

**EXPECTATIONS DIVERGENCE: EXPLORING WHITE TEACHERS’
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AT A DIVERSE
SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was designed to explore how primarily White educators describe their beliefs about student opportunity and achievement. In order to develop more equitable teaching practices, this study provides insights into the multi-dimensionality of teacher beliefs and expectations. Biases, prejudices, and socioeconomic inequities underlie the social context of teaching that guides practice, influences decision-making, and shapes what type of classroom interactions are valued. Teachers insensitive or unfamiliar with the needs of diverse learners make the understanding of required knowledge and skills difficult.

This case study design examined the experiences of educators at Heartfelt High School (pseudonym), undergoing reform in a suburban district in the northeastern United States. Archival data, collected in the 2011-2012 school year as part of a previous study of school reform effort, included semi-structured interviews collected from 10 participants at Heartfelt. Participants were teachers and administrators. Using a constant comparative method, the present study examined these educators and teacher beliefs. The researcher used an inductive process to make meaning of the archival data, allowing research questions to emerge concurrently with the constant comparative analysis focused on classifying data using the cloud-base program *Dedoose*. To understand the educators' descriptions, an Expectations Divergence framework emerged to recognize tensions in teacher beliefs. Administrators must be cognizant of teacher beliefs, knowledge, and behavior as a starting point to alter teacher practices. In order for this

change to happen, administrators must work with teachers to achieve social justice for all students.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, Walter Marvin Goff, Aggie Class of '60, in memoriam. I will forever remember dancing on top of your feet, your hand gently guiding me on my path.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Even with the whirling and humming of the copier machine and clanking of coffee mugs, teachers would often find sanctuary in the teacher's lounge. Here teachers chat about their day, stopping every so often when an administrator walks by. On one particular day, a teacher was excitedly sharing how her students designed an investigation on their own and then worked amongst themselves devising a plan to complete the project. She was even more impressed when they asked if they could extend their investigation into the next week. Upon hearing this, some teachers curled the corners of their lips and shook their heads expressing that those students must be in the gifted and talented program because that could never happen in their classes. This disbelief flowed like a wave over the lounge as other teachers would chime in about having classes full of "low readers" or special education students or "those kids who can't do anything except copy notes off the board." One teacher even growled as she stacked the graded papers she had been working on and expressed no surprise over the many failures. She lamented, "It makes no difference how I teach; they can't learn."

While it is difficult to speculate why these teachers chose divergent approaches to their teaching, it is important to understand how these varying perspectives influence teachers' practices. The one factor that would seem to be most important is teachers' dispositions. Research confirms that the quality of teacher classroom experiences influences the quality of teacher beliefs about themselves, their students, the school, and

the community (Skott, 2013). This cycle can be both positive and negative, a self-fulfilling prophecy tethering belief and practice. Good teaching is engaging, relevant, multicultural, and appealing to a variety of modalities and learning styles (Cole, 2008). As a school leader in a former suburban district that is now a highly diverse urban setting, patterns of differential expectation of student achievement are commonly observed. The beliefs of the teachers described above illustrate differences in low and high expectations that can create the tone of achievement or underperformance. Hamre, Hatfield, Pianta, and Jamil (2014) posited that the interactions between students and teachers are central to student achievement. Unfortunately, too little attention is paid to how teacher dispositions are requisite for student achievement.

Teaching takes place not only in classrooms, but also in schools and communities. No school exists outside its history and culture. The changing context of schools reflects the largest population growth in areas at the periphery of major cities, the suburbs. The life within cities has been a unique combination of the legacy of the WWII economic boom juxtaposed with increased competition of goods, services, and housing often labeled as urban and correlated with class and ethnicity (Juday, 2015). Urbanization heightened disparities in educational opportunities due to limited resources and social capital (Leana & Pil, 2006). Urban schools undergo the effects of poor social capital, lack of positive role models, and lack of networking (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). To ensure a successful educational experience for their children, the educated and middle-class residents of the urban areas moved away from the cities into the suburbs where they found affordable housing for their larger families. Unfortunately,

this migration helped to spread the burden of inner-city problems, such as lesser qualified teachers as well as housing discrimination practices that established housing re-segregation. In many respects, suburban schools have become more like urban systems. Suburban school districts that were once homogeneous are now more culturally and linguistically diverse (Weiner & Jerome, 2016). This shift in population is part of the national context within which teacher dispositions unfold. How teachers think about their students is central for successful teaching; therefore, the context of schools impact student achievement. How more diverse schools respond to changes in student population and address their students' complex needs require urgent scrutiny.

Without a sustained effort directed at closing the teacher gap, the persistent achievement disparities that are most pronounced in urban schools and districts will persist (Cammarota, 2007; Gaitan, 2012; Luna, Evans, & Davis, 2015). The often misnamed “achievement gap” encompasses historical, economic, political, and moral under-investments in the education of diverse learners. Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to this significant deficit as an “education debt” (p. 3) reflective of the tireless disparity that has historically persisted in American schools. She implored a shift in perspective requiring considerable and ongoing investments in education to close gaps created by disinvestment over the years; this shift includes a specific focus on closing the “teacher gap.”

Scholars urge an improvement to the teacher preparation programs to redress this reality (Flint, Maloch, & Leland, 2010; Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Recruitment and selection of teachers with culturally diverse knowledge, skills, and dispositions will

facilitate teaching in diverse schools (Haberman, 2005). The snapshot of U.S. teachers reveals a population that is 90% White, middle-class, and English-speaking (Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003). As things presently stand, the United States continues to prepare a homogenous teaching force for an increasingly diverse student body amidst persistent achievement disparities. Within this context, the belief structures, and their connections to instructional decisions, which in turn influence student learning, must be explored further (Alexander, 2008).

Motivational factors of teachers likewise affect the achievement of diverse student populations. The typical teacher is motivated by domain specific values of power, achievement, stimulation, self-direction, and universalism (Richardson, Karabenick, & Watt, 2014). Research further asserted that:

Teachers' internal motivational and emotional states, shaped by external forces, translate into demonstrable pedagogical behaviors and ultimately into student learning There is a compelling need to demonstrate whether and to what extent teachers' internal motivational and emotional states translate into desirable external outcomes, as expressed in their instructional practices or in student learning or achievement. (p. 155)

Teacher beliefs and values are animated by the wider socio-political context in America and are often reinforced by the district and local organizational systems. Teacher beliefs, therefore, generate both individual and collective impact on the ability of diverse students to successfully negotiate school and the classroom learning environments (Frenzel, Becker-Kurz, Pekrun, & Goetz, 2015).

Background to the Study

Dewey (1933) described beliefs:

It covers all the matters of which we have no sure knowledge and yet which we are sufficiently confident to act upon and also matters that we now accept as certainly true, as knowledge, but which nevertheless may be questioned in the future. (p. 116)

Teacher beliefs are based on values that are believed to be most important in their classroom, school, and philosophy of education (Rokeach, 1968).

Presently, high-stakes standardized achievement tests are the accepted measures of student learning by states and districts. For the past three decades, the persistent problem has been testing gaps between students of color and White students amidst rising proficiency targets on math and reading assessments. When framing the problem, reformers blame low teacher quality, ineffective traditional teacher preparation programs, and impact of deficit-centered teacher beliefs on student performance (Bogges, 2008). This problem is exacerbated in the urban environments where students are given under-prepared teachers and where the teacher/student demographics are disproportionate (Raible & Irizarry, 2010). Akiba, LeTendre, and Scribner (2007) confirmed the inequitable distribution of teachers and student access to a qualified teacher is significantly associated with higher student achievement gains. Weiner and Jerome (2016) insisted that teachers must be knowledgeable and mindful about the ways in which a child's membership in a social group may influence learning and school success.

If teacher beliefs inform their practice and impact student achievement, accountability must be taken when discrepancies between the two exist. Haberman (2005) illustrated the challenges and barriers facing teachers of diverse children in poverty by highlighting new procedures for recruitment. He recommended (a) the selection of individuals whose belief systems promote the view that teaching and schooling foster equity and justice for diverse students and (b) the practice of providing these teachers coaching opportunities from skilled mentors. These initiatives secured knowledgeable teachers who were effective and made a difference immediately in today's schools with diverse populations. Haberman's (2005) research revealed that after recruiting what he called "star teachers" and placing them with skilled mentors, 94% of the teachers of color remained successful in the profession a decade later.

Statement of the Problem

In an ongoing attempt to improve quality, American education has undergone a series of reforms. The latest reform, Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, seeks to foster innovative approaches to assessments using performance-based and instructional-embedded tests and technology support. These measures are an attempt to roll back many of the perceived shortcomings of No Child Left Behind that introduced widespread use of formal standardized tests and state and federal interventions for persistently underperforming schools and districts. Research has guided the profession by examining the link between testing outcomes and teacher quality during the standardized testing era. For instance, Grant, Stronge, and Ward (2011) analyzed classroom practices effectuating student achievement. They concluded that variations in

student achievement on standardized tests are correlated to teacher motivation, beliefs, and instructional skill-set. Teacher beliefs are manifested into instructional practices through teacher dispositions, what they say, what instructional choices they make, and/or how they act in classrooms toward students.

While the link between classroom practice and teacher beliefs is a universal concern, the performance gap between urban and suburban schools requires specific attention be paid to schools with large populations of ethnically and economically diverse learners. While traditionally defined as “urban” (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010), demographic shifts, immigration patterns, and the gentrification of urban centers may require a reconsideration of a narrow definition of “urban.”

Over the past 20 years, diversified districts and schools have emerged as post-suburban communities that have experienced increased cultural, ethnic, economic, and linguistic diversity. Many of these districts have more in common with the conditions of schooling in urban centers than they do with traditional suburban schools (Kincheloe, 2010; Weiner & Jerome, 2016). Today’s suburban schools are in the midst of a transition in student demographics with over half of the students of color attending suburban schools. Outdated stereotypes of a “suburban district” no longer fit the reality of diversity, and these districts have no policies or practices specifically designed to prepare teachers to enact culturally responsive pedagogy (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). As these student bodies diversify, teachers need a different approach, or these districts will continue to perpetuate the “teacher quality gap.”

Goldhaber, Lavery, and Theobald's (2015) research showed that this gap is the difference between teacher years of service compared to indicators of students labelled in need and low achievement.

Banks (1997) stated, "Citizenship education in the United States has historically reinforced dominant-group hegemony" (p. 4). Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, and Noguera (2011) demonstrated how unchecked deficit perspectives in teachers contribute to high disciplinary referrals for students of color and few opportunities to demanding accelerated courses. Unfortunately, numerous studies have confirmed that student learners in diverse environments are often given teachers with little regard to the impact of teacher beliefs on practice and learning (Brandon, 2003; Dudley-Marling, 2007; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Gorski, 2011; Sleeter, 2004; Valencia, 2012; Yosso, 2005). The present study explored teacher beliefs and how they contribute to teaching and learning in a diversified high school located in a middle-class diverse suburban district.

Scope of the Problem

This case study was a descriptive secondary analysis of teacher beliefs and expectations and practices at Heartfelt High School (pseudonym) located in a middle-class, culturally-diverse suburb. The achievement gap at this particular school was three years in reading and math although the African American students were from middle-class college-educated families and, therefore, did not face the traditional challenges associated with urban communities.

Nevertheless, significant disparities between Heartfelt High School and other high schools throughout the state existed. Disaggregated mathematics data suggest

disparities in student academic achievement by racial/ethnic groups: Black and White students had a 40-point difference and Hispanic and White students had a 25 to 30-point difference.

Similarly, Black and White students’ reading scores showed a 30-point difference, and Hispanic and White students’ scores showed a 13-point difference (see Table 1).

Table 1

State Tests Scale Scores by Race of Student for Heartfelt High School (Adapted from Generation 3 Connecticut Academic Performance Text [CAPT], 2017)

Test	2011	2012	2014
Mathematics			
Black	241.0	235.0	227.0
Hispanic	249.0	251.0	242.0
White	280.0	276.0	265.3
Reading			
Black	229.0	219.0	220.5
Hispanic	231.0	236.0	237.3
White	258.0	249.0	251.3

Heartfelt High School has a student population of 1301 students; the racial/ethnic breakdown was 51% Black, 30% White, 12.8% Hispanic, 4.2% Asian, and less than 1%

two or more races The school staff was composed of 118 teachers, of which 113 were female and 5 were male. The ethnic makeup of the faculty was typical of most schools with 115 teachers being White and 3 teachers of color (Fieldnotes, August 3, 2016). The teachers' and instructors' average years of service was 10.9, and over 69% of Heartfelt's teachers had at least a master's degree. The teaching force was also very stable with a retention rate of 87% from the previous year. If the low achievement of students of color at Heartfelt High School is related to teacher beliefs, then reform efforts must also address the belief systems that differentiate effective and ineffective teachers (Alderman, 2013).

Research Questions

This descriptive qualitative case study is inductive and designed to explore the role of beliefs and expectations in teaching and how they might influence student learning. This study features an analysis of teacher interviews at a diverse high school that was collected in 2012 as a part of a larger study to understand the causal factors that underlie the test score gap at Heartfelt High School. This analysis was steered by subsequent questions:

1. How do primarily White educators, in a highly diverse suburban middle-class high school, describe their beliefs about student opportunity and achievement?
2. How do White educators describe how their beliefs inform their practices related to student opportunity and achievement?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to recognize how primarily White teachers describe their beliefs about student opportunity in a highly diverse, suburban, middle-class high school and the influence of those beliefs on achievement of students. This case study addressed the urgency of the responsibility of suburban high schools to restructure school climate to provide greater opportunity for its diverse student population by addressing the beliefs of teachers. The research findings will provide insight for those who impact the mechanisms of the suburban school reform, including teachers, administrators, and stakeholders.

Significance of the Study

Seminal research regarding teacher beliefs and their impact on student achievement exists (Bandura, 1993; Pajares & Schunk, 2001). While there are many studies on the shifting demographics of districts (Ahram et al., 2011; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012; Frey, 2011; Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2014; Rury, & Saatcioglu, 2011), this study was performed in highly diverse suburban, rather than urban school. This study is unique in that it is one of the few qualitative studies that reveal the voices of practicing teachers. Through teacher interviews, this case study will bring to the forefront the multi-dimensionality of teacher beliefs and elaborate on an underlying construct of teachers' commitment to a reform agenda that guides practice, influences decision-making, and shapes what types of interactions are valued. This study is different in its real-life context of the school and investigation of the complex

relationships between beliefs, practices, and contexts from a variety of data points that are beneficial in looking at complex phenomena.

The link between student achievement and teacher expectations is regarded as both a cause and effect to the achievement gap (Brophy, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gay & Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This study will assist educators to understand reform on the local level and the ways in which teacher beliefs should be addressed as a prerequisite for promoting gains in student achievement.

Definition of Terms

For this research to be clearly understood and evaluated, it is necessary to describe critical terms:

Culture: A social group's design for surviving in and adapting to its environment (Bullivant, 1989).

Cultural awareness: "Becoming functionally aware of the degree to which behavior is culturally informed and influenced" (Schram, 1994, p. 63).

Culturally responsive teaching: "Classroom instruction more consistent with the cultural orientation of ethnically diverse students" (Gay, 2010, p. 29).

Diverse: "Differences between members of socially-defined groups" (Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003, p. 802).

Inopportunity: "Individual opportunity is a byproduct of educators' conformity to the tenets of deficit thinking, and the normalization of this praxis within school cultures adopting and acting upon the problem-paradigm institutionalized within school cultures, policies, and practices." "Inopportunity within school cultures normalizes poor

instruction with expectations tied to mediocrity, unfair discipline, and disconnections between communities and schools” (James & Lewis, 2014, pp. 269-270).

Opportunity: “All students should have access to high level courses that will allow them to meet performance and content standards and provide them with good career opportunities (Schwartz, 1998, p. 29).

School climate: “The set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behavior of each school’s members” (Hoy & Miskel, 2005, p. 5).

Suburban: “Not in the central city Limited resources to serve growing numbers of low-income and minority students” (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012, p. 11).

Teacher attitude/beliefs: “Inferences made by an observer about underlying states of expectancy” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 2); “speaks to an individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition; a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do” (Pajares, 1992, p. 316).

Teacher perceptions: The lens through which teachers view and evaluate the behaviors of others (La Vonne, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003); a determinant to student achievement and actual performance (Lewis, Pitts, & Collins, 2002).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Given the persistent nature of achievement disparities in the United States, previous research has emerged to examine the nature of the problem and to inform sustainable remedies. This chapter presents a literature review to explore the extant of teacher beliefs and expectations, and their influence on student outcomes for culturally diverse learners. This chapter begins with a synthesis of concepts that will attend to the framework for the present study. Next, the literature review will define and detail the major conceptualizations of teacher beliefs and teacher expectations.

Conceptual Framework

The structures and functions of teacher beliefs influence classroom practices and the expectations of diverse learners' achievement (Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1982; Ertmer, 2005; Fang, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rosenthal, 1991). Since almost 90% of teachers in America are females and White, the ideology of Whiteness is intertwined in our schools (Matias & Zembylas, 2014). The experiences of White teachers are historically, politically, and socially connected with issues of students of diversity. The interplay between the collective expectations of teachers, the social nature of self-fulfilling prophecies, and the competing social context within schools illuminate the nature of teacher efficacy. Effectuating student achievement implicates the habituated effects of Whiteness that allows resistance and unsettling degradation of

marginalized students. Teachers must be unyielding to move toward action and reflection when teaching diverse students.

Teacher Efficacy

While teacher efficacy will not produce proficient achievement when students lack the needed skills, students' values can affect their behavior will end in positive results or avoid activities that may lead to negative consequences (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000; Freire, 1974; Vygotsky, 1978) and saw learning as a social performance, where educators and students produced knowledge collectively.

The three concepts of professional teaching practice, the social context of teaching, and teaching capacity for student opportunity are essential to the nature and quality of teacher and student interaction. To teach all students with today's standards, teachers' professional practice must incorporate a honed craft and a flexibility to relate the concepts to students' everyday lives. This foundation of pedagogical awareness empowers teachers to connect to their students (Shulman, 1987). The professionalism of teaching is student-centered and adaptable to address the needs of their students. This concept, however, is negotiated through the social context of teaching.

Teaching practices have transformed in the past 200 years from the predominant method of teaching through recitation, to mastery of the textbook, to natural teaching to the current collaborative conversations (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). In the past, the student role was passive, and few teachers made any effort to adapt instruction to individual differences. Now, the social context of teaching involves opportunities for give and take between a challenging teacher and engaged students. The complex

interactions among personal, political, and social, factors in exploring achievement of students is linked to the social context of teaching.

Student efficacy, however, is often diminished by issues of race, ethnicity, and language (Nieto, 2010). By affirming diversity, inequitable opportunities for students may begin to reverse discrimination in teachers' classrooms. Freire (2005) established the conditions for learning: "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry we pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (p. 72). Teacher approaches using critical pedagogies (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1974; Giroux, 1989; Grant, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) demonstrated the consolidated practices needed to be fully committed to the ideal of social justice within our schools.

Too often there are competing ideologies that impede the transformation of those structures and conditions within schools for social justice. These divergent views and perspectives are demonstrated by the reform initiatives in our schools. These critical perspectives prevent the autonomous participation in schooling by teachers, students, and community members. Gaps in the research fail to address the harmful narrow-minded policies and programs in education and the deliberately ignorant practices of teachers' unresponsiveness to the diversity in their classroom. Dewey (1916) cautioned even today:

A society which makes provisions for participation in its good of all members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is insofar democratic. Such a

society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social change. (p. 115)

This study was designed to explore how primarily White educators describe their beliefs about student opportunity and achievement. In order to develop more equitable teaching practices, this study offers understandings into the multi-dimensionality of teacher expectations and beliefs. Particularly as various stakeholders view their roles in reform and the reform's effect on the school differently, it is important to look at teacher beliefs and expectations; then deconstruct these to contribute to the conversation of meaningful learning opportunities for all students when framing student achievement. Considering the failure of so many urban school reforms, it is critical to deliberate how competing expectations may be sabotaging otherwise workable solutions, resulting in school failure. Numerous researchers have urged systemic change, but in fact, teacher beliefs and expectations warrant more consideration (Hargreaves, 2000; Lipman, 1998; Thompson, Warren, & Carter, 2004).

Whiteness

Everyone has a culture group and each culture has social norms. This socialization is influenced by class, ethnicity, gender, language, and religion. Through interactions with other cultural groups, persons gain and maintain hegemonic indulgences related to race as an organizing force in U.S. society. The term "hegemonic understandings" denotes internalized habits of social organization (Picower, 2009). From

these hegemonic understandings, prejudices are developed about groups or individuals and groups considered distant from in-groups or those who we identify with the most.

Being White refers to ancestry from the European continent. The concept of Whiteness reveals methods that Whites profit from formal and social configurations, though invisible to the normative group (Dyer, 2008). One of the privileges of Whiteness is the ability to ignore, dismiss, and even deny the reality experienced by the diverse students in schools; however, Whiteness lacks meaning without non-Whiteness constituting its boundaries (Applebaum, 2010). In effect, Whiteness is systemic and prevalent in schools throughout the nation. Developing pedagogies include emergent affective relationships lacking explicit questioning of past, knowledge, and involvements (Zembylas, 2012). Teaching for student success is about exposing the normative implications of Whiteness in order to resist and disrupt the degradation of non-dominant communities of students. Teachers must be resolute to discursively move between action and reflection.

Social factors, such as the racial context of society, impact teacher beliefs, school reform, and student achievement (Henry, 2013). It is an inescapable part of life in America, yet racism is entrenched in cultural realization and establishments that seem judicious and inoffensive (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery, 2004). Racism is generally a “dysconscious” act—it is “an uncritical habit of mind including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (King, 1991, p. 135). King contended that this racism permits numerous teachers to continue unaware to fundamental inequities and the

effects of White norms and privileges on their perceptions. Undoubtedly, schools must attend to the needs and welfare of particularly African Americans and Latinos, then negative stereotypes, low expectations, and ethnic misapprehensions believed by teachers require recognition, confrontation, and dismantlement.

Role Model Theory

Startling racial composition of teachers in America 90% of the K-12 teaching force is White (National Education Association, 2004) while almost half of the schools do not have a single teacher of color on staff (Irvine, 2003). Many teachers are White, female, suburban, and Christian and are hesitant to work in urban schools but are more inclined to teach students whose circumstances are comparable to themselves (Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017).

Teachers often serve as role model for their students in their practice of communication, instruction, and curriculum design (Ferguson, 2003). A teacher's racial individuality engenders a role-model consequence that involves student exertion, assurance, and eagerness (Clewell & Villegas, 1997). For Black students, the presence of a Black teacher encourages a comfortable feeling irrespective of the teacher's authentic performance. Another passive teacher effect is "stereotype threat" (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003) and refers to the prospect that, in circumstances where students recognize stereotypes, for instance Black students with White teachers, students practice an trepidation that hampers their consequent achievement.

Teachers are further concerned with students who are similar in their racial or ethnic experience (Ferguson, 2003). Furthermore, in a study by Taylor (1979), White

teachers provided less training and fleeting, positive comments when articulated earlier of the student's race.

Over the past 20 years, diversified districts and schools have emerged as post-suburban communities, experiencing increased cultural, ethnic, economic, and linguistic diversity; and now many have more in common with the conditions of schooling in urban centers than they do with traditional suburban schools. The underachievement of Black students in suburban settings is a byproduct of social class differences rather than race-based inequalities (Ferguson, 2002). Diversification of suburban schools cause increased segregation within and in between suburban districts (Reardon, Yun, & Chmielewski, 2012). In the 21st century, urban educators must continue efforts to transform schooling in urban centers, while providing sustained attention to diversified urban school and districts.

Dispositions

Many can recall from our school experiences the outstanding teacher who possessed the ability to make each student feel worthy and capable. This memorable teacher had an overall approach that supported learners' achievement. The profession of teaching is so multidimensional that few can effectively answer the call to serve, particularly with the increasing emphasis on accountability in the classroom. Teachers today must possess dispositions, knowledge, and skills to support student gains in achievement.

Human factors are primarily responsible for teacher effectiveness. The National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) Online Glossary has the

following entry: *Dispositions*—“The professional practices that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities, and affect student achievement; will also affect an educator’s own professional growth” (p. 15). Melton, Mallory, and Green (2010) defined dispositions as “values, beliefs, and attitudes; invoke concepts of a wide range of values, such as integrity and honesty, and beliefs” (pp. 46-47). For the purpose of this study, dispositions are defined as one’s beliefs put into action (Hill-Jackson & Stafford, 2017). Dispositions are understood from the viewpoint of the person exhibiting a core belief and will manifest itself by intentional and unintentional behavior that in turn will be evident to students.

Findings from disposition research generated five capacities that distinguished clearly between good and poor helpers (Combs, Miser, & Whitaker, 1999) and were subsequently been used to work with teachers (Usher et al., 2003): (a) empathy, (b) view of others, (c) view of oneself, (d) authenticity, and (e) purpose and vision. Teachers with empathy are committed to building relationships. Those with a positive interpretation of others believe in trust. Still, those with a positive view of self, have a sense of self-adequacy. These teachers possessing authenticity seek individual-professional alignment. Finally, teachers must have meaningful purpose and vision.

Dispositions are chiefly learned as a result of involvements connected to the ego (Freeman, 2007). The proposed five dispositions mentioned above are normal developments of the rudimentary human need for self-adequacy (Diez, 2007). It is imperative that teachers be free to their dispositions (Wilkerson & Lang, 2007). The development of these perceptual qualities evolves when one feels loved, respected, and

admired by others (Wasicsko, 2001). Only once teachers can identify with others can they mature successfully and attend to students' needs (Thornton, 2006). The moral and ethical dimensions of teaching must foster dispositions toward ethnicity (Major & Brock, 2003).

In 2006, NCATE included dispositions, because the organization "believed that the time had come for teacher educators to pay attention not merely to knowledge and skill development and teaching and learning but also to the moral and ethical development of teachers" (Wise, 2006, p. 5). These technical dispositions include five propositions for professional development: (a) Teachers are committed to students and their learning; (b) Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students; (c) Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning; (d) Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and (e) Teachers are members of learning communities (Wise, 2006). Colleges of Education have become the center of dispositions. The limitation of these guidelines is the over-reliance in the development and preparation of teachers. While they serve as valuable reflective tools to gauge a teacher's individual commitment to classroom instruction, this area is subjective and biased.

The beliefs and behaviors of pre-service teachers were studied for five decades yielding seven mid-range functions identified as relational dispositions that differentiated teachers as "Star" teachers (Haberman, 1995). These relational dispositions are: (a) persistence, (b) protection and value of student learning, (c) theory into practice, (d) approach to children in poverty or placed at risk, (e) professional versus

personal orientation to students, (f) burnout, and (g) fallibility (Haberman, 1995). These qualities have been used to predict who will remain in teaching within highly bureaucratic school systems and those who will quit (Hartlep & McCubbins, 2013).

Teacher Beliefs and Teacher Expectations

To improve quality, American education has undergone a series of reforms in response to the political, economic, and historical climate. Stemming from the urgency of the document, *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), the nation's education system was purported to be inequitable and demanded the preparation for "the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world" (p. 5). The latest iteration of federal education law, Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, seeks to foster innovative approaches to assessments using performance-based and formative assessments as well as technological support (Klein, 2015). These measures aim to foster an education system that will provide both equity and excellence for all American students. The Every Student Succeeds Act evolved from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which brought about the standards-based movement and strives to maintain the vision of Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

As a result of these reform initiatives, efforts have shifted toward student achievement, consequently highlighting the significance of the teacher as the central component in the classroom who must continually regulate to the unpredictability of learning. Fives and Buehl (2012) posited that classroom processes are significantly shaped by teacher beliefs and serve as predictive mechanisms in teacher practices

(Abrami, Poulsen, & Chambers, 2004), student achievement (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002), and experiences.

Teacher Beliefs

A belief may be defined as an individual idea to be correct (Schwitzgebel, 2013). Beliefs appear to be one of the building blocks of systemic sensible thought. Why are beliefs important to teaching? Beliefs are the maps by which one navigates (Schwitzgebel, 2013). Beliefs are the perceptions that teachers develop about themselves, students, learning, and instruction (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). To further accurately define beliefs, Pajares (1992) stated that “It will not be possible for researchers to come to grips with teachers’ beliefs without first deciding what they wish ‘belief’ to mean and how this meaning will differ from that of similar constructs” (p. 308). Pajares (1992) challenged researchers to define beliefs with specificity.

Research provides a consensus that personal pre-dispositions are essential to teaching (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). The reviewed literature did not speak to the obvious nature of beliefs, but that teacher beliefs are inherent (Kagan, 1992; Osisioma & Moscovici, 2008). Teacher beliefs are characterized as information of people, places, and their relationships (Fang, 1996). Furthermore, teacher beliefs are not socialized, but require active interpretation of all experiences (Sexton, 2004). Teacher beliefs seem to be moderately steady and unaffected to adjustment (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Herrmann & Duffy, 1989). Scholars have found that root beliefs sort new knowledge (Bryan, 2012; Levin & He, 2008; Richardson, 2003; Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004). Discussion of teachers’ beliefs must then recognize how they are

formed and how individuals within teacher-student and teacher-administrator interactions of power relations are constantly negotiated to impact the work of teachers.

Elements of teacher beliefs. Fives and Buehl (2012) reviewed 300 articles related to teacher beliefs and found that teacher beliefs could be framed by (a) self, (b) context or environment, (c) content or knowledge, (d) specific teaching practices, (e) approach to teaching, and (f) students. Initially a context-dependent view of beliefs is based on the specific situation presented (Verjovsky & Waldegg, 2005). In contrast, a context-independent perspective suggests that teachers embrace legitimately rational beliefs (Hermans, van Braak, & Van Keer, 2008). Hermans et al. (2008) rejected this simple dichotomy of either context-dependent or context-independent and argued that teacher beliefs are influenced by the larger cultural context beyond their classrooms. Without a doubt, the contextual grounding of beliefs manifested by the teacher behavior and language is crucial to understanding White teacher interaction with diverse populations. Another related construct collective teacher efficacy brings clarity to how schools differ in the attainment of a mission and vision to educate their students and relates to teachers' job satisfaction (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000) by mirroring teachers' perceptions of the capabilities of the whole faculty to positively affect student outcomes.

Teacher beliefs and student achievement. An early study of teacher beliefs by Oliver (1953) conducted with 119 teachers representing kindergarten through the eighth grade suggested that learning occurs best when connected to the interests and experiences of the learner. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) conducted a seminal study that established that teacher beliefs regarding student achievement may possibly develop

a self-fulfilling prophesy. Once teachers were communicated that definite collections of students were labeled either high or low, they treated the “high-performing” group more positively than students labeled “low performing.” Yet, in reality, the student groups were not based upon student ability.

The Teacher Beliefs Study (Abelson, 1979) examined the facets of schooling in urban settings and extensions into suburban areas, including the myriad of avenues to restructure aspects of schooling. Abelson’s study provides research on the nature of cognition of teachers and insights to the mechanisms of urban education characteristics such as inclusivity and a belief in generally distributed intelligence. Additionally, teacher belief research by Nespor (1987) studied teachers who stated a belief in innate intelligence and believed that the intelligence of their students was distributed along a bell curve. Consequently, patterns of beliefs and interactions with students were more favorable and supportive of students deemed more naturally intelligent.

Scholars agree that the effects of differential teacher beliefs sustain differences in student achievement (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Cooper, 1979; Fennema, Peterson, Carpenter, & Lubinski, 1990; Good, 1987). These studies demonstrated that self-efficacy beliefs increase the prospective to create the conditions that nurture and maintain student achievement. Likewise, Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) found that student achievement improves when students have more ownership of their school community, and when students have a say in how learning happens, a renewed relevance and authenticity to classrooms and school reform efforts emerge.

Unfortunately, some teachers have beliefs grounded in deficit thinking. Warren's (2002) findings support that 70% of the teachers believed negative opinions about their students who were poor and middle-class and reflected lower expectations, and a lack of teaching efficacy that effectuates low academic achievement. Warren (2002) found that low student achievement is the result of the following teacher beliefs:

1. Poor students have less ability,
2. Low social class causes poor behavior.
3. Second language learners have less ability,
4. Students can't learn if they come from deficient family backgrounds

Haberman (2005) brought forward comparable findings of pre-service teachers that suggest that less effective teachers are more likely to leave urban districts because their beliefs largely view urban learners and communities in negative ways. School systems need to analyze and question outside forces that may have contributed to poor student achievement (Donnor, 2013). Therefore, teacher beliefs are critical for reform since beliefs mold views and influence instructional behaviors that, in turn, can contribute to student performance (Kiraly, 2014).

Historical perspective of teacher beliefs. Nesper (1987) studied teachers who believed in innate intelligence distributed along a bell curve. This study involved in-class observations of students grouped by ability and given demanding tasks and assessments. Teachers encouraged competition by providing incentives and consequences. The result was obvious gaps in achievement. Data collected via videotaped interviews focused on the teacher beliefs about how the school

administration and the community did or did not influence teacher classroom practices. Teachers' behaviors were reported as products of intentions or thought processes, yet they were not the sole determinants of action. The critical limitation in Nespor's (1987) study was that little attention was given to how intentions are shaped by school environments and how thought processes are produced through the interaction of teacher beliefs and contextual constraints. By contrast, teachers in the study by Weinstein et al. (2004) believed in multiple abilities and intelligence applied dynamic, collaborative, and flexible groupings with a rigorous curriculum and differentiated performance assessments. These practices yielded a supportive, inclusive, and academically challenging classroom environment.

The teacher beliefs' research conducted in the 1990s attempted to cultivate foretelling compassions of the relationships between teacher beliefs and practices so that attitude inventories could be used in the selection of teachers (Fang, 1996; Haney, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 1996; Readence, Konopak, & Wilson, 1991; Vacc & Bright, 1999). Teacher self-efficacy scale inventories assess teacher beliefs about their value (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999). The aim of these studies was to understand the characteristics of teachers' discernment and worldview. Research at the beginning of the 21st century focused on teacher beliefs and their relationship in understanding how teachers view of their classroom (Farrell & Lim, 2005; Hursh, 2007; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

A considerable amount of research reveals that teachers embrace beliefs about students that maintain distinct expectations and management grounded on race and

ethnicity. A recent study by Schein (2010) supported this idea and found that the first source of influence on teacher beliefs consists of the individual's goals, knowledge, and personal beliefs. The second source involved cues from different elements of the organizational environment. These sources are connected to the influence of the social context of schooling develop on the building of individual understanding and beliefs within the organization (Schein, 2010).

In the last 10 years, research on teacher beliefs has shifted to highlighting the revolution of teacher philosophy and insightful practices (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Schön, 1987). Nieto's (2010) study of teacher beliefs concerned the students' cultural capital and the impact of power and status in the classroom among other students and faculty members. Her study revealed how teachers must recognize that racism destructively influences diverse students and their capacity to efficaciously convey school. With increased classroom diversity, Heilig and Darling-Hammond (2008) believed more research in teacher beliefs is needed to further educate teachers in culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education.

The greatest challenge cited in the literature was the struggle in altering teacher practices and beliefs. The social context of schooling wields authoritative stimuluses on teachers' emerging views and understandings (Carey, 2004; Jennings & Sohn, 2014). Many beliefs are value-laden. Educational stakeholders must contemplate prudently prior to endeavoring to transformation beliefs lacking attention to the ecological nature of those beliefs.

Teacher beliefs and educational policy. From the perspective of policy, educators need to explore the influence on teacher views, behaviors, and professional education and training. Any of the previous perceptions will alter underlying explanations. Darling-Hammond & Youngs (2002) found that formal teacher preparation predicts higher student achievement; however teacher cognitive and verbal ability and content knowledge are more essential than certifications (Paige, 2002).

The literature suggested that the educational policy context of the high-stakes testing environment contributed to beliefs and practices that drive educational inequality (Au, 2011; Carey, 2004; Jennings & Sohn, 2014). Moreover, high-stakes standardized testing governs classroom practice by placing restrictions on the types of opportunities for students. Such limited opportunities only further enhance the academic disparities while under the guise of working toward reducing these academic disparities for diverse student populations.

Teacher Expectations

Teachers and administrators can often be heard talking about the significance of high expectations for the achievement of students. In the popular movie, *Stand and Deliver*, mathematics teacher Jaime Escalante was shown telling faculty colleagues, “Students will rise to their level of expectations” (Musca & Menéndez, 1988). Indeed, teachers in schools with high student achievement have higher student expectations than do teachers in relatively less effective ones (Brophy, 1985; Edmonds, 1979; Proctor, 1984).

The concept of expectancy has been regarded as an explanation of human behavior (Bandura, 1986) based on belief about particular outcomes. Individuals affirming beliefs about their abilities and expects positive outcomes has greater self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Individuals' sense of low self-efficacy weighs heavily toward engaging in low-risk responsibilities. Personal goals are also believed to provide direction for one's behavior (García & Pintrich, 1991). In short, teachers are as effective as they expect themselves to be within a wider context of expectations.

Elements of teacher expectations. Students often succeed or fail according to teacher expectations of them. Jussim and Harber (2005) found that the self-fulfilling prophecies of students take place because teacher demeanor is in a different way toward high- and low-performing students. Specifically, their findings support that teachers frequently are emotionally warmer and additionally helpful to high-performing students by responding richer and more affirming feedback, teaching students more rigorously, and providing more occasions to demonstrate mastery. Further illustrating this concept would be if a teacher has high expectations for children, thinks them capable, and expects them to do well, the teacher is likely to attempt to teach more content or to create a more positive, affective climate, thus resulting in higher achievement.

Conversely, when a teacher has low expectations and thinks children will probably not do well, the teacher might be less likely to offer more advanced and more challenging material and allow students to exert less effort in school (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Farkas, 1996). The teacher might even unwittingly discourage learning by creating a less congenial atmosphere for the students—less

attention, encouragement, or positive feedback for example (Nash, 2012). The literature on teacher expectations characteristically highlights connections between teachers and their students and explores teachers' obligations for the achievement of students (Lee & Smith, 2001).

Teacher expectations linked to student achievement. Jussim's (1989) findings included, "Teacher expectations are accurate because they create self-fulfilling prophecies" (p. 478). Similarly, teacher expectations and their impact on student achievement are associated with racial categories (Lewis, 2003). Stereotypic images provide group members with reduced social status when suggested that African Americans students are not as intelligent as White students (Perry et al., 2003). Expectations seem to function differently, however, for different teachers, different students, and probably under different circumstances (Brophy, 1983; Good & Brophy, 2008).

Since the Rist (1970) and Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) landmark studies nearly a half-century ago, several proposals about teacher expectancies have been put forth, but the most noteworthy is that "teacher expectations predicted student achievement" (Jussim & Eccles, 1992, p. 958). Further studies show that once teachers ensure high anticipations, believe in their students, and are accountable offer students more opportunities, then students perform better (Feldlaufer, Midgley, & Eccles, 1988; Lee & Loeb, 2000; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1988; Stipek & Daniels, 1988). Moreover, irrespective of students' aptitudes, once teachers believe in students' prospectives, students sense competency, commitment, and achievement (Brophy, 1983;

Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Conversely, when teachers do not trust students, maintain low expectancies, and doubt students' ability to succeed because of a perceived lack of competency or low cognitive abilities, their negative beliefs act as a self-fulfilling prophecy and greatly interfere with students' self-perceptions and learning (Goddard et al., 2001). Students inevitably become aware of their teachers' perceptions and are influenced by them, especially in schools located in underserved communities where these negative beliefs are observed more frequently (Alexander, Entwisle, & Thompson, 1987). Teachers of successful students are more likely to experience repeated success and in turn, contribute to and consolidate these students' positive beliefs (Caprara et al., 2006).

Teacher expectations' studies. Most public secondary schools attempt to mold teachers through a variety of procedures and mechanisms designed to make individual values and expectations correspond with those of the school organization. Often bureaucratic structures maintain a hierarchy of authority, division of labor, and specific policies and procedures (Ingersoll, 2009). Consequently, a distinctive climate is produced in which teachers are expected to adopt an orientation consistent with the established school organization. As a result, subcultures manifest from the structures of expectations already in place in departments' on-grade levels, or from veteran teachers rallying to protect a dying culture from a new one (Muhammad, 2009). Muhammad illustrates how teacher subculture groups respond differently to block scheduling so some teachers may band together to oppose the idea and push back not only on issues surrounding scheduling, but also on efforts to introduce modifications such as adding an

intervention period. Teacher leaders may want to consider trying to influence their peers to embrace subcultures that are more of a positive influence toward their common mission and vision of student success (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003).

Current education reorganizations and the related modifications in professional anticipations have predestined that matters of teacher competence and expert distinctiveness are being challenged at both the certification level and classroom instruction (Sachs, 2001). With democracy and managerial professionalism often in competition in the collaborative nature of professional learning communities, leadership determines how the staff behaves. Often administrators will endeavor to accelerate the progression of school development by implementing partnerships and controlling circumstances that nurture it (Anderson, 2004). As teacher practices become more controlled, teacher self-sufficiency is reduced, and the new approaches and techniques meant to support teaching actually reduce teachers' motivation (Sadker, Zittleman & Sadker, 2012).

A school with a toxic culture may have teachers who are satisfied with their performance; however, their teaching may not be aligned with the ultimate goal of fostering student achievement. Their purpose may be self-serving to simply protect what they value: themselves. One of the hallmarks of a toxic school culture is the ability of the staff to hide their beliefs (Tyler & Boelter, 2008). A new teacher, a teacher lacking administrative support, or a teacher ready to retire may succumb to the toxic culture just to fit in. Unfortunately, this toxic coalition minimizes any efforts these teachers expend toward student success. The mission of what is best for the students takes a back seat to

what is best for the teachers themselves (Woolfolk-Hoy, Hoy, & Davis, 2009). The cycle begins. Teachers prioritize their own survival over the mission of school improvement; their vision is mired as they lower their regard for their students' success.

Teacher expectations have been suggested as one cause to the achievement gap (Ferguson, 1998; Rist, 1973; Weinstein et al., 2004). Studies purport that some teachers substantiate their expectations for student achievement on the ethnicity of the student in that teachers expect more from European American and Asian American students than from their African American and Latino peers (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985). Research findings from Brophy and Good (1970), Darley and Fazio (1980), and Weinstein and Middlestadt (1979) support (a) when teachers provide higher quality instruction to students from whom they expect more, those students become beneficiaries and perform better; (b) when students perceive cues about what the teacher expects, they internalize those expectations and become motivated to achieve; and (c) students from academically stereotyped ethnic groups may, in the face of a low teacher expectation, become concerned about being judged based on the stereotype, increasing susceptibility to negative expectancy effects (McKown & Weinstein, 2002; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Jussim, Eccles, and Madon (1996) established that teacher expectations and student achievement are more powerfully connected for African American students than for European American students. Likewise, McKown and Weinstein (2002) recognized that African American elementary students are more susceptible to negative anticipation effects than their European American peers.

Competing priorities may sabotage possible effective resolutions to school failure. Muhammad (2009) examined technical changes of schedules, curriculum, learning standards, and materials and ascertained that these changes, while necessary, will not alter behavior when used by teachers who do not believe they will work. A healthy school culture begins with a belief in students, but it does not stop with just belief alone. Healthy school cultures also institutionalize their beliefs through a series of policies and practices aligned with their belief system on the basis that every student can learn (Muhammad, 2009). Contrary to this belief is one in which student success is based solely upon a student's level of readiness, interest, prior knowledge, and preparedness to conform with the requirements of the school. Systems' policies and practices are then seen as mandates that create a legacy of anger, resentment, and pessimism among teachers. Sachs (2001) examined conditions of significant change in federal policy and educational restructuring in schools and the effect shaping the professional identity of teachers with the emphasis on accountability and effectiveness. Emerging from this discourse were competing identities of task-minded teachers with a belief of activism.

Studies have shown that school change needs to mediate the belief systems of educators' exchanges with students in determining classroom and school culture (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). Research of teacher beliefs links what happens in classrooms with what students achieve or can do (Borg, 2015; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Rubie-Davies (2010) posited that relationships between teachers' expectations and student performances in the classroom can be recurrent. Many low-performing schools

restructuring their school climate focus primarily on the educational opportunity of its diverse population in schooling and racial micro-aggressions in pedagogy (Goertz & Massell, 2005). Micro-aggressions are described as an explicit racial derogation intended to indignantly anticipate the prey through name-calling, avoidant activities, or focused biased activities or could be an insult conveying impoliteness and inconsiderateness that demeans a person's ethnic culture or uniqueness (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008). Many students of color who are even now overdue are frequently not predicted or encouraged to excel and learn the talents essential to persist in their governing culture (Conchas, 2006; Meier, 2004; Thompson et al., 2004).

Conclusion

This researcher, a White female educator, is interested in understanding how modifications in teachers' beliefs and expectations affect student achievement. Looking through the lens of teacher beliefs and expectations will be particularly helpful in attempts at urban school reform. Teachers as researchers will allow well-conceptualized beliefs and practices in education and will drive the research rather than permitting traditional research designs to constrain educational programs. In this way, teacher educators can conduct research that is truly informative for American urban school reform. The literature review brings to light the conceptual complexity of teacher beliefs and expectations, as well as the continuing need for research to explore how teacher beliefs influence student academic behavior and performance.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand how educators describe their experiences in a diverse suburban high school undergoing school reform to increase academic achievement. The researcher selected a case study research design to explore the complex social phenomena of teacher beliefs and expectations. According to Yin (2014), a case study is dependent on various sources of data converging for confirmation. The present research examined in depth interviews from a group of teachers and administrators participating in reform initiatives. The analytical tool of direct interpretation was used to develop naturalistic generalizations from multiple sources of data including interviews and archival records of performance and school profiles (Turiano, 2014). The researcher sought to explore how different teachers described their own attitudes, values, and belief systems about their teaching tasks, themselves, the school, and the students to provide a synergy to restructure the school's climate. This study primarily focused on the opportunity of the diverse population of the high school and the competing nature of teacher beliefs.

Case Study

A case study methodology is complementary to this study of teacher beliefs and practices as these beliefs occur in the usual site of the classroom. The definition of a case study is shared by Swanborn (2010): “the study of a social phenomenon” that is “carried out within the boundaries of one social system” and “in the case’s natural context” and

“by monitoring (the subject) during a period of time” (p. 13). Additionally, Swanborn (2010) added that the case study is conducted with a “researcher focused on process-tracking” and where the “researcher explores data in order to formulate research questions” by “using several data sources” (p. 13) before the case study is finalized. Similarly, Yin (1994) focused on describing how and why case study research might be used and the types of studies that could be conducted. Yin stated that “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” and “the case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method – with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis” (p. 13). Furthermore, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) recognized a case study as a type of qualitative research inductive in nature that seeks meaning and understanding from the rich description gained from any number of methods for gathering or analyzing data.

The necessity for a case study arose out of the aspiration to recognize complex, contemporary, and social issues while retaining a holistic and real-world perspective in studying school performance through interviews of the teachers involved in the school reform. The case study’s distinctive asset is its capacity to manage with a variation of data including documents, artifacts, and interviews by revealing a set of decisions regarding why they were collected (Yin, 2014). Yin cautioned that this type of empirical inquiry’s scope may be limited in its margins between the occurrence and setting not being clearly evident.

This researcher's goal was to provide a context relatable to the true experiences of the case: a diverse suburban high school in the transition of educational reform. While questions were asked about the many programs and initiatives implemented at this campus during the period in which the interviews were conducted—such as the new teacher evaluation system, professional learning communities, and academic tracking—this study focused only on the analysis of teacher beliefs. The design of a case study while challenging was appropriate to collect, present, and analyze data fairly through a rigorous and methodological path with a thorough literature review and careful posing of the research questions. The impetus of this study was to explore and understand teacher perceptions of their school and efforts of reform initiatives. In light of the current failure of urban/suburban schools, addressing the needs of all learners—particularly its diverse, underserved students—this case study is relevant today.

Research Site and Participants

Data used in this case study were gathered as part of an earlier research study in 2011-2012 at Heartfelt High School. Located in a suburban school district near a major urban center, as well as two leading universities in the northeastern region of the United States, this is a diverse student public high school: 51% African American, 30% White, 12.8% Hispanic, and 4.2% Asian. At that time, the school served 1228 students in grades 9-12. Even though Heartfelt High School had no poverty or language diversity, the student body was extremely diverse in terms of student cultural group representation.

Yin (2014) urged researchers to identify a case site that is “geographically convenient or may have an unusual amount of documentation and data or is a unique case that forms the basis for the investigation” (p. 96). Accordingly, the district online performance data for 2011-2012 state standardized assessment for tenth graders revealed significant disparities between Heartfelt and other high schools throughout the state. Heartfelt High School’s average scale score was 12.8 below the average scale state score and at a rate at least 16 percentage points lower than students at other schools in the state in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Demographic data available to disaggregate by ethnicity showed that Black students underperformed in reading, writing, and mathematics, while Hispanics underperformed in science compared to their Asian and White counterparts. The data exposed achievement gaps among different demographic groups within the tested subjects.

Heartfelt High School was selected because it is representative of the many suburban schools that do not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is the measure by which all schools are held accountable for student performance under Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Editorial Projects in Education Research, 2011). In order to show improvement under NCLB, each state sets goals for its schools, such as increasing the high school graduation rate, attendance rates, or standardized test scores. Schools are required to make AYP toward those goals. In order to do so, schools and districts must meet the target percentage of students on standardized tests for the entire school/district, as well as for each subgroup of students (race/ethnicity, poverty, English language

learner status, special education). While no consequences exist for schools that fail to make AYP for one year, not meeting state goals for two years is called a “School in Need of Improvement” requiring that school to develop a two-year improvement plan. In 2011, Heartfelt High School failed to meet AYP for the second year and introduced reform initiatives for the 2012-2013 school years to include new teacher evaluation system, professional learning communities, and academic tracking.

School profile data show that the school employed 179 staff members, including 112 teachers, 6 administrators, and 71 support staff. The ethnic makeup of teachers was typical of most schools with 115 teachers being White and 3 teachers of color (Fieldnotes, August 3, 2016). The teachers’ years of service were 10.9, and over 69% of this high school’s teachers had earned at least a master’s degree. The teaching force was also relatively stable retaining 87% of the teachers assigned to the same school compared to the previous year. As the student population grew more diverse in Heartfelt District, the teacher population remained homogeneous, primarily White and middle-class.

The political tension within Heartfelt School District’s Board of Education reflects the aggressive nature of the Tea Party movement that controlled the narrative of voting by influencing teacher participation in the interviewing process; therefore, a restricted number of teachers were ultimately in this study (Fieldnotes, August 3, 2016). While teacher participation was completely voluntary, they were aware participation could be withdrawn from the interviewing process without negatively impacting their

relationship with their school. Nevertheless, only 10 participants—8 teachers and 2 administrators—contributed in the interview process.

Data Collection

This qualitative study involved the reuse of interviews of teachers and administrators from Heartfelt High School that were audiotaped and transcribed in 2012. The original research team consisted of professors and students of various races and genders from two local universities. The secondary analysis of the 10 interviews was performed with the intention of developing a rich description of the case. According to Hays and Singh (2012), the number of participants required to reach a depth of understanding depends on the phenomenon under study and the consistency of the number of participants to adequately represent the phenomenon investigated. The phenomenon highlighted in this current study dealt only with teacher beliefs that occur in classrooms, in the school, and in interactions with the parents and the communities.

This researcher used thick description to show that the research study's findings can be applicable to other schools. To establish credibility, this researcher provided an audit trail that highlighted every step of data analysis that was made in order to provide a rationale for the decisions made. The archival data analyzed in this study represented interviews that were conducted in 2011, using a protocol developed by the research team. This protocol, as Yin (2014) suggested served as a guide from whom interviewers probed with follow-up questions when further clarification was necessary. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by a professional transcription company, and the research team confirmed the accuracy of transcripts by comparing text to the audio

recordings. Additionally, the research team presented preliminary findings to teachers, students, administrators and parents at the Heartfelt High School in 2011 to gauge the accuracy and clarity of their research findings. The participants were then invited to a faculty meeting where interviews were offered to be reviewed and input on additional elaboration was sought to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences.

The audit trail described in the previous paragraph helped establish that this study's findings accurately portrayed participants' responses. This researcher used an inquiry audit in order to establish dependability. An outside person reviewed and examined the research process and the data analysis in order to ensure that the findings were consistent and could be repeated. The trustworthiness of these group discussions provided evidence as to participants' validation to explore the credibility of the data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility so that any errors could then be easily corrected or facilitated a need to collect more data to reconcile discrepancies. It also serves as an opportunity for participants to recall new facts or new perceptions regarding their situation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking was satisfied in the design with the interactive process of having the teachers interviewed read the transcripts of their own comments and then be asked to add anything else that they might want to include. All interviewees invited the teachers to contact them if they thought of anything else after the interview had concluded.

Semi-structured interviews are highly valued in qualitative research since individuals' experiences are the lens, and their focus is allowed to emerge and change

over the course of the inquiries of life views (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This type of interview allows for the flexible structures in the wording and sequencing so that the researcher authentically reacts to participant responses in a conversational format (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hays and Singh (2012) prioritized this type of interview for its richness in authentic interaction for providing a clear snapshot of the phenomenon under examination. The semi-structured interviews were previously collected in 2012 and consisted of an interview protocol where participants were encouraged to share and elaborate their experiences as they addressed the questions (see Appendix A). Each teacher was asked to answer questions in a one-on-one interview for approximately 30 minutes by three different interviewers. Interviewees were cognizant that they could refuse to respond any of the interviews without penalty. Some teachers were later requested to participate in a 45-minute focus group with members of their department to address group issues such as the district's curriculum development process and their curriculum's alignment with the Common Core Standards.

Data Analysis

Secondary analysis involved pre-existing qualitative data consequent from a previous research study. For this current study, "reuse" will be defined as using data for purposes different from those for which it was originally collected. A definition of secondary analysis is presented by Heaton (2008) as "the re-use of pre-existing qualitative data derived from previous research studies" (p. 34). Furthermore, Smith (2008) posited that secondary analysis can enable data to be replicated from different perspectives to offer chances for the unearthing of associations not deliberated in the

initial research. Replicated studies provide a window to the field of education by assisting the identification of trends and inequities requiring further inquiry.

With benefits come limitations. Revisiting initial data, shared only by accessing datasets from public archives, is one such limitation. Available archival data had to meet necessary ethical and legal requirements for sharing with others.

Inductive Data Analysis

An inductive process captures concepts relevant to the experience of the people living that experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study's inductive process revolved around grounded theory in that the teachers constructing their organizational realities were the people who knew what they were trying to do and could explain their thoughts, objectives, and actions.

The inductive process gives voice to the teachers in the early stages of data gathering and analysis and also represents their voices in the reporting of the research, which creates rich opportunities for discovery of new concepts rather than the affirmation of existing concepts (Hodkinson, 2008). Hays and Singh (2012) explained that inductive data analysis of information collected helped to drive deeper into an appreciation of a phenomenon. Likewise, researchers Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that this type of analysis seeks to fully depict the setting by identifying occurrences and their interactions within the context under study and uncover the multiple truths within the data. The benefit of inductive data analysis in this study was operating from the detailed to the wide-ranging concepts to combining, ordering, and using data to develop naturalistic generalizations. Specific, detailed transcriptions of teacher interviews led the

researcher to formulate generalizations about teacher beliefs in a suburban high school undergoing reform initiatives.

Constant Comparative Method

The cloud-based software *Dedoose* was selected for use in this study implementing data management, excerpting, coding, and analysis. While this technology aids in assembling, mapping, and synthesizing the codes between and within each transcript, *Dedoose* does not have the capability to scan transcripts. The teacher transcripts were downloaded into an encryption and password protection database. Teacher interview transcripts were tagged with descriptors of the participant's—gender, years of experience, pseudonym, ethnicity, and teacher/leader—so that an interview could be linked to specific themes. The data that were related in the analysis is based on the coding system described above and emerged as central themes of all the interviews.

As the researcher read through the transcripts and fleshed out the meaning of a participant's ideas conveyed through the interview, it was coded using open-coded themes, which became color-coded and stored as an excerpt. The researcher utilized the constant comparative method of data analysis focusing and classifying data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Unitizing data were used to define categories aimed at some understanding that the researcher needed to have to stand alone as an entity such as a sentence or a paragraph (Saldaña, 2009). As similar phrases, ideas and themes concerning teacher beliefs and practices emerged, *Dedoose* developed a methodical coding pattern for examining the data (see Figure 1).

Emerging patterns from the *Dedoose* co-occurrence code system was applied to the transcriptions of teacher interviews. The code co-occurrence matrix provided a frequency distribution of the transcripts. Blue is the least represented, green is moderately, and red represents critical areas. These patterns emerged in data analysis and elucidation of the conceptual framework that traditional qualitative analysis does not have. The transcripts were then collapsed into a quantifiable frequency format to inductively develop naturalistic generalizations of teacher beliefs. Aulls and Ibrahim (2012) recognized the importance of quantifying qualitative data to formulate an understanding of the representation of the knowledge; in this study, it would be of teacher beliefs. The patterns allowed the researcher to collapse the 68 original themes revealing the nine belief categories that would be analyzed specifically. The excerpt codes used to classify the data became the framework used to organize and communicate findings from the research data (see Table 2). These initial themes became the root codes and further analysis looked for meaning at the sentence or phrase level to identify sub codes. The codebook excerpt shows a hierarchical code/tag system with details about one highlighted tag, “Perseverance.” Using the conceptual framework of Professional Teaching Practice, the Perseverance parent (or root) code has three subordinate levels—the children codes: commitment, responsibility, and efficacy.

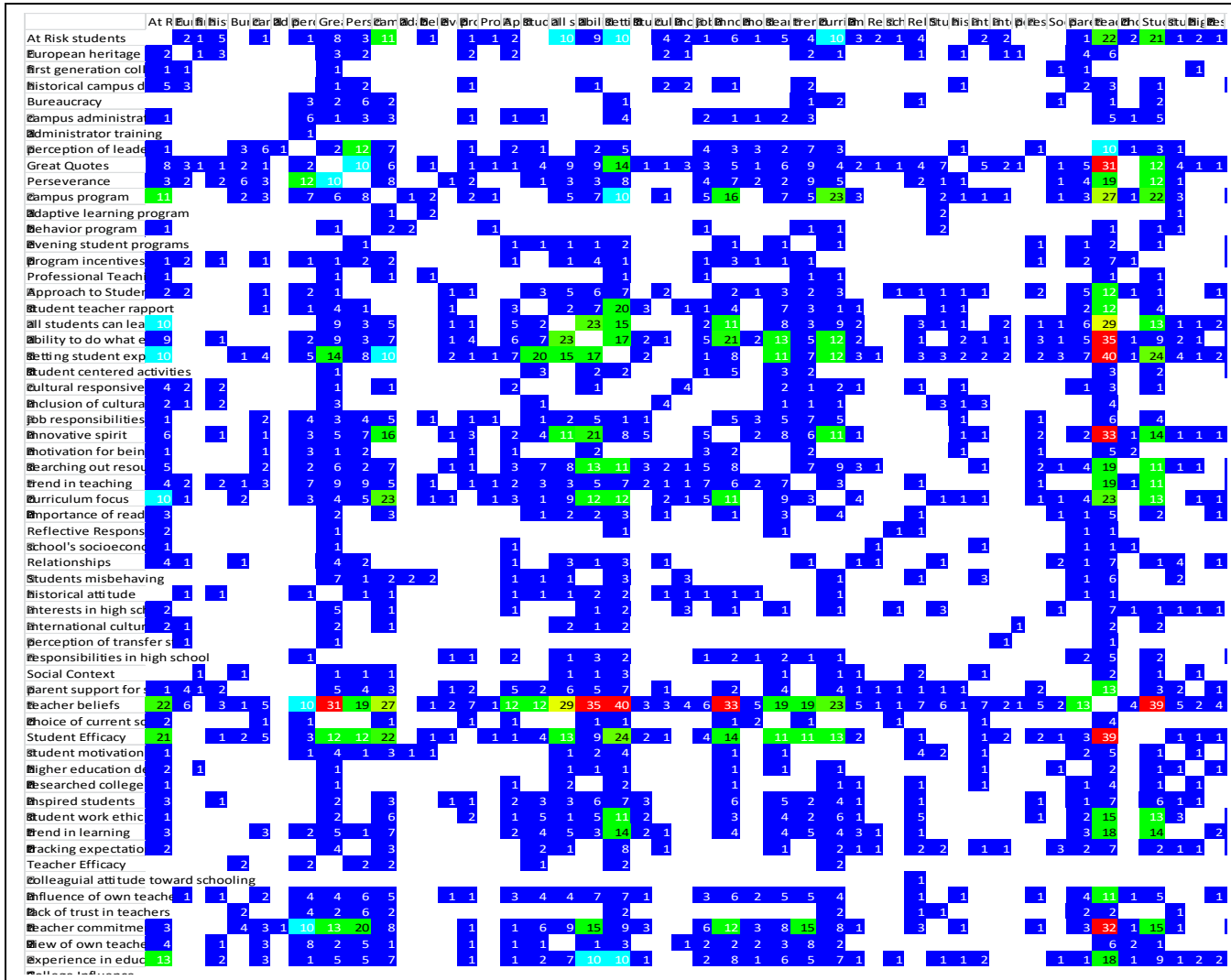


Figure 1. Code of co-occurrence chart.

Table 2

Codebook

Theme	Subtheme	Frequency	Description	
Professional Teaching Practice	Perseverance	44	Commitment	
		64	Responsibility	
		270	Efficacy	
	Reflective Response	Preparation and Planning	121	Teaching Philosophy
			51	Data Reflection
			14	Formative Assessments
			34	Collaboration
			89	Strategies
			10	Content Knowledge
			9	Staff Development
	Social Context of Teaching	Bureaucracy	23	Initiatives
			7	Administration
			20	Evaluations
9			Community	
9			Communication	
Teacher Success		Students Placed At Risk	8	Compliance
			25	Leadership
			4	Innovation
			5	Passion
Capacity for Student Opportunity		Engagement	3	Addressing Needs
			45	Students Misbehaving
			89	Labeling
		Relationships	Cultural Relevance	45
	73			Programs
	5			Delivery
	106			Motivation
	61			Opportunity
	4			Relevance
	109			Trust
7	Expectations			
48	Rapport			
11	Ethnicity			
10	Deficit Thinking			
21	Resources			

The three main themes of Professional Teaching Practice, the Social Context of Teaching, and Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity emerged from the teacher's interviews, and will be detailed in the forthcoming chapter. Specific attention will be given to the interconnectedness of teacher beliefs and expectations.

Re-Contextualizing Data

A key issue in qualitative methodology is context, as data are inseparable from the context in which they are generated (Corti, 2006). One advantage that the primary researcher has is the unique position of knowing the original context to the data by having “been there” (Gillies & Edwards, 2005; Mauthner, Parry, & Backett-Milburn, 1998). Moore (2007) introduced the concept of “re-contextualization” to make clear that all researchers engage in contextualization. As a secondary analysis, it was important for the researcher to re-contextualize the setting from which the initial data were gathered. In addition to the archival interviews used in this study, documents were collected for analysis. The state’s education department website, available publicly online, was utilized to collect demographic and performance data on state assessments. Other documents used for this study include board meeting minutes, action plans, demographic profile, suspension data, tracking placement, and performance data.

A historical perspective provides information on how the community was first settled as a colony and the evolving importance of schooling in this community. A collection of letters provided a historical perspective of the White settlers arriving in early 17th century to an area inhabited by Native Americans and later the African American residents who were released from restraint slavery in 1784 (Morrow, 2001). The interlacing of these expressions concerning their race-related experiences provided a subtle account of the Second Great Awakenings in the 1820s and the inspirations of Lyman Beecher, Lewis and Arthur Tappan, and William Lloyd Garrison (Vara-Dannen, 2014).

The beginning of the nineteenth century revealed a state with the second highest African American population in New England, but only 3% of its total population in pockets of small agricultural communities supporting the tobacco crops shipped out through the state's harbor (Vara-Dannen, 2014). The sincerity of faith of this state's residents was passed from generation-to-generation, as exemplified by Harriet Beecher Stowe and her family; yet, it was in stark contrast to the cruelty and mistreatment of Fredrick Douglass (Beeching, 2016). The Primus Papers provided information on the economic status of the African Americans in the community in the 1860s: "No Black upper class existed; no Blacks achieved wealth comparable to that of Samuel Colt or the Cheney Brothers" (Beeching, 2016, p. 6). Whites doubted the educability of African Americans, which motivated African Americans on a great quest for literacy.

Along with its functional value and practical uses, education was a mark of determination and supported the perseverance for equality. While New Haven College and the Crandell School were viewed as stepping stones toward this goal, they were viewed as threats to the status quo. The Privas Papers revealed: "When Black children were allowed to attend district schools, they met with prejudice and discrimination (Beeching, 2016, p. 24). The end of the century saw a movement of African Americans from the rural farms to major cities seeking factory employment as well as a chance to establish communities in which to live without shame or fear and attending their own churches, schools, and organizations. The unintended consequence of this migration disrupts the state today in its extreme economic and cultural segregation. It may also explain why this state, in 2012, had a highly educated population and yet one of the most

segregated school systems and residential patterns in America (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012).

In the last 20 years, there has been growing recognition of secondary analysis of qualitative data as a methodology of researchers to re-use qualitative data. Heaton (2008) described secondary analysis as “the re-use of pre-existing qualitative data derived from previous research studies such as semi-structured interviews, field notes and research diaries” (p. 2). Secondary analysis in this study was carried out using datasets obtained from the initial researchers who provided access of their data to this researcher to investigate a new set of research questions.

Researcher as the Instrument

The researcher was the instrument for the collection and analysis of data in this qualitative research as Yin (2014) suggested. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) used the term reflexivity to describe “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (p. 124). The researcher was not involved in the initial collection of data, but conducted secondary analysis and had “the problem of not having been there” (Heaton, 2008) for the construction of the data. The researcher added memos as reflections to connect theory and practice after coding to crystalize facets of teacher beliefs as suggested by Hays and Singh (2012).

Positionality

Since the researcher in qualitative research is the most important data collection instrument, it is important to understand how this researcher stands in relationship to the topic of study. My perspective with assumptions and biases, preconceptions, and past

experiences with teacher beliefs influences my understanding, observation, and analysis. As I reflect on my teaching in several diversifying suburban districts surrounding a large metropolitan area in Texas, I remember how unprepared I was during my initial year of teaching. I did not look like my students nor had the same experiences as they did. I did not have to worry that when I came home from school as a child, my electricity might be turned off or that my belongings would be piled up in haste to leave for another apartment because the rent was not paid. When I came home from school, my mom would be preparing dinner and she would remind me to start on my homework at the kitchen table. My dad would shortly arrive home and after dinner, he would check my homework and even quiz me. There was consistency in our family's routines and expectations. As a first-year teacher, I believed my students had this same consistency in their lives. But my naivety soon was reconfigured into a sophisticated belief that each of my students could learn when provided opportunities to do so. My 35 years of teaching have honed my preparation and planning, my involvement with the social context of school, and most importantly, my purposeful attention to make connections with my students to contribute to their achievement.

From my White teacher's perspective, I have pursued ongoing efforts to gain respect and develop trust with all my students by letting them know what I believe and who I am. I share with my students how I cherish my experiences of being an Air Force brat and going to 11 different schools and learning two other languages. I care that my students know that I believe my classroom will be always a safe and supportive environment and not matter from where you come. I believe in each student and his/her

growth through empowerment to be responsible their own achievement. I believe in students' parents and value their participation in the development of all my students. I model for my students the communication needed to garner support from parents, grandparents, caregivers, district leaders, and my colleagues. I believe in constructivism since my students are the makers of meaning of their new knowledge. I believe my teaching is the hope needed to change the lives of my students.

Teaching, while often an isolating experience, combined with the pursuit of a doctorate degree, has resulted in a new sense of satisfaction; this researcher can better approach this study through the lens of both a scholar and practitioner. Currently, as a campus teacher-leader, this researcher assists other teachers by modeling effective practices in teaching diverse learners. In doing so, I hope to challenge teachers to foster new beliefs that frame their teaching and future practices in the profession. My drive in pursuing this study was to empower more teachers to thoughtfully disrupt the status quo and participate in opportunities to eclipse a culture of failure and mediocrity for diverse learners. As a stakeholder in this country's economic stability, I am probing to deconstruct how I can be an agent of change in closing the achievement gap and pervade earnest optimism as a scaffold in educational construction of social justice and equity.

Research Questions

This descriptive qualitative case study was inductive in nature and designed to explore the role of beliefs and expectations in teaching and how they might influence student learning. This study featured an analysis of teacher interviews at a diverse high school that was collected in 2012 as a part of a larger study to understand the causal

factors that underlie the test score gap at Heartfelt High School. This analysis was steered by following questions:

1. How do primarily White educators, in a highly diverse suburban middle-class high school, describe their beliefs about student opportunity and achievement?
2. How do White educators describe how their beliefs inform their practices related to student opportunity and achievement?

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA AND FINDINGS

The teaching profession has become a focal point of conflict between numerous special interest groups attempting to control, reform, or protect various aspects of education in the United States. Likewise, teachers possess competing ideologies and dispositions that impede or promote school transformation (Muhammad, 2009). Thus, the fate of school reform and practices, such as tracking or efforts to tie teacher evaluations to student outcomes, are all influenced by the collective ideologies and practices of educators. Teachers are not a monolith, but a varied assembly of practitioners representing a multitude of perspectives on how to promote effective teaching and student learning. The common factor to every successful change initiative is the improvement of relationships with diverse people and groups (Fullan, 2008). The voices and experiences of teachers in the present study highlight the nature of such divergent perspectives.

Bernoulli (1738/1954)— scientist and mathematician —wrote:

The determination of the value of an item must not be based on its price, but rather on the utility it yields. The price of the item is dependent only on the thing itself and is equal for everyone; the utility, however, is dependent on the particular circumstances of the person making the estimate. (p. 23)

In the past, teachers formed their own expectations about instructional productiveness and risk based on the classroom environment established by the teacher. Their personal

analysis gave flight to specific and strategic practices that engaged students and addressed their needs. The current social context of teaching, however, is guided by national and state stakeholders, district school boards, and historically dominant community members.

When designing this qualitative study, I took note of the cautions to novice researchers that research is co-constructed by both the researcher and the participants (Parry & Mauthner, 2004). To aptly convey their accounts, I used the participants' words to present their values, perceptions, and beliefs about their students, school, and community. I triangulated these voices with archival data (climate surveys and school report cards) to understand of the contextual aspects that may have predisposed teachers' perspectives. The following findings were based on the voices of the teachers and administrators as they grappled with the complexities of narrowing the White-Black and White-Hispanic test score gaps at Heartfelt High School.

The participants in this study demonstrated that what the teachers say they believe and what they actually expect from students are not the same, which contributed to the divergence in expectations revealed in the subtractive practices that work against student development and ultimately achievement. The themes of Professional Teaching Practice, the Social Context of Teaching, and Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity emerged from the teacher's interviews, and will be detailed in the forthcoming sections. Specific attention will be given to the interconnectedness of teacher beliefs and expectations, the divergent nature of professional practice, the nature

of teacher responsiveness to the social context of teaching, and the lack of systemic supports for promoting student efficacy at Heartfelt High School.

Professional Teaching Practice

The theme of Professional Teaching Practice was evidenced by the vacillating obligation to develop and maintain the professional standards of teaching by moving from a comfortable average in pursuit of an unknown better. It is framed by teachers' dispositions of authenticity to seek procedures, methods, techniques, and curricular approaches that allow personal-professional congruence and reflection. Teachers have daily influence on the lives of children and should be held to the highest standards. In the midst of all of their responsibilities, they are obligated to serve as strong role models and demonstrate ethical behaviors as they interact with people in the school setting. Ideally, teachers "accept responsibility for teaching, allocate most of their time to instruction, organize their classroom for effective instruction, . . . maintain a pleasant learning environment that is student centered, and provide opportunities for practice and feedback on performance" (Morrison, 2006, p. 13).

Overall data revealed three subthemes of Perseverance, Reflective Response, and Planning and Preparation that were central to how teachers at Heartfelt High School lived out their professional practices. Initial interpretations of the data highlighted a number of aspects of teachers' beliefs that were demonstrated across a spectrum of productive to subtractive teaching in an effort to effectuate student achievement. By situating at the productive side of the spectrum, teachers worked collaboratively by goalsetting to seek occasions for professional reflection. These activities, in turn,

capitalized on students' academic achievement. Teachers whose practice established them at the subtractive end of the spectrum created an environment where teachers operated in seclusion, with little contribution in goalsetting, and had limited occasions for professional reflection, content with the status quo. As a consequence, students' achievement was minimized. The forthcoming subthemes will detail how the divergent (productive and subtractive) nature of teacher Perseverance, Reflective Response, and Planning and Preparation characterized their collective professional practice.

Perseverance

Although many urban or, in this case, diverse schools fall short in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers (Kincheloe, 2004), perseverance is critical to success when serving urban and diverse learners. Such a commitment to students was recognized by the NCATE (2006) as the technical disposition called purpose and vision. The theme of perseverance was manifested in the belief that teachers are responsible for finding ways to engage all of their students in learning activities that are rigorous and meaningful. But among teachers at Heartfelt High School, there were significant extremes in perseverance.

The productive extreme was illustrated in the reflection of Danielle (teacher) when she stated, "We have a strong group of teachers who are committed to academic excellence. There is never any sort of top down push to increase our scores. It all comes from the bottom up." Another teacher, Christina, shared how she guides her students:

I have very few students that aren't eager to learn. Most of my students really want to do it. And I think some of them don't have development tools to do well,

and that's my job to help them identify. I ask them what they need to do and what sort of structure do they need or what techniques they need.

Again, Danielle shared this sentiment, "If we know in September that [the students] are not there, we all have the persistence that we are going to teach them the skills that they don't have." These teachers persevered in the many tasks required to teach effectively and doing "whatever it takes" to impact their students.

Unfortunately, at Heartfelt High School, there was also a subtractive extreme of perseverance that typified some teachers' beliefs that negative student behavior hindered them from creating lessons that would engage students. For instance, Ashley explained that,

The school needs to be a place of learning, not a funhouse to come in and have your social crew. And especially in the lower level kids, I don't have to think. It's like okay if that's what you think, you're not passing my class with that attitude, and then it's my fault!

At Heartfelt High School, students were divided into four academic tracks, with close to 90% of African American learners being assigned to the lowest academic track, and as Ashley notes, they were referred to as "low students" or "lower level kids." Jennifer described these students as:

If you need Special Ed services, you go into a low-level class. And it's a mix between behavior problems and academic problems. Again, I have got kids in low level who are really, really bright, but they don't do any work, and there are definitely behavior issues. So, you can imagine somewhere along the way,

someone said, “Okay . . . I will place kids based on what they are able to do; I don’t place kids based on what they physically do because that seems to defeat the purpose. If you are going to do nothing, you are going to get an F no matter which level you are at. So, you might as well fail at your skill level.”

Teachers such as Ashley and Jennifer believed that their “low level” students should not be in their classrooms, but these students needed to be in a class where they could receive special help with their attentiveness or behavioral issues. These teachers do not take responsibility for students’ involvement in learning activities as a priority in their teaching. On the other hand, teachers like Christina and Danielle assumed that all of their students will learn because as teachers, they felt accountable for promoting student achievement.

Lisa, an administrator for 27 years, felt that the majority of instructors of low track courses had subtractive beliefs. She added, “I think as instructional leaders that we could bring our philosophy to the classroom, to the teachers by having the conversations with them on how they could improve.” As Lisa described, it is not enough for administrators to state that all students at the school will learn, but that conversations regarding implementing specific practices in the classroom must also be held.

While a school often sets high expectations in their vision and mission statements emblazoned on banners, newsletters, and the campus website, it is not necessarily implemented. Sarah (teacher) provided insight into the lack of perseverance in the implementation of her campus’ vision:

I feel like this vision, this differentiation of our diverse students' directed vision hasn't been, you know, we haven't been fully trained There's a lot of talk about how we want things to be, but I don't feel like overall across the board, there's been an effective implementation.

It is through the perseverance of both teachers and administrators that an articulated, unified effort will generate meaningful teaching. Yet, in this case, some teachers, particularly those assigned to teach students of color, struggled with negative beliefs about learners, which undermined their ability to seek solutions to their instructional challenges. Furthermore, administrators failed to persevere in their efforts to enact the student-centered values of the school's mission.

A teacher's perseverance is influenced by assurance in one's capability to employ operational teaching skills, feelings of preparedness and competence, and beliefs that effort will help in times of challenge. Teacher perseverance refers to a teacher's persistent anticipations about the consequences of teaching. An educator's perseverance is based on his or her beliefs that teachers can affect student achievement.

The Perseverance under the theme of Professional Teaching Practices identifies the change in belief needed for teachers to clear their minds from previous experiences by listening to what's going on inside themselves with the same quality of persistence and attention they offer teaching. The productive characteristics of campus articulation of the mission and vision, unified willingness of the teachers to see the purpose through to fruition, and the eagerness of teachers to seek solutions to non-mastery of goals was not articulated at Heartfelt High School. Instead, the strain from the competing voices of

mindless compliance and a lack of motivation numbed the empathy teachers had for themselves and the willingness to be vulnerable to search for the motivation that enables teachers to be present for their students. These subtractive practices worked against student development and ultimately achievement.

This study's data revealed the lack of perseverance through the preponderance of lower expectations and a lack of teacher efficacy. My findings are supported by past research (Bruce et al., 2010; Caprara et al., 2006; Cooper, 1979; Fennema et al., 1990; Good, 1987) that recognizes teachers with beliefs in self-efficacy are more likely to be able to create the circumstances to promote and sustain student achievement. The beliefs and behaviors of pre-service teachers were studied by Haberman (1995) to conclude the relational disposition of persistence differentiated teachers as "star" teachers. The majority of the teachers described their beliefs toward student achievement in terms of barriers. These beliefs prevented these teachers from moving toward a productive discourse and illustrate the underlying tensions that impact learning for all students.

Reflective Response

The unpredictable and fervent characteristics of teaching and learning are missing in the consideration reform efforts according to Hargreaves (2000). The teacher disposition to re-evaluate the purpose and vision of their school to reflect on teacher performance in classrooms is the central focus of this subtheme. Teachers' observations and teaching experiences are created on that very first day of teaching and become their touchstone used in the reflection process to help navigate through future experiences. The facet of teachers' Reflective Response builds on the teachers' own perceptions, their

thinking, feeling, needs, and concerns, about concrete teaching situations in which they were actively involved.

The participants in this study had teaching experience ranging from 2 to 27 years. Their ability to reflect on their many specific classroom behaviors stemming from their own theories and philosophies revealed both productive and subtractive reflective responses to student needs. On the productive end, teachers used data to reveal trends in student performance that needed to be addressed, and they took decisive action to redress issues. For instance, Christopher (teacher) described how teachers sought to enrich the curriculum through field-based experiences. He shared:

We wrote a grant and kids . . . we took them off campus, we brought in experts, we took them off campus to meet with our experts, and so we built up this whole sort of thing. And it was great and controversial because the Gates Foundation was funding it and there were awards. It's modest, but financial rewards for teachers involved.

Yet, teachers often lamented about how innovations were hard to maintain, and like the Gates project referenced above, they were not sustainable once they met one of the many structural barriers at Heartfelt (school schedule, lack of common planning time, etc.).

Christina discussed the ongoing challenges faced by the 9th grade Social Studies team to affect change despite patterns of underperformance revealed by student data. She recalled,

For a number of years, we had data teams focused on achievement related to the state performance test, the achievement test that we take in high school. And

those data teams were focused on measuring development of skills related to tasks associated with the success in this test. In our particular data team, which was related to 9th grade Social Studies, we weren't as effective as we would have hoped to have been. We felt that there are number of issues related to the time that we had to work together and the opportunities to give rapid feedback to the students.

While the teachers were given time to reflect on their students' test scores, there was actually no systemic response to the patterns of underperformance that they discovered. Another type of productive reflective response was reactionary to boost specific performance of specific students rather than an effort to adjust ongoing instructional practices. Christina's comments illustrated her belief that a change in approach will improve student achievement. She noted,

I think I actually emailed the parent yesterday because a girl worked her way from a C to an A. I gave the quiz every day; she didn't really know how to study for a quiz. So, we spent a few days after school learning how to study writing. While this is indeed a positive response to meet a student's need, it seems to be a reaction to a problem within the general curriculum that is not producing independent learners.

More common was the subtractive reflective response of resistance to new approaches to student-centered instruction. Christopher noted that,

We have an immensely talented new curriculum leader in English. She wants us to use cooperative learning in small student groups. I can see how it will help

students communicate with one another to develop a group project. I feel more comfortable teaching my grammar unit though to the entire class to make sure they get the standards.

Christopher appeared to like both the curriculum leader and the cooperative learning that she suggested, yet he still chose to teach in his “comfortable” traditional manner. The classroom practices utilized by Christopher are essentially based on presentation, practice, and production of concepts and skills. In contrast to Christopher’s adherence to the traditional lecture format supports research by Brophy (2000) that found that students learn more when most of the available time is distributed to aligned curriculum-related activities managed with prescribed engagement in those activities. Unfortunately, Christopher falsely evaluated traditional instructional approaches based on a faulty assumption that they will help him ensure that students reach curriculum standards. Teachers’ own data analysis revealed that students were underperforming, but teachers and leaders struggled to move beyond awareness of students’ needs to responsive action.

Performance in schools is increasingly judged on the delivering of instruction to accomplished learners and providing response for improvement in student achievement.

Andrew (administrator) talked about teacher practice:

Our kids are not successful, and I’m not saying test scores are the only measure of whether our kids are succeeding or not. But it’s a measure, and it’s really, really public measure. And by just about every standard you look at, it isn’t happening. We’re not getting it done. It is a culture of the lack of continuous

learning. This school has a culture of silence around learning because no one is looking at your practice. And you are not asked to look at your practice.

In the current U.S. educational climate, if a school's standardized test scores are low, the community perceives the school's teachers as ineffective.

The world is changing technologically and economically at an unprecedented rate. Some of these changes present immense challenges for students graduating from high school. Selena (teacher) recognized the skill set students need for success:

I am looking at some people skills, soft skills that students are going to need when they get to the workplace to compete in the global society. Those skills must be transferable from the classroom. If you practice just the discipline of reading and building reading stamina, it tells you that you can do it for 20 minutes. What we now have to find are strategies to introduce students to the skills needed to communicate with each other. Once we master that, we can teach techniques for students to attain creativity, imagination, problem solving and critical thinking.

The previous reflections of Andrew and Selena remind us that classrooms must reflect our understanding of how students learn. Moreover, Christopher described how the new teacher appraisal instrument facilitated collective teacher motivation to improve:

With the SEED evaluation (new teacher appraisal system), for example, it's the teachers, the grassroots effort where we get 10 teachers who are maybe passionately saying something around the lunch table and say, "Okay, let's do a committee after school and get our own thing." But even if the building wants to

do something, they tend to invite likeminded people on to these committees, which you can understand, that they are how you get things done if everybody is on the same page. But there is never an all school blank e-mail.

Christopher believed in the informed optimism and expected the group to change the group. His picture of reality was that an adjustment to the school's vision for improvement was needed, but not initiated. Matthew (teacher) also confirmed the need for improvement with evidence of performance but the school lacked sustainability in their plans. Matthew defined his sense of urgency to develop a response to student failure:

There is a tremendous amount of failures in the 9th grade; this is documented, okay, and that's why we have been trying to start a freshmen institute here for a number of years. The idea would be we have a transition from 8th grade to 9th grade. So, what we wanted to do was to double up on language and mathematics. But there are scheduling issues and other kinds of staffing issues that are problematic.

These teachers are enthusiastically involved in observing and adapting their instruction, both relative to established goals and in relation of the techniques used to reach those goals.

Teachers' personal vision comes from within. A catalyst for a teacher's reflective response is the belief that they are a lifelong learner and pursue extensions in their own knowledge. Professional teaching practices should include ongoing professional development and self-reflection (Tavil, 2014). The knowledge gained from professional

development allows teachers to re-evaluate their practices as well as demonstrates growth in their teaching.

A teacher's reflective response gives meaning to their teaching while being independent of the school or community. Productive practices needed to include more active monitoring for students' understanding, regulating the teachers' own performance and the use of students' performance data not only on the state assessment but formative assessments as evidence of needed response. The risk, however, lies in the fact that the more effort teachers take to express their personal purpose, the more they need to find kindred spirits. Personal purpose is the route to organizational change (Fullan, 2014). The subtractive practices of unexamined decisions of interventions, lack of support systems in place for teachers, and the inattentiveness to assessments worked against student development and ultimately achievement. When the reflective response of teachers is reduced, the structure of the school becomes a continual stream of fragmented decisions assimilated uncritically. Without tethering teaching choices to beliefs, teachers will have borrowed techniques disconnected to their vision. Unless teachers participate in critical conversations, they remain stagnant confined in unexamined resolutions. The divergence of reflective action at Heartfelt is then confirmed as both as result of difference among individual teachers and the lack of support systems to encourage teachers to redress long-standing student achievement issues.

This study's data revealed unexamined decisions of interventions, lack of support systems in place for teachers, and the inattentiveness to evidence, which showed a lack

of student development and ultimately achievement. My findings are supported by past research by Wise (2006) that recognized the technical disposition of teachers to deliberate methodically about their practice and learn from experience is critical. Wilkerson and Lang (2007) posited that it is not necessary to require teachers to develop this disposition, but it is imperative that teachers be permitted so as to develop in the direction of reflection. Teachers' own data analysis revealed that students were underperforming, but teachers and leaders struggled to move beyond awareness of students' needs to responsive action toward student achievement.

Preparation and Planning

Teaching is a complex activity with a myriad of responsibilities focused on organization, the classroom environment, techniques and strategies of instruction, and seeking professional growth. The subtheme Preparation and Planning is based on a teacher's technical disposition of commitment to know the subjects and to check for students understanding by analyzing teaching practice methodically. The importance of teaching to individual and societal success has increased with the emerging global knowledge-based economy (Darling-Hammond, 2005) in so much that it is imperative that teachers effectively articulate the high standards needed for the economic and political survival of the diversifying student population. The subtheme of Preparation and Planning reveals teachers' beliefs about their management of students, materials, and resources. A key part of successful teaching and learning has to do with teachers' beliefs in their role in productive expectations as they survey their actions for promoting students' achievement. Yet, at Heartfelt, there also existed extremes in how teachers

planned and prepared for class, which diminished student development and performance. The productive extreme is typified by comments like Lisa (administrator) that reflect on her observation of one teacher's classroom:

She was teaching the kids. She didn't pay attention to curriculum. The kids thought she was loony tunes, but they worked with her. She developed a senior portfolio where the students had to pick from a topic hat and research it. Then she videotaped the students' presentations.

The teacher being observed had the role of a facilitator. Her planning offered positive feedback about her students because the students were fully invested in the project. The success of the project encouraged future participation. Matthew (teacher) described that he submersed himself into teaching any way he could, "I taught two years in the STAIR program (Score Academic and Individual Responsibility) along with my honors U.S. history. They offered an evening class for STAIR for credit recovery. I also helped with the Drama club." Matthew saw these different teaching assignments as a hardship and stated that these difficulties inspired the teachers to do "whatever it takes" and be innovative (Tough, 2009). This learned optimism is reflective of the innovative belief of Christopher (teacher):

One of the biggest barriers to innovation has been a sense of frustration that I'm not being as effective as I possibly could. I find it fun to try out new things. When I have a new idea and I sit down and start planning, my students enjoy being taught in a different way to the regular sit and get thing.

This impetus also frames the resources needed to help all students to succeed. Lisa (administrator) remembered how motivation for the preparation of the state achievement produced admirable gains:

I know one year, before I got here, they had auctioned off a car before the state achievement test—whichever got all their 3s or above on test got their name put into raffle for a car, and that was the one year I think in the five years before that, that our scores actually went up.

The ideology of both Christopher and Lisa to “doing whatever it takes” can be recognized in these teachers’ efforts to afford their students with as many opportunities as possible to be successful, happy, and positive contributing citizens in this school. These educators showed how they worked creatively and tactically to buffer or confront system requirements that represented a threat to student learning.

Selena (teacher) described how important parents can be in helping students learn:

I mean, we are both encouraged and mandated to be in constant contact with parents to give them feedback on their kids. Of course, there is a lot of information to the parents on the portal where they can check on the progress of their kid. I love talking to my parents. Most of parents I have talked to are supportive. Many of them have questions that I have had an answer. I think a lot of parents live pretty busy lives. Sometimes it’s really hard to get ahold of parents. Many parents don’t have an e-mail or they have e-mail address, but they never check it, or they have an e-mail address, but they don’t have an internet

connection, so maybe they get the e-mail on the phone. There is no single way to contact parents. That can be a challenge. But I think once parents are contacted, I enjoy conversations with parents. I think quite honestly, many parents don't fully grasp how important their role is even in high school.

Next to parents, Hughes and Kwok (2007) found that teachers are the most important people in shaping the fate of a student's academic success. Selena realized that by calling a parent to give them positive feedback about their child demonstrates that teachers care about their students and maintain a professional respect for the community in which they teach.

In contrast, teachers in the subtractive praxis established an extension at the other end of the spectrum creating barriers that hinder good communication between educators and parents. Danielle (teacher) shared,

I would say maybe 50% of the parents I have met at Open House. That's when I meet a majority of the parents. We have a second night in November, which is a conference night where parents contact me because they want to set up a conference.

While Danielle cited opportunities for parent communication within Heartfelt High School, Danielle did not strive for an investment to be actively involved in communication with each of her student's parents. She did not have relevant information and a basic understanding of what her students' lives were like outside of Heartfelt High school.

Weiner (2003) purported that teachers need to know how dynamics outside of the school influence students' perceptions and activities inside the school knowing such factors would have helped guide Danielle in her decisions for planning and preparation, but she remained in a subtractive position of uncertainty and unpreparedness. Another teacher, Selena, provided insight into this potential disconnect,

When our test results came back, it appeared that African American students in general are showing that they learned the common parts but lacked preparation and support. My God, I am really complaining, but why don't their parents help them more?

Selena needs to pursue avenues to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity reflected in the families of her students. Both teachers expressed a lack of probing into how students' efficacy influences the professional accountability of teaching and outcome expectations promoting student achievement. Danielle and Selena articulated beliefs that all students can learn if their parents are interested, further illustrating that expectations are divergent. The lack of positive interchange decreases trust and corrodes rapport with students' parents, but eventually with the larger community.

Seen as an effective means of planning and preparing for students' potential, Tyson (2011) found that tracking segregates racially. Students at Heartfelt High School were placed in one of the three levels: College, Honors, or AP based upon teacher recommendations. After examining 300 classes and the effects of tracking on subgroups of students, Hattie (2002) arrived at that the conclusion that "no one profits from tracking including high achievers" (p. 90) and establishes gaps in instruction between

underserved and affluent students. Jennifer (teacher) described her expectations for the levels:

Low-level students need more graphic organizers; they need more information chunked out; they need more definitions of words. And honors level students, we can move a lot faster. They can independently take notes from a lecture as opposed to my low-level kids. I would have to print out notes for them.

While Jennifer may have believed her efforts to supply students with modified instructional templates helped the lower level students, her behavior had profound negative effects on equity outcomes. Students relegated to the lower tracks complete worksheets because teachers' low expectations so these students learn in limited opportunities. Students then come to the understanding that there will be no challenges that they can manage. Thusly, these lower track classes simply become sanctuaries of stagnation with repetitious classwork. Andrew (administrator) shared his belief about tracking,

We got rid of the basic track because you're at the lowest level. With College Level and Honors, it will increase the rigor across the board and dispel the negative effects of the low-track perception. With just these two bands of ability, it has made it more challenging, you know, to differentiate. The College Level classes are catered to using the level of readings a little bit easier for them to grasp and point them in the right direction. Otherwise, you can blend whole group and break-out sessions and more inquiry.

In contrast to College level, Honors level students were steadily professed as demonstrating more fundamental impetus, as conducting themselves politely, and as more scholastically proficient than their peers. Danielle (teacher) described the levels, “In an Honors class, the students are well behaved, quiet, and turning in all their classwork. But then in a College Level class, they do not bring in their work.” This study supported the findings of what Oakes, Gamoran, and Page (1992) contended that students in lower tracks are not as proficient as students in the higher tracks. This leads to not only more discipline referrals (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999), but effectuates lack of effort by both teachers and students.

The teacher descriptions of their beliefs and behavior illustrated the tensions of students and students’ abilities and their capabilities. These beliefs prevented these teachers from moving toward a productive discourse and illustrate their deficit orientation that perpetuates the underperformance of diverse students. Missing at Heartfelt High School are the purposeful planning and preparation by teachers for the low level of students to accurately assess student understanding of content and design instruction that scaffolds skills and concepts for individual students by anticipating student misconceptions.

The voices of the teachers interviewed confirmed that professional teaching practices must be connected to an understanding of students and their needs. Productive teachers are vibrant about their professional undertaking, have continued professional development, keep abreast in best practices by incorporating innovation, and model what is meant to be an accomplished teacher (Aleccia, 2011). The productive practices with

innovative instruction, teacher efforts to scaffold skills and concepts, and doing “whatever it takes” was not articulated in a manner to effectuate student achievement. Teachers at Heartfelt High school were not able to make the connection between their beliefs and expectations and their daily practice. Without these teachers’ abilities to derive meaning from their school’s initiatives and their own teaching beliefs, expectations and dispositions interacting synergistically, these teachers were unable to support students’ social, academic, and cultural strengths. The teacher subtractive practices allowed teachers to articulate default pedagogy, depend on mass-produced programs, and became inattentiveness to students’ needs. Darling-Hammond (1996) stated, “The invention of 21st century schools that can educate all children well rests, first and foremost, upon the development of a highly qualified and committed teaching force” (p. 5).

This study’s data revealed that the teachers at Heartfelt High did not see the relationship between their beliefs and expectations and their daily practice. Without these teachers’ abilities to prepare and plan their school’s initiatives, these teachers were unable to support students’ social, academic, and cultural strengths. The teacher articulated default pedagogy, depended on mass-produced programs, and became inattentiveness to students’ needs. My findings are supported by past research by Anderson (2004) that concluded that administrators will try to accelerate the progression of school development by implementing partnerships and monitoring circumstances that nurture it. Sadker et al. (2012) posited that as teacher practices are prescribed and controlled, teacher independence is reduced; and the new approaches and techniques

meant to support teaching actually reduce teachers' motivation. Teacher beliefs are powerful determinants for how teachers prepare and plan their instruction in the classroom (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Hamre et al., 2012; Weiner & Jerome, 2016). Preparation and planning must address the inter-personal approach to meeting student needs and maneuver through contradictions of a school's reform movement and the divergence of expectations.

The theme Professional Teaching Practices identifies the change needed for teachers to collect information about what goes on in their classroom and to analyze their own practices and underlying beliefs. This mindset primes teachers to deviate from mass-produced programs and strive for dialogue in teaching practices by suspending assumptions about their students. "If the dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounter will be empty and sterile, bureaucratic and tedious" (Freire, 1974, p. 73). The apprehension of changing professional teaching practices is evident at Heartfelt High School where teachers who are not well prepared and motivated for risk-taking innovation, revert to their default pedagogy of teaching the way they have always done. Unfortunately, the heterogeneity of student demographics demands a commitment for teachers to negotiate the social context of teaching to provide an equitable environment that supports the learning and success of all students.

Social Context of Teaching

The second theme is the setting for interplay between the collective expectations of teachers, the social nature of self-fulfilling prophecies, and the competing social context within schools driven by teacher efficacy. Each stakeholder's authority within a

school supports teaching within their governess of student achievement. The public relations process of these interests impacts the subtractive power of policies and procedures that become unbalanced forces pushing teacher attention away from the students' efficacy.

Bernoulli's (1738/1954) principle of fluid dynamics described that an increase in the speed of a fluid occurs simultaneously with a decrease in pressure and causes lift (see Figure 2). Bernoulli's description of the physical properties of fluids can be useful to illustrate that the more effort in the dynamics of classroom instruction with less emphasis of the pressures of stakeholders' compliance-driven policies and procedures, our students' achievement will soar. Furthermore, stakeholders may have a surplus in capital, but not the dispositions to invest in true ownership in teaching. The urgency to increase student achievement often mandates unrealistic targets. These disparities across the social context of teaching serve to perpetuate historical inequities in teaching and learning in schools.

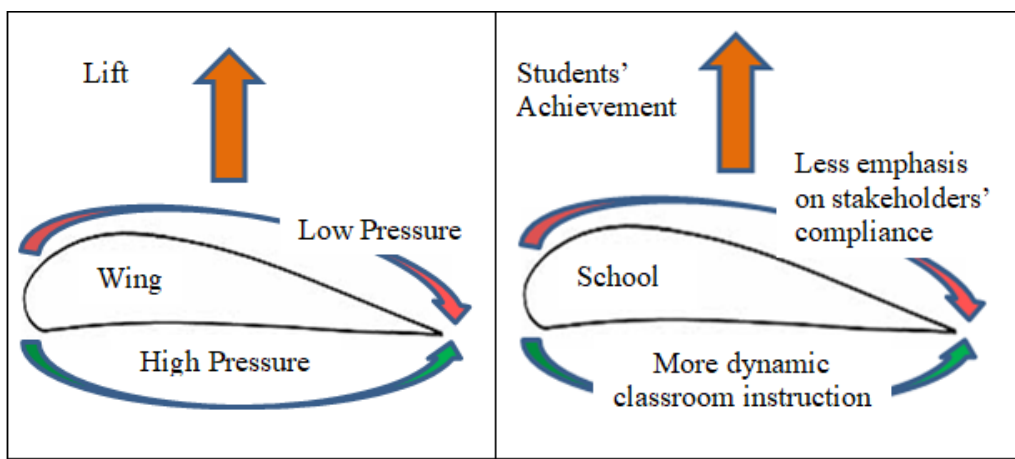


Figure 2. Power of disequilibrium.

One of the elements of teachers' dispositions is the view of others and the view of oneself (Usher et al., 2003). Productive practices will be seen in partnerships and dialogue with stakeholders and affirmation of teachers. Such membership in a learning community fills the niche in the theme of social context of teaching. The theme of Social Context of Teaching is evidenced by the incongruences in the bureaucracy of the educational system, how teacher success is measured, and the students placed at risk. The Social Context of Teaching theme is mounted in teacher beliefs of identity arising from their ambiguous socially-constructed roles. Teachers are overloaded with standards and expectations. Transferring information from my science teaching background, the brain is wired to be social. In the Social Context of Teaching theme, many teacher behaviors of belonging revert to be followers (Muhammad, 2009). Some teacher stress arises from conflicts in group inclusion and lack of developed processes to build faculty rapport, with esteem, as clashing peers. This level of stress contributes to incomplete tasks and yields nonconformity of behavior standards in the workspace of schools. Teachers' patterns of classroom interactions will be characterized by sarcasm and disrespectful comments, lack of partnerships with colleagues, counterproductive routines and procedure, and arrival into the "Valley of Despair." The theme of Social Context of Teaching is important in recognizing the devaluing of teachers' beliefs in the power of schooling to create modifying conversations where all stakeholders understand, hear, shape, and are shaped by each other's perspectives. The top-down initiatives of reform forces teachers to work in extremes monologues of people trying to persuade others to buy-in to what they want with false assumptions of genuine connection between people

and ideas. The following subthemes of Bureaucracy, Teacher Success, and Students Placed at Risk punctuate the divergence in teacher role expectation and a lack of equilibrium toward a productive discourse. Schein (2010) wrote that,

Teachers will be maximally comfortable with others who share the same set of assumptions and very uncomfortable and vulnerable in situations where different assumptions operate because either a teacher will not understand what is going on, or worse, a teacher will misperceive and misinterpret the actions of others. (p. 29)

Teacher beliefs can be held as individuals or collectively as part of the culture of an organization and will give shape to who they are and what they do in their school.

Bureaucracy

This subtheme is founded on the belief in organizational structures within school yielding relationships among colleagues, administrators, and the community to foster mutually satisfying decision-making. The major mistake of many schools to implement innovations has been to initiate change from the wider educational arena that did not address the campus needs or concerns of the teachers. Holmes (1998) stated that:

Despite the rhetoric, school change projects are inevitably top down. For all the talk of democratic decision making, collaboration, and recognizing the importance of teachers, change projects are and must be implemented from the top. Occasionally, teachers may exercise the right of veto, but more usually any resistance will see them being accused of being afraid of change and defenders of the status quo. (p. 250)

In principle, the bureaucracy of education improves efficiency, ensures equal opportunities, and increases efficiency. In reality, the organization of education allows individuals to benefit from structural privileges and social origins like a dominant race, language, or culture to which some other individuals may not have access. The subtheme Bureaucracy describes how teachers find themselves involved in the struggles to redefine their role to engage students in active learning. Sarah (teacher) believes that changes are always going to occur and so accepts and negotiates her role:

There's always that little thing to do and I don't spend a lot of time because I try to focus my attention on what I can do, not what I can't do. I feel like the current initiative is more cohesive, more focused, and I guess more well planned than past initiatives. There just hasn't been enough time to pull everything together to implement it in a way that would have been ideal. We have to do this and we have to do this now.

However, Ashley (teacher) justified her beliefs that the initiatives are fruitless by saying,

It's been a stressful year, so it's a rush between what they have to get down. If it continues to be a pain in the neck, they'll lose a lot of teachers. A lot of new initiatives: curriculums, assessments, teacher evaluation. All in all, though there is the lack of academics, I feel like we're not getting anywhere.

Ashley's effectiveness as a teacher is evaluated based on the attainment of mandated organizational standards within parameters of the "new" changes in programs and policies. Ashley revealed the subtractive nature of the bureaucracy of Heartfelt High school evidenced by the stakeholders' unrelenting manipulation of criteria through new

initiatives to ultimately increase student achievement. The imposed focus on teaching then has been commandeered by aberrant checklists of standardization in direct contradiction to the process of authentic student learning in the classrooms. Christopher (teacher) shared that the school's initiatives lack impact on student achievement: "One of our school-wide initiatives is data meetings to target our low performance on the statewide reading achievement test. But the problem is that we are going to be losing planning time next year with changes in the schedule."

Losing planning time next year demonstrates a lack of impact on student achievement. These teachers will have to whittle out their own time to call parents, develop lesson plans, review student assessments, write individualized education plans, collaborate with grade-level colleagues, grade student work, and meet with individual students and/or parents in their efforts to improve student performance. Sarah, Ashley, and Christopher shared their reservations about the bureaucracy at Heartfelt High School regarding the task of increasing student achievement. The mindless bureaucracy is often a catalyst for stress constricting the productive expectations of teaching with lack of time, obsessive concern with test scores, and conflicting rules and policies. Even the most positive teachers will need to protect themselves from feeling punished and eventually becoming burned out. Teachers must give themselves permission to prioritize tasks to maintain an emotional buy-in without experiencing feelings of inadequacy or guilt from the pressures to do it all. The emotional anxiety of sustaining student improvement illustrates the tensions in teachers' beliefs of viable contributions to the success of their school and students.

A skilled and well-supported leadership team in schools can seek ownership and purpose in the way that teachers do their job. Inconsistencies within and between leadership create fragmentation and incoherence of purpose undermining the capacity of schools. Danielle (teacher) believes that the inconsistency in leadership adds to the feeling of inadequacy:

I think that you need to know that we have a high rate of turnover in both faculty and administration and that is what leads to kind of spinning our wheels all the time because there is this constant rotation of administration and constant rotation of initiatives so we never really get anywhere.

The myriad views of these teachers at Heartfelt High School fueled differences in the level of confidence in the school administration. School leadership can help steer the course when new initiatives are implemented by including teachers in site-based management of decisions. Christina shared her belief that she had a voice within her school between and among the staff, “Well, oftentimes we discuss things and take votes, express our opinion so we say that to some extent, yes, we do take part in decision making.” This collective teacher efficacy is an imperative barrier between administration and teacher effort toward student achievement. In stark contrast to this teacher autonomy is the hierarchy of school systems where teachers often feel neglected and overlooked.

Danielle (teacher) believes her role in her school is ambiguous:

Our board of education has been dysfunctional for the past few years. There is a lot of contention between Democrats and Republicans. Our school board president had been president for several years and kind of resigned out of

nowhere. There was disagreement between the school board and the faculty over the new initiatives. So, I think we do what they tell us to do because we have to. When the teachers in the building are looking for direction, we don't look to the school board. Again, we do what we are told, and we do our jobs. But as far as needing inspiration, we don't turn to the school board. And I mean I can't speak for the whole school district because I only work in Heartfelt High School. I would say we just take our orders.

Contrasting this belief in the lack of teacher voice at Heartfelt High school is the belief of Christina (teacher) for deeper involvement in the core business of schooling:

I consider myself a professional, and I feel like my professional responsibility and my ethical responsibility is to always provide my students the highest quality instruction, highest quality materials, and highest quality feedback and opportunities for developmental skills and knowledge. And so I think the board objectives tend to direct that energy. But my energy or my focus or my commitment or my attention to my students hasn't changed. I just feel like why would I be any less or how could I be any more than what I am doing based on some kind of external objectives. I mean I certainly respect their objectives, I work for them, but from the time I started teaching, I have always wanted to deliver my students the best, and I have always wanted to do that every day. And so if the board has certain objectives that point toward excellence, I am all for that, but that doesn't really change what I do.

Danielle and Christina described the bureaucracy of Heartfelt High School as becoming an increasingly depersonalized organization. Their frustration was grounded in the dysfunctional policies, procedures, and initiatives at their campus that impede them from doing what they deem best for their students.

School practices revealed in the voices of teachers during this study provided evidence of the research findings of Morrison (2006) that teachers accept the organizational context of group dynamics in teaching through conformity, but deviate from this standard behavior to allocate most of their time to instruction. The competing teacher beliefs found in the bureaucracy of school systems is subtractive to the efforts to increase student achievement within the social context of teaching. The productive practice of professional resiliency of teachers enabled them to function and thrive in the large depersonalized organization of Heartfelt High School to searching out ways to remain effective teachers when there is a large test score disparity between Black and White students. School bureaucracies in Heartfelt High School hindered equitable and just instruction. The divergence of expectations caused teachers to become part of the machinery in school reform, unsophisticatedly participating in the adoption of new curricula and a mandated pedagogy.

This study's data revealed that top-down standards in the reform initiatives at Heartfelt High School promoted standardized teaching that worked against student development and ultimately achievement. Teacher efficacy was jeopardized since these teachers took it personally when asked about their practice. Teachers' concerns about identity affect their work in schools and their success as a teacher. My findings are

supported by past research of Clewell and Villegas (1997) that affirmed teacher racial identity produces a role-model effect that employs student determination, self-confidence, and eagerness. For the Black students at Heartfelt High School, the presence of a Black teacher would have encouraged a revision of prior beliefs about student achievement. Research by Perry et al. (2003) yielded a passive teacher effect, “stereotype threat,” that explained how this school’s Black students taught by White teachers experienced trepidation that impeded their scholastic status and consequent achievement. The bureaucracy’s actions, manifested from the belief that teachers are mindful of others’ attempts for connection within the organizational structures of their school, yielded relationships among colleagues, administrators, and the community that were in direct conflict with one another.

Teacher Success

As teachers interact in the school environment, they may encounter disparity between teacher preparation and expectations, isolation and lack of support within their school setting, and an emerging gap between teachers’ vision of teaching and the realities of the job. This subtheme is defined by the belief in a teacher’s own competency and credibility to be more effective, often recognized by stakeholders as having a special “with-it-ness” spirit. Within the context of these challenges emerge teachers with a will and motivation to teach so all students can learn.

The subtheme, Teacher Success, describes how teachers believe in taking a hands-on approach to helping motivate their students to learn and succeed. Teachers face challenges and pressures every day in their classrooms beyond the curriculum, such as

managing student behavioral issues, cultivating relationships with parents, navigating school district politics, and helping students confront adversity in their lives. The success of students is dependent upon the teachers' success (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The participants in this study discussed how they handled their challenges to leverage every opportunity to engage students in learning.

Teachers' evaluations, once based on only classroom observations, now include student performance measurements in relation to the new emphasis on accountability. Many teachers, however, believe the new evaluation initiatives make their job harder. Ashley (teacher) stated,

If I were a parent of a student that wanted to go into education, I would talk them out of it. It's not fun teaching at this point. I have friends in other districts and everybody is struggling. It is open season on teachers now with all these initiatives. And if I didn't enjoy being with the kids, I'd be out of here. It's just ridiculous. The rating system is all about what the kids are doing, not what you're trying to get them to do. The students may decide they don't like me and refuse to do anything I ask them to do, and then my rating goes to crap. Our new rating system is such garbage. I was at the point in the first semester that I nearly walked out three times. I don't need this money, I've made my money. I don't need it; my husband has a good job. Three times I almost walked out.

Ashley's frustration is based on her belief that as long as she delivers the information to her students, she has done her job as a teacher, and thusly is successful. While the primary purpose of teacher evaluations has been to determine a teacher's suitability for

continued employment, a teacher evaluation is now an instrument to rate teachers based on student performance. The subtractive practice Ashley expresses is her protection and value of her career. This is juxtaposed to the intended productive practice that a teachers' highest priority is student learning. Danielle (teacher) believes that the new evaluation detracts from this goal:

Everything is so up in the air right now. Like the evaluations. It's new; it's our pilot year. So, I would say that it is detracting from our focus on academic because now we got this mountain of paperwork to deal with as opposed to focusing on what our kids can achieve.

Both Ashley and Danielle voice the discouragement they feel from their school's reform movement that is increasing pressure to raise their students' test scores, and both believe this initiative has reduced support from teachers.

On productive practice end of the spectrum, however, is founded on the belief that data analysis reveals root causes for the lack of student achievement. Christina (teacher) shared her belief in breaking down student skills:

For a number of years, we have had data teams focused on achievement related to the state achievement test that we take in high school. And those data teams focus on measuring development of skill related to tasks with the success in this test. So that was a very data-oriented focused effort to help the whole class, but also individuals within that group move higher on their skill level related to the testing. We weren't as effective as we could have hoped to have been. There were a number of issues related to the time that we had to work together and the

opportunities to give rapid feedback to the students. There would be a month between meetings since the team was made of teachers, and we have lots to do so it became less effective because of the structure of the meetings and the time we had available. It's pretty involved work; it involves a lot of time, especially when you are learning how to do it so we were in a learning curve.

The productive practice of initiating data analysis at Heartfelt High School has rightly placed student performance at the forefront and revealed a need to emphasize instructional leadership to support teacher success. Andrew (administrator) clarified his new role,

As I have made observations in teachers' classrooms, the biggest negative for me is the amount of passivity in this school among both students and teachers. I was bored where I was in there for 10 minutes and sadly I've been in a couple of longer ones where honestly there's not a lot going on here. I tend to see teachers who are not pushing the kids to learn. Teachers are allowing the students not to do anything; I do think we have an issue with expectations.

The subtractive practice to emphasize improving test scores has overwhelmed every aspect of teachers' work, forcing them to spend precious collaborative time pouring over student data rather than having conversations about students and instruction. While seen as a productive practice to support teachers, teacher professional development tied to the evaluation process is having a stifling effect on teachers, by undermining their sense of autonomy, and limiting their capacity for real professional growth (Bredeson, 2002). The divergence of expectations caused these teachers to struggle with their efficacy due to

the increase in accountability in the teacher evaluation reform that largely bypassed genuine consultation with teachers and imposed more prescriptive requirements in its teacher appraisal instrument.

Schools today are diversifying with classrooms populated by English language learners, students from other countries, gifted students, students with disabilities, and students placed at risk. In an effort to address the varied needs of these students, education reform has been promoting a prescribed approach to instruction that aligns to the theory of assimilation (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Ashley (teacher) described her typical classroom,

All day long; the same content; and then in the meantime, I have got a kid who just came back from expulsion, kid who just moved in, a lot of transients, a lot of athletes who slip through everything. It's definitely a wild mix.

Ashley's description illustrated the subtractive practice of "one-size-fits-all" teaching philosophy flawed with the assumption that all students learn in the same ways.

Unfortunately, it also means the loss of teacher creativity and flexibility to deliver differentiated instruction tailored to each child's individual educational needs.

Teachers' beliefs and dispositions founded on the ideology that all students can learn are strong proponents for teachers to articulate learning mindsets in the classroom.

Christopher (teacher) explained how he is successful:

I think it is possible to meet the needs of all the students and I certainly deliver, but it is a difficult task. I have won two national teaching awards in the last three years. I feel good about my career, good about my work, but it doesn't mean I

can't improve. I don't deny there is an achievement gap here in our particular school. The critical question is whether we are doing something systemically different than other schools. There is institutional racism and institutional classism in every institution. I think that this school has been striving vigilantly to address these issues since I have been here. And then there is the whole question of youth culture that manifests itself for each particular group. I am very suspicious of the achievement gap because it has to do with the way different groups respond to standardized tests. I am not sure that every group in our school responds to tests in the same way.

Christopher's productive mindset differed from Ashley's, Danielle's, and Christina's mindset in that he is self-confident in approaching his teaching as a process to search for implications for the achievement gap at their school. He was recognized for his productive practices of finding how systemic discrimination impedes student achievement in his classroom. Christopher's comments in this study confirmed the finding in research of Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) that when teachers feel good about their work, student achievement rises.

Recognition of success for a teacher comes only from being an active participant within a school (Barth, 2006). Lisa (administrator) recalled how the belief in her students in the classroom was applauded by a campus group outside of her classroom. She remembered, "One of the things that I'm very proud of is the first Paul Cody award. It was given by the basketball team. It was for somebody who helped the kids the most." Lisa felt empowered by the social expectation of the ethical, moral, and professional

obligations of her teaching profession. Danielle (teacher) shared her belief that teachers must celebrate each other. She confided that,

There is no recognition of individual teacher achievement. They call us staff; they don't even address us as faculty. One of the teachers in my department just got this really prestigious grant. My teacher leader emailed the superintendent of the district to let them know so they recognize the awarding of the grant. In response though, the superintendent said that the school district doesn't address individual teachers like that. So they didn't. The fact that they call us "staff" is very telling for what they think of us. We look to each other for inspiration and to the kids certainly, and that's what we are doing. Whatever the board tells us to do, whatever the administration tells us to do, and we do. What really matters though is when we are alone in our classroom with our kids. That's where we get our strength from. I wouldn't say that we are not celebrated by the district; I think they provide us with breakfast on some Fridays, but that only happens once a year and that's about it.

Subtractive practices in Heartfelt High School were evident in the lack of stakeholders' recognition of teacher success, and minimal incentives were offered for teachers to strive to do their best. These practices were demoralizing and created a negative school climate. Pink (2011) recognized teacher motivation,

Like all extrinsic motivators, goals narrow our focus. That's one reason they can be effective; they concentrate the mind. But as we've seen, a narrowed focus

exacts a cost. For complex or conceptual tasks, offering a reward can signal the wide-ranging thinking necessary to come up with an innovative solution. (p. 48)

The indifference at Heartfelt High School to build interpersonal relationships between and among teachers and the administration's failed to honor the status of teachers.

Unless teachers care about a goal, they aren't likely to continue to achieve success.

Lisa (administrator) described her belief about what makes teachers successful at her school. She stated:

Teachers must be incredibly knowledgeable about their subject area and passionate that the kids get the very best that they can offer. These types of teachers look for the best resources they can bring in and offer the best experiences to their students. They are kind, okay? They're kind. They know about their kids beyond the classroom. They extend their lessons beyond the classroom. It's not just what they are doing in the building. They get the kids involved in other activities too.

Christopher, Danielle, and Lisa described their teacher success as standing out among their peers because they have a special "with-it-ness." The level of support that teachers receive during their experiences may determine whether their can-do beliefs will increase, decrease, or remain unchanged (Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney, & Beltyukova, 2012). DuFour (2004) recognized that by focusing on a school culture that highlights faculty commitment to a mission of safeguarding student achievement, teachers will be involved in rigorous partnerships and systematic responses on student and school data.

Christine (teacher) stated,

We had data teams focused on measuring development of skills related to tasks associated with the success on the state achievement test. We weren't as effective as we would have hoped to have been. We felt there are a number of issues related to time that we had to work together and the opportunities to give rapid feedback to students.

York-Barr, Ghore, and Sommerness (2007) recognized that collaboration is often a cause of faculty tension due to loss of autonomy over work allocation, however, offers greater communication and interdependence among teachers, and responsibility to others. Sarah (teacher) stated:

I feel like I have input, but I think here one of the biggest issues is communication. The really critical communication that needs to be happening is often not happening or is lost somehow. I feel there is a cohesive vision at the school, but I am in the minority. Some of the negative comments that I hear, I wonder how much is just that people are tired and kind of turn down because there is a lot going on here. I mean there is a ton of moving parts, but that is reality.

This study's data revealed that the teachers at Heartfelt High School already knew everything they needed to know, criticized others, resisted innovation, lacked passion for their subject, and were frustrated with change. The divergent expectations of teacher success created resentment and suppressed the interpersonal networks that nourished and sustained student achievement. My findings are supported by past research construct of Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) confirms that collective teacher efficacy brings clarity to

how schools differ in the attainment of a mission and vision to educate their students. The collective self-efficacy of teachers at Heartfelt High School mirrored teachers' perceptions of the lack of capabilities of the whole faculty to positively affect student outcomes. Furthermore, research (Brophy & Good, 1970; Darley & Fazio, 1980; Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979) revealed that when students recognize cues about teacher expectations, students internalize those expectations and respond consistent with the perceived expectation.

Students Placed at Risk

Students placed at risk is implied language for culturally, economically, or linguistically disenfranchised students who are low performing or low achieving needing help academically. Historically, schools are sites where teachers' beliefs and expectations sabotage the achievement of students from diverse backgrounds. Wehlage, Smith, and Lipman (1992) urged a restructuring of urban schools to establish relationships with students placed at risk to prevent alienation from teachers or peers and manage the rigor of school work by emphasizing the relevance of the kind of schoolwork assigned. The misalignment between teachers' and students' backgrounds, and the resulting behaviors of teachers are interwoven in issues related to bureaucracy. The subtheme, Students Placed at Risk describes the teachers' account of barriers for possibilities to student learning based on culture and social relationships linked to limited student experiences. Christina (teacher) believed in her students' funds of knowledge,

I had a student who was in England for three weeks this spring because her family is from England. So, here is a young woman who has experience in multiple cultures. She is navigating a variety of cultures, and she brings that wealth of understanding, of humanity, and of culture. She brings that to the classroom. That's strength in my mind; that's a tremendous strength.

All the teachers at Heartfelt High School were prepared by the professional certification process; however, they have had little opportunity to learn how to teach students who are English Language Learners (ELL). Christopher (teacher) believed he shouldn't have to teach these placed at-risk students:

If a young person doesn't speak English and I have to teach them Macbeth, I have to invent—I have to work out a way of communicating the curriculum to a student who doesn't speak English. I think that asking a teacher who is just beginning their career to work in a classroom where they have to immediately do individualized instruction for 12 or 13 or 14 kids is asking too much.

Subtractive practices at Heartfelt High School marginalized students placed at risk in multiple ways by trying to fit these students into the hierarchical structure of schools.

At-risk students needed interventions as a result of irrelevant curriculum, deficit thinking, or poor teaching. Andrew (administrator) stated, "I think more than 50% of our teachers would certainly label these students as challenging and *bad*." The teachers in this study offered a number of elucidations for the racial/disparities in campus discipline associated with suspensions/expulsions and problematic classroom behaviors. Student-teacher racial/ethnic incongruence affected the allocation of school discipline sanctions

to the African American students. Brittany (teacher) exposed her bias, “Well I think our students, Black students mostly, are the most misbehaved students at this point.” School discipline practices must examine the discipline experiences of at-risk students, but also unpack deficit thinking of staff members. Ashley (teacher) believed families were to blame:

I don’t know what causes the achievement gap to be honest. It does seem to be White versus any kind of background, Hispanic and African American, it doesn’t really matter. And I believe probably more of that has to do with what the home life is, the single parent family, nobody home to help them with their homework, not having that structure at home.

Each of us relates to a culture group based on the way we have been socialized. This socialization is influenced on class, ethnicity, gender, language, and religion. Though the teachers at Heartfelt High School interacted with students of other races, they maintained hegemonic understandings of the world from their monolingual, White experiences.

This study’s data revealed that the teachers at Heartfelt High School demonstrated substandard teaching, lack of culturally relevant curriculum, or learning environments that intentionally restricted the scope of instruction due to deficit thinking and lowered expectations for students placed at risk. My findings are supported by past research of Howard (2006) that identified students placed at risk are often found in the bottommost of the achievement gap. Weiner and Jerome (2016) insisted that teachers must be knowledgeable and mindful about the ways in which a child’s membership placed in a group at risk influence learning and school success. Goldhaber et al.’s (2015)

research showed that the lack of teacher experience dealing with students placed at risk by their free/reduced-price lunch status (FRL) and underrepresented minority (URM) impacted their low academic performance. Diverse expectations of students placed at risk are the contradictions of trying to change the students to fit into every classroom. Unfortunately, efforts toward including diverse faculty members and increasing opportunities for positive peer group influences were missing at Heartfelt High School.

The theme of Social Context of Teaching recognizes teachers' beliefs in resisting the power of schooling that infringes on the reciprocal support of true dialogue in decision-making. Top-down communication results in active or passive power struggles where different stakeholders try to impose their ideas onto the rest of the group. Top-down communication fails to produce results when stakeholders focus on avoiding conflict rather than articulating transparency and trust to create student opportunities.

Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity

The third theme of Expectation Divergence is defined from the belief of teachers in their contribution to meaningful learning opportunities for all students. The interplay between teaching and student achievement is complex and variable. Researchers have attempted to gain insight into trends in student achievement that are related to exposure to differences student opportunities (Darity, Castellino, Tyson, Cobb, & McMillen, 2001). With the focus on accountability, teacher beliefs contribute to the habituation of behaviors that reduce sensitivity toward the underperformance of their diverse students. "Too often, attitudes and beliefs that contribute to the normalization of failure are unchallenged, and when failure is normalized, educators often grow comfortable seeing

diverse students fail” (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 33). Teacher beliefs to make learning engaging, valued, inclusive, and implemented by fair and equitable resources give all students a meaningful chance for achievement and exemplify productive practices. Unfortunately, there were subtractive practices that established a student disconnect through a lack of cultural representation in instructional materials and a lack communication with students’ parents. The theme Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity encapsulates three subthemes: (a) Engagement, (b) Relationships, and (c) Cultural Relevance.

Engagement

The subtheme Engagement is defined as the belief of teachers in their contribution to meaningful learning opportunities for all students. When teachers fail to involve their students in learning, they fail to generate enthusiasm for learning.

Unfortunately, not all educators are involved with active learning. With a student-centered mindset, teachers can increase the extent to which positive purpose becomes ingrained as a stable aspect of students’ identities. A key to student self-efficacy is to permit students a voice and a choice over their learning. This opportunity develops self-confidence and an ownership of learning, achieving their potential at school.

Recognizing opportunities to engage students increases students’ active learning. Ashley (teacher) believed that not all her students’ needs were being met:

I think we’re not meeting needs of a fairly large population. Those kids who want to go to college have that opportunity to go to college because parents here for the most part are not poor. It’s an affluent community. It’s a very business-

oriented community. They have the money or can borrow the money like the rest of us. But those kids who generally don't want to go to college, what are you going to do instead? What are you going to do other than flip burgers? Do you want to be a carpenter? Give them that opportunity. We do have a tech department but that's not enough I don't think.

Student engagement is aligned to learning and personal development since the more students study, the more they tend to understand. The subtheme focused on how teachers reflected a readiness to create student learning opportunities a priority. Danielle (teacher) believed in high expectations: "I don't think anybody walks into a classroom and says, 'Oh these kids can't do it.' I think most of us go into it being like okay this is where my kids are and let's move them." This productive practice demonstrates the ideology of valuing student learning and can only be realized as a result of the faculty's commitment to meeting the students where they are, recognize the skills they have, and begin teaching there.

This study's data revealed that unfortunately, only two teachers were focused on the engagement of students. The other teachers failed to include any beliefs of engaging their students in learning and relied on the subtractive practices of a lecture style of delivery to the whole group setting, assessing with only paper-pencil assignments. My findings are supported by Hamre et al.'s (2014) past research that posited that the interactions between teachers and students are fundamental to understanding student engagement toward increased student achievement. Furthermore, Martin's (2006) research confirmed that engagement plays a large role in students' interest and

enjoyment of school. In addition, Kuh (2003) recognized that the very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and beliefs that is indispensable to live a productive and satisfying life.

Relationships

The subtheme Relationships is defined as the quality of student-teacher interactions and is informed by the historical, political, and social worldviews of teachers. The school setting offers opportunities for interpersonal relationships through a complex connection of student and teacher fundamental to their success in school (Zullig, Huebner, & Patton, 2011). The subtheme, Relationships, deals with the teachers' perceptions of their attention to the connections that are made with students to establish school climate. Andrew (administrator) stated,

I think there are elements in this school we have that connect in really small spots. The students connect with a person. They connect with a class. They connect with a situation which again is great. But how do we take that connection once you're working for the students somewhere. But then translate that to bigger areas around the school. Why is a student going into this person's particular room or this particular area and excelling to such a degree and yet walking around the rest of the building and pretty much hating their existence? And we have some kids sadly that aren't connecting anywhere. That's an issue. Students have very strong opinions about certain classes. And part of it is they're teenagers and their perceptions are their truths. And why are there so many kids that perceive that when they walk into somewhere, "Nobody cares about me, or

“This teacher hates me” or “This teacher doesn’t ask me to do anything”?

There’s too much of that floating around.

Danielle (teacher) recounted how students are encouraged to make connections with their teachers:

Students can certainly come, talk to any teacher that they want to. Our principal is really good about taking time to listen to kids. Yeah, I think that there is definitely plenty of ways students can have their voices heard.

But there are barriers to building student relationships in this high school. Christopher (teacher) reflected on the demographics of the teaching staff:

What we really could use in our school are more Black males to provide role models. The school would move heaven and earth to get qualified African American men to join us. And that’s also true of Latino people as well. We need people who speak the language of the currency of the kids. Every district in the area is really anxious and eager to open up and to have a more diverse faculty to provide these kinds of role models to our young people.

A teacher’s racial identity generates a role-model effect that engages student determination, sureness, and eagerness (Clewell & Villegas, 1997). Student relationships are foundational to the school’s community of learners. Lisa (administrator) reflected:

I have developed a sense of belonging through my passion for the subject, and realizing that kids are kids, and knowing them outside of the classroom. I would go to football games; I would go to basketball games. I would go to the concerts. They saw me everywhere. I stuck my nose in their business. I'd say, "How come you're looking so ratty today?"

Lisa was relating a situation she had with a student when she was a teacher before she became an administrator. Lisa also went on to describe a particular student, whom many teachers had given up on, and how her beliefs influenced how she interacted with that student:

I taught summer school, and I had Jarvis Johnson [pseudonym]. Bright kid did nothing in the school day. And I'm looking at the stuff he's giving me and I say, "What's this?" I said, "I'm going back, and you're going to have me as a teacher next year." I went back to the counselor and said that I wanted that kid in my classroom because he has a lot to give. I think the teachers might have been scared of him or something. I don't know. When he walked in that next September and saw me, things were a little different then. When the principal walked by and saw him dusting for me she said, "What did you do to him because he's driving every else nuts?" He is now a surgical nurse.

When asked what Lisa thought was the secret to reaching Jarvis when other teachers could not, she replied, "I wasn't putting up with his crap And I also had a sense of humor with the kids. My one rule was, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, at all times, if I am happy, you're happy.'" The reflections of Danielle and Lisa demonstrated how they built

students' confidence in their own capacity for learning through the use of vernacular, empathy, and warmth. Teachers' intentions to build student relationships may not be always be visible. Matthew (teacher) revealed the competing unintentional barriers that hindered student relationships:

Five years ago, we'd have 40 or 50 teachers in the stands for a basketball game.

This year we only had a half dozen teachers there . . . that's just a reflection of how everybody's feeling and just how really over-stressed we are. We're putting in more time and we are trying to do so much.

Christina (teacher) spoke of her effort in forming supportive relationships with her students when she said,

I expect students to be respectful of each other. I expect them to expect the best from themselves and to extend themselves to push themselves beyond what they thought their capability is. And I start out the year with those set of expectations that I say, "Look, I have this for myself and I have this for you. I want you to transform your mind, create new ways of thinking. I want you to become more charitable. I want you to take all of this and actually become a better person using charity in the Biblical sense, and I want you to extend yourself. And that's what I expect." They know that I expect those things of them and I expect those things from myself.

Christina's reflections confirmed her students need to feel safe and secure in her classroom. In contrast, Selena (teacher) described how struggle with teachers may place students placed at risk of school failure:

The students will interact with me and speak to me, and one said "Miss, I keep getting a 65 on my writing assignments, but when I go to my teacher he won't tell me what I need to do to improve it. He keeps telling me, 'Why do you want to be in an AP class with this hard work?'" So, I said keep asking him.

This teacher's description of the situation provides an example of the barriers teachers create when they fail to provide a connection to academic and social resources for their students. Sarah (teacher) believed that building relationships is based on character traits. She stated,

The kids who are performing well have developed certain habits or characteristics that have helped them be successful in that setting; different people have different strengths. I try to get students to make sense out of learning. I am helping them to identify what kind of learner they are—visual, kinesthetic. I spend a lot of time trying to understand how they are approaching the problem because if I can get an understanding of how they think and what their approach is, it is easier for me to know what type of questions to ask them to bring them along. If they know how they think, then they can capitalize on their strengths and identify where they need to work. Isn't that what we are all trying to do every day?

Unfortunately, the lack of a teachers' belief in their students' abilities can sabotage what potential students have to succeed. Ashley described the deficit beliefs she held regarding her students:

They don't have the tools. They don't have the skills. They don't have the experience of failing. So, when they come here, I keep saying for a bunch of warriors they're a bunch of wimps. When you give them something that's too hard, they just stop. They don't try to go over or around it, they just stop.

"Because you don't know how to study, you don't know how to take notes." So I'm trying to address that in my class, but I'm only one person. And I get anywhere from 9th to 12th grade.

Teachers must develop and nurture positive relationships with students. Relationships are particularly crucial to success in schools where there is often a lack of trust in adults' motives and actions. The productive practices of developing trust, offering students a voice and choice in assignments and providing a supportive network of resources for students would have promoted student achievement at Heartfelt High School. A successful teacher can create a classroom community and motivate students. All the teachers believed that the relationships they developed with their students were critical to establish learning. Having a positive relationship with one's teacher promotes positive achievement. While providing a safe and caring learning environment for students was articulated by all 10 educators' in their interviews, it was not explicit that these educators believed they were maximizing student potential.

This study's data revealed that most of the teachers at Heartfelt High School articulated subtractive practices that worked against student development and ultimately achievement such as the habituation of bias, hegemonic beliefs, and unresponsive toward students. My findings are supported by research from Teven and McCroskey (1997) that found that students who perceive their teacher as caring learn more. Jia, Konold, and Cornell's (2016) studies support that a positive correlation exists between students' perceptions of their supportive teachers to lowered drop-out rates and increased achievement. Furthermore, Natriello (2002) found that negative teacher relationships further promote negative outcomes, specifically for students placed at risk who may already be low achievers, behavior problems, or have poor attendance.

Cultural Relevance

Good teaching and positive student engagement foster greater development of success mindsets when learning is relevant, especially when teaching is purposefully in its attention to students' cultural backgrounds and identities. The subtheme of Cultural Relevance recognizes the teacher belief in valuing others' perspectives by celebration of students' cultural integrity to accommodate the dynamic mix of race, ethnicity, class, gender, region, religion, and family that contributes to student success in every classroom.

Standardized testing perpetuates the assumptions that all students demonstrate their academic knowledge in the manner. Christopher (teacher) questioned the use of standardized tests:

I am very suspicious of the achievement gap because also a lot of it has to do with the way the various different groups respond to standardized tests. And I am not sure that every group in our school responds to tests and standardized tests in the same way. I think the interesting question is whether or not when a kid goes into a testing environment, and who shuts down, who turns on, who can concentrate the longest.

Braun (2005) studied the impact of school improvement outcomes and found that a tracking individual students' academic growth over several years and different subjects is a better estimate of student achievement than the standardized tests most states use.

Brittany (teacher) focused on the resources that allow students an opportunity for success when she stated,

My assumption is that to have better results in closing the achievement gap is to offer our resources to different group of students. I know our campus goal is to bring the 21st century technology into every classroom. As a language teacher, I think that not having a language lab belies the fact that we are telling ourselves that we are achieving that goal.

Teachers need to know their students and their academic abilities individually, rather than relying on racial or ethnic stereotypes. Ashley (teacher) believed all students can learn:

I tell my students, “I don’t care the color of your skin; I don’t care about your socioeconomic background. You come into my classroom— all I know is in the classroom. Unless you tell me something, that’s all I can see so I expect you to give me your best effort.”

Muhammad (2009) identified “Believers” (p. 29) as those teachers with high efficacy and high student expectations. These teachers support a healthy school culture striving for student success and believe all students are capable of achieving success. However, if a teacher believes that there is no hope for learners, then he or she will be less likely to implement the practices that support learning. Realistically, not all teachers have the pedagogical tools to make a belief in student success a reality. Christina (teacher) thought she knew the demographics of her students,

Many of my students have multicultural experiences or are themselves bicultural, either because their home has one culture and the school has another or they come here from another place. So, we are moving students to a higher degree of cultural literacy; I think reading levels play into it.

Reviewing Christina’s words, it is apparent that she did not understand who her students were culturally. Culturally responsive teaching incorporates reflection on one’s own culture and position of power to understand the assumptions made about students based on own life experiences. Recognition of students as individuals, not as labels or racial or cultural assumptions, is the hallmark of cultural relevance pedagogy.

This study's data revealed that the teachers' subtractive practices of deficit beliefs in regard to students' abilities and perceptions of students' families, and a lack of confidence in students' potential worked against student development and ultimately subsequent achievement. The teachers did not articulate beliefs in culturally relevant pedagogy. Professional development interventions would encourage teachers to shift their beliefs toward a more culturally relevant perspective. My findings are supported by the research of Au (2006), Gay (2002), Howard (2001) and Ladson Billings (1995) that posit that culturally relevant pedagogy draws meaningfully on cultures, languages, and experiences to increase academic achievement for students. Researchers on culturally relevant pedagogy note the difficulties that teachers have when implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Rozansky, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Thornton, 2014).

Summary

The findings detail these tensions or divergence in beliefs and practices across three themes: (a) Professional Teaching Practice, (b) the Social Context of Teaching, and (c) Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity related to teacher beliefs and expectations. The findings demonstrate how collective comments to both subtractive and productive praxes undermined the development of students of color at Heartfelt High School. What the teachers say they believe and what they actually expect from students are not the same. This divergence in expectations constitutes subtractive practices that worked against student development and ultimately achievement. At the productive end of the spectrum, teachers worked collaboratively in goalsetting to create opportunities

for students. Teachers' reflective practices informed expectations and strategies to promote student development and achievement.

Emerging from this study's analysis, a new framework developed—Expectations Divergence—that the researcher developed to synthesize how these educators attempted to understand the connection among the multidimensional, yet paradoxical facets of teacher beliefs. Expectations Divergence is disunity among a school staff caused by competing and contradictory praxes concerning how to educate culturally diverse learners. The three interlocking components: (a) Professional Teaching Practice, (b) Social Context of Teaching, and (c) Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity are illustrated in Figure 3. Each stakeholder promotes preferences in his or her perspective of student achievement. This struggle for the power to control how education is measured and delivered is the vertex or hinge point in the facets of Expectations Divergence.

The Expectations Divergence framework illustrates the multidimensionality of teaching focusing on three aspects: (a) Professional Teaching Practice (for self), (b) Social Context of Teaching (for the school), and (c) Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity (for the students). Teacher beliefs gave shape to who these teachers are and what they do, individually or collectively, as part of the culture of their school.

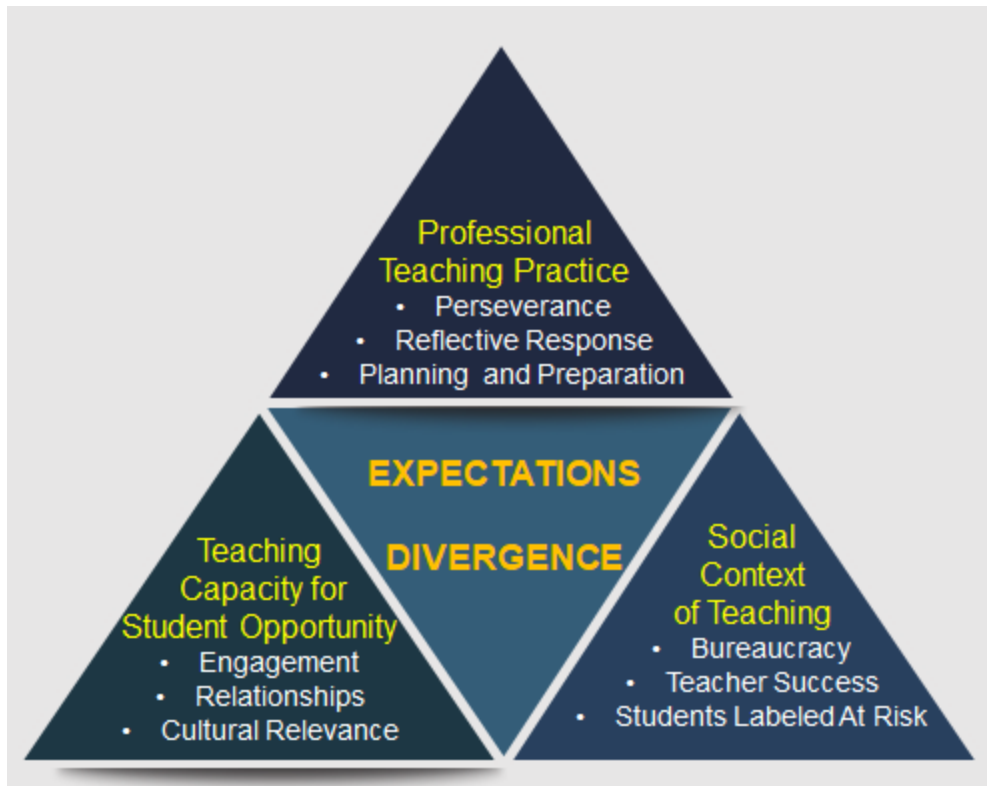


Figure 3. Expectations divergence.

The facets of Professional Teaching Practice (Perseverance, Reflective Response, and Planning and Preparation) as depicted in the Expectations Divergence framework are important in the struggle of teachers' belief in self to demonstrate affective empathy that can interfere with the capability to comprehend a teacher's role in the school. Productive Professional Teaching Practice was demonstrated by persistent and effective teacher approaches using a repertoire of strategies and solicitation of resources from the school or community. Subtractive Professional Teaching Practice was manifested in content errors, lack of modifications to lesson development to address student mastery, and resistance to enhance one's own knowledge and skills to improve performance. As a professional, a teacher needs to have a clear purpose and shared school agenda; however,

rigid adherence to a school's agenda is detrimental when it comes at the expense of the loss of the teacher's identity of self. The status deserving of teachers, thusly, protects their self-esteem and increases efficacy.

The Expectations Divergence framework is also illustrated by a second aspect identified as the Social Context of Teaching: (a) Bureaucracy, (b) Teacher Success, and (c) Students Placed At-Risk. Productive practice of Social Context of Teaching is equality within the school context that allows teachers to develop partnerships, rather than down top-down decisions, with stakeholders so that all voices are heard in dialogue that affirms teachers' competency and credibility. Subtractive practices of Social Context of Teaching, which alienate teachers from the greater environment of the school context, are moralistic judgments, labeling of students as deficient, toxic communication, and teachers' isolation due to lack of communication and collegiality. Fay and Funk (1995) recognized that all teachers want some control over their situation or they are willing to fight to get it back.

The facets of Bureaucracy, Teacher Success, and Students Placed At-Risk as depicted in the Expectations Divergence framework are important in the valuing of teacher beliefs to grapple the power of commanding top-down school organization. These facets identify contextually based tacit knowledge transferred through socialization within all schools that either honor or violate the stakeholders' mutual satisfying outcome of choice and voice in decision-making during reform initiatives. The problem with top-down initiatives is that it forces teachers to function within predetermined processes, accountability measures, compliance rules, and structures

without knowing why these initiatives are beneficial to the organization. As a result, teachers collectively create miscommunication within the disequilibrium of unmet needs and a lack of purpose in their teaching. Schools ignoring these needs of teachers can inadvertently contribute to feelings of disrespect. Teachers struggle for an equitable and respectful environment of making schools more autonomous where teachers feel supported and helpfully challenged.

The Expectations Divergence framework is elucidated by the final aspect identified as Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity: Engagement, Relationships, and Cultural Relevance. Productive practices of Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity are in authentic situations on campus or in the community to provide voice and choice of real world experiences and to provide positive representation/images of cultural diversity in curriculum choices and classroom posters. These productive practices also include teachers making efforts to know the students, develop rapport, and protect the students' self-esteem, so that learning becomes significantly more powerful. Subtractive practices of Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity are the disconnections from students through lecturing, teaching directly out of stereotyped textbooks, not caring if students are absent, not attending extracurricular student activities, and not making parent phone calls. The facets of Engagement, Relationships, and Cultural Relevance as depicted in the Expectations Divergence framework are important in perpetuating the habituation of bias confirming teacher beliefs. The habituation of bias is safe and familiar cognition automatically based on what is known/familiar leading to a vicious cycle of poorly informed decisions.

The three aspects of Professional Teaching Practice, Social Context of Teaching and Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity as portrayed in the Expectations Divergence framework reflect the struggle between teacher beliefs regarding students' apparent resistant attitudes and beliefs toward learning and those teacher beliefs that all students can learn. The cycle is perpetuated when teachers communicate their low expectations for the students, and students respond with apathy in their own ability to learn for themselves. The students become frustrated and give poor effort.

The interviews discussed in this chapter revealed the ever-increasing complexity of the multidimensionality of teacher beliefs and the Expectations Divergence. The interviews illuminated the critical components of the Expectation Divergence framework and how these beliefs and expectations impeded the partnership participation in schooling by teachers and their students. Many factors impact how teaching influences student achievement for our nation's diverse students: greater societal accountability and lower societal appreciation, greater transparency to parents and less support for pedagogical and curriculum changes being implemented. These competing beliefs obstruct the change of those organizations and circumstances within schools for collective fairness. These divergent views and perspectives are confirmed by the restructuring initiatives in our schools and are data for the Expectation Divergence framework (see Table 3).

Table 3

Expectation Divergence Framework

Expectation Divergence	Productive Practices	Subtractive Practices
<p>Professional Practice- Teacher technical <i>disposition</i> of commitment to the purpose and mission of finding ways in which all students can learn.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perseverance – Teacher technical <i>disposition</i> of commitment to the purpose and mission of finding ways in which all students can learn. 2. Reflective Response- Teacher <i>disposition</i> to re-evaluate the purpose and vision of their school to reflect on their performance in classrooms. 3. Preparation and Planning- Teacher technical <i>disposition</i> of commitment to know the subjects and manage and monitor student learning by thinking systematically about teaching practice. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “We have a strong group of teachers who are committed to academic excellence. There is never any sort of top down push to increase our scores. It all comes from the bottom up.” 2. Our data teams were focused on measuring development of skill related to tasks associated with the success in this test.” 3. “I find it fun to try out new things. When I have a new idea and I sit down and start planning; my students enjoy being taught in a different way to the regular sit and get thing.” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “There’s a lot of talk about how we want things to be, but I don’t feel like overall across the board, there’s been an effective implementation.” 2. “We’re not getting it done. It is a culture of the lack of continuous learning. This school has a culture of silence around learning because no one is looking at your practice. And you are not asked to look at your practice. 3. “When our test results came back, it appeared that African American students in general are showing that they learned the common parts, but lacked preparation and support. Why don’t their parents help them more?”

Table 3 (continued)

Expectation Divergence	Productive Practices	Subtractive Practices
<p>1. Social Context of Teaching- is the setting for interplay between the collective expectations of teachers, the social nature of self-fulfilling prophecies, and the competing social context within schools illuminate the nature <i>teacher efficacy</i>.</p> <p>2. Bureaucracy- The <i>belief</i> in organizational structures within school yielding relationships among colleagues, administrators, and the community to foster mutually satisfying decision-making.</p> <p>3. Teacher Success- The <i>belief</i> in a teacher's own competency and credibility recognized by stakeholders as having a special "with-it-ness" spirit.</p> <p>4. Students Placed at Risk The expectation in abilities and capabilities of culturally, economically, or linguistically disenfranchised students labeled as low performing/achieving needing strategic academic interventions.</p>	<p>1. "I consider myself a professional, and I feel like my professional responsibility and my ethical responsibility is to always provide my students the highest quality instruction, materials and feedback, and opportunities for skills and knowledge. And so I think the board objectives tend to direct that energy."</p> <p>2. "I find it fun to try out new things. When I have a new idea and I sit down and start planning; my students enjoy being taught in a different way to the regular sit and get thing."</p> <p>3. "With just these two bands of ability it has made it more challenging, you know, to differentiate. The College Level classes are catered to using the level of readings a little bit easier for them to grasp and point them in the right direction."</p>	<p>1. "I find it fun to try out new things. When I have a new idea and I sit down and start planning; my students enjoy being taught in a different way to the regular sit and get thing."</p> <p>2. "We're not getting it done. It is a culture of the lack of continuous learning. This school has a culture of silence around learning because no one is looking at your practice. And you are not asked to look at your practice."</p> <p>3. "I think that asking a teacher who is just beginning their career to work in a classroom where they have to immediately do individualized instruction for 12 or 13 or 14 kids is asking too much."</p>

Table 3 (continued)

Expectation Divergence	Productive Practices	Subtractive Practices
<p>Teaching Capacity for Student Opportunity – The expectation in abilities and capabilities of culturally, economically, or linguistically disenfranchised students labeled as low performing or low achieving needing strategic academic interventions.</p> <p>1. Engagement- Effectuate student effort, confidence, and enthusiasm.</p> <p>2. Relationships- The quality of student-teacher interactions is informed by the historical, political, and social worldviews of teachers.</p> <p>3. Cultural Relevance- Instructionally inclusive practices that celebrate race and ethnicity of family membership.</p>	<p>1. “I don’t think anybody walks into a classroom and says, ‘Oh these kids can’t do it.’ I think most of us go into it being like okay this is where my kids are and let’s move them.”</p> <p>2. “I realized that kids are kids, and knew them outside of the classroom. I would go to football games; I would go to basketball games. I would go to the concerts. They saw me everywhere. I stuck my nose in their business.”</p> <p>3. “I tell my students, ‘I don’t care the color of your skin; I don’t care about your socioeconomic background. You come into my classroom; all I know is in the classroom. Unless you tell me something, that’s all I can see, so I expect you to give me your best effort.’”</p>	<p>1. “I think we’re not meeting needs of a fairly large population. Those kids who want to go to college have that opportunity to go to college because parents here for the most part are not poor. It’s an affluent community.”</p> <p>2. “Students have very strong opinions about certain classes. And part of it is they’re teenagers and their perceptions are their truths. ‘Nobody cares about me’, or ‘This teacher hates me’ or ‘This teacher doesn’t ask me to do anything.’ There’s too much of that floating around.”</p> <p>3. “Many of my students have multicultural experiences or are themselves bicultural, so we are moving students to a higher degree of cultural literacy. I think reading levels play into it.”</p>

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The classroom is like the black box. Referring to the researcher's experience as a science teacher, the analogy of the black box is unassuming and uncomplicated. The black box is model of a system that cannot be viewed of its internal workings, but can be interpreted based on the inputs and outputs. This comparison is made in relation to the many inputs applied to classroom instruction in anticipation for the output of increased student achievement. The critical variable, however, still remains: teacher beliefs and expectations.

The overriding purpose of exploring the beliefs of educators in this study was to see how their articulated teaching practices reflected the social context and instructional environment of their teaching that drive the school. This study differed from other studies as it provides an insider's perspective of White teachers. The interviews afforded these teachers an opportunity to voice their beliefs, expectations, and experiences.

Summary of Findings

This study sought to acquire from these practitioners, teachers, and administrators, their genuine beliefs and expectations of students' achievement. Two questions were posed that guided this research. The first question was, "How do primarily White educators, in a highly diverse suburban middle-class high school, describe their beliefs about student opportunity and achievement?" Most of the teachers in the school in which this study took place were White. Their "White lens" seemed to

filter their negative descriptions of their student achievement with a sense of “color blindness” (Ferguson, 2002). These teachers used their hegemonic understandings to internalize the organization of the social context of teaching (Picower, 2009). The educators interviewed did not recognize their Whiteness expressed by their own behavior. Missing at Heartfelt High School are pedagogies that utilize strategic empathy dedicated to developing relationships without dismissing the obvious past emotional experiences (Zembylas, 2012).

Ashley referred to “low students” or “those kids.” This reference of “those kids” highlighted her Whiteness and the lack of this teacher’s racial identity to engage student effort, confidence, and enthusiasm (Clewell & Villegas, 1997). Jennifer described her students as having “behavior problems” and “academic problems.” These descriptions illustrated the tensions in teachers’ beliefs about students as a deficit model rather than a growth model of students’ abilities and capabilities. According to Haberman (2004), some of the qualities that Star Teachers possess include their persistence, emotional stamina, caring relationships with students, commitment to engage parents as partners in student learning, support for placed at-risk students, and organization skills. The teachers interviewed from Heartfelt High School do not share the same beliefs of Haberman’s (2004) Star Teachers. Missing is the persistence in the efforts of the teachers at Heartfelt High School to meet their students’ individual educational needs, and their “with-it-ness” reflects their culture of caring transcending curriculum, resources, or assessments.

The primarily White educators described their beliefs about student opportunity based on the level of classes in which the students were enrolled. These teachers

provided opportunities with imposed boundaries of what teachers believed were the abilities and capabilities of each level. The tracking of the students into College Level, Honors Level, and Advanced Placement Level restricted the scope in which teachers provided opportunities for their students. This finding highlighted the nature and scope of the broad resources available to teachers and how this impacts student achievement. The primarily White educators described their beliefs about student achievement in terms of whose responsibility it is to ensure student achievement. Students with “poor” ability, or students who do not take “responsibility” for their own learning, provided a justification for the teacher to relinquish some professional responsibility by blaming students. The articulated beliefs of these teachers were synthesized in Expectations Divergence framework as subtractive practices.

The second question guiding this research was, “How do White educators describe how their beliefs inform their practices related to student opportunity and achievement?” While these teachers spoke of their effort about meeting students’ learning needs, inspiring them, challenging them, and making a meaningful difference in their lives, they also were emotionally charged in their description of the barriers toward the fruition of student opportunity and achievement. Initially, the teachers focused on the directives of reform initiatives that were not aligned to student opportunity and achievement. These teachers’ professional discourse emerged due to these teachers positioning within their professional environments, and their agency, or lack thereof, often beyond their immediate control. Further descriptions of these teachers’ experiences, however, revealed a lack of equity pedagogy. The diverse realities of their

students were seldom addressed. The teachers used generalizations to describe their students as being “different” from their own culture, but failed to view the social reality in their classrooms through a lens of multiple perspectives. The teachers often expressed a lack of passion for justice and social action with complacency that the responsibility lay in the bureaucracy of the school district.

The fate of school reform and practices, such as tracking or efforts to tie teacher evaluations to student outcomes, are all influenced by the collective ideologies and practices of educators (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Dispositions of effective teachers (Star Teachers) are persistence, caring relationships with students, and partnerships with parents in student learning (Haberman, 2004). School leaders must seek to recruit and nurture Star dispositions as a prerequisite to school reform. The teachers demonstrated that what the teachers say they believe and what they actually expect from students are not the same (Stronge et al., 2011). Collectively, this divergence creates a school culture that tolerates, normalizes and institutionalizes educational inequalities.

Underachievement of Black students in suburban settings is a byproduct of social class differences rather than race-based inequalities (Ferguson, 2002). But, at Heartfelt, race rather than school class determined educational opportunity, given that the average Black family was more educated and grossed higher incomes than White families. Teachers possess competing ideologies and dispositions that impede or promote school transformation (Muhammad, 2009). This study confirmed this conclusion, while demonstrating that race remains a fixed barrier to educational opportunity, regardless of parental educational or economic status.

With the urgency of the published Black-White test score gap at Heartfelt High School, the disequilibrium of subtractive and productive teaching practices emerged. The stakeholders at this particular school were not clear in their orchestration of strategic plans for direction and innovation. Teachers felt too much distress, and they described how they pushed back, retreated to their classrooms, or chose to just go along with the inevitable conflict, chaos, and confusion of change. Embracing the disequilibrium supports a change in articulation of teacher beliefs of professional teaching practices, social context of teaching, and teaching capacity for student opportunity as pivotal points in Expectations Divergence. The aim was to identify contradictory teacher beliefs that diminish expectations for student achievement.

The Expectations Divergence framework emerged from this study exposes the contradictions of teacher beliefs and student learning and how these contradictions make effective teaching difficult. Students are socio-culturally embedded in schooling and subjected to a myriad of mixed messages and signals from the teacher, as well as the school, about what is valued and how one demonstrates competency and achievement as a student. The Expectation Divergence framework emerged from a synthesis of the shared experiences of participants that contribute to student academic success. Teachers say one thing and then do something else. For example, Christopher mentioned he liked the curriculum coach, but did not believe in her suggestion so did not implement the new strategy. Fives and Buehl (2012) posited that classroom processes are significantly shaped by teacher beliefs.

Implications

Since competing expectations (Muhammad, 2009) negatively impact school climate and impede change, it is vital that reforms work systematically to improve the culture of schools. This study adds to the literature as it relates to ways to improve student achievement in a diverse high school setting. This study was designed to explore primarily White educators' description of their beliefs about student opportunity and achievement. The Expectations Divergence framework will encourage teachers to look introspectively at their beliefs and practices. By means of this study, teachers have the potential to engage in discourse any time they encounter a message about teaching that they have difficulty understanding. As teachers grapple to make sense of these puzzling messages of student interaction, they depend on their beliefs, expectations, and current practices.

Teacher efficacy shapes student opportunity through teacher beliefs, judgments, goals, and attempts to regulate student behavior. Central to the Expectation Divergence framework is teacher efficacy. Efficacy beliefs are very powerful because they guide teacher practices. Efficacy beliefs help regulate what teachers focus on, how they react to challenges, and how they spend their energies. If teachers' realities are filtered through their beliefs that they can do very little to influence student achievement, then these beliefs will be demonstrated in their practice. "It is promising to know that teacher beliefs about their capacity to impact student outcomes can be shaped and adjusted (Donohoo, 2016, p. xv). This statement highlights the importance of identifying and exploring how contextual factors influence teachers' beliefs about their abilities to

successfully increase student achievement. Teacher practices, therefore, either encourage or discourage opportunities to learn.

The complex nature of Whiteness among teachers should not generalize all White teachers as deficit-orientated, but that Whiteness is nuanced with contradictions and complexities, as this study revealed. Notwithstanding these complexities, educators clearly have many opportunities along a productive and subtractive spectrum. The study suggests that when teachers fail to examine Whiteness, it is not only about the power, but also about the ability of these teachers to function with contradiction and their own responsibility for developing strategies for understanding Whiteness and its relationship to the lack of sensitivity toward others. This study can be better positioned within the Whiteness studies movement and a key value-added of this study.

Through his book, intended to be a letter conveying wisdom to his son, Coates (2015) urgently cautioned White, middle-class teachers wrestling with their teaching capacity for diverse students to provide equal access to the world of thought and beauty. His reflections of schooling are of a system of blind obedience over the curiosity of discovery and the judiciary social context of teaching over the individual learner. Yet, the aim of 21st century education maintains learning through collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Through Coates' (2005) descriptions of his own experiences growing up Black in the United States, he wrote: "There exists, all around us, an apparatus urging us to accept American innocence at face value and not inquire too much" (p. 8). Educators must reflect on their own role in schooling and change their unconscious perspective, unaware of one's racial self and others.

Educators who are socio-culturally conscious will articulate beliefs that recognize the barriers ethnic groups encounter, and the role in which Whiteness contributes to those barriers. The efforts of these educators may be hampered by the avoidance of conversations about Whiteness with students and colleagues due to resentment, frustration, and blame. Hill-Jackson (2007) examined the three stages of White pre-service teachers' perspectives crucial for advancing equity pedagogy: changing multicultural perspective from the unconscious stage to the responsive stage, and finally to the critical conscious stage requires educators to embrace a new lens by which to see the world. While many teacher education institutions provide field experiences with diverse student populations, without continuing dialogue and reflection of teachers in their own classrooms, these educators' cognitive dissonance will effectuate alignment with collective divergence.

Transforming teacher education is difficult due to the origins of traditional teaching and faculty who are not entrenched to facilitate discussions. The collaborative learning communities now established in most schools can serve as a space for these much-needed discussions in the form of staff development. A staff development design should promote collaborative and critical reflection of Whiteness. The use of book studies of multicultural literature, movie/video clips, field trips, various reflective writing, and even participation in community service projects support opportunities for discussion of once-silenced voices. The development of professional capabilities of teachers yields productive practices of advocacy for social justice so that current schooling is reimagined to benefit students from diverse groups. The disruption of the

status quo permits teachers to have high expectations for all students and use a variety of innovative strategies to empower all learners and ultimately improve academic achievement. The critical consciousness of productive practices leads teachers to empathize with the struggle of oppressed others.

Ideally, productive practices possess and enact beliefs, expectations, and dispositions synergistically and in support of students' social, academic, and cultural strengths. In schools like Heartfelt High School, teacher beliefs and expectations are subtractive, thus promoting a climate that is not synergistic and works against student development with institutionalized harmful, narrow-minded policies and programs that further impede teachers' ability to address the needs of all students. Moreover, the unresponsiveness of teachers to the diversity in their classrooms obstructed genuine learning and student development.

Limitations

As a secondary analysis, the researcher could have benefited greatly from taking an active role in the initial data collection process. Although the sample of teachers of color at Heartfelt is small, their inclusion in this sample could have yielded a more distinct spectrum of teacher beliefs and practice.

Suggestions for Future Research

Schools vary in the practices that are used to achieve their goals; these practices also produce class, gender, and racial inequalities. Pervasive achievement disparities in schools shadow a pattern similar in low achievement by mirroring the low socioeconomic status of the school. However, this was not indicative of Heartfelt High

School that reflected social capital and household earnings that were the second wealthiest in the state. This site reflected an increase in diversity as more and more African Americans and Latinos/o families are migrating to the suburban districts with ideal resources. Suggestions for future research would be to replicate this study in diversified suburban school districts of Houston, like Aldine, Klein, Spring, and Cypress Fairbanks. In many respects, these suburban schools have become more like urban systems. Suburban school districts that were once homogeneous are now more culturally and linguistically diverse. This shift in population is part of the schooling context within which expectations divergence unfolds.

A second suggestion for future research is to study how the community and families in diverse suburban school districts are managing expectations divergence to ensure productive practices support their children. As reform efforts are initiated, it will be necessary to address differing necessities, tenets, and levels of belief to involve communities. The focus on family involvement recognizes parents as key partners in the instruction of their child.

The third suggestion for future research is to apply the Expectation Divergence framework to a traditional urban site such as Dallas or Chicago. The focused framework must be implemented within differentiated reform initiatives to attend to differences in the nature of beliefs and subtractive practices as an investment in school capacity.

The common factor to every successful change initiative is the improvement of relationships with diverse people and groups (Fullan, 2008). Continuing with the status quo will mean continued mediocrity of many of diverse students. Administrators must be

acquainted with their teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices as a starting point. In order for this to happen, administrators must work with the teachers to achieve social justice for all students.

In conclusion, the researcher embarked on this study to examine the impact of White teachers' beliefs and expectations about their diverse students, and discovered teacher efficacy is a key component to this study. The researcher was surprised by the subtractive practice of articulated deficit-centered teacher beliefs on student performance. Missing at Heartfelt High School were teachers who were knowledgeable in pedagogy to enhance students' identity by effectuating learning and school success. The potential for this group of teachers is to reflect and challenge their traditional teaching methods following Nieto's (2005) advice:

Although for over a century our nation has advanced the ideal that a high-quality and excellent public education is the birthright of all children, our schools cannot fulfill this ambitious and noble purpose unless all of us—parents, policymakers, and the general public—commit ourselves to sustaining education as a public trust and a promise to future generations. (p. 6)

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant	Questions
Introduction for all interviews:	So, for the next 30 minutes everything you say here will be confidential. Nothing you say here will be shared so that no one will know what you share. The audio recording will be turned into text and the recordings will be destroyed. When we do share the responses, it won't be shared with names attached. Anything that can be specific as to get back to you we won't share.
Personal Journey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I'd like to understand how you entered your personal journey to education and leadership because it is a different field to get into. 2. Where did you grow up? 3. What was your first school you ended up at? 4. How supportive is your family? 5. For Administrators- How did you come into administration?
Perceptions of this School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you live in this school's community? 2. What is your role here at this school? 3. In which department are you working? 4. What percentage of teachers might label their lower level classes as "bad"? 5. Are there any assumptions teachers have? 6. For Administrators- How are you involved in instructional leadership?
Change Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presently there is a strategic plan in place to look at where the school now needs to go. Describe the schedule of implementation. 2. Is there any energy, staff time, leadership for the inquiry process? 3. What are the major priorities in terms of initiatives that this school is tasked with right now? 4. What are some issues that are immersing from the plan? 5. How has new teacher evaluation system reduced teacher confidence? 6. If you could raise the expectations for yourself and your department, what practice would have to shift among the teachers?
Shared Vision and Mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much variation do you see in terms of teachers' willingness to hold the students to high expectations? 2. What has been the administrators' response to the new changes? 3. Describe this school's culture.
Student Needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are the teaching strategies addressing student needs? 2. What are the challenges in the varying levels of instruction? 3. What does differentiation look like in assessments? 4. How do you connect to their students and their families?
Strength of Teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe teacher quality at this school? 2. How would you describe how learning is occurring? 3. How are teachers checking for understanding? 4. How much variation do you see in terms of teachers' willingness to hold students to high expectations?