers will, whether they know it or not, view kids prophetically, see the kids for what they can be rather than what they are half the time. (Interview, June 24, 2010).

Another teacher reflected belief in students’ good nature and their quest to self-actualization, both integral to developing the full potential of each student.

No one walks in my door saying, I'm going to fail this class. I don't like this teacher. I'm hateful. None of those kids walk in with that attitude. I think when they come, when they do come in, some of those unmotivated kids, they're hopeful. Maybe this is going to be a good teacher for me. Maybe this is going to be a good lesson. It's really an important job (Interview, July 16, 2010).

It is interesting that this idea of perception, including teachers’ perceptions of their students and students’ perceptions of themselves, has such a profound effect on both students’ and teachers’ feelings of competency in the classroom. Teachers who take the time to create a hopeful, positive climate for their learners seem to inspire a higher amount of self-efficacy in their students, and thus become, largely through this power of belief, more effective teachers.

Maximizing student potential and student learning were fundamental beliefs among the teachers. A slight dichotomy emerged among the teachers when discussing how students were empowered to meet their potential. As previously discussed, dialogue and the use of voice is analogous to how power and privilege are manifested in routine classroom workings: students who feel powerful and validated by the teacher or the curriculum talk, and students who feel neglected or ignored by the teacher or the curriculum remain silent (Rocco and West, 1998; Tisdell, 1993). Rocco and West (1998) and Tisdell (1993) also cite race as a major location of power and privilege in society and in classrooms.
Connected to this idea of race, teachers’ viewed students for what they can be versus what they are or lack. The majority of teachers viewed students’ culture through a constructive lens, one that defines the important starting point for student-teacher relationships. However, four of the white participants responded to aspects of culture through a deficit model. These participants attributed students’ lack of educational success to characteristics often rooted in their cultures and communities.

The deficit perspective blames the victims of institutional oppression for their own victimization by referring to negative stereotypes and conventions regarding certain groups of people. This outlook does not examine the origin of oppression because it holds the responsibilities solely within individuals and/or their communities. This model frames the problem as one of students and families. The remedies informed by this deficit perspectives which are created to ameliorate student underachievement and failure often fail to meaningfully address the problems that combine to depress the performance of certain groups of students. Under the cultural deficit model schools are, at least in part, liberated from their responsibilities to educate all students appropriately, and this responsibility is shifted almost entirely to students and their families.

The cultural deficit model is founded on negative conjectures and theories regarding the ability, aspirations, and work ethic of minorities and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. It is based on assumptions that low-income students often fail to do well in school because of perceived “cultural deprivation” or lack of exposure to cultural models more aligned with school success. Consequently, according to this perspective, minorities and poor students often enter school with a lack of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1977), cultural skills that are privileged by schools and often shared
by school agents and therefore considered valuable. In addition, there is a popular belief that the communities and families of minorities and socioeconomically disadvantaged students do not value education as much as those of middle and upper-class White students. As a result, upper and middle-class students, according to the theory, are more likely to perform well in school because they possess more cultural capital.

The deficit perspective is also distributed through educational research and within teacher training programs (Valencia, 1991; González, 2005). For example, Ruby Payne's 2001 Framework for Understanding Poverty, a widely disseminated text within school districts, has been understood as promoting classist, deficit-centered philosophies to explain the underachievement of youth in poverty (Gorski, 2006). The results of the deficit perspective can make school a “subtractive” experience for students (Valenzuela, 1999). One of the most damaging research findings is that minorities continue to be overrepresented in special education and in the less academically rigorous, non college-prep tracks of their schools (Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997; Patton, 1998; Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Nogueira, 2001; Conchas, 2006). The negative impact of the deficit perspective is also demonstrated by disproportionately high dropout rates among minorities and poor students. Moreover, the negative beliefs regarding minorities and low socio-economical students can also result in stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat involves people experiencing situations in which, according to cultural labels, their social identities forecast poor performance. Awareness of these negative stereotypes may produce distracting thoughts about confirming group stereotypes, and these anxieties, in turn, may lead to the very failure that is feared.
The difference between the Pygmalion effect of a teacher’s positive expectations and a teacher’s subscription to the deficit model is vast. Since a teacher’s perspective pervades every lesson, every interaction with a student, and every opinion of student ability, it is an underlying force that presents itself in several sections of this analysis.

**Internal Locus of Control: Self-efficacy**

The participants of this study dogmatically focused on their roles as the primary variable in the learning of their students. A level of self-efficacy accompanied the belief that they are in control of their students’ learning. They view themselves as individuals who are driven by their desire to constantly improve their craft, their positive expectations of their students, and their resilient attitude toward the profession. Several teachers acknowledged that it is within their locus of control to create a dominant narrative of hard work and high expectations, one that their reluctant students might initially oppose until they realize that these standards are “not optional.” One teacher asserts that “when you set up an environment where learning will take place, that’s what we are doing in these two hour blocks” (Interview, June 28, 2010).

Highly effective teachers possess an internal locus of control that results in an intentional personalization of the learning outcomes of their students. As stated by one teacher,

In my classroom, they have no choice. If they’re not passing, I’m going to get them after school. I’m going to get them during lunch or nutrition break, or I’m going to have some type of intervention... But I don’t give up on them. (Interview, June 28, 2010).

The teacher seems to be aware that a students’ success in a given class is dependent on several factors such as their teacher’s belief in them, the academic support
they receive inside or outside of the class, and the amount of attention to the student’s success in the course. Several teachers maintained that while personalization demands a large amount of time, emotional attention, and follow-through from the teacher, the results often go a long way. Teachers commented that, with experience, they are able to hone in on the most-needed interventions rather quickly, according to their knowledge of their students, while always making it a priority to maintain a consistent level of genuine day-to-day personalization with all of their students.

In addition to personal persistence, the quality of high self-efficacy compels effective teachers forward in a constant quest for improvement through reflection. “And I take it very personally. If they're not getting it, it must be something that I'm doing.” (Interview, July 9, 2010). This teacher went on to explain how she seeks anonymous evaluations on her teaching from students so as to improve her practice and make changes. She is confident enough in herself that she is not intimated or fearful of possible negative feedback. This attitude and practice reflect a high degree of self-efficacy. These teachers know that when outcomes are not met on the ideal plane of achievement, they possess within themselves the common practice of self-reflection that improves their ability to further facilitate student learning. As one teacher put it, “Good teachers don't rely on things that they have always done to always work. Good teachers are constantly reflective and researching” (Interview, July 1, 2010). This characteristic of reflective practice seems to work in tandem with teachers’ aforementioned belief in student potential to create a system of self-motivation that will carry them through the year. Teachers repeatedly returned to the importance of reflection, stating that all forms of reflective feedback, whether from students, from peer observations, or from data they
collected themselves, helped them to grow as a teacher and a learner. Several also said that intentional reflection promoted their professional growth, in their opinion, and that it also infused their teaching with an energy and a freshness that might have otherwise been lacking over the years.

A shared characteristic among the teachers in this study involved the lack of need to seek validation from others. These teachers instead felt empowered to teach and help students without a constant external driving force. This is qualitatively different than seeking feedback, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Their validation came from their sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. However, half of the six teachers who had been teaching for five or fewer years seemed to express stronger feelings of helplessness than the more experienced teachers. A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverance. Some setbacks and difficulties in pursuits serve a useful purpose; success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks (Bandura, 1994). The more experienced teachers emphasized that by sticking it out through tough times, they emerged stronger from adversity.

**Caring Adults Facilitating Learning**

Effective teachers genuinely care about their students and are able to affect a transparency about their teaching persona that affords students both a real and perceived awareness of their teacher’s care. While caring is a broad term, its nature can be
quantified, just as teacher effectiveness itself is developing quantifiable qualities. Caring reaches far beyond knowing student names and their demographic and achievement profiles. Caring includes qualities such as patience, trust, honesty, and courage. Specific teacher attributes that show caring include listening, gentleness, understanding, knowledge of students as individuals, warmth and encouragement, and an overall love for children. Although challenging to characterize, it is difficult to argue that a caring teacher compels their students to achieve. As one teacher stated, “Kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. So getting back to this whole first week speech that I give my kids, I want them to know I believe in them. I want them to know that I will work as hard as anybody on this campus will for them; but I expect the same in return” (Interview, June 27, 2010).

Another effective teacher characterized the caring relationship developed between teacher and student as analogous to the relationship between a parent and their child:

My favorite theorist on how to go do this is Quintillion; I really like him; he's the ancient Roman and he believed [that] relationships are the most important. I love what he says because he says, “A teacher should look at a student as a parent looks at a child.” That I should teach my classes in such a way that I would be totally comfortable having my own child, my own flesh and blood in that classroom. I want to teach at a school where I want my kid to go. You know, it's like now when I see teachers who send their kids to private schools or whatever. I'm like, "Oh, man," because to me that says something about how you feel about the campus that you're on (Interview, July 12, 2010).

Teachers who drew explicit connections between parent-child relationships and teacher-student relationships, when they often have more than 100 students they see each day, make a powerful statement about authentic caring. Effective teachers say that they
demonstrate their care for their students both in the way that they talk to them directly, and in the way that they speak about them to others.

Some teachers discuss the affective aspects of teaching in terms of a reflective process of humanization. One teacher states:

Good teachers believe that they're teaching kids and not a subject matter. They believe that this... I've had several student teachers through the years and they've gotten completely frustrated and borderline just confrontational with some students that they feel that they just clash with. And I can see where they're coming from. If the kid is disrespectful or rude at any given time or just apathetic sometimes that is more frustrating for teachers sometimes than even just the obvious backlash. But they always remind you look at those kids' faces and someone in the world loves that kid. And interests the teacher to do whatever it takes to try to reach that child the hours that you have them for (Interview, June 19, 2010).

Many teachers described this process of humanization, of authentic caring, as one of the most rewarding and simultaneously heart-wrenching aspects of the job. They explained how there is no shortcut to genuine caring, and that once there is an investment in the humanity of a child beyond just their grade or their presence in the class, it is a perpetual source of responsibility, joy, and sometimes worry. They explain that this is the part of the job that they most frequently “take home with them,” and that largely goes unmeasured.

The belief that students should enjoy and look forward to being in class due to a caring environment was a recurring theme among the effective teachers in this study. As one stated, “When they walk out of my door every day, I want them to say, ‘See you tomorrow.’ I want them to look forward to coming back.”(Interview, June 29, 2010). Other teachers described this sentiment by using terms such as “a safe space,” “warm,” and “nonthreatening” to describe the classroom. Teachers believe that the classroom
environment, which is something that is definitely within their locus of control, is a very powerful way to facilitate student learning.

There is a reciprocal relationship of caring that is often described in terms of student behaviors. For example, one teacher described her students’ desire to make her happy:

I don't necessarily want to be friends with my students, but I think there's a level where you have to grow personal relationships with your students in order for them to trust you and respect you, because as much as they do their work for themselves, they also do their work for you. You can build that personal relationship with them. They don't want to upset you. They want to make you happy. They want to make you proud. (Interview, July 7, 2010).

Similar to the initial teacher’s commentary, this teacher’s statement draws attention to a personal, almost emotional aspect of a teacher-student relationship that can serve to motivate a child immensely. This teacher, like so many others, also makes it clear that effective teachers do more emotional work, more planning, more thinking about specific students’ needs, and more reflecting than could possibly only be restricted to a bell-to-bell school day.

Defining a caring teacher in absolutes can be a daunting task considering that the action of caring can be expressed in different ways. Regardless of the definition, identification of a caring teacher is an axiomatic action for students. This construct of caring will be further explored and elaborated upon in chapter 5.

**Understanding Students and their Needs**

Effective teachers understand the importance of knowing their students’ needs both collectively and individually. Effective teachers know students both formally and
informally, and utilize every opportunity at school and in the community to keep the lines of communication open. These effective teachers know their students individually, from understanding each student's learning style and needs, to understanding and embracing each student's personality, likes and dislikes, and personal situations that affect behavior and performance in school. One teacher explained that when a student is acting out, the teacher should not judge them for that action alone, but consider the context in which that behavior is taking place: “There’s something else going on with that kid that has nothing to do with me and that probably has nothing to do with school... And maybe I’ll be able to figure out what that is and maybe not.” This teacher went on to describe how sometimes natural initial responses might have to be tempered with consideration of a bigger possible picture. “Sometimes you’ll find out that a kid’s going through something terrible and I can feel myself like, ‘Whaah!’ you know? Like freak out on a kid, but you don’t really know what’s going on with that kid” (Interview, July 14, 2010). Being compassionate while maintaining high standards is one way these teachers mentioned they show their students that they are responsive to their students’ needs.

Many of the effective teachers take the time to understand cultural context and the insight into student learning it can provide. Other teachers discussed understanding students through the critical lens of race:

I think an important belief for teachers is to first of all realize that their experience is separate from the students' experience, especially if there's a different racial background, cultural background. So speaking from my experience as a white person growing up in an incredibly white, small, rural, redneck, conservative town, coming to teach here really opened my eyes to the assumptions that people make about each other and that how it's really critical how a teacher approaches student relationships (Interview, July 12, 2010).
These teachers know that it is important to take time to reflect on cultural context as an important dimension of their students’ individuality, and that this intentionality also helps them refine their role as a teacher. Further, it provides them with greater elegance and precision in articulating the implications of their practice in a Latino community.

Another teacher explains how they learn about their students through the community, and how they work to participate as an active member in that community in which they teach:

> After all, I am teaching in your community so, I think an integral part of being a good teacher is first of all being involved in the community in which you teach, in whatever form that takes. I try to do that through walking through a document for student scholarships or helping teach in a Latino youth school, I get my own interest in their families and with the communities that my students are a part of (Interview, June 13, 2010).

This teacher makes the argument that to truly be effective at a specific school and with a specific population of students, a teacher needs to have a certain level of interest and knowledge about the community in which they are teaching. Whether they originally come from the community or not, effective teachers believe that investing some of their life outside of the classroom into the community is part of their service to their students, because to truly understand your students, you have to understand where they come from.

Students learn differently because they are different—and they grow more distinctive as they mature (Sizer, 1996). Students who score high and students who score in the murky middle have different motivations and purposes in the system of education. Students scoring at the bottom often have a long history of school failure; for them, education has become an unending punishment and they long only to escape, either by resisting authority, by graduating with minimal skills, or by dropping out. The very idea of learning implies moving from what students know to what they do not yet know. Since
students cannot begin at the same place, they cannot end at the same place, no matter how intentional or well-designed their school may be (Vygotsky, 1928).

Effective teachers personalize their curriculum and pedagogy in the classroom because they understand that students have different needs. Both male and female teachers in this study indicated the importance of understanding their students and creating a personalized environment in the classroom, but their approach to connecting with students had a different tone. Male teacher responses indicated that activities or deeds between the teacher and student relationship suggested personalization and understanding. Female teachers also referenced activities as important, but referred to more emotional incidents as significant in understanding their students.

**Teacher Beliefs about Students and Teachers- Student Drop Out**

High school dropouts have reached epidemic proportions in the United States. As discussed in chapter 2, each year almost one third of all public high school students – and nearly one half of all blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans – fail to graduate from public high school with their class. Many of these students abandon school with less than two years to complete their high school education. This tragic cycle has not substantially improved during the past few decades, even when education reform has been high on the public agenda.

When asked to explain the large number of students at-risk of failing or dropping out, teachers often recite the predictable litany of causes that include dysfunctional families, drugs, violence, gangs, lack of health care, poor housing, unemployment, crime, lack of belief in education, no role models, and/or physical defects (Haberman, 1995).
The teachers interviewed for this study can recite the hackneyed explanations of what is wrong with many of the families and communities in which the children live. They can catalog all the causes of children and youth being at-risk, but they do not stop there. They also cite the variety of ways in which school curricula and teaching methods have unwittingly and unintentionally contributed to the labeling of so many children as “at-risk.” They offer insightful analysis of how a lack of role models and language barriers ultimately distill into a central issue of cultural capital. In addition to these elements, teachers identify two additional elements – economics and systemic low expectations – which contribute to the perpetuation of the dropout dilemma.

Cultural Capital

Most educators agree that parents and families have the most direct and lasting impact on children's learning and development of social competence. When parents are involved, students achieve more, exhibit more positive attitudes, improve behavior, and feel more comfortable in new settings. When responding to inquiries related to the impact of cultural capital on student achievement, the teachers interviewed in this study concluded that although their Latino students often have strong family units, they frequently exhibit differences in priorities when it comes to education. “The priorities are different. Their family comes first always. I have a girl who constantly has to stay home because she has to take care of her brother because her mom's sick. Just priorities have shifted. And I think that's part of the reason. Their priorities are just different” (Interview, June 29, 2010). Some teachers interviewed seemed to articulate a similar idea that, as a generalization, education is often undervalued in Latino families in comparison
to the dominant culture’s perceived value of education. One teacher discussed how
cultural capital can shape student beliefs about secondary education. “I’ve heard them say
that it's not a big thing in their family at all, I'm just going to go straight to work. I don't
need a college education” (Interview, July 7, 2010). An implicit concern that seems to be
held by these teachers is that for some students, education and family values are
somehow competing for priority instead of working as a mutually-reinforcing system that
supports student success.

Many of the participants affirmed the tightness of the family unit, and also
acknowledged the potential negative impact on achievement when family obligations
squeeze out education as a high priority. One teacher stated,

Latino families are extremely tight knit. They put their families before
everything else. There are extended networks of families with aunts and
uncles and grandparents, and friends might become aunts or uncles. And a
lot of people live together maybe in the same house and maybe within the
community. But, there's lots of family. And if an uncle is in the hospital--
and there might be nine uncles--they have to go see their uncle in the
hospital. Or, if their little brother needs to be taken care of and the mom
has something she needs to do, the student might help take care of their
little brother and sister. The result of that in my class is a huge attendance
problem. And if they're not here, then I can't teach them. So, they miss out
on a lot of assignments and activities for that (Interview, June 14, 2010).

One teacher hypothesized that educational priorities experienced by parents in
their country of origin can affect how they value the school’s academic expectations for
their children. “A lot of the parents that I know, they come to this country, maybe they're
first generation or zero generation into this country. And they're just hoping that they
graduate from middle school because that's the expectation in their country. Age 14, you
finish school. You're done” (Interview, June 25, 2010). The presumption is that parents’
unfamiliarity with their child’s school system and parents’ own personal experience in a
school system that is perceived to be less rigorous, are factors that detract from their ability to value a school’s standard of academic achievement for their child. One teacher articulated the social capital necessary for a parent to navigate our complex bureaucratic system in support of their student. He offered the example of parents who are familiar with the school system in Mexico and the fact that every seventh grader is in the same math class regardless of ability. The parents do not necessarily understand that in U.S. high schools, students are placed in classes by ability. The teacher went on to explain that parents “don't realize that their kids are getting good grades, but they might not be the good grades in the right classes because graduation requirements are very different from college requirements. So, again, that communication is not filtering all the way down to the parents in the neighborhoods” (Interview, June 20, 2010). In several cases a perceived “lack of family support” is what teachers named as the problem. One teacher claimed that this is precisely what was demonstrated by a father when he told the teacher, “If [the student] doesn't pass with Cs or better at the end of her sophomore year, I'm pulling her out of school and she's going to be at home helping to raise the family.” The teacher reflected, “Right there, that's a dad that doesn't value education...That's a prime example of not having the family support” (Interview, July 12, 2010). The recurring theme of differences in values, differences in cultural capital, in these interviews generates new questions regarding the responsibilities of a school to educate a child versus the responsibilities of a family, as well as how big a role cultural capital should play in this determination versus how big a role it actually plays. Some teachers described a lack of “pressure from home” (Interview, June 24, 2010). This pressure from home, which takes the form of parents reminding students to do homework, insisting on
good grades, and assuring that the student is on the track to college, is part of cultural capital that many teachers feel is imperative for a student’s success within the school system.

Teachers also described how in some cases students do not make the connection between academics and the world of work, perhaps because of a difference in cultural capital. As one teacher explained, “In many cases, my struggling students didn't quite correlate education with job prospects. And as much as I talked about it, everything I said a lot of the times would be countered by what they do at home or what they hear from friends” (Interview, June 28, 2010). Another teacher stated, “I think there's not a strong enough connection made to the importance of a high school diploma and why it's important and what will happen if you don't have a high school diploma once you leave. I don't think that's emphasized enough, necessarily” (Interview, July 13, 2010). A third teacher mirrored the difficulty of “certainly trying to always relate what they're doing in school to their future success, but I think that's a challenge for any demographic to be perfectly honest with you” (Interview, July 8, 2010). Cultural capital often influences what a person believes needs to be learned and determines the criteria necessary to achieve success. The observation that many Latino students do not appreciate the importance of education was often attributed to justifications based on observed models of success without education. As one teacher stated:

Some say, “Why do I need go to school? I don't need to get a diploma. I can do this or that.” A lot of their parents or family members have trade jobs. So a lot of the high school students, especially our young men, think they don't need a high school diploma. [Students say,] “My uncle and my dad don’t have one, and yet, we make all this money. They have this job. They have their own company” (Interview, June 20, 2010).
Many teachers discussed how they feel that parents do not adequately prepare their children for the expectations of school. One teacher stated, “A lot of them haven't instilled that academic capital in their students. So it's that basic lack of preparedness that doesn't set them up for success” (Interview, July 7, 2010). Others state that they notice a general lack of parental involvement in advocating for student success. Even when one teacher feels they have made a concerted effort to invite communication with parents, the teacher stated, “There are probably teachers on the East side [a more affluent area] who get more parent contact in a month, than I get in an entire school year” (Interview, July 9, 2010). Teachers seem to value and seek out a shared understanding and a more regular form of communication between themselves and parents, but do not seem sure about how to attain this desired result. They attribute the weakness of this potentially powerful alliance to a difference in value systems, a difference in cultural capital, which at times feels like an insurmountable challenge to bridge. As a way to describe the differences in cultural capital, one teacher offered the following anecdote:

I was house-sitting for some rich people two weeks ago and these people came over to give the dog a shot. The little girl was 13, a little white girl. And they were talking about how she had been taken by her parents, over the past summer, to like nine or 10 campuses around California for college and she was like 13. I have students who are ending their junior year and I’m like, "Where are you going to college?" And they're like, "Don't know." And I thought, I'm not saying that that's the fault of their parents or something. I'm saying that, I think it's that, I've never met a parent with any of my students who doesn’t want absolutely the best for their kid, period. Doesn't matter what race or culture you come from. So when you have students who are coming from a working community like ours where most of my students' parents are working two jobs, they don't have the time and money to take their kids to 13 campuses. They don't have that luxury. So I think it really becomes the obligation of the school to pick up that slack and do that role and get them on a bus, get a field trip going. Take them to places, take them to plays, take them to museum and just expose them to things that will help open doors (Interview, July 1, 2010).
The idea that students lack access to opportunities that will expand their horizons was reiterated by another teacher: “I think that their access to what’s out there is so limited, particularly in high poverty areas. It's so unknown to them. The belief of, ‘this is my family, this is where I grew up, this is my community,’ is good, but it’s a false dichotomy. I think we ruin it by not showing them what is available out there and then exposing them to opportunities outside” (Interview, July 7, 2010). The idea of exposure versus lack of exposure is also a dichotomy which calls attention to a previous definition of cultural capital: what a person believes needs to be learned and what criterion is deemed necessary to achieve success. An assumption that students begin their education with very few, if any, of the determinants for academic success calls into question the cultural capital that they already possess.

Several teachers alluded to the fact that their students have a lack of books in the house and fewer opportunities than do their white counterparts. “I was shocked that some students have never seen the beach. I think the role of education can become more difficult in that sense” (Interview, June 29, 2010). Descriptors such as “lack” and “less” suggest that the students have begun their education with a deficiency of cultural capital, and that this deficiency contributes to the difficulty of teaching these students. Another observation made by a teacher was the possibility that cultural norms exist in direct opposition to teacher expectations in the classroom. This cognitive dissonance can often interfere with students successfully adapting to classroom norms:

And most important is there's a mismatch between the home culture and school culture. For example, I remember in my own experience, I was taught in my home to be very quiet, to be very humble. And in school that's not approved. You have to be outspoken. You need to raise your
hand. You need to be out there. And for high school in particular, from my experience, I completely saw the mismatch. And I think that's the same thing right now (Interview, July 1, 2010).

This teacher noticed the same disconnect in her own high school experience, and notices the same pattern in her students today. This repeating cycle of cultural and behavioral expectations speaks to the formation of cultural capital within a community.

When high dropout rates for Latino students that have been documented over the past decades were discussed, these effective teachers frequently expressed the belief that cultural capital needed to provide resilience and hope, but was often lacking due to the absence of positive role models. The following example is one of many representative of this belief:

I believe it is because they're not exposed to having generation after generation seeing college graduates. And so for one person to step out of that box and go to college is...It's very difficult, because it's very intimidating. It's a world they're not familiar with. It's a world the families are not familiar with. And so there's that risk of failing at that (Interview, June 21, 2010).

While some teachers suggested that students would benefit from role models who had a greater amount of exposure to higher education, others suggested that students need their role models to simply encourage and believe in them as students, regardless of their own amount of experience with education. Two different elements of cultural capital seem to be exposed through the teachers’ stories: knowledge of the educational system gained through exposure and experience, and belief in a student’s ability to navigate, work rigorously under, and ultimately achieve success in an academic environment.

In addition to cultural capital that students could gain by having a role model with experience successfully navigating them through our educational system, many of the
teachers point to an adjunct lack of cultural capital inherent in being an English Language Learner (ELL). As one teacher discussed, “The language barrier's another thing. We talk about academic vocabulary so much. When I was growing up as a kid I wasn't using symmetry and x axis and hyperbolic curve. I wasn't saying these words with my friends outside, but I was college bound and I went places. I know for a fact that the kids learning English are not using those words either” (Interview, June 27, 2010). Several teachers cited academic language as an indicator of the amount of cultural capital a student may possess. Exposure to academic language, whether inside or outside the school, can vary greatly among students depending on their background; for some students, the language practiced in contexts outside of school is a world away from the language required of them while they are in school. One teacher gave a personal example of the language barrier that ELLs battle on a daily basis. “I always thought I'd hate to do my math class in another language. It already is not easy, but to not get it because of another language, that would be insanely difficult” (Interview, July 19, 2010).

Another teacher offered an insightful vignette as to how this language barrier, experienced by many EL students, may often be overlooked as a key indicator for why so many Latino students fail to graduate from high school:

One event that really hit home was I had a pretty good class of algebra students and a few superstar EL kids that really wanted to go after their education and knew that was a path to life that would lead to success. In fact, one of them is now a fabulous tutor for us. She's got her teaching credential and she works really closely with our 10th grade EL population. But her friend sat in the front row and I would open every class with, “OK kiddos, this is what we're going to do today.” Every day. “Alright, kiddos.” Finally she asked me, “Mister, what does kiddos mean?” I'm like, “Holy cow.” This is one word that she's asking about. I can't even
imagine all the other little innuendos and little things that I say that they might not get. (Interview, July 6, 2010).

The teacher’s description of a clarifying moment of awareness is one in which they realized that their students’ grasp of language was much different than they had assumed it was. Ironically, as the teacher pointed out, it is often the student who feels the least comfortable speaking up that has the most questions. This teacher suggests that when teachers mistake the silence for understanding, they probably assume a greater transfer of information has occurred than has actually occurred, and might look to other more visible sources of a student’s struggling, and not to language acquisition. One teacher discussed how this problem is exacerbated by the facility with which students interact and carry out their normal lives in their native Spanish language:

As an English teacher, I see that one part of it is pretty good students who are sort of going between two different worlds, one in English and one in Spanish. I think that sometimes they spend so much time in one world and they are speaking in Spanish. And they are interacting in Spanish, and all that. And, for whatever reason, at school they are not given the opportunity to do the same in English. And so I think as they go up further and further, it becomes more and more difficult to do the type of higher level skills in English (Interview, July 7, 2010).

Although the participating teachers in this study do not assert as explicitly as Bourdieu does in his theory of cultural capital that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), they did re-frame cultural capital as an evident difference among students. This interpretation of Bourdieu suggests that White, middle class culture is the benchmark, and therefore, all other forms and expressions of culture are judged in comparison to this norm. In other words, cultural capital is not just inherited or possessed by the middle class, but rather it refers to an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are valued by
fortunate and worthy groups in society. The participants’ conclusions were based on their life experiences, and they responded with a focus on how understanding differences in culture can influence their teaching practice. A critique of Bourdieu’s ideas of cultural capital and their implications will be further investigated in chapter five.

**Economics**

The participants in this study all work at secondary schools with high poverty rates. For this reason, many teachers cited economics as a major factor in Latino students dropping out of high school. As one teacher described, “For many kids it could be home issues related to poverty. We've got some kids whose parents lost their homes or apartments and now they are moving around a lot” (Interview, July 16, 2010). Another teacher discussed an economic rationale for dropping out as, “They don't look at the long term. They think about the short term only, like, ‘If I drop out now, I can help my parents, I can make money.’” The teacher explained that if students of high poverty were more easily able to accept the idea that “if [they] graduate and go to college, [they] might be hurting [themselves] for a little while, but in the end it’s going to make a bigger impact,” they would have more success in school (Interview, July 8, 2010). There would be a greater purpose for going to school. Although the rationale for dropping out was attributed to economics, the underlying reason was still informed by lack of social capital. The teacher ultimately attributed the drop out rate to an undervaluing of education.

Another teacher expressed a similar belief when she said,

I do see the socioeconomic issues. You know they need to work after school or to help their family and all that. School's kind of a second
priority for some students and for some families too. So it's easy for them to kind of fade off the radar with some teachers and it might become difficult for them to get back; they're getting lost in the shuffle (Interview, July 5, 2010).

In both the previous examples, the teachers set forth a calculation where economic circumstance outweighed the priority to remain in school. In other examples, a teacher discussed that dropping out is often not perceived as a calculation, but a mandate based on circumstances: “It's like they think they have no other choice but to take care of their parents. So what's more important? Getting an A or B in Algebra, or helping their mom put food on the table?” (Interview, June 24, 2010). The risk of students dropping out because they perceive they have no choice is a theme that appeared in a number of teacher interviews. This lack of choice was described by one teacher as resulting from a number of economic situations.

Usually there are so many other circumstances that really don't have to do with academics that are thrown at them, whether it be a living situation, having to contribute to the household, having to work, having a split family, living in two different places. There's a lot of kids moving a lot and not necessarily from “We're moving from this house to this house,” but “We're staying with this person or that person.” There's a lot of movement that's going on in their life (Interview, June 24, 2010).

A majority of teachers seemed to feel that the circumstances in students’ lives that exist outside of school have a great impact on their performance in school and beliefs about school. Commonly-cited circumstances included an obligation to support the family in some way and a lack of permanence or stability at home, resulting in a natural shift of a student’s priorities away from school.

A product of economic circumstances is the necessity to move. Within the current economic downturn families who never would have considered moving, or families who would have planned a move to coincide with the end of a school term, have
begun an uneasy migration from home to apartment, a relocation with extended family, or a residence in temporary state-supported housing. This issue of transience was specifically discussed by one of the teachers: “I think the transiency, especially in this area again, kind of takes a toll on our kids. Because when they do come back, whether they moved upstate, or whether they moved back to Mexico, and they come back, they're so far behind, that a lot of them do just give up on school and go to work” (Interview, June 17, 2010). Another teacher also discussed transience as one of many ancillary problems associated with economic circumstances. “Transience is a major issue. Also, having to deal with the realities of life and, most recently, economic realities, is a challenge. There's a lot of pressure on our kids, especially high school kids.” (Interview, July 1, 2010). Again, the impact of life outside of school is cited as a major contributing factor to a student’s performance in school. Teachers allude to several aspects of transience that affect students, including the social and emotional upheaval involved in moving, the gaps in learning that are invariably created when a student changes location, and the sense of duty that students have to support their family during such difficult times.

A student’s sense of duty toward their family during economically trying times can perhaps best be understood by looking at the family as a whole. One teacher offered a description of a recent experience that provided insight into the economic circumstances that might influence a student’s decision to drop out:

We have a couple of students with a very involved mother. She was here every day helping as a parent volunteer. At the beginning of the year, there were two weeks where I didn't see her. So I asked her daughter about her and she said, “My father is a gardener and he had an accident and chopped off his fingers, so my mom has to go in his place and do his work to earn a
living for the family.” And she has two students at our school, and she's here supporting them. But even though she wanted to, it was really hard for her to come. And when she came a few weeks later, she came in apologizing profusely for not coming in. (Interview, June 15, 2010).

Another harsh economic reality sometimes results from single parent households. Often the parent is working more than one job to make ends meet. The older children who are in high school feel a deep responsibility to help out by getting a job. Their time, energies, and loyalties are divided between school and familial needs. One teacher stated,

Many students have to work in order to contribute to their home. We have a lot of single parent homes. Or families where both parents are working and they're not able to make ends meet. I can tell you many of my students who after they're done with school, they go and they work at McDonald's or they work at a fast food restaurant. They don't have time to study. And of course, their grades suffer” (Interview, June 24, 2010).

All participating teachers were aware of their students’ economic situations. In general, Latino students tend to come from low-income households, meaning Latino students are more likely to attend poorly-funded schools. Schools in lower-income districts tend to employ less-qualified teachers, have fewer educational resources, and less access to high-level curriculum (Green, 2002; Oakes, 1985). In addition, Latino teens are more likely than Whites to attend public high schools that have the most students, the highest concentrations of poor students, and the highest student-teacher ratios (Fry, 2005). Most teachers interviewed did not use student economics as an excuse for lower student achievement, but emphasized that students needed the tools to overcome the barriers of poverty. Some of the teachers stated that their students’ lack of performance and regard for education was a result of their economic situation. Popular explanations for the Latino achievement gap often focus on deficiencies among parents and students (Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Overly narrow analysis cites dysfunctional families,
 unmotivated students, and the culture of poverty in inner-city as causes of the gap (Payne, 2003).

Teachers who focused on the awareness of students’ economic situations as a tool to improve their teaching practice and their understanding of students are supported by research. Haberman’s *Star Teachers: The Ideology and Best Practice of Effective Teachers of Diverse Children and Youth in Poverty* (2005) and *Star Teachers of Poverty* (1995) identified 15 characteristics of effective urban teachers. Two of these characteristics were teachers’ approach to at-risk students and their explanations of children’s success. He referred to those educators who possess these characteristics as “star teachers,” and pointed out that their ideology separates them from teachers who are not successful in urban school settings.

**Low Expectations**

In addition to the challenges of social capital and economics, teachers frequently cited low expectations of students as a precursor to Latino students dropping out of high school. Often a classroom teacher directly or indirectly communicates low expectations to under-performing students. As one teacher stated,

One problem is that some teachers will tell the kids, "Oh. You're going to work at McDonald's anyway." So, why even try? At least once to twice a week, I have to have my more motivational talk of, they're wrong. Those teachers are wrong. They don't understand and they don't know what is going on. And obviously I would make some enemies if I were to tell the teacher, "Oh man, you said this and this." But, I tell the kids, you can do it; I can't do it for you, you can do it, you can be someone (Interview, June 24, 2010).

In addition to individual teachers characterized as not having high expectations of their students, other teachers in the study discussed the challenge of low expectations as a
systemic issue within entire schools. One teacher described low expectations in two ways: not being challenged educationally and not being engaged in a fun and interesting learning environment. This teacher posited that if a student did not have these two elements, school would quickly become a “drudge” that would make the student question, “Why do I want to go there and deal with that?” (Interview, June 17, 2010). Teachers who were interviewed conclusively asserted that a teacher’s low expectations, often imposed unintentionally, damage a student’s desire to achieve in school. An entire school which lacks a culture of challenge and engagement in its courses, according to most of these teachers, has an even more powerful effect.

In addition to low expectations fostered by teachers and schools in general, students may have low expectations of themselves as a result of attending what is perceived to be a low-achieving school. As one teacher put it, low expectations are created “when [students] walk in here and they see the school that they attend is a ghetto school. When they walk into a school and assume that the expectation is lower because it's a [region] school, because it's a predominately Latino school, because it is an underperforming school” (Interview, July 1, 2010). The perception of a school being “ghetto” was described by one teacher as a result of what teachers themselves feel about their own schools. As one teacher reported, “It's a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that, if a teacher thinks they teach at a ‘ghetto school,’ the students will live down to those standards.” The teacher suggested that instead, “as a faculty, we sit down and say, ‘Here are the issues. Here are the concerns,’” rather than complain about it. The teacher wants to move other teachers to action, asking, “What are we going to do about it?” (Interview, July 15, 2010).
All teachers in this study across all genders, ethnicities and curricula saw the danger of low expectations with respect to achievement. Almost universally, they correlated a teacher’s low expectations of students with many curriculum and pedagogy problems. Research shows that children from groups who are the beneficiaries of higher expectations will benefit from greater exposure to high-quality instruction. First, teachers may provide higher quality instruction to students from whom they expect more. Second, students may perceive cues about what the teacher expects, internalize the expectation, and become motivated and achieve in a manner that is consistent with the perceived expectation (Brophy & Good, 1970; Darley & Fazio, 1980; Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979). Over time, students from whom teachers expect very little are likely to fulfill these expectations.

Teacher expectations have been identified as one contributor to the ethnic achievement gap (Ferguson, 1998; Rist, 1973; Weinstein et al., 2004). According to this account, teachers sometimes base their expectations for student achievement on student ethnicity, with teachers expecting more from White and Asian American students than from their African American and Latino peers (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985). Expectations that are differentiated by ethnic group contribute to ethnic differences in children's achievement. Additionally, McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) concluded that demonstrating high expectations throughout the curriculum was a practice identified as essential for teacher and student success.
Beliefs about Teacher-Student Relationship

The second research question in this study was aimed at discovering patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools. In order to examine the beliefs effective teachers had with respect to the teacher-student relationship, the participants were asked two contrasting questions. The first was an appreciative question; each subject was asked to simply describe their concept of an ideal relationship between student and teacher. The second, more critical question was to discuss an instance where there were problems with a student in which they, as the teacher, had either precipitated or exacerbated the problem. The three themes that emerged represent what the participants believe are the foundation for ideal teacher-student relationships. These themes are: fun but strict relationships, coaching/mentoring relationships, and relationships characterized by caring. Teachers expressed that regardless of the thematic foundation of the relationship, it is of extreme importance to take action when that relationship is threatened by misunderstanding or teacher error. Teachers explained that during such a situation, they are called upon to humanize their profession by showing their willingness to express regret and apologize, in order to avoid violating the trust established between the student and teacher.

Fun but Strict

When exploring what the effective teachers in the study believed about building an ideal relationship with students, many agreed that the development of a robust rapport that supports high achievement is based on balance. There must be a balance between a
good sense of humor and a spontaneity that sparks inventive and engaging activities that students perceive as fun, and a marked formal demeanor that anticipates the transition to the important academic work of the day. One teacher remarked:

It's humorous but serious. My little catchphrase for it is, “Take your job seriously, but don't take yourself seriously.” We need to take it seriously, but that doesn't mean that we can't have fun doing it. The flip is also true. You can't come in and just say, “We're going to have fun,” and be so lighthearted that you're not learning that core content. Again, it's a balance. So, I'm friendly with the students, while knowing where that line is of being friends, getting back to [the fact that] it's still my classroom. We can come in and have a very positive environment; at the same time, we're going to get some work done” (Interview, June 24, 2010).

Another of the effective teachers similarly characterizes the balance in their classroom:

It's friendly. They're not afraid to come in and give me a hard time and I'm not afraid to give them a hard time. And I would say it's not a typical teacher/student... Well, I don't know what really typical is, but I hardly have any kids, I could probably count them on two hands in my 12 years of teaching that just didn't like me, for whatever reason. So, I would say it's really friendly, but it's very businesslike. They know that they can come in before the bell and they can give me a hard time because the Padres lost last night. Or after the bell rings, they can give me a hard time, but they know that, during the 52 minutes they're in my class, that they're going to be working on math. So it's friendly and it's very businesslike. And I work hard in the first couple of weeks to really define that, that relationship (Interview, June 24, 2010).

Teachers identified that a second balancing act exists between flexibility and fairness. Effective teachers model fairness to their students through equal treatment in any given situation; they will all work within the same framework of expectations. Fairness is more easily attained when a teacher can be flexible. Interruptions and changing human dynamics due to the stresses of the day require teachers to make
adjustments that allow the rapport within the classroom to remain vibrant and energetic.

This was revealed in the following teacher reflections:

1. I feel like I'm strict if I need to be and I joke around when I need to. They know when they can play with me or get down with me, but then they also know when it's time to work. I think you can ask any one of my students, and I think they'll tell you that I'm fair (Interview, July 6, 2010).

2. Students know that I try to make learning fun, and that I can be playful with them, but I also have high expectations. They know they can't get away with stuff in my class (Interview, June 17, 2010).

3. Well, number one, I try to bring humor in every day. I think it's really important for them to be comfortable with me as a teacher. I'm firm. I'm definitely a very firm teacher. But I'm also pretty easygoing with them. So they see my foibles. I see their foibles. I know that humor wakes them up and keeps them engaged. So I try to use as much humor as I can (Interview, June 29, 2010).

4. I love to have fun and laugh a lot in class as well so sometimes it's difficult setting those boundaries. At the beginning of the year I'm a little bit stricter and I have to set boundaries for the students (Interview, June 28, 2010).

What might be considered to be two contradictory traits in a teacher’s persona, “fun” and “strict,” actually find a meeting point in these teachers’ descriptions of their practice. Teachers present both traits as being equally necessary and relevant, and they explain the benefits of being able to flip between the two at any moment as the situation dictates, and also being able to embody both simultaneously. These teachers seem to demonstrate a certain responsiveness to their students that is indicative of both high expectations and genuine caring.

Teachers have different definitions of what signifies fun or strict; similarly, they exhibit differences in their search for the perfect balance between entertainment and rules. Some teachers gave advice to new teachers to smile a lot, while others said not much. Some discussed being vulnerable and open about their lives, whereas some advised to be businesslike and professional. They commented that students are teenagers,
and no one is perfect, not even the teacher. Some recommended the practice of getting to
know their students on the basis of short, daily banter, while others advised that deep
emotional conversations are the most important dialogues. Some stated that second
chances are a must, while others thought that second chances lowered expectations.
Time and time again, teachers based their amalgam of “fun” and “strict” teaching
strategies on their own experiences in the classroom. These beliefs were foundational in
how they viewed the coaching and mentoring relationship they had with their students.

Coaching/Mentoring

High school, for most students, is about preparing to move into the next stage of
their lives: post-secondary education and/or the world of work. Top students inherently
know the direction they are going and have an internal performance framework that
guides their success. Latino students in high-challenge schools are also transitioning, but
lacking any internal guidance system they find it nearly impossible to navigate a
secondary school’s academic, social and emotional labyrinth. The effective teachers in
this study identified an additional role for themselves beyond establishing a rapport and
providing instruction in the teacher-student relationship: the role of mentor and coach.
One teacher reflected on how the teacher-student relationship in an academic class is akin
to the relationship developed by coaches of athletics:

I usually tell my students to view us as a team, and I'm their coach. And I
have them talk about it first, like a football coach or baseball coach and
how they treat their team. When they see a player knocked down, what
does a coach usually do? "Oh, they'll go and teach them the skills, or do
one on one, or give them extra practice." And so they've prepared for the
game, and for the big games, and we get into those kind of conversations
and then I bring that all back to, “OK, well I'm your math coach; you
know when you mess up, I'm gonna help you. I'm going to give you some
practice. We can practice and practice so that we can get really good and win at the game, and the game is the test.” (Interview, July 16, 2010).

The coaching relationship, for this teacher, seems to include targeted intervention for certain students, a high level of practice for the final goal, and a team ethos of work and support. Mentorship also includes a warmth of character that is directed from the teacher to the students; it is a level of approachability and individualization that teachers focus on. One teacher explained that ideally, it should be an unspoken relationship where a student should like the teacher. She said, “There is a huge amount of capital when a student likes their teacher. It doesn’t mean they’re your friend, but they should show up to class and be very concerned if they feel they haven’t met your expectations.” The teacher describes mentoring as “a cordial relationship, where you shake their hands every day, then at graduation when they get their first hug from you it’s one of their best moments” (Interview, July 6, 2010). The hug, literal and metaphorical, represents the genuine investment that the teacher and the student have put into the relationship.

Another teacher described their mentoring in terms of a relationship built on directness and honesty:

I try to set an environment where they feel welcomed, and a warm environment, a sense of wellbeing. But they also know that I mean business, that I have a standard, an expectation, that I expect them to be on task, to be on time, do their work, be dependable, be responsible... (Interview, June 16, 2010).

Several teachers succinctly clarified the fine lines they draw between a warm approachability and professionalism with high expectations. Similar to their comments on being both fun and strict, teachers seemed to repeatedly articulate the necessity of a delicate balance between these two qualities in a mentoring relationship. “I'm a mentor. I'm a Teacher. I will be a friend to you, but I can't be your friend. There's a line and a
difference there. I'm going to work for you as hard as I can in the onset, but sooner or later you'll have to pay me back through making that effort” (Interview, June 26, 2010).

Several effective teachers mentioned that simply being open to their students and modeling their own professionalism is how they mentor. One teacher said that they try to set up a community in their classroom where everyone is a scholar, and so “the way that [they] speak to each other is professional.” The teacher makes the classroom into a place “where you do intellectual work and you come there for that” (Interview, June 28, 2010). Another teacher models professionalism by demonstrating hard work, and by trying to show students that a teacher’s tremendous efforts to teach them “can be reciprocated by them” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Across the board, teachers voiced genuine concerns that students achieve, describing how they adopt professionalism toward rigor and work, while balancing it with compassion and encouragement.

According to many of the participants in this study, the best classroom teachers are mentors and coaches, but being a good teacher does not automatically mean that one will be a good mentor. It is imperative that those responsible for working with students be aware of the special characteristics of being a mentor. Teachers in this study emphasized that while the content of instruction is important, teachers who are mentors are more concerned with the process of their instruction. The goal is for students to further their problem-solving skills, and the best way for teachers to promote these objectives is through questioning. When students ask for advice, mentors should ask for their opinions before responding. Effective teachers stated that rather than suggesting the way that has worked for them, as mentors they can help students generate lists of possible options and then encourage them to experiment to find what works best. Teachers as
Mentors answer questions with a question. Mentoring is a one-on-one relationship where an experienced member offers advice, feedback and support to the student for the purpose of aiding the mentee to advance in the organization and in their career (Levinson, et al. 1978; Murray & Owen, 1991).

Coaching is also seen as a good problem solving process (McDermott, 1996; Witherspoon & White, 1996). In more specific terms, Peters (1996) and McDermott (1996) listed specific goals that students can expect in the coaching experience. Help in identifying and accomplishing goals, receiving performance feedback, help interpreting/perceiving issues and events, using the coach as a sounding board, and practicing new skills in low-risk situations are just some of the elements a student can receive when being coached (Peters, 1996). Successful teachers could be considered disguised mentors and coaches that are grounded in caring and compassion.

Caring

“To be concerned” is a narrow definition of the word caring that all teachers would agree is important to the context of their teacher-student relationships. When interviewing the effective teachers in this study, the context expanded from a simple intellectual investment made when assessing student achievement to a holistic process involving observation and personal interaction with students, both collectively and individually.

Several teachers in the study defined a caring teacher as one who provides a trusting environment that is a comfort zone which allows students to develop positive
self-perception and resilience in the face of rigorous academic expectations. As one teacher commented,

Yeah, I'm actually very close with my students, especially my seniors, my AP calc students in the sense that I'm with them many, many hours every day and then before school for an hour for tutoring, and on Saturdays, because no one expects them to pass AP calculus test this year, but I do. With my Sheltered kids I'm very close with them too because I tell them how it is, you know, they're used to being babied and I don't sugar coat or baby (Interview, July 2, 2010).

Another effective teacher shared:

I think the students would say that I'm an outgoing teacher who cares for them. I think my motto is like, 'The students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care' (Interview, June 16, 2010).

Both teachers suggest a type of authenticity in their caring for their students, an authenticity that allows students to trust their teacher, to grow academically and personally, and to believe in themselves. One teacher mentioned the extra time spent with students and the honesty of their discussions that served as catalysts for this caring relationship, while the other focused on an unabashed demonstration of their care to their students, using this care to push them towards other, bigger goals. Another teacher explained their demonstration of care as “a circle, a space in which we work,” suggesting the safety and the inclusiveness of an authentically caring classroom environment (Interview, June 23, 2010).

Another connotation of caring identified by the study participants was the importance of showing a genuine interest in the lives of students long after the last period bell rings. One teacher discussed the importance of understanding what is going on in their students’ lives when she said, “I've been coaching for 15, 16 years. I do it because I love the relationship that you get with coaching. It's a totally different dynamic than in
the classroom. And I love cheer, but it's the people that they become and to watch them grow” (Interview, July 9, 2010). In a similar out-of-the-classroom experience, another teacher explained, “I have a whole group of seniors who are leaving this year. I've been their teacher for three years, and I have really strong relationships with them. I took them on a senior trip to Monterey Bay last week, and they got me a book from the aquarium. And they each signed every page with the most heartfelt, wonderful things I've ever seen” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Both of these teachers focus on experiences with students that occurred outside of the typical classroom context, citing examples of building relationships with students that possibly extend beyond academics altogether. They imply that once these types of relationships are forged with students, the benefits carry over into all areas of the teacher-student relationship, including academics, and that they are long-lasting. Incidentally, both teachers also mentioned the reciprocal nature of these relationships. They expressed great joy and pride in seeing their students grow and accept their potential. The students’ acknowledgment of their teacher’s investment in them further validated the power of the relationship.

Effective teachers also believe that it is important to get to know students as entire people, not just as students in one specific class period. One teacher recalled how his own high school experience shaped his treatment of his own students when he said, “I remember when I was in high school, the teachers that I liked I would keep in contact with throughout the school year. And the ones that I didn't enjoy, I just moved on from their classes. I leave my room open for lunch purely for kids; those are kind of like my office hours” (Interview, July 10, 2010). Several teachers in the study seemed to agree that spending time with students during more informal situations such as lunch
strengthened their relationship with their students in the classroom. Another teacher responded that caring requires demonstrating sensitivity to the changing social and emotional dynamics that ebb and flow during the course of daily classroom instruction. They said that students often come to them, confide in them, and talk to them, but if “it’s obvious they’re having something going on, [they] don’t push them.” They give them a chance to regroup, “because they're people too, you know” (Interview, June 20, 2010).

Teachers agreed that considering the whole student not only humanized the student, but helped motivate them to reach their goals in school and in life.

The effective teachers realized that students intrinsically identify teacher-caring when they feel that their teachers are willing to take the time to make them understand the required content and listen to them, and are willing to support them with personal issues so they can be successful. One teacher stated,

In the beginning of the school year, I definitely try to be a little bit meaner. And a little bit more tough-love. But it doesn't take long for my kids to kind of figure that out. It's like I really want them to learn chemistry. And I really push that. But at the same point, they know I care about them more than I care about the subject. So as soon as they figure that out, then it can cause a release of tension (Interview, July 25, 2010).

Similarly, another teacher reflected:

I think that the students feel so comfortable with me, that they're willing to ask for pretty much anything, from birth control all the way to, “Help me on this essay for college.” And it's a good feeling. You need to be willing to accept any role if you want to touch the lives of students; you've got to find anything, plain and simple (Interview, June 25, 2010).

These two teachers both express a willingness to take the extra steps necessary to make sure their students know how much they care about them. They also understand that this caring is a powerful tool to hook students emotionally and academically; it has
an effect on student success. Students realize that their teacher cares, and they respond accordingly.

A final perspective on how caring evolves in the teacher-student relationship is that teachers, without crossing the lines of professionalism, become an extension of their students’ family advocating for the same academic outcomes and supporting them to reach the highest levels of achievement possible. One teacher reflected,

I try to be personable, but professional. I try to be friendly, but not their friend. I try to be a mentor. I definitely look at myself as like a dad or a grandpa. I look at myself as, all these kids are my grandkids, all these kids are my... And if this was my kid, what would I want done? How would I want to handle in this situation? That's how I look at it. There is something good in everyone and to be in this world of teaching, I need to make sure that I branch out, because there's just so much. (Interview, June 29, 2010).

This teacher explained how he views his students in the same way he would his own grandchildren, and in this way, is able to take their issues to heart, to hold them to high expectations, and to make curricular decisions that best benefit them as individuals.

As mentioned before, the sources and foundations of caring will be developed in chapter 5. Furthermore, the elements of a caring teacher-student relationship based on trust will be elaborated in the next section. Of the various definitions and facets of trust discussed in studies between student and teacher relationships, the most common element is benevolence (Goddard, Shalloum & Berebitsky, 2009; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), meaning "...the confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected by the trusted person or group" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 187). Trust is grounded in vulnerability and compassion. Additionally, a serious deficiency of caring and empathy can undermine relational trust.
**Humanizing Fallibility to Maintain Trust**

When the effective teachers were asked about mistakes they had made, most did not comment on mistakes in their presentation of a concept or topic. Most often discussed were the mistakes that affected their relationship with a particular student. The effective teachers confessed to serious errors that involved breaking trust. For example, although they know their students quite well, some confessed to an occasional rush to judgment without getting all the facts, or they let their frustration lead to an overt reaction that resulted in hurting a student’s feelings. The teachers uniformly expressed their belief that when such mistakes are made, it is incumbent upon them to apologize to students, both publicly and in private. These teachers believe it is important that their students realize that teachers are humans, and that making mistakes is a common aspect of human nature. Because trust is the foundation upon which a vibrant teacher-student relationship is built, effective teachers are motivated to maintain a trusting relationship with their students. The following two narratives illustrate these teachers’ recognition of a violation of student trust, and the subsequent rebuilding of trust through honest reconciliation.

1. There have been times where I... you can tell right away on a student’s face if you’ve made them feel bad, and so there may have been times where sarcasm was taken the wrong way. So I am really trying not to be sarcastic as a teacher anymore at all. And correcting the problem? I'm thinking of one student, I can't even remember what was said, but I could tell that I had hurt the student’s feelings, and I just said, “Hey, can you stay for a second? I wasn't meaning to say this about you. I hope you understand,” and letting them know that I realize my mistake because teachers are not without fault. We're all human beings (Interview, June 14, 2010).

2. After the whole moment was done with, I had instant regret, and I approached her. It was not the right time to approach her, and she didn't want to have anything to do with me. So the next day, when I saw that
group of kids again, I remember going to the whole class and saying, "We have to talk." And saying, "I owe [Name] a huge apology for disrespecting her privacy, for disrespecting her feelings, and not taking into consideration what she had to say to somebody else and airing it out in front of everyone." And I pointed right in her direction, "I hope you can forgive me. If you don't at this moment, I understand completely. And I hope we can move on, and I will never again take a note and show it to the class (Interview, July 17, 2010).

Teachers in these examples did not stop at recognizing that they had mishandled the trust of one of their students. They all focused on the apology, one that was appropriate and sensitive to the situation. Whether it was calling a student aside after class or apologizing to the class publicly, the teacher made it a point to make things right with the student. As the last teacher said, in order for a teacher to truly be a role model to their students, they have to practice what they preach, modeling what it means to take responsibility and what it means to show empathy for another’s feelings. Also evident in the teachers’ statements is that fact that this is not always an easy thing for teachers to do, but that in showing this honesty, fallibility, and regret, they are truly teaching their students life lessons.

Some of the effective teachers in the study shared stories of times when it was difficult, especially as new teachers, to separate their personal reaction to a student from what they knew was their professional obligation. One teacher remembered an extremely powerful moment when she realized that she had misjudged the situation:

I would struggle with [student] and we'd have arguments. I was a younger teacher and didn't understand how not to engage in arguments with kids. But I would, and she would push back. Finally she disappeared off my roster and my reaction was, “Thank God I don't have to deal with that every day.” Sure enough, a month later [she came] back in. My first reaction was the worst one to have. She sees me and I go, oh my God, I roll my eyes, and I must have physically said, “Oh my God,” and that was the wrong thing to do. Immediately I continued this horrible rapport I had
with this student when it could have been a fresh beginning. Even though I'm thinking that I should have reacted with, “I'm so glad you're back. Let's try again,” it took me a while to actually gain rapport with her again. She was homeless. Other than being homeless, I didn't know much about her. I knew she had a job. She would tell me about it. On Friday nights I would go down to the pizza place and order a sandwich just to show my face outside of class to her. It really hit me hard when a year later I saw her. I was coming out of the water at the beach. It was in the morning. I see her at the beach with a blanket on her and I knew she had probably slept on the beach that night. I knew I shouldn't and I still regret reacting that way to students (Interview, July 9, 2010).

This teacher comes back to the importance of understanding students’ lives and circumstances outside of school as a driving factor in forging effective student-teacher relationships. The teacher realized that a student who is acting out in class or who is aggressive probably has other circumstances in life that are causing them to act that way. In this situation, the teacher made it a point to regain a rapport with her student after he felt that he had lost it, and he went out of his way to visit the student at work in order to prove her support of that student. While every teacher knows that this type of attention is impossible to give to every student, effective teachers seem to be able to pick out students and circumstances that would most benefit from their efforts, and focus their attention there.

One teacher realized during a professional development conference how often students feel humiliated simply by how they are spoken to by their teachers, and he brought strategies into the classroom to mitigate the issue. The teacher explained that the idea is to speak with no malice intended. For example, they suggest common teacher responses to a student who is late might be, “Why are you late?” or “Hey, class started 6 minutes ago.” The teacher reflected that instead of making their default response to students a sarcastic one, they need to change the way they frame the response, “when the
reality is that it may be a tremendous accomplishment for that student today to crawl out of their miserable bed to show up to your classroom.” Instead, when the student shows up late, a teacher could say, “Cindy, you are 10 minutes late. This is against our norms. We will need to discuss this later.” The teacher focused on the importance of communicating that it is not okay to be late, but realizing that it is not acceptable to humiliate a student either (Interview, July 5, 2010). This fine balance is one over which effective teachers seem to become experts over time, largely through experience and trial and error. These teachers often have to override their own instinctual emotional reactions to student behavior in favor of an unbiased, unemotional directive that will more efficiently guide the student’s success.

Teachers are very much like traffic controllers who must make a decision, course correction, or attitude adjustment within a matter of seconds to avoid a collision. When a teacher misjudges a classroom situation and reacts with swift and exacting action, it is the student who crashes and burns. Effective teachers in the study illustrated several incidents where they knew their flawed decisions had caused harm, and yet because they were able to face those students and share their true regret, relationships and rapport were not only saved, but strengthened. One teacher stated:

I've had a couple of classroom management situations where I felt after self-reflection, I didn't do the best job I could do. I've thought about it and modified what I do with that particular student in the future. I've pulled that student's line. I've gone to and walked to a student's class during my prep, taken them out of class and said, "Look. You know that conversation we had yesterday? I don't feel it went the best it could have gone and I think I have some fault in that. Let's see if we can't figure this out together in a way that solves that.” (Interview, June 28, 2010).
A vivid example of the pain that can be caused by teacher assumptions made without the full story came from one teacher whose student started demonstrating erratic behavior in the classroom. One of his students was absent for about three weeks, and “when she came back, she was all over the place, she wasn’t really paying attention. She was in and out, she'd ditch a lot.” The teacher finally called her over and said, “When you are here, act like [you are] part of the class. At least when you are here you need to do your work. I get that you don't want to come to school, whatever is going on.” The next day the student came to talk to the teacher crying. She explained that her dad had just passed away, which was the reason that she hadn’t been coming to school. The teacher responded sensitively, immediately, and appropriately by saying, “And I apologized. I felt bad. I wish she would have told me; I know that the school had known and I wish the school had told me” (Interview, June 25, 2010). After the teacher knew what was going on, he was able to make the adjustments and help her out. In the end, the teacher and the student’s counselor alternated dates each morning, coming before school to get her caught up.

Confessed fallibility is a condition of truth and it is a stimulus for continuous inquiry. Students know people are not perfect, so honesty and self-reflection facilitate trust and concern for one another. Research has documented that student perceptions’ of their relationships with their teachers impact achievement (e.g. Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Stipek, 2002; Wentzel, 1997). Although many agree that trust is important, there has been less agreement on the definition of trust. Trust has been described as a calculated social exchange whereby one makes a choice about engaging in an action where risk is involved (Bryk & Schneider 2002), one's dependence upon
another's ability and desire to take care of that which is important and entrusted to their care (Baier, 1986), the expectation that another can be relied upon (Rotter, 1967), and in terms of a cost-benefit analysis where the respect of one's vulnerability is at stake (Zand, 1972). The five-facet model of trust that has been conceptualized by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) describes trust as a willingness to be vulnerable based on an assessment of benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence. Relational trust is the crucial interdependence of relationships in schools combined with the expectation of fulfilling role responsibilities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Theorists from a variety of disciplines widely agree that trust plays a vital role in all aspects of human affairs. Trust is the underpinning of cooperation in everyday interactions (Baier, 1986; Zucker, 1986) and without that trust, societies will collapse (Bok, 1979). It is a necessary component in economic exchange (Coleman, 1984; Fukuyama, 1995; Hirsch, 1969), social relationships (Coleman, 1990; Lewis & Weigert, 1985), and organizational effectiveness (Tyler & Kramer, 1996). Over the past two decades, trust has been increasingly studied by organizational theorists and most recently, in relation to schools. Schools are similar to other types of organizations, in that they too are social structures which depend upon members' mutually interdependent relationships in order to function successfully (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Thus, the construct of trust also provides a lens within which to examine relationships among members of school communities and organizational outcomes.

An examination of elementary students’ self-reported sense of relatedness to social actors including parents, teachers, and peers found that the students’ relationships with teachers was the strongest predictor of academic performance (Furrer & Skinner,
2003). Furthermore, this study presented evidence that the student-teacher relationship could compensate for detrimental relationships with peers and parents in predicting achievement. Teachers in this study and the literature widely agree that student-teacher relationships through trust impact learning outcomes. The nature of this relationship will be further explicated through the curriculum and the teaching practice in order to understand the specific relational elements that impact performance.

**Description of Practice- Engaging All Students**

**Culturally Relevant Curriculum**

Secondary students often filter their experiences through a triune lens of culture, race and ethnicity. Therefore, development of culturally relevant curriculum and teaching strategies sits squarely on the shoulders of teachers willing to reflect on the broad spectrum of issues relative to race, culture, social justice and equity. The effective teachers in this study commented on the ways in which they developed their lessons and instructional strategies to orchestrate learning that is both engaging and relevant to students’ social and cultural realities.

For example, effective teachers reported that research projects are made richer through culture relevance. One teacher explained how a successful standards-based unit culminated in a mini-research project which helped students understand global hatred and genocide by first discussing specific instances of hatred on campus, in the community, in the state, in the nation, and then globally. Through first handed analysis of the Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) “pyramid of hate,” students were able to observe instances on their high school campus and then expand those instances to such contemporary issues as the Arizona immigration law. In a classroom of 99% Latino students, they were able
to objectively use the ADL’s definition of “hatred” and its “pyramid of hate” to advocate whether or not Arizona’s law would qualify as an instance of hate. Making the global issue of genocide and hatred more relevant to their own lives and communities, students were able then to gain a greater and more personal understanding of both the California standards and the over-arching concept as they expanded their knowledge to genocides of the Holocaust, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur (Interview, June 29, 2010).

Similarly, another teacher had students write a persuasive essay on the merits of Arizona Senate Bill 1070. The teacher reported that using such relevant subjects in articles and essays with which students can make personal connections provides greater relevance to the students, thereby engaging them more actively in the lesson. More importantly, using material which is significant to students’ social and cultural realities gets students to explore higher level thinking skills in topics which intrigue them. These topics enable the students to focus not merely on subjective opinions, but rather on objective analysis in understanding the two valid sides of an argument and in presenting their own effective arguments on the topic (Interview, June 29, 2010).

Moreover, taking the necessary time to thoughtfully map out standards-based lessons in order to include activities and materials that connect the context of the learning to relevant experiences in students’ lives is another essential component of lessons that are more engaging for students. One teacher commented, “I really try to look at my lessons and my units ahead of time. I try to think, ‘What is the standard? What is the objective? And, how can I help connect it to their lives?’” (Interview, June 24, 2010). Students have greater retention of the information when the subject is relevant to them. Therefore, using multicultural texts and texts that demonstrate a Latino perspective can
only benefit Latino students. Similarly, finding a way to take non-Latino texts and making them connect personally with students’ lives and interests also promotes greater success and retention in the classroom. As a teacher stated, “[When teaching Canterbury Tales,] I kind of connected it to them, like, what pilgrimage are you on? They drew out and did a timeline. It told where each of them was as a character, and they kind of had to decide their life experiences.” (Interview, June 24, 2010). By making Chaucer’s text relevant to their immediate and personal lives, students automatically had a greater connection to the text and its meaning as a whole.

Effective teachers also use realia and other experiential support materials to increase students’ sense of identity and to spark interest into, through and beyond the lesson of the day. One teacher shared how they “try to make a conscientious effort to provide materials for [their] students,” allowing for greater ethnic, cultural, national, and gender diversity than the core curriculum provides (Interview, June 29, 2010). Purchasing an extensive range of supplemental and extra-curricular reading material with this kind of diversity to which students can relate personally and culturally dramatically increases their desire to read well beyond the classroom walls; and the more they read, the more academically successful these students will ultimately be.

Another factor significant in engaging students through a culturally relevant curriculum is providing access and connections to members of the community who teachers present as mirrors into which students can look and see themselves. Such community role models demonstrate the compelling why: students see successful Latinos in their own community and project personal goals for themselves, reinforcing why they should work hard and achieve academically. One effective teacher stated: “I try to bring
guest speakers that are Latino because I know that's going to impact my students” (Interview, June 28, 2010). By inviting community members into the classroom from local universities and the county at large to speak about their educational and vocational experiences, Latino high school students become more motivated. They have an internal drive, they hear success stories of people who are similar to them, and they then seek to emulate that success in their own futures. Particularly in math and science, such role models dramatically increase students’ levels of motivation. And, ultimately, when the personal motivation factor increases for students, the greater their productivity and engagement will be in the classroom, culminating in greater personal and academic success overall.

Another teacher expressed her compassion and understanding of her students’ needs by validating known cultural aspects of her students’ upbringing. The teacher – also a soccer coach – explained how she shares her own interest in soccer with her students in order to make a personal connection with them. Understanding that soccer tends to be the sport of passion in Mexico and Latin America, the student-teacher relationship evolves beyond the curriculum; they share personal interests. The teacher noted, “Any time that you can make some sort of connection that's not necessarily a teacher/student connection, I think the kid is more likely to do well in the class because he feels there's a good rapport there, and he feels almost obligated to do well for me” (Interview, July 7, 2010). Students who have an interpersonal connection with their teachers, not only want to succeed for themselves, but also want to succeed for their teachers, their role models who they hold in high esteem. The student simply wants to
make the teacher proud. A student’s academic success becomes the teacher’s academic success.

**Relevance Through Personalization and Contextualization**

Latino students in large urban high schools have the same desire as high school students across the United States: to become capable, competent and productive adults, confident in their belief that they are prepared to be successful in the world that awaits them beyond high school. However, a problem lies within their perception of school. Many see no connection between what they are learning in class and what they are living after 2:45 pm in the afternoon. This disconnect generally manifests itself in the classroom with lack of attention and lamentations such as, “This is boring,” “When will I ever use this stuff?” and spotty attendance. Effective teachers in this study often reported that the way to student engagement lies in personalizing their curriculum and instruction, contextualizing academic content to create relevance for their students.

The following effective teachers’ responses underscore the importance of lessons that provide both academic skills development and real world competencies, two relevant hooks onto which students can hang. In one response, a social studies teacher explained how they use student experiences and mock scenarios to demonstrate how alliances contributed to the outbreak of WWI. Because most contemporary students have no true notion of first-hand experience with the difficulties of war time, the teacher posed the question, “Why would Russia want to be mobilized to war with Serbia?” and applied it to real and/or mock situations in the students’ own lives. By having students imagine a scenario in which someone were bullying their younger sibling, students were able to
relate much more clearly to the idea of larger countries coming to the defense of smaller and weaker nations. Creating such a personal analogy put the context of WWI into a more concrete and emotional context for the students’ understanding. Student engagement and retention of the material is dramatically increased by making the historical concepts more relevant to their personal lives in a way that students could more clearly define (Interview, June 29, 2010).

Similarly, in getting students to understand the Cold War, the same teacher divided the class in half, one side representing the United States and one side representing the Soviet Union. By developing a mock scenario in which the students on the “U.S. side” were told they would receive iPods and the students on the “Soviet side” were told they would receive tape recorders, students became both personally and emotionally connected to the issues of imbalance in power and economic systems during the Cold War: capitalism versus communism. Once students were able to personally empathize with the imbalance, both their understanding and retention of issues on both sides of the Iron Curtain were made far more coherent. Such mock scenarios, personal emotion, and inter-connectedness with historical events bring the history of yesterday into the present of today, enabling students to better grasp ideas that would otherwise be far removed from them personally, culturally, and historically (Interview, June 29, 2010).

In another response, an English teacher stated his belief in the necessity of connecting literature to things going on in the world of today, of making the past relevant to the present so that students can gain a greater understanding of the content. In classroom discussion of the literature, the teacher continuously asks, “What was this author trying to say about his time period or her time period?” and “How does this
connect, and what does it tell you about your own time period?” (Interview, July 20, 2010). By contextualizing authors’ philosophical and political assumptions of the past to contemporary issues, students are able to see the cyclical nature of politics, philosophy, and cultural issues over time, extrapolating that into their own lives and beliefs as they evaluate and reflect on similar instances in their personal lives and in their own communities. Again, reinforcing the interconnectedness of the academic content to students’ own experiences and understandings further enhances their understanding of the material and their success with the subject matter.

In another example, a science teacher discussed the importance of finding ways to connect science to students personally. By incorporating more class discussion regarding the relevance and significance of real life situations, contemporary news articles and modern scientific discoveries, the science teacher is better able to impress upon their students why and how science impacts their own lives and environment. As they stated, “When science is in the news it gives me an opportunity to help kids know this is how it affects you” (Interview, July 9, 2010). Science and technology are ever-changing, and the more students can see how they can be personally affected by such changes, the more engaged they will become with the material.

Another social studies teacher maintained that the ability to interconnect with the subject matter goes far beyond the printed text for students. Due to potential language barriers of second language learners, many Latino students would benefit from auditory and/or visual learning experiences. Therefore, by showing students a variety of historical clips, students have a greater likelihood of contextualizing the significance of the moment for not only that time period, but
for their own time period as well. The teacher asserted, “In order to understand the world around you and what you are living in the present you need to understand the past and how we got to where we are today… once you understand how everything is involved you’ll understand today a whole lot better” (Interview, June 25, 2010). Much of the social relevance is inaccessible in textbooks; students need to see and hear the history come alive before them in order to make a cognitive relationship with the historical significance of the moment. After understanding the social and cultural dynamics of the past, students are far more likely to understand the social and cultural dynamics of their own present.

Effective teachers also instinctively know that providing a window into their own lives and experiences which are relevant to the context of their lessons engages students to, at the very least, suspend their disbelief and embrace the standards and concepts of a lesson that might otherwise seem dull and uninspiring.

One effective teacher noted how using her own personal belief in the necessity for a quality education and for academic reading and writing skills helps her encourage students to also strive for greater success in their educational pursuits. Hearing their teacher’s personal experiences with how a quality education helped to improve her own opportunities in the workplace helps students understand that “reading and writing is going to be part of any schooling they may do in the future and what type of profession they are trying to pursue or what type of educational goals that they have after their high school experience” (Interview, June 29, 2010). By focusing on the students’ own personal and vocational interests, the teacher was better able to encourage them and
refine the curriculum in order to build upon those interests, enabling students to see a
greater personal benefit in what they are learning and to expect that such learning will
only help them to succeed in their post-secondary endeavors. Another teacher shared that
a way to get students involved in new units of study was by first sharing his own
response to an introductory question on the topic, and then by engaging students further
with their own responses and discussion. Although the answer may not always be what
the students want or expect to hear, by stimulating the conversation with open-ended
discussion on the topic, it immediately gets students actively involved in their own
learning. They first get hooked by the teacher’s response to the overarching question of
study, and then they create personal hypotheses through their own responses. Ultimately,
this provides an environment of active engagement, reflection, and further study to
eventually evaluate their initial responses as a culminating activity. It gives them a
reason to sit up and pay attention, a reason to work actively with difficult standards and
subject matter that they might otherwise find uninteresting or irrelevant (Interview, July
20, 2010).

Effective teachers will engage themselves in inquiry to address the cognitive
challenge of sustaining relevance by creating an intellectual curiosity in their
underachieving students that can lead to the mastering of academic content and
development of the life competencies they will need beyond high school. Additionally, in
determining how lessons should be structured, effective teachers continuously remind
themselves of the significance of the material – the significance relative to the standard,
to the teacher and to the learner. One effective teacher noted the following: “Every unit,
every lesson, every day I ask myself the question of, ‘Why is my content important? Why
should my students even spend the time learning this? How are they going to use it, or how will it help them understand their future experiences to a deeper level?” (Interview, July 9, 2010). In making their science classroom more engaging for students, the teacher continuously poses these questions of inquiry during lesson planning; and, furthermore, poses these questions to students by finding ways to actively engage them – particularly the underachievers. By finding a way to connect the new curriculum to students’ previous knowledge and interests, teachers are able to gain the attention of students who otherwise might fade into the background. For example, in completing a physiology and biotechnology unit, the science teacher worked diligently to make a connection to the students’ own background knowledge: “I try to access their knowledge… all of our students have experience with things like vaccines. So I might preface a unit on the immune system with a discussion about vaccines or about swine flu or things that are current events to try to tease out what students’ misconceptions are and what their current understandings are” (Interview, July 9, 2010). Using students’ background knowledge in the subject matter, especially when working with difficult concepts and standards, enhances students’ intellectual curiosity. They want to learn more; therefore, they learn better.

Similarly, a social studies teacher noted that gaining students’ interest is critical to their improved level of engagement in the topic. As the teacher stated, “If I can get them interested in even one of those subjects… it catches fire and then they get interested in more subjects, and then the next thing you know they're really pursuing the news and those kinds of things” (Interview, July 6, 2010). By sparking students’ interest in current events, by making students see the relevance of controversial issues in their own lives, by
showing students how governmental policies can directly affect them, students are far more likely to want to further their own inquiry. Their intellectual curiosity and their personal drive to seek answers in the material propel their motivation to learn, and ultimately it enables them to retain the information for a much longer period of time. Learning something we are interested in is never as difficult as learning something we find tedious or dull.

The insight of these effective teachers echoes the importance of the selection of materials with which students individually or collaboratively can engage to bridge the past with the present and to find relevance. Often textbooks use literature which seems so distant and removed from students. However, effective teachers understand the importance of making such text more relevant to their students; the more relevant the text, the more engaged the students will be, and the greater the learning curve of the students. In the social sciences, for example, many texts seem relevant, particularly when they are read through the lens of social movement. As one social studies teacher asserted, “all my students are experiencing social movement and should be part of the social movement itself” (Interview, July 8, 2010). However, by having students work with those texts collaboratively, students gain even greater understanding as they contextualize the literature through their own personal lenses. Direct guidance through carefully planned questions and discussions can help students take those texts – even ones which may seem personally, culturally and socially irrelevant – and engage with them critically by making connections to their own lives, their own perceptions, and their own social lenses.

Moreover, effective teachers understand that in order to improve student engagement, students must truly be engaged. Students cannot be allowed to be passive in
a classroom. They must actively participate in their own academic learning. Surely a teacher can provide students with interesting texts, pose thought-provoking questions, plan coherent lessons. However, if a student is passive, then no active learning is taking place. As one chemistry teacher shared, “I like to have some type of little activity with every class, or a demonstration, but something to get them at least moving and thinking. So, I guess the best way that I bring it alive, is by just getting them actually moving and doing stuff with the material and not just being passive” (Interview, July 14, 2010). Students should be held just as responsible for their education as are their educators. They cannot just sit back and let their minds become passive and inactive; rather, they must delve into their intellectual curiosities, strive for greater understanding, and participate – act – upon their learning. And, effective teachers must find a way to ignite that activity, that engagement with the course material of study.

Another aspect important to engaging students develops when effective teachers infuse “a sense of community” into their classroom. Students need to identify themselves not only by who they perceive themselves to be, but also to have the opportunity to see themselves through peer groups, family, and even neighborhoods. Effective teachers create these opportunities of safe community environments in their classrooms by connecting the academic content to issues that leap off the page of the text and into their daily lives. For example, a science teacher created a scenario to provide a relevant context to their students’ immediate community. In teaching about the immune system and vaccinations, HIV and AIDS were extensively discussed. As the science teacher noted, “with HIV, the age group of 16 to 25 is the most [newly] infected group. It's not only relevant to them, but it's extremely important that their age group understand
exactly how they are exposed to and contract HIV. They need to know the difference between HIV and AIDS, and the path of the HIV infection” (Interview, June 28, 2010).

In understanding the urgency and centrality of such information to today’s youth, the science curriculum becomes far more relevant to students. In teaching the immune system, this teacher understands the personal, cultural, and societal relevance of stressing topics such as HIV, AIDS and H1N1 to their students, particularly when there are multiple flu vaccines and none exist for HIV. Building the personal relevance in a classroom community where students feel safe to actively engage in discussion and learning only builds upon a hierarchical system by which a teacher can draw students into further academic study and greater academic success.

One teacher who utilized community as a context for engaging students discussed how making personal connections to individual students in the classroom enabled the entire classroom to feel a level of connectedness, a sense of community by which they feel safe to share, to study, to learn. In studying about Afghanistan, the teacher had several members of the class share their own personal stories, stories of family members who are in the military and who have direct knowledge and experience of the topic at hand. By taking the time to share their experiences, everyone else is “tuned in” (Interview, July 28, 2010). Not only does this encourage a safe venue for students to think, to question, and to reflect, but also it instigates intellectual curiosity and emotional attachment with a unit of study that can enhance the entire class’ learning, not just the students who would have otherwise sat there with their own personal stories quietly to themselves. It creates a classroom community whereby a shared experience becomes a personal learning tool for everyone in the room.
Similarly, in teaching writing to better prepare English language learners for the CAHSEE, another teacher intentionally spends a great deal of time working with writing prompts that ask students to delve into issues that have to do with them personally. By providing students with an “outlet for them to express themselves in writing,” the teacher is able to not only have the students practice their skill sets for the writing standards, but also to share personal stories about themselves and their families, which can further foster a classroom community (Interview, July 1, 2010). Students positively respond to issues that concern them or their friends, and by cultivating an environment where such issues are held in high regard, where they are shared among their peers, students are more likely to become more motivated to actively engage in their own learning process.

**Description of Practice- Understanding Challenging Students**

Within the pages of scientific studies, scholarly articles and professional journals, there is a plethora of information regarding how to best meet the learning needs of challenging students – those who are hard to reach, and even harder to teach. Interviews with the effective teachers in this study revealed three strategic areas that play vital roles in engaging and retaining challenging students: 1) highly personalized teaching environments 2) partnering with other professionals and 3) paralyzing student resistance with relentless and respectful persistence.

**Personalization**

Through their interviews many of the effective teachers indicated that the more they came to understand themselves, (their attitude toward their profession and their clarified beliefs about the students in their classes and what they should be expected to
achieve), the more personalized was the delivery of instruction and interaction with
students. Several teachers remarked that for a wide range of students one-to-one
communication is most effective for preventing future problems. This following vignette
portrays the power of one-to-one communication to embrace a reluctant learner and
transform the classroom from the place of dread to the pathway of success.

A teacher shared a story of a student during her first year of teaching. Although
the student appeared to be very academically capable, he continually acted out in class,
causing behavioral disruptions and academic failure. However, the teacher finally
decided to call the student’s home. Rather than speaking to the student’s parents, the
teacher had an extensive conversation with the student, one-to-one, about his disruptive
behavior and, perhaps more importantly, his apparent potential. The teacher told the
student that “he was very intelligent and… he could be very successful in school”
(Interview, July 14, 2010). Sometimes all people need is for someone else to believe in
them. Hearing such confidence from the teacher, the student began to alter his opinion of
himself as a student. He began to do better in that class and in other classes as well.

Moreover, the teacher not only espoused the belief in the student, but also backed
it up with a necessary support system which the student could rely on to help him
improve. Because the student needed additional help in math, for example, the teacher
provided extra one on one tutoring. As a student who had been socially promoted through
the grades, he now needed to concentrate his efforts and his studies to make up for lost
time. And it worked. Eventually, the student ended up at UCLA. Regardless, a student’s
perception of himself and a teacher’s perception of her students can contribute greatly to
a self-fulfilling prophecy. Effective teachers must not only believe in their students’
potential, but also they must share that belief with their students, and, ultimately, they must provide the means and the time by which their students can obtain success.

Another teacher made the observation that reluctant students, in particular, need one-to-one assistance. However, in order to maintain a level of mutual respect, that one-to-one assistance most likely should occur in a more private setting, not in front of the whole class “because that kid that's hard to reach probably doesn't do well in a big group. It might be a lunch time tutoring or in class, when the class is working on something” (Interview, July 28, 2010). Regardless, it’s the personal connection that is significant.

The knowledge that someone believes in a student’s success, that he can achieve, and that the teacher will find a way to help make that success happen.

In addition to academic one-to-one conversation, the effective teachers reflected that it is important to strengthen personalization with challenging students by inviting them to share their interests, or by being where they are outside of class, to catch them involved in an activity or event in which they have confidence and see themselves as successful. The following two anecdotes validate this point.

A science teacher shared how with reluctant students it became essential to remain interested in the students on a personal level, to find out how things were going in their lives, to occasionally check and make sure things were okay. Simply showing concern and compassion through mutual respect and understanding helps these students to once again become reconnected with the classroom environment and with the teacher. As the teacher acknowledged, “building a rapport with my students definitely helps, you know, building a relationship with them and saying that I care about other things besides their science grade. I find that that really helps a lot with those students” (Interview, July
Similarly, in sharing in students’ extra-curricular activities, those reluctant students can also be reined back into the academic realm. Perhaps it is watching them play basketball or sing in the choir; but, showing students that the teacher is interested in them as people, not just as students inside their classroom can make a tremendously positive impact on the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher, and ultimately, on the success of the students.

Similarly, an English teacher reiterated the idea that each student is an individual, with individual needs and individual interests. Therefore, “personalizing issues or giving them more choice” in the curriculum can help reluctant students come out of their shells. For example, “rather than have the whole class write about one issue, especially with those kids that aren't motivated, I try to dig a little bit deeper and say, ‘Well, what are you interested in?’” (Interview, June 28, 2010). High school students want to feel a little autonomy; they want to feel like what they care about matters. So, finding a way to connect the curriculum to them particularly and providing them with positive feedback on what they know or do well can only enhance their willingness to actively engage in the classroom.

For another teacher in the study, personalization was exchanging stories about life experiences and the impact it had on hard to reach students. This teacher continually tells their students that they expect better from their students than they expected from themselves. When this teacher was a student in high school, no one told him he could achieve and be successful; now, the teacher shares that message with his students regularly. The teacher cites “a little self-confidence issue” with his AP students (Interview, July 5, 2010). Even though they may have decent academic grades and test
scores, many of them still question their own potential. Students need to believe in themselves. They need to hear positive feedback. They need to know that they are capable. Yes, they may be unmotivated or misdirected at times; however, they can succeed. And, with effective teachers, they persistently remind students that such success is always within their students’ grasps, just waiting to be taken.

Through the majority of the interviews in this study, personalization was also expressed as the intentional creation of an environment that encourages acknowledgement of the whole student: the good, the bad, the mischievous, the clown, the sullen and withdrawn. The effective teacher facilitates conversations and interactions in which each challenged student comes to understand that they are in a place of trust, where criticism is never of the person but of their action, and that high expectations are essential to maximize their academic performance. Four reflections from effective teachers relate to this aspect of personalized environments.

First, a math teacher discussed how she honestly acknowledges that students may have had “some pretty crappy math teachers,” but that she does not allow blame to be placed on either the students or the educators of the past. (Interview, June 23, 2010). Instead, through an open acceptance of the circumstances as they currently stand, the teacher and students agree to work through it and beyond it, to go from where they are now and work together to build greater success based on the reality of the students’ current strengths and weaknesses.

Secondly, another teacher cites instances when problematic students can be rerouted to more positive and more beneficial roles within the classroom. Rather than focusing on the students’ negative behavior, the teacher tries “to provide them
opportunities that can be seen by the rest of the class in a positive way to eliminate some negative attention” (Interview, June 29, 2010). By giving these students leadership roles or public opportunities for success, such as in sharing their correct response on a warm up activity, the teacher is able to modify the students’ attention-seeking behavior so that it helps the entire class rather than disrupts it.

Thirdly, another teacher reinforced the persistence of compassion. Effective classroom environments put students in relationships and situations where they know they are cared for. “I try to make them understand and realize that I do care. Because I don't think they're going to care, unless I prove to them that I care first” (Interview, July 6, 2010). Recalcitrant students tend to do better when they know that the teacher is not going to give up on them. Whether by close proximity, continual one-to-one conversation, personal connections, honest communication, or extended time periods, students need to feel the presence of an adult who cares, an adult they know will not allow them to fail.

And lastly, one teacher shared the importance of establishing a classroom environment based on trust. Moreover, by speaking to their students in Spanish, the teacher is able to personally connect to their Latino students in an even greater sense of comfort. As the teacher conveyed, “Sometimes you can’t reach them in English, so by speaking their native language you get on a personal level” (Interview, July 8, 2010). By creating a sense of community where students and teachers can mutually respect and understand one another, and by reinforcing an environment for personal, linguistic and cultural alliances, success is more likely. Students can explore new academic horizons
and know that even when they fail, someone will be there to help them up and to help them move forward.

The interviews of effective teachers in this study revealed a connection between personalization and motivation. High-risk students will accept the challenge to reach a higher standard of performance from teachers who personalize their concern for them and encourage them to work smarter and to be more motivated to improve. For this teacher, simply stating genuine care for students’ success is a catalyst to motivation: “They have to want something. I think them just knowing that you care can motivate them. I try to just show them that I care about them, and their success, and their future. Luckily, it's worked so far” (Interview, July 7, 2010).

Another effective teacher identified “a synergy” created by students sharing life experiences that fuels motivation, contributing to positive changes in attitude and performance. As students and teacher share class discussions “not just about academics, but about life,” a synergetic effect occurs (Interview, July 16, 2010). The teacher imposes an environment of compassion, one that breeds success, and only allows talk and work that cultivates that environment within the classroom. Soon, the students absorb that dialogue and embrace it as their own. They learn to demand greater success not only from themselves, but also from others in the room. The sense of classroom community becomes one in which all learn to work together, to expect the best of each other, to seek excellence among themselves.

This teacher points out that when a student’s single motivating factor is in direct opposition to their potential to succeed, he requires personalization on multiple levels. Not one method or approach will work with every student. Similarly, the same approach
will not always work with any one individual student. Sometimes students may need to hear the voice of comfort, and sometimes they may need to hear a stern “You need to get to work” (Interview, July 19, 2010). Students cannot be forced to learn. Nevertheless, a variety of approaches from a teacher who legitimately cares in a safe environment with engaging curriculum certainly can help to persuade.

Finally, an effective teacher stated that personalization’s highest reward comes through cultivating relationships in which the most challenged students realize their teachers have a “genuine interest” in their success. As one teacher so poignantly stated, “Essentially, if I could boil down my teaching philosophy into one word, I would say it’s about relationships. “If a student doesn’t see that you genuinely have their best interest in mind, then there’s no buy in from them to listen to you” (Interview, June 29, 2010). Students must believe that their teachers always expect them to succeed. Whether that belief stems from one-to-one work in the classroom, sharing mutual interests, or conversations about life, students need to know that their teachers care about them as people – about who they are now and who they will become in their future endeavors.

**Partnering with Others**

It is not uncommon on the campus of the large urban high school to see a poster on the wall in the counseling center or teacher workroom proclaiming, “It takes a village to raise a child.” For the most challenged students in these schools, especially for those who struggle with differences in language, economic, cultural and social disadvantage, it is more than an inspiring platitude; it is the necessary non-negotiable required for success in and beyond their secondary education.
Effective teachers in the study, when asked about collaboration with others, reported that when the need arises, they engage in partnerships with their colleagues who also know their students. They also look to school counselors, parents and community family resources to provide additional academic, emotional and social support for their struggling students.

One teacher felt that using a counselor as a resource for difficult to reach students often could help in obtaining either background or personal information that may be prohibiting the student from focusing on the academics in the classroom. “Often things are going on in [students’] lives that are far beyond the constraints of school. And you need to kind of have a clue as to how to reach them. I find the more information, the better” (Interview, July 27, 2010). Counselors have the training and the ability to meet with students in a much more private situation, where students can share issues and concerns that just are not always feasible or appropriate in open classroom environments. However, effective teachers also felt that once the counselor was brought in as an additional resource, rarely was it necessary to seek administrative help through a progressive “discipline” hierarchy. Usually, with the counselor and the teacher’s gentle persistence towards success, students tended to come around (Interview, July 6, 2010).

Additionally, parent involvement can be critical to a student’s academic success. Effective teachers may call home or do home visits. This can make an impression upon the student himself: “You go their house, and they act a totally different way. And the parents are impressed by it. And the student takes it a little bit more seriously when you’ve been to their house and making that personal connection with them” (Interview, June 25, 2010). By making that personal connection, by taking the school directly into
the student’s home, students genuinely become cognizant of the teacher’s sincere interest in their success and well-being.

Another teacher suggested not only phoning, emailing or meeting with parents individually, but also setting up group conferences (Interview, July 20, 2010). Often if a student is distracted by life issues it may only last a day or two. However, if a student has shown ongoing failure in multiple classes, it can be a sign of apathy or academic limitations. By setting up a group conference with the student, the counselor, the parents, and several of the students’ teachers, honest communication and a plan of action can be discussed and implemented. Once again, this reinforces the notion that a whole village is needed. The student just may need to see a larger group of people showing concern for his well-being, and realize that these adults will then follow through to provide the means and the time to give him additional opportunities to move towards more positive personal and/or academic results.

Effective teachers often take their students’ success as a personal mission. They may feel the need to counsel their own students first, to attempt multiple methods of positive reinforcement and modes of intervention prior to seeking alternative resources. One teacher stated that his individual counseling with the student was not effective and it ultimately progressed to having a conference with the student, the parents and an administrator (Interview, July 26, 2010). Although it may not be a teacher’s first choice, it still can be an effective tool. And, as an effective teacher, any tool that can be effective for any student and any situation is one worth taking the time to investigate and attempt. Ultimately, it is the student’s progress, their personal and academic success which is at stake.
Persistence

The poet James Whitcomb Riley, when asked about process in producing and perfecting his work responded: “The most essential factor is persistence; the determination never to allow your energy or enthusiasm to be dampened by the discouragement that must inevitably come.” An effective teacher is a perfect translation of persistence.

Teacher persistence prompts the very attitudes, skills and beliefs that schools try to foster in their most challenged students. The more persistent a teacher is, the more they transmit persistence to their students through words, actions and relationships; and, ultimately, the more effective their teaching becomes. In turn, the resolve emanating from this persistence yields improved academic and behavioral student performance. The analysis of the interviews given by the effective teachers in the study revealed four distinct classifications of persistence that they attribute as significant to promoting success for their most challenged students. Effective teachers in the study characterize the persistence of engagement in multiple ways.

First, effective teachers find ways to give their students multiple opportunities for learning and assessment. Students need alternatives. Teachers should “not give [students] the sense of hopelessness, so that a kid can have a change of heart… not ever backing a kid into a corner” (Interview, June 14, 2010). The youth do not always see how their actions of today can lead to consequences of tomorrow. Just because a student may do poorly on one assignment or assessment doesn’t mean he will never understand the
standard or skill. If a student needs longer to learn the material, if he needs multiple opportunities to practice the standard, if he needs to be retake an assessment, should it matter? The point of education is to master the material. How long a student takes to master that material or by what means it becomes necessary to learn that material should be insignificant in the student’s grade. “Grading is to determine whether they understand the concept or not. So, at the end of the day if they understand it and they've mastered it, that's what [effective teachers] care about” (Interview, June 14, 2010). Making a personal connection with students and providing them multiple learning opportunities is far more significant than any single assignment that they may or may not complete. Effective teachers must look at the bigger picture and evaluate student learning based on what they are supposed to be teaching – mastery of their standards.

Effective teachers understand that students naturally want to be engaged in their learning, in their lives. They are innately curious. A science teacher noted that students “want to do the activities, so they are really good at doing the lab part and the hands on part,” so much so that they do not necessarily care about how they do on the summative assessment (Interview, July 6, 2010). Nevertheless, effective teachers must find a way to not only engage students in the “fun” activities, but also to actively engage in the “serious” ones.

Regardless, an effective teacher never gives up. When a teacher does not give up on his students, students are less likely to give up on themselves. Learning doesn’t follow a prescribed timeline for every single student. Although we have curriculum that must be taught in certain sequences and timeframes, not all students learn at the same rate. Therefore, as a math teacher discerned, punishing students for taking longer to learn the
standards to mastery is ineffective and unfair (Interview, July 1, 2010). Students need to be shown that the goal does not change; their job is to master the learning. And, once they do that, they will be rewarded for it, for then they have completed their academic objective. Success is always attainable; the door of time shouldn’t shut merely because time has passed and some people take longer to learn some concepts than others.

Effective teachers also see themselves as a guide in the student’s learning process. They aren’t the “sage on the stage” (Interview, June 24, 2010). Rather, they participate in the students’ learning alongside their class. They have a personal investment in their students’ academic outcomes, and therefore are willing to differentiate learning in order to help individual students meet their individual needs. Students each have their own strengths and weaknesses, and one cookie cutter educational plan will not work for all. An effective teacher recognizes that and artfully balances state standards and curriculum with personal, cultural, and social awareness that will engage students towards greater mastery.

One teacher, for example, shared a scenario in which they altered the curriculum for a student who had missing assignments. Rather than giving the student a failing grade or making the student complete the assignment he had missed, the teacher took into account the student’s extracurricular interest in skateboarding and Bob Marley, and replaced the student’s reading assignment with *Catch a Fire*, the Bob Marley biography (Interview, July 23, 2010). By providing this alternative for the student, motivation and interest were heightened, and the student was still given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the reading and writing standards for which he was being assessed.
Differentiation of curriculum, multiple learning opportunities, and assessment for learning all play a significant role in student mastery and teacher effectiveness.

Persistence of relationships is also critical to being an effective teacher. “You never give up on a kid,” (Interview, July 7, 2010). When a student understands that a teacher has his best interest at heart, the student is much more resilient and receptive to hard work and academic rigor. “Students like structure and like discipline because it gives them parameters and it makes them feel safe” (Interview, July 7, 2010). And, when a student knows that a teacher genuinely cares about them, the student will in turn work twice as hard for themselves, as well as for the teacher. Having a positive role model in their lives at school reinforces for the students both the benefits and the true possibility of successful academic achievements. If teachers “can create a feeling of success in the early stages and if [they] have a good rapport with students… they're going to learn to trust… and… understand that we're a team” (Interview, July 2, 2010). Effective teachers work in collaboration with their students; they are working together to achieve the students’ ultimate goal of academic mastery and future success. This shared synergy can be infectious, positively outweighing even some negative circumstances that may be looming outside of the classroom walls. It builds towards ultimate success – personally, socially, academically, and vocationally for the students’ futures.

Unfortunately, students may have had past experiences and past teachers that have allowed them the opportunity for failure. Reluctant or at-risk students then may accept this fate as their own in a cyclical process within their education. However, for an effective teacher, this is not an option. As one teacher noted, a student may “have the idea that if I do poorly, if I do bad on this test, I don’t study, I’m disrespectful, eventually
they’ll just give up on me” (Interview, June 14, 2010). Effective teachers realize that persistence is key. Students need to realize that there is someone who will not give up on them, someone who believes that success is always a viable option.

Frequently, this persistence takes place in continual and honest communication between student and teacher. Effective teachers need to talk to their students often. Students need to be motivated, they need constant affirmation, they need positive feedback. Ultimately, they need to hear that they can do it, that they can succeed regardless of any other mitigating factors or beliefs that may exist in their lives. Here, in an effective classroom, success needs to be the expectation, the standard by which students are set up to both believe and achieve.

Not only must effective teachers be persistent, but also they must be patient. There are several mitigating factors that can cause a student to fail, and often it is something that is going on outside of the classroom and far removed from a student’s academic capabilities. Therefore, teachers must be patient. As one teacher in the study stated, “If you're just patient, and just keep asking them, and just keep asking them, as long as you don't do it in groups, nine out of ten times they'll see that you're genuinely asking them, ‘What's the problem?’” (Interview, July 29, 2010). Whether the teacher is concerned over disruptive behavior, lack of participation, or incomplete assignments, the teacher’s gentle persistence and patient understanding foster a student’s belief that the teacher genuinely cares. And, ultimately, that fosters the student’s belief in himself, in his own potential to succeed, regardless of whatever else may be going on in his life. And, because of this, as one teacher in the study rationalized, “You have to view students, especially the English language learners, peripatetically. You have to view them
for what they can be, not for what they are” (Interview, July 16, 2010). Students may appear distracted, they may appear apathetic, but they need to be continually reaffirmed in the belief that the can achieve, that they can succeed.

Ultimately, the effective teacher sees beyond the recalcitrant student in their classroom. They do not allow excuses to be made. They do not accept failure. Rather, they nurture a sense of security and compassion; they foster an atmosphere of acceptance and success. As a teacher so poignantly asserted, “I treat all those kids the way I want my own kid treated. If it means being firm with them I'll be firm. If it means guiding them and nurturing them I'm going to guide them and nurture them because all these kids have something special about them. If we stop at ‘That kid's unmotivated,’ who am I to do that?” (Interview, June 23, 2010).

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs, expectations, and practices of effective high school teachers of Latino students in one high school district. Teacher quality plays a critical role in increasing educational opportunities for students in urban school districts. This chapter presented findings from the data collection process and analysis of that data. The data analysis revealed the following themes with respect to why effective teachers enter the profession and why they believe so many leave the profession (Table 4.2.a.). Additionally the data revealed the beliefs of effective teachers with respect to what good teachers believe and the Latino dropout rate (4.2.b.). Also, the research revealed beliefs of effective teachers with respect to the ideal teacher-student relationship and when mistakes happen due to teacher fallibility (4.2.c.). Finally, the
research revealed information on how effective teachers engage and make their subject matter relevant, even to the most challenging students (4.2.d.). Of all the beliefs and practices discussed by these effective teachers, the analysis revealed the importance of caring behaviors for the achievement of Latino students, as manifested by building trusting relationships, reflective practices, and providing scaffolding and support.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The final chapter of this study presents a review of the findings and the significant conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter 4. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the previous chapters, including an overview of the problem, a review of the methodology, and a summary of the major findings. Following this summary are: a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, limitations of the study, implications for future research, implications for practice and concluding remarks. Also addressed in this chapter are the implications for both practice and research with a focus on social justice, critical race theory, hiring practices, professional development, and teacher education. Finally, this chapter proposes an area of future research in selecting, training, and supporting the types of teachers who will be tasked with the challenge to, once and for all, close the pervasive gap that exist between Latino children and their white counterparts.

Overview of the Problem

As stated in chapter one, teacher quality plays a critical role in increasing educational opportunities for Latino students and closing the persistent gap that exists between Latino students and their white counterparts. Despite the virtual consensus among researchers on the importance of teacher quality, identifying the qualities of an effective teacher of Latino students can be elusive.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the beliefs, expectations, and practices of effective teachers of Latino high school students in one Southern California school district. This study sought to examine the belief constructs identified in prior research, as well as to identify patterns and relationships that emerged from analysis of
the qualitative data. The research utilized both Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperider & Whitney, 2005; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006) techniques, as well as critical questioning strategies to investigate belief structures. The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the espoused beliefs, expectations and practices of high school teachers who have been recognized for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students?

2. Are there patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?

The belief constructs explored in the interviews were as follows: (1) Persistence in teaching practices, (2) protection of students’ learning, (3) use of theory in practice,(4) approach to at-risk students, (5) professional vs. personal orientation, (6) teacher burnout, and (7) fallibility (Haberman, 2005).

**Review of the Methodology**

The researcher looked at the perceptions of teachers working in high poverty, predominately Latino high schools. Participants were interviewed about their beliefs, attitudes and instructional practices. The participants were recruited based on identification by their site principals for their effectiveness in teaching Latino students as evidenced by their students’ state test results. Additionally, the teachers were currently working at schools that served predominately Latino populations with a high percentage of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch.

The interviews of effective teachers were recorded and transcribed using NVivo 8 software in order to distill topics or units of data. The data was organized by labeling ideas, words, or phrases of the participants with codes. The use of open coding allowed
the researcher to identify categories, their properties and dimensional locations with respect to the critical race and Haberman theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter 3 (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In addition to emergent coding, a priori coding schemas were utilized in the analysis of interview transcripts (Weber, 1990), based on the constructs from Haberman’s research (Haberman, 2005) discussed in chapter 3.

Coded responses were then placed into four categories: attitudes about teaching as a profession, beliefs about students, beliefs about teacher-student relationships and description of practice. Within each one of these categories, responses were organized under two opposing subcategories. The first subcategory was based on appreciative inquiry questions related to peak experiences. The second subcategory was in relation to critical questions about situations when circumstances are not ideal. From the data analysis emerged a major theme of the importance of caring relationships and attitudes from teachers to ensure success of their Latino students. That major theme evolved into a construct referred to here as Pillars of Caring.

**Pillars of Caring: A Foundation for Successful Teachers of Latino Students**

A clear finding resulted from the second research question, “What are the patterns and relationships that emerge in the espoused beliefs, expectations or practices of successful teachers of Latino high school students working in high poverty schools?” Despite the fact that effective teachers come from various backgrounds (racial, social, and economic), they are bound by a set of common principles. In interview after interview, three characteristics emerged in all their beliefs and practices, and all of these beliefs and practices can be traced back to the caring relationship that teachers have for their students. These three characteristics are (1) trusting relationships; (2) reflective
practitioners; (3) providing scaffolding and support. This caring relationship that effective teachers have towards their students is often manifested in various ideologies and pedagogies. What follows is a description of each of these three pillars of caring, along with an explanation of the significance of that pillar to the teachers’ effectiveness with their students.

Pillar One – Trusting Relationships

The effective teachers in this study all exhibited a distinct commitment to building trust with their students. The fact that trust is important in a teacher-student relationship should not be surprising to anyone. However, it was the unique way that these teachers talked about trust that was most striking. All the teachers of this study discussed the importance of establishing a trusting relationship, by listening to students, understanding students, knowing students, being fair to students, as evidenced in their day-to-day interactions with students.

The effective teachers in this study practice focused and sympathetic listening to show students they care not only about what happens in the classroom, but about students' lives in general. As described in the findings, these teachers often initiate two-way communication that exudes trust, tact, honesty, humility, and care. In the act of listening, these teachers actually pay attention and understand what the students say. They are dedicated to improving student lives and demonstrating their understanding through tenderness, patience, and gentleness.

The teachers also establish trusting relationships by understanding their students’ concerns and questions not only about the course content, but about other issues and the students’ personal interests. The interviews consistently revealed that these teachers
believe it is critical to listen to their students’ arguments and assist them in working out their problems, not only with regard to course content, but in all of the issues students bring forward. These teachers and their students develop a mutual respect, and the teachers are willing to talk about their own personal lives and experiences. Through their appropriate self-disclosure, these teachers become human in the eyes of students. The teachers and students find common interests within and outside of school. The teachers’ availability to students coupled with their understanding of students casts them as “real people” in the eyes of the students. These effective teachers know students both formally and informally. They use every opportunity at school and in the community to maintain good communication. As evidenced by their responses, these effective teachers know their students individually, not only understanding each student’s learning style and needs, but also understanding the student’s personality, likes and dislikes, and personal situations that may affect behavior and performance in school. Effective teachers care for the learner first as a person, and second as a student. They respect each student as an individual. These effective teachers who know their students create trusting relationships that enhance the learning process. In interviews, these teachers consistently emphasized their love for children as one key element of their success. By creating a supportive and warm classroom climate, they believe themselves to be more effective with all students.

Although the students of these 29 teachers vary widely in their concerns and needs, it was evident that these effective teachers believe that they can help all students feel safe and be successful learners when they understand their students and attempt to meet their needs. Knowing students is core to forming a trusting student-teacher relationship, a major factor in students being engaged in school. The teachers
interviewed would find what is likeable in each student, especially the ones who may be hard to like immediately because they are the ones who need a trusting relationship the most. The resounding belief among these teachers is that relationship-building pays big dividends in the child's improved student achievement.

In addition, the effective teachers built trust with their students by establishing rapport and credibility through a process of emphasizing, modeling, and practicing fairness and respect. Respect and equity were identified as the prerequisites of effective teaching in the eyes of many of these teachers. For example, these effective teachers responded to particular behaviors at an individual level rather than holding a whole class responsible for the actions of one student or a small group of students. They knew and understood the facts before responding to any disciplinary situation, and then told the students specifically what they did wrong. Moreover, they told students what they need to do right. They understood that students expect teachers to treat them equitably—when they behave as well as misbehave—and to avoid demonstrations of favoritism.

The effective teachers continually demonstrated respect and understanding, along with fairness regarding race, cultural background, and gender. In furthering a trusting relationship, these teachers recognized that many students associated respect with fairness and expected teachers to treat them as people. These effective teachers avoided using ridicule to prevent situations in which students lose respect in front of their peers. These effective teachers practiced gender, racial, and ethnic fairness, and they emphasized fairness and respect by being consistent and providing opportunities for students to provide appropriate input into the classroom. These teachers believed that they offer all students opportunities to participate and to succeed.
Although teachers and students spend much of their day interacting academically, it is social interactions that gave these teachers opportunities to demonstrate caring, fairness, and respect which ultimately led to teacher effectiveness. These teachers’ ability to relate to their students and to make positive, caring connections with them played a significant role in cultivating a positive learning environment and promoting student achievement. These effective teachers used a wide variety of strategies to interact with students. However, the basis for these interactions went beyond the four walls of the classroom. In fact, the interviews revealed that these effective teachers demonstrated interest in students' lives beyond the classroom. Teachers who attended sporting events, concerts, and other special programs in which their students participate are valued by their students. Additionally, the constructive social interactions between these teachers and their students not only contributed to student learning and achievement, but as research suggest, also increased student self-esteem by fostering feelings of belonging to the classroom and the school (Bandura, 1986).

The effective teachers interviewed for this study are aware of their own style of interacting with their students; thus, they are able to provide a more favorable learning environment for all students. Through social interactions with their students, these effective teachers are able to challenge each and every student to succeed.

The effective teachers established trusting social interactions in various manners. They attempted to behave in a friendly and personal manner while maintaining appropriate teacher-student role structure. In addition, these effective teachers consistently referred to their practice as work with students as opposed to doing things to or for the students. They engaged in productive interactions which involve giving
students responsibility and respect, treating their students as adults and expecting them to behave as such. These teachers allowed students to participate in decision making and paid attention to what students have to say. When interacting with students, these effective teachers demonstrated a sense of fun and a willingness to play or participate. They had a good sense of humor and were willing to share jokes.

**Pillar Two – Reflective Practitioner**

Another element of caring observed in the effective teachers was their commitment to reflective practice, or careful review of and thoughtfulness about their own teaching process. These effective teachers continuously practiced self-evaluation and self-critique as learning tools. Reflective teachers portrayed themselves as students of their own learning. They were curious about the art and science of teaching and about themselves as effective teachers. They constantly improved lessons, thought about how to reach particular children, and tried out new approaches in the classroom to better meet the needs of their learners. These teachers were introspective, in that they sought a greater understanding of teaching through scholarly study and professional reading.

Through their reflective practice, these effective teachers monitored their teaching because they wanted to be better teachers and to make a difference in the lives of students. Because they cared so much about their own success, these effective teachers were not afraid of feedback; in fact, time and time again they described how they elicited information and criticism from others, including their students. Additionally, in the interest of improving their ability to have a positive impact on their students’ learning, these teachers readily accepted constructive criticism and reflected upon it. Reflective
practice can initially result in confusion for some teachers, but these teachers possessed an open-mindedness, honesty, and sufficient level of self-efficacy to be able to constantly improve. These teachers’ sense of efficacy that had an impact on how they approached their instructional content and their students. While efficacy does change for teachers as they encounter new experiences, such as new subject matter, they were more likely to have additional positive experiences as they reflected on these new experiences. Their confidence in their ability to facilitate the learning and understanding of material by students was observable by others as evidenced in their evaluations and the initial reference from the principal for participation in the study. In particular, these teachers were confident and they communicated the belief in their own efficacy to their students.

Socrates is often credited with saying that a wise person knows that he knows nothing. This observation is discussed by Cornel West (2001), in which he argues for the development of this lifelong commitment to learning through the development of what he calls a “Socratic Sensibility.” The teachers in this study lived out this Socratic sensibility by striking the balance between confidence in their ability and frequent self-critique. These teachers constantly reflected on their daily practice and their relationships with their students in an effort to get a little bit better every day. They understood their duty to connect their pedagogy to the realities of poor, urban communities they serve.

The appeal for these highly effective teachers for the use of reflective practice was that since teaching and learning is complex, and there is not one right approach, the ability to reflect on different versions of teaching and reshape past and current experiences led them to improvement in their teaching practices. Their reflective practice moved teachers from their knowledge base of distinct skills to a stage in their careers
where they were able to modify their skills to suit specific contexts and situations, and eventually to their ability to invent their own strategies (Interview, July 21, 2010). The sense of caring for the development of their students seemed to be at the core of a resistance in establishing a classroom culture of control. Instead they became reflective practitioners, continuously engaging in a critical reflection, and thereby remaining fluid in the dynamic environment of the classroom.

**Pillar Three – Providing Scaffolding and Support**

Scaffolding is defined in this study as the instructional help provided to students in the classroom during a teaching segment. The teachers in this study described their commitment to instructional behaviors that facilitate success and encourage self-esteem. Helping students to understand without embarrassing them seemed to be a common practice in these teachers classroom. The teacher’s discussed instructional behaviors that demonstrates a willingness to ensure student success and is perceived as caring.

The teachers in this study focused on helping students succeed rather than completion of a task. These teachers expected their students to do well and provided the necessary support in the classroom. In addition, these teachers exhibited caring by taking the time to remind their students of upcoming assignments and reviewing expectations. Some students grasped instruction the first time and had the intrinsic motivation to complete tasks by the designated deadlines, but other students needed encouraging reminders.

The teachers’ statements regarding how they supported their students reflected the teachers’ readiness to provide varied instructional assistance. More importantly, the
support statements provided a window into how these teachers were genuinely interested in their students’ success. Providing assistance with academic learning tasks and ensuring comprehension are consistent with previous research (Bosworth, 1995; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Hayes et al., 1994). This theme suggests that providing a varied and active support system during instruction is critical to student success. Monitoring and checking students’ understanding during instruction is a way of ensuring comprehension and providing necessary and timely assistance. Aside from promoting success for all students, the individual student scaffolding practices ensure a process to assist students who might be timid or too embarrassed to ask for help during instruction.

Very similar to the concept of scaffolding is the idea of academic support in the classroom setting. In this study academic support describes a teacher who expresses concern for students when failing but, most importantly, will do whatever is necessary to help them pass. This theme focuses on the affective domain and centers on providing assistance to students as dictated by circumstances and moral obligation as an educator (Blustein, 1991; Noddings, 2005). The findings of this study suggest that the effective teacher needs to view academic support in the classroom as a way to demonstrate care for the individual as well as a way to provide the needed academic help. Other studies (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; M. D. Nelson & Bauch, 1997; Wentzel, 1997) support this perception of teacher behavior as a form of caring.

The teachers interviewed for this study discussed how their students value the way they explain evaluation expectations and how they allow students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Unfortunately, common practice offers only one opportunity—the test or the quiz—to demonstrate mastery of particular skills, concepts, or content.
This assessment is often given without regard to whether or not the student has learned the material. The teachers in this study understood that the “one strike and you’re out” approach is not effective for every student. These teachers voiced an overwhelming opinion that their responsibility is not merely to get through the content and finish the curriculum outlined by state standards. They understood that they are also responsible for ensuring the students’ authentic needs are not neglected. Many of the teachers discussed how they offer academic support for students in the classroom by providing flexibility with deadlines and multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery. These teachers perceived second chances as an expressions of caring. Although a more familiar method involves subtracting points from the assessment for not meeting a deadline, the majority of these teachers reported that they allowed subsequent opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery. The implication of this practice is that teachers must be willing to reconsider whether their pedagogical practices are effective for students. Although the teacher’s intentions may seem appropriate, the effective teachers in this study understood that some high school students need more than one opportunity to demonstrate mastery.

**Implications for Practice**

**Social Justice and Racial Underpinnings**

The effective teachers who participated in this study demonstrated cultural responsiveness in the teaching of their Latino students. Many teaching candidates and practicing teachers have a limited perspective of the historical struggles experienced by Latinos. Teachers unfamiliar with the political histories of Latinos in America are
unlikely to appreciate the challenges they have overcome or acknowledge the continuing plight of these groups. If schools and districts develop programs to prepare teachers to serve an increasingly diverse student body, then curricula and training modules should address issues that have historically retained people at the margins of the larger society. These programs will have to be presented in such a way that teachers gain an in-depth understanding of the role of culture in our society and its impact on the educational process.

All groups of teachers interviewed for this study, regardless of race or ethnicity, understood the importance of family-related factors and factors pertaining to their students’ disposition towards schooling; yet, continuously they reiterated the role they (the teachers) played in the achievement of their students. Culture is a complex construct to be understood and examined through multiple perspectives. This study presented informative and intriguing results. Teachers’ beliefs are strongly associated with their instructional practices as well as their expectations for success. The effective teachers in this study understood the cultural aspects pertaining to their students, but they saw their students’ culture as a foundation to expand their understanding. As presented in chapter four, the vast majority of the participating teachers possessed beliefs that led to persistently high expectations despite the challenges of teaching in high poverty high schools.

The critical pedagogy doctrine professes the notion that education should liberate people to fight injustices against oppressed people in our society (Freire, 1970). The expectation that teachers are equipped to provide a “liberating” education assumes teachers are knowledgeable about the cultural, social, and political histories of the many
American immigrants who comprise the society. Gay (1993) points out that social
dissonance between teachers and students with regard to familial educational attainment,
social class, and residence continues to widen. She proposes that prospective teachers
should be prepared to function as cultural brokers, possessing and capable of
demonstrating the knowledge and skill base required to present an instructional program
that connects students, their experiences, and the curriculum.

The effective teachers tended to exhibit a strong appreciation for the diversity
Latinos bring to the learning environment. This trait is supported by Haberman’s fourth
function, to look beyond the “at-risk” status, and value the community as an asset to
student success. Successful teachers valued the input of parents and the community as
resources for fostering Latino student learning. Stanovich and Jordon (1998) suggest that
teachers who embrace diversity tend to have positive experiences with minorities. The
majority of effective teachers interviewed for this study dispelled the naïve notion that
overlooking diversity is appropriate; instead they noted the differences as providing a
richness that made diversity an advantage.

The effective teachers interviewed fostered learning environments for Latino
students through various methods, including their beliefs about their student’s families
and communities. Studies on teacher interaction with the larger community also support
the willingness to reach out to Latino students and families (Delgado-Gaiton, 1994;
Garcia, 2001). By taking the initiative to connect with the community, bonds of trust
develop. Such attempts may heighten teachers’ beliefs that they can overcome external
factors.
Preservice, Professional Development and Hiring Practices

As discussed in chapter two, recruiting and retaining effective teachers of Latino students is paramount in closing the achievement gap (Haycock & Huang, 2001). Our inability to support high-quality teaching in many high needs schools is driven not only by too few teachers coming in, but by too many going out, that is, by a staggering teacher turnover and attrition rate. In general, the turnover rate among teachers is significantly higher than for other occupations. As pointed out in chapter two, the effect of teachers leaving the profession is disproportionately felt in those schools serving Latino and African American communities. An alarming and unsustainable number of teachers are leaving teaching during their first few years of teaching. The Federal Government’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act, formerly known as No Child Left Behind, has stimulated a national effort to find highly qualified teachers for every classroom. But no teacher supply strategy will ever keep our classrooms staffed with quality teachers if we do not reverse the debilitating rate of teacher attrition. In order to close the achievement gap, law makers, district offices, and principals must commit to policy and practice that balance efforts to prepare high quality teachers of Latino students with strong strategies to support good teaching in the schools where these teachers are most needed. The focus on hiring practices, pre-service education, and professional development is fundamental in this effort.
Pre-service Education and Professional Development

The findings discussed in chapter four suggest the need to develop programs in which current teachers and prospective teachers are asked to consider the larger moral and social implications of their profession. This change would represent a significant change from the purely technical skill orientation common to teacher education and many schools’ professional development plans. Efforts must be made to better understand the impact that pre-service and professional development plans have on the achievement of Latino students. The inadequate tracking by institutions and schools and the host of confounding variables that cloud the relationship between teacher education and student performance make it difficult to see this link.

Teacher pre-service programs and school professional development plans cannot hope to prepare teachers who will be equally successful with all cultural and linguistic groups. Often the focus is on preparing teachers for “diversity.” For instance, curriculum development strategies using a dialogic approach have an even application; that is, the general technique for engaging in a critical pedagogy is generalized for any population of students, regardless of their age, ethnicity, or native language. The only required common condition is some level of oppression by a dominant culture.

The findings in this study suggest that new teachers not only would benefit from typical diversity preparation, but from targeted preparation for a specific cultural and linguistic group. The wide variations among such groups prohibit teacher education from preparing new teachers for every kind of student. Consider the different needs of African-American and Latino students with regard to language instruction. Teachers of Latino children must know how to teach English, an entirely new language, or, in some cases,
develop literacy in their students’ native language, one that will soon be supplanted by English (i.e., the work of a bilingual education teacher). By contrast, teachers of African-American students must understand how new *dialects* are acquired, a process that can result in a powerful meta-linguistic awareness. Of course there are many points of similarity between teaching a new language and teaching a new dialect, but linguists recognize important variations (Wolfram, 1991).

While both African-Americans and Latinos students have been subjected to marginalized treatment in mainstream culture, the two groups are quite different, especially when we consider their immigrant status. Many Latino students regularly visit relatives in Latin American countries, where links to their home culture are reinforced. African-American students have no comparable experience. Some researchers (e.g., Rumberger, 1991) have studied Latino K-12 students as a distinct group, implying that similar schooling features may succeed for one group while failing another. These points of difference, among many others, suggest that teacher preparation and school professional development plans could profit from a clear focus on specific populations.

The findings in this study suggest potential benefit from program changes in recruitment and content of pre-service and professional development programs. Teacher education must develop a well-articulated recruitment project with the local secondary schools and community colleges with the goal of adding more high quality teachers to the teaching force. Recruitment efforts alone may not be sufficient. The content of teacher education must be reformed so that new teachers of Latino youth know how to (a) work collaboratively within a team of language education specialists, paraprofessionals, and teachers, (b) teach English as a second language, (c) create a classroom of dialogic
inquiry, which is based on student knowledge, and (d) use student culture in developing curriculum. Reforms in teacher education programs that assist non-Latino pre-service teachers to understand Latino culture, especially recent immigrant culture, and that help new teachers work effectively with Latino English Learners offer promise for the education of Latino youth.

**Hiring Practices**

In a 2008 article for The New Yorker Magazine, columnist Malcolm Gladwell posed the question, “How do we hire when we can’t tell who’s right for the job?” He went on to give the account of Dan Shonka, an NFL football scout who discussed the challenges of identifying the skill set of a college football quarterback that would translate into NFL greatness. Shonka recounted several anecdotes of college quarterback talents who had all the skills thought necessary to thrive in the NFL only to end up as failures. Mr. Gladwell drew parallels to the current conditions districts and school administrators’ face when hiring teachers, especially for challenging urban settings. The problem, labeled by Gladwell as “the quarterback problem,” is that there are certain jobs where almost nothing you can learn about candidates before they start predicts how they will do once they are hired. So how do we know who to choose in cases like that? In recent years, a number of fields have begun to wrestle with this problem, but none with such profound social consequences as the profession of teaching.

The findings of this research suggest that the selection of teachers is just as, if not more important than, the nature of their preparation. What colleges and universities struggle to teach is the ability to relate to diverse children in poverty and to persist at a
job in a failing bureaucracy organized for the benefit of the adults and against the best educational interest of the children. As discussed in the previous section, learning pedagogical content in pre-service and professional development settings can be readily achieved, but the beliefs discussed in this chapter as “Pillars of Caring” are much more elusive. Content can be learned, but relationship skills and their undergirding ideology is much more challenging.

This ability to relate to Latino students and thrive in often challenging school settings was apparent in the effective teachers who participated in this study. Their beliefs and expectations are a result of their life experiences and the growth which comes from reflecting on these experiences. The challenge schools and districts face in replacing the aging baby boomer generation as they approach retirement can also be an opportunity. Schools and districts serving Latino students have the opportunity to seek candidates that match the beliefs discussed in this study. These schools and districts can partner with teacher preparation programs to recruit more Latino teachers as well as to provide clinical practice settings whereby both Latino and non-Latino teacher candidates work with and learn from effective teachers of Latino students. Individual schools can be made effective, and countless children within them can be saved if schools serving diverse children in poverty seek to hire better teachers who will stay. The teachers needed are available if school officials and policy makers target and commit to their selection and development.
Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study was limited to seven high schools within one school district, and focused on teacher interview data concerning Latino student success. In order to establish a better understanding of the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices and Latino student success, other research studies are suggested. Replication of this study at additional sites may support the generalization of this study. Schools with similar populations of Latino students in different districts and states may provide greater support of the findings of this study. Replication of this study with other ethnic populations may support these findings as well. There may be teacher traits that foster student success for all students of color; likewise, there may be teacher traits that are pertinent to specific cultures. Such findings would provide techniques that may foster student success in various facets, applicable to all levels of formal education, including elementary and middle school teachers.

Further investigation of the relationship between successful Latino students’ perceptions and identification of traits of effective teachers will strengthen the validity and reliability of this interview protocol. Continued use of interviews based on the constructs identified by this study may provide greater validity and reliability of this study’s findings. Triangulation of findings through classroom observations and interviews or surveys of students may support this study’s findings, and likely provide additional insights. The constructs identified by this study complement research on teacher quality and effectiveness, and provide tenets of successful teachers in diverse environments. Such investigation may also provide more data on possible degrees of the constructs exhibited by successful teachers. Such an investigation may challenge the
tendency by school districts to use evaluation criteria based solely on educational attainment for screening potential teachers.

In this study interviews were a good instrument for data collection, but they are not without limitations. The findings suggest that caring relationships can build levels of trust between Latino students and their teachers. However, as self-reporters, the teachers in this study are offering their perspectives of their actions. Outsider observations would provide corroboration for the teachers’ own perspectives. Likewise, further investigation of students’ perspectives on the role of caring would be important to verify the results of this study. Such an investigation would also enhance research on students’ perspectives on the importance of trust.

The role of the Latino community was discussed in chapter two, but was not a major topic of exploration. Further investigation may provide a methodology for parents and other community members to use to identify effective teachers. Such research may also identify parent issues concerning student success. Issues concerning legal status of the parents should be considered as a potential hindrance for participation. Fear that authorities may use documentation of participants is a possible obstacle. Also, familiarity with the local Latino community may provide key leaders who could advocate for community participation. Non-profit organizations, churches, and social organizations should be contacted for support of possible research.

**Conclusion**

Education is a key factor in maintaining the socioeconomic wellbeing of the United States. Latinos comprise the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population; however, their lack of academic success warrants attention. The purpose of this study
was to examine the beliefs and practices of secondary teachers who are seen as effective instructors in high schools with a significant Latino population who are living in low socioeconomic conditions. The findings suggest that effective teachers care deeply about their students and their practice. Teachers who successfully impact Latino students tend to exhibit a caring relationship with their students, characterized by trust, self-reflection, and support. Recognizing the benefits of diversity, successful teachers adjust instruction and learning strategies to actively engage Latino students. As a result, all students in a classroom benefit from a more global perspective of a given subject matter. There may be no dominant ethnic or racial population in the United States within the next 40 years. Enhancing diverse views within the educational process may properly prepare all students for the reality of the U.S. experience of this millennium. In strengthening the academic achievement of Latinos and all students, teachers may set the foundation for the continued economic and social viability of this country. Teachers can play a pivotal role in the process by believing that they are fully capable of fostering student success.
APPENDIX A
Subject Line: Effective Teacher Research Study

Hello Mr./Ms. High School Teacher,

I am currently a graduate student in the joint doctoral program in educational leadership with UCSD and CSUSM. I am conducting research on effective teaching of Latino students. Your principal has identified you as a teacher who is highly effective with Latino students. The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching practices that you believe account for the success of your Latino students.

I am requesting an interview with you to document your beliefs, attitudes, and practices. This information will provide the research community with valuable insight about best practices for the teaching of Latino students.

Your participation will require you to participate in an interview of about 60 minutes in length. In addition, you will be asked to have your students conduct an anonymous and voluntary online survey. Your participation is completely voluntary. In the final report, pseudonyms will be used for references to schools and teachers to ensure confidentiality. I realize that this is an extremely busy time for you; however, your participation will allow us to inform the educational community regarding the practice of school leaders. While I cannot guarantee that you will receive any benefits from participation in this study, your participation will allow you some self-reflection regarding your own pedagogy and instructional practice. There will certainly be benefits to the educational community at large regarding effective teaching practices with Latino students.

If you agree to this interview, please reply this email within 10 days so we can arrange a time either during you prep period or after school for the interview to take place.

Thank you,

Roman Del Rosario
Doctoral Candidate, UCSD & CSUSM
Work Phone: ___________________

Personal Contact Information:
email: roman.delrosario@gmail.com
Cell Phone: (619)710-9813
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Invitation to Participate

Roman E. Del Rosario, a graduate student at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego’s (UCSD) joint doctoral program, is conducting a study that seeks to identify practices that effective teachers of Latino students believe account for their successes. You are being contacted because you have been identified as an effective teacher of this particular student population by your principal.

This study has two principle objectives:

1. To identify teaching practices that effective teachers of Latino students believe account for their successes.
2. To better understand the beliefs and attitudes of teachers who are effective at teaching Latino students.

Description of Procedures

You will be interviewed individually. The conversational style interview will take approximately one hour and, with your permission, will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be provided a transcript of the interview for checking and clarifying any information. In addition, you will be asked to administer an online survey to your students in at least two of your classes. Students will be given an information sheet to take home explaining the purpose of the survey.

Risks and Inconveniences

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. You will give up personal time necessary to participate in the interview and review of the transcript. In addition, you will lose instructional time while your students complete the online survey.
**Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Participation**

Your interview data and the student survey responses will be kept confidential, available only to the research team for analysis purposes. Only the research team will listen to and transcribe the information you provide. The audio tapes will be destroyed following final analysis; no later than June 15, 2011. Pseudonyms for schools, districts, and teachers will be used to minimize the risk of identifiability. Participants will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and to eliminate any comments or references they feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations with respect to the district or school leadership. Interview responses will not be linked to your name or address, and there will be no follow-up sessions. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time without consequence. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate. In particular, your job evaluation will not be affected if you choose not to participate.

**Benefits**

Although your participation will yield minimal or no direct benefits to you, we believe that the study has the potential to positively affect teaching of Latino students.

**Questions**

This study has been approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Roman Del Rosario, roman.delrosario@gmail.com, (323) 620-5591, or the researcher’s advisor/professor, Dr. Patricia Stall, pstall@csusm.edu, (760) 750-4386. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.

_________________________________________                     ____________________
Participants Name                                  Date

_________________________________________
Participants Signature

_________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature

This document has been approved by Institutional Review Board at California State University San Marcos

Expiration Date: 6/9/2011
Interview Protocol

1. Describe how you bring your subject matter to life? What are examples of how you make your subject relevant?

2. What did you do to motivate your students when they are not engaged?

3. Can you give an example of something that good teachers believe? How are these beliefs manifested in your classroom?

4. Can you explain why so many Latino students drop out of high school?

5. What motivated you to become a teacher? Why do you remain teaching? How would you describe the relationship you have with your students?

6. Why do so many teachers burnout? What do you do to prevent this?

7. Can you describe a mistake you made as a teacher and what you did to correct it?

Please complete the following sentence:

8. When I see more Latinos in my classroom, I think…

9. Latino students come alive in the classroom when…

10. When Latino students fall short of my expectations, I…

11. I see the role of the Latino community in education as…

12. Ultimately, my responsibility to Latino students is…
Hello Mr./Ms. High School Principal,

I am currently a graduate student in the joint doctoral program in educational leadership with UCSD and CSUSM. I am conducting research on effective teaching of Latino students. In addition, I am an assistant principal at Castle Park High School. Your school has been selected to participate in a research study that is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation study focused on educational leadership. The purpose of this study is to identify the teaching practices that effective teachers of Latino students believe account for their successes in closing and/or narrowing the achievement gap.

I am requesting that you take a moment to reflect and provide me the names of your most effective teachers of 10th grade Latino students. Effectiveness should be measured by how well the students perform on either their CAHSEE or CST state tests, after they have had this particular teacher. Participants that agree to voluntarily participate will be interviewed for approximately one hour. They will be asked general questions regarding what they believe to be the practices they employ that enable Latino students to be successful. Please limit your selections to teachers who teach subjects that are assessed by either one of these assessments.

Once I am provided with names, participation will be completely voluntary. I realize that this is an extremely busy time for you; however, your participation will allow me to inform the educational community regarding the practices and beliefs of these effective teachers.
APPENDIX E
School District Consent for Research

Desert School District

*Educational Services*

To: Roman Del Rosario

From: Executive Director

Date: February 16, 2010

Subject: Research Project in SCUHSD

Mr. Del Rosario,

This email is to inform you that your request to do your research "Exploring the Beliefs, expectations, and practices of Effective Teachers of Latino Students" in Sweetwater Union High School district has been approved. I have a copy of your proposal.

Thank you

Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
REFERENCES


Douglass, Frederick. “Speech on the 24th anniversary of Emancipation,” Washington, DC 16 April 1886.


