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Knowledge, skills, and dispositions influencing middle school teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school

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By

Angela M. González

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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June 14, 2012

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Influencing Middle School

Teachers' Decision Making in Planning Social Studies Instruction

in a Hispanic Serving School

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

The issue of highly qualified teachers as the key to improving the educational system in the United States has become a primary focus in education. The federal educational policy *No Child Left Behind* Act 2001, describes what it means to be a highly qualified teacher in core subject areas, and all states are required to use this criterion for defining what teachers should know, and be able to do. Accordingly, certified teachers in today's public school classrooms must possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions so that all students, including those students who have been historically disadvantaged and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse are offered equal opportunities for academic success. Teachers are continuously developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions to build their capacities (Grant, 2008). The purpose of this multiple-case study is to describe how these capacities influenced six middle school teachers' decision making in planni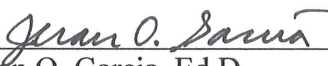ng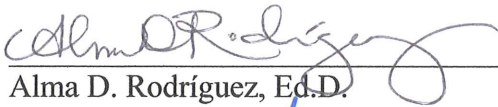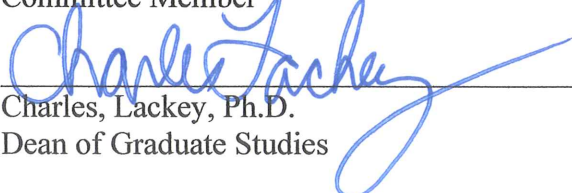 social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school over time. Henderson and Gornik's (2007) concept of *decision-making in planning curriculum goals* served as a framework to conduct this multiple-case study. The data collected through interviews, followed the Seidman's (2006) model of three-interview series. In addition, data were collected from non-participant observations, written field notes, and social studies lesson plans. The data were first analyzed using Yin's (2009) case-by-case analysis framework, and then, by applying Stake's (2006) cross-case analysis. Twenty thematic categories emerged as a result of the case-by-case analyses. These thematic categories served as a preamble for the cross-case analysis from which six themes and two atypical results emerged.

The emerged themes across the cases are: (1) effective teamwork; (2) cultural awareness; (3) ownership in learning; (4) caring about student needs; (5) connecting lessons to everyday life; and (6) reflective practices. Implications for practices and further research are provided to help contribute to the body of knowledge regarding teacher capacity. These implications include strategies that can be developed to prepare teachers to effectively plan differentiated instruction for diverse students to help close the achievement gaps.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The history of educational reform in the twentieth century has focused on improving schools, closing the achievement gap, increasing teacher quality, and fostering student learning for all children in the United States. More recently, the issue of highly qualified teachers as the key to improving the educational system has become a primary focus in education. The federal educational policy, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB,2001a)*, describes what it means to be a highly qualified teacher in core subject areas, and all states are required to use this criterion for defining what teachers should know and be able to do. Accordingly, certified teachers in today's public school classrooms must possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Grant, 2008; Y. A. Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; Villegas, 2002) required so that all students, including those students who have been historically disadvantaged and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, are offered equal opportunities for academic success.

An increasing challenge in education today is that the teaching workforce in the United States does not reflect the diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background of the nation's student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). For example, a student body that is increasingly Hispanic is being taught by a teaching force that remains predominantly White. There are 3.5 million teachers in America's public school system and of these, only 242 thousand teachers are Hispanic or African-American, accounting for less that 15% of the total teachers in the country (U.S. Department of Education,

2010). Those teachers serve a population of 10 million Hispanic students, an average of 1 Hispanic teacher per 43 Hispanic students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Research shows that teachers with diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds may provide real-life examples for minority students of future career paths (Delpit, 2006). In addition, highly qualified and effective teachers within different ethnicities, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds, have demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement for engaging students of similar backgrounds (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Hispanic students are becoming the majority of the U.S. student population (Fry, 2008), while historically displaying the lowest academic performance (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Several researchers (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; García, 2001, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999) have found that the Hispanic student population in the U.S. receives an inferior education compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts. Although there are several complex factors that contribute to this, one of the most critical is the teachers' lack of preparation to address Hispanic students' needs (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; García, 1997; Villamil Tinajero, Hope Munter, & Araujo, 2010).

Research (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009) has found that what teachers think and do, and how this influences their decision making for planning instruction to address diverse students' needs, greatly impacts student achievement. Therefore, underscoring the need for policy makers and stakeholders in the educational system to establish reforms to prepare highly qualified teachers and offer professional development so teachers can deliver effective instruction that reflects the increasing diversity of students in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b).

Statement of the Problem

Although some progress on the academic performance of minority student groups has been made since the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* Act of 2001 was enacted, Hispanic students are still performing below than their White counterparts. The *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP)*,* also referred to as the nation's report card, shows that, for example, 2009 scores for Hispanic students, have increased since the early 1990s when NAEP was first implemented. However, scores for White students have increased as well. While scores have improved for both groups, Hispanic students lag by the same percentages today as they did in 1990. This means that the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has been largely unchanged for the past two decades, both nationally, and for almost every state (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). According to Chapin (2006), the achievement gap phenomenon occurs when two or more groups have severe and persistent discrepancies in formally measured academic performance. Although there is evidence of progress, data from NAEP which reports overall and subgroup findings for grades 4th and 8th for mathematics and reading, demonstrates that a persistent achievement gap is evident across the country in the core content areas, including reading, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The effort in improving students' achievement has been focused on reading and mathematics (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). In the last decade, the emphasis on reading and mathematics standardized testing under the federal policy *No Child Left Behind* Act, has led to lagging performance in other subjects, such as history (Hinde, 2008; Meier, 2004; Vogler, 2003; Wood, 2004). Of the seven subjects on the most recent national NAEP

tests, students performed the most poorly in U.S. History. For example, in 2010, the

NAEP reported that U.S. History at the eighth grade level recorded that 69% of all tested

students performed at or above the *basic* level only, 17% performed at or above the

proficient level and 1% performed at the *advanced* level (National Assessment of

Educational Progress, 2010).

One of the most challenging courses in the social studies content area for diverse

students at the middle school level is U.S. History (Conklin, 2007). Research (Cho &

Reich, 2008; Conklin, 2007, 2008; Szpara & Ahmad, 2007a) shows that at the middle

school level, social studies subject matter is a challenging area for culturally and

linguistically diverse populations. This situation has educators concerned about their

ability to prepare all students, including diverse learners, to become active citizens, as

well as the long-term viability of the nation's democracy (Gay, 2004b). In 2001, the

National Council for the Social Studies, published a document entitled *Diversity Within*

Unity: Essential Principles for Teaching and Learning in a Multicultural Society. This

document recommended that schools should contribute to the building of a common

nation from the growing ethnic, cultural, and language diversity, where educators "must

respect and build upon the strengths and characteristics that students from diverse

backgrounds bring to school…helping all students acquire the knowledge, skills, and

values needed to become participant citizens on the commonwealth" (p.5). However,

since social studies is not tied to high stakes testing due the implementation of NCLB,

many school districts have reduced the amount of time students spend learning about

subjects that are not tested, including social studies and history (Meier, 2004; Vogler,

2003; Wood, 2004). According to Goodman, Shannon, Goodman, and Rapoport (2005),

this curriculum narrowing phenomena is more common in poor school districts with high minority populations, thereby increasing the achievement gap even further.

The problem is clear. Hispanic students need effective teaching in order to achieve academic success. As the Hispanic population increases, closing the achievement gap is vital to ensuring the future as a nation and our ability to compete in a global society. Hispanic students are the most undereducated population group in the nation (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). How to provide equal opportunities for these students continues to be a source of considerable concern and controversy. An increasing body of research has demonstrated that highly qualified and effective teachers positively impact students' learning (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Haycock, 1998) and every child should have access to highly qualified teachers. Teachers' lack of preparation to face this challenge has been addressed by the U.S. Department of Education through *The Obama Administration's Plan for Teacher Education Reform and Improvement* (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). Although teachers continuously develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that shape their capacities, there is no consensus on the critical competencies that teachers must have to effectively meet these students' needs (Gándara, et al., 2003; Hanushek, 2006).

Need for the Study

This study emerged from the call for all educators and teachers to be better prepared to address the academic needs of all students (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, & Trezek, 2008; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001b; U.S. Department of Education, 2011b) and the urgency to close the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students that has stayed largely unchanged for the past two decades (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008;

Murdock, 2003; Texas Education Agency, 2011b). The educational literature is replete with recommendations and instructional strategies for improving student academic achievement and closing the achievement gap. However, research maintains that the gap remains (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008). Despite knowing the impact of what teachers think, decide, and do during the process of planning instruction on student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009), few studies research these processes, especially how they pertain to middle school social studies instruction. Therefore, there exists a need to conduct research studies that contribute to the body of knowledge regarding how middle school teachers, serving large Hispanic student population, make decisions during the process of planning social studies instruction. Since teachers' knowledge-base affects their decisions about instructional approaches (Y. A. Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010), it is worth considering their voices by conducting research on how their knowledge, skills, and dispositions influence their instructional planning decisions. By examining and describing what decision-making processes middle school teachers engage in for effectively planning social studies instruction for a predominantly Hispanic student population, other educators can make informed decisions, changes, and accommodations in their instructional planning to ensure academic success for diverse students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how a group of middle school teachers in a school serving a large Hispanic student population engaged in decision making, while planning social studies instruction. By listening to the voices of the teachers, the need to better prepare educators to effectively meet diverse students' academic needs, can

be addressed by educators, specifically in professional development and teacher education programs. By examining how teachers make decisions, and what teachers think and do during the process of planning instruction, this study contributed to the body of knowledge in the research literature regarding teacher capacity and the preparation of highly qualified teachers to deliver effective instruction for a diverse student population and to encourage the development of a teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of our students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b).

Research Question

Inasmuch as the purpose of this proposed study was to describe the decision making process middle school teachers engage in for planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school, the study addressed the following research question: What knowledge, skills, and dispositions influence middle school teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school?

Context and Background of the Study

The context and background for the study was a South Texas school district serving a predominantly Hispanic student population. A middle school was purposefully selected (Creswell, 2009) as the setting for this study. After an invitation to all middle school social studies teachers in the district to participate in the study, only one middle school was chosen. That middle school was selected because all of the teachers who were invited agreed to participate. The school was a 6th to 8th grade middle school that serves 723 students where 92% are Hispanics. The participants or cases (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009) included six teachers who teach social studies courses at middle school grade

level. The participants were explicitly selected (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009) to encompass instances in which the phenomena under study are likely to be found.

The study examined how middle school teachers engaged in decision-making when planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. Two critical aspects made the context of the study significant. First, the school district selected, mirrored the high number of Hispanic students in the American schools. Texas, where the school district was chosen, has shown a population trend of declining numbers of Whites and a growing in the number of minorities (Murdock, 2003; Texas Education Agency, 2011b). For example, in 2003, Murdock predicted that between 2000 and 2040, Texas' public enrollment will see a 15% decline in White children, while Hispanic children will make up a 213% increase. This is alarming because education and income levels for Hispanics lag considerably behind Whites, and this population has historically under-performed across the educational ladder.

The second aspect that makes the context of the study significant is the low-priority status of the social studies curricula at elementary and middle school levels in public schools. The social studies content area includes different strands, including U.S. History and citizenship education. Although citizenship education or *civics* is historically one of the foremost purposes for formalized schooling in America, it has lost prominence and priority in today's schools (Hinde, 2008; Vogler, 2003; Zarrillo, 2011). Stark (1987) stated that since the 1980s, numerous studies have documented the diminishing status of social studies in American schools. Other studies have documented insufficient teachers' attention to social studies when they deliberate on what to include in planning their instruction (Vogler, 2003). As a result of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 an

emphasis on reading and mathematics has occurred because they are content areas that require mandated testing, while social studies is viewed by many teachers as a less important subject (Hinde, 2008; Vogler, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

In order to examine how teachers engage in decision making for planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school, Henderson and Gornik's (2007) concept of *decision-making in planning curriculum goals* provided the theoretical propositions for this study. As a framework to help teachers expand their understanding of planning and decision-making, Henderson & Gornik (2007) described the entire process of decision making in planning curriculum goals in four levels: (1) designing and planning for classroom instruction; (2) implementation of planning once instructional decisions are made; (3) evaluating classroom practices through reflective inquiry; (4) and organizing and reorganizing curricula or ongoing planning and decision making. This study was guided by the first two Henderson & Gornik's curriculum decision-making processes: (1) designing and planning for classroom instruction, and (2) implementation of planning once instructional decisions are made. These two decision-making processes provided the theoretical framework for examining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influence teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school.

Research Design

This qualitative study used Yin's (2009) multiple-case study as a strategy of inquiry providing specific direction for procedures in the research design (Creswell, 2009). The research design employed Yin's (2009) three principles of data collection: (1)

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triangulate *multiple sources of evidence*; (2) the creation of a *case study database*; and (3) the *maintenance of a chain of evidence*. The multiple sources of evidence included the following: academic artifacts, such as lesson plans and schedules for planning time; individual and group interviews with participants; the researcher's field notes; and observations. For initial analysis, themes that emerged from the literature and from the theoretical framework were identified. Next, using content analysis, major themes were identified, coded, and further analyzed (Stake, 2006). Major identified findings are discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this study.

<div align="center">Organization of the Dissertation</div>

The study is presented in six chapters. The first chapter provides the general introduction, the rationale for the study and the outline for each chapter. Chapter Two delineates a comprehensive review of the literature on teacher education including the following: (1) the conceptualization of teacher capacity; (2) Henderson & Gornik's conceptual framework for the study; (3) the development and research on the forces that influence teachers' decision making in planning for instruction; and (4) the state of the social studies classroom describing the middle school student and the Hispanic demographics in U.S. and Texas as the specific context for this study. The third chapter describes the research methodology, including participant information, forms of data collection, how data were analyzed, triangulation and trustworthiness of data, and ethical issues, such as the role of the researcher. Chapter Four presents the case-by-case analyses and Chapter Five presents the cross-case analyses to present the findings as a multiple-case study. The last chapter discusses the implications of the study for teachers, educational administrators and teacher preparation programs. This last chapter also

includes some recommendations for further research on teachers' preparation for delivering effective instruction for diverse student population and for professional development.

<div align="center">Definitions of Terms</div>

For the purpose of this study, this section defines key terms that recur throughout the study.

Achievement gap in education is applied when "one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant, that is, larger than the margin of error" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a). The achievement gap is usually discussed in terms of significant differences in the academic achievement between two or more groups of students such as White and Hispanics, or between groups of students from different socio-economic (SES) backgrounds (Waxman, Padron, Jee-Young, & Rivera, 2008).

Curriculum is defined as an academic plan devised for a course, grade, or school level (Kliebard, 1989) around specific objectives stated in behavioral and content terms that can be used as criteria by which to measure the outcomes of curriculum planning and instruction (Reid, 2009).

CSCOPE is a comprehensive, customized, user-friendly curriculum management system built on the most current research-based practices in the field. CSCOPE is a K-12 Texas' standards-based curriculum developed by the Texas Education Service Centers and a team of content experts. Its primary focus is to impact instructional practices in the classroom to improve student performance. The key components of the CSCOPE

curriculum are: a K-12 systemic model in the four content areas, clarified and specified ELPS/TEKS expectations assembled in a vertical alignment format, customizable instructional plans that allows district resources to be integrated into the system, lessons in both English and Spanish (CSCOPE, 2012).

Decision-making is defined as a conscious and unconscious cognitive thinking process on a task or a problem (Bishop, 2008; Shavelson, 1973).

English Language Learner is a student of limited English proficiency (LEP) whose primary language is other than English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing appropriate grade level coursework in English (Texas Education Agency, 2011c). While most government reports and educational agencies use the term LEP (Limited English Proficient) (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001a; Texas Education Code, in 29.052), for the purpose of the proposed study, the term *English Language Learner* (ELL) will be used to refer to those students whose first or native language is other than English (Texas Education Agency, 2011c).

English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) are the state standards required by 19 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 74, Subchapter A, which outline English language proficiency level descriptors and student expectations for English language learners (ELLs). Texas schools are required to implement ELPS as an integral part of each subject in the required curriculum (Texas Education Agency, 2012).

Hispanic or Latino terms refer to an ethnic category that applies to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term *Spanish origin* can be used in addition to *Hispanic* or *Latino*. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012c; U.S. Department of Education,

2007). In reviewing pertinent literature, several terms such as *Hispanic, Latino, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican* and *Latin-American* were all encountered. In reviewing and reporting literature and studies of different authors and researchers, it was chosen to use those terms in the same way those authors employed those terms. Thus, the use of *Hispanic, Latino and Mexican-American* terms were used interchangeably.

Hispanic student is as a student of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race, residing in the U.S. according to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR, 2010).

Knowledge refers to the use of empirical research, disciplined inquiry, informed theory and the wisdom of practice. This term refers to teacher knowledge, including subject matter, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum, pedagogy, educational foundations (multicultural as well as historical, philosophical, sociological, and psychological), policy context, diverse learners (including those with special needs) and their culture, technology, child and adolescent development, group processes and dynamics, theories of learning, motivation and assessment. It also includes understandings of schooling and education, professional ethics, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession of teaching (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

Limited English Proficient (LEP) student is defined by the NCLB Act (2001a) as an individual between 3 and 21 years old, who is enrolled or about to enroll in a U.S. elementary or secondary school and was not born in the U.S. or speaks a native language other than English. The *NCLB Act* utilized primarily the term *LEP* throughout the Act, as well as other government reports. However, most of the educational and research reports

use the term *English Language Learner (ELL)*. According to *NCLB Act* definition, a

student is labeled as *LEP* if the student is unable to score at the proficient level on state

assessments of academic achievement, learn successfully in classrooms that have English

as the language of instruction, and to fully participate in society because of difficulties in

speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language (No Child Left Behind

Act, 2001a).

 Long-term English language learners (LTELLs) describes secondary ELL

students who have attended U.S. schools for seven or more years (Menken & Kleyn,

2010; Olsen, 2010). One main characteristic of LTELLs is that they struggle

academically. Olsen (2010) argued that LTELLs' prior schooling has been linguistically

subtractive because their native language was not fully developed in school and replaced

by English language (Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

 Pedagogical knowledge is defined by the National Council for Accreditation of

Teacher Education (NCATE) as the "general concepts, theories, and research about

effective teaching, regardless of content areas" (National Council for Accreditation of

Teacher Education, 2008).

 Pedagogical content knowledge is defined by the NCATE as the "interaction of

the subject matter and effective teaching strategies to help students learn the subject

matter." It requires the teacher to have an in-depth understanding of the subject matter to

teach it in multiple ways, "drawing on cultural backgrounds and prior knowledge and

experiences of students" (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education,

2008).

Planning is defined as teachers' decision-making process, where teachers select subject matter standards, factors that impact students' learning process, and alternative strategies and experiences for engaging students with the content (Hlebowitsh, 1999).

Planning for instruction in the educational field is defined as a systematic way in determining what to teach, the development of objectives, choose methods and strategies to teach the content, and deciding how to evaluate students progress (Yell, Busch, & Rogers, 2008).

Professional dispositions is defined by NCATE as the professional attitudes, values, commitments and beliefs "demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development" (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

Region One Education Service Center is part of a state-wide system of 20 regional education service centers created by the 59th Texas Legislature to assist school districts across the state. The role of Region One ESC is to "assist school districts in improving student performance; enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and implement initiatives" (Region One Education Service Center, 2012).

Skills is the ability to use content, professional, and pedagogical knowledge effectively and readily in diverse teaching settings in a manner that ensures that all students are learning. This term includes planning, organizing, and orchestrating instruction, using instructional materials and technology, disciplining pupils, managing groups, monitoring and evaluating learning, collaborating with colleagues, parents, and

community and social services agencies. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

Teacher capacity is defined as the core knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers should posses to teach in today's classrooms. Also included in the definition, is the awareness of the social and political contexts of education and the development of critical consciousness about issues such as race, class, gender, culture, language, and educational equity (Howard & Aleman, 2008).

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) is defined by TEA as the official K-12 curriculum for the state of Texas. The TEKS are the state standards for what students should know and be able to do (Texas Education Agency, 2012).

White refers to a racial category that applies to a "person having origins in any of the original populations of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012c; U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For decades, debates in the education field have flourished about what makes a good teacher and what capacities teachers need to be effective (Grant, 2008; Hanushek, 2006). Teacher capacity research has concerned itself with the knowledge, skills and dispositions that teachers should possess (Grant, 2008) and are required to teach in today's P-12 classrooms (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). According to Meyen and Greer (2009), teachers decide and establish the expectations within a class influenced by their knowledge, skills, and dispositions that ultimately, influence the students' educational process.

Similarly, in deciding expectations for students, teacher capacity implies the preparation of lessons and activities on a daily basis, knowing that this is a process of conscious and unconscious decision-making (Eley, 2006; Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Milner, 2003; Panasuk, Stone, & Todd, 2002), where a lesson plan can be defined as pre-active decision-making that takes place before instruction (Pineiro Ruiz, 2009). In today's classroom, with the increasing participation of diverse students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011a), the concept of teacher capacity is extended to include the "awareness of the social and political contexts of education and the development of critical consciousness about issues such as race, class, gender, culture, language, and educational equity" (Howard & Aleman, 2008, p. 158). In this twenty-first century, teachers face a more complex task due the need to develop a more thoughtful consideration of the

process of decision-making in planning for instruction appropriate in culturally and linguistic diverse contexts (Howard & Aleman, 2008; Milner, 2010).

In order to address this complexity, this literature review is divided into three sections. The first section presents the conceptions of teacher capacity over time and how teacher capacity is defined for the purpose of this study. Henderson & Gornik's (2007) concept of decision making in planning curriculum goals is presented to provide the conceptual framework for this study, emphasizing the planning for classroom instruction and the implementation of planning once decisions are made. The second section describes forces that influence teachers' decision making during the instructional planning process. In describing the forces, this second section specifically addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions relevant to the purpose of this study and employed as theoretical propositions. The section includes the following forces: mandated standards, content and pedagogical knowledge, teachers' beliefs, collaboration and knowledge about students' development.

The third section presents literature that shapes the context for this study, the middle school social studies classroom in a Hispanic serving school. It looks at the state of the social studies classroom today in the United States. Subsequently, it describes challenges that middle school students experience in learning social studies. Since Hispanic students were the majority of the population of the context of this study, this section ends with an overview of the demographics of Hispanic students as a culturally and linguistic growing population in the U.S. classroom. The review of the literature for this dissertation aimed to provide an overview of: the research that this study builds upon;

teachers' decision-making process in planning social studies instruction at middle school level in a Hispanic serving school; as well as, identify the gaps in the literature.

Teacher Capacity

What teachers bring and develop during their teaching career is highly tied to their capacity. In this study, the term *teacher capacity* (Grant, 2008, p. 127) was used interchangeably with its definition: "teacher core knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers should possess to teach in today's classrooms" (Howard & Aleman, 2008, p. 157). For the purpose of this study and to frame the sequence of this literature review, Williamson and Clevenger's (2008) definitions of teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, terms were selected. The concepts embedded in the definition are closely related to the purpose of this research, which was to examine what knowledge, skills and dispositions influence middle school teachers' decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school.

The first term *knowledge* is about what teachers need to know. When planning for instruction, an effective teacher needs to know the subject matter; pedagogical content knowledge; curriculum; child and adolescent development; and the characteristics of diverse learners and their cultures. The second term, *skills,* delineates what teachers need to be able to do. The critical skills required for effective teaching, include: planning and orchestrating instruction; using instructional materials and technology appropriately; and working in collaboration with colleagues. The third term *dispositions,* describes what teachers care about. The dispositions include the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, values, and commitments.

The debate regarding to what teachers need to know, including their skills and

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dispositions, have changed and evolved in response to changing social, economic, and political agendas in the United States. As early as 1830, the Normal Schools, now more commonly called *teachers' colleges,* started to identify what teachers should know and be able to do. Then, as now, the focus was on teacher's (1) knowledge, (2) skills, and (3) dispositions (Grant, 2008). These three broad categories appear to capture the spectrum of teacher capacities across time (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). The history of teacher preparation and capacity shows an ongoing search to identify and to define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that each teacher must possess to help educate the nation's student body population (Howard & Aleman, 2008). For instance, from the early 1900s, in response to the nation's rapid industrialization and urbanization, questions about what students needed to learn was based on a new concept about industrial management. This new concept was known as *scientific management* and it was first addressed by educational curriculum scholars at that time, creating implications for teacher capacity conceptualization.

The sequence and weight of educational curriculum reform in the United States have increased dramatically over the past twenty years. The publication of two U.S. Department of Education reports, *A Nation at Risk (1983)* and later *Education 2000* in 1992, initiated the changes in the educational curriculum where scholars and policy makers began to examine the need for reform of the K-12 academic curriculum causing again debate about teacher capacity (Grant, 2008). The findings gave reasons for serious concern about the ability of the United States to remain competitive in a worldwide industry, commerce, science, and technological innovation (King & Zucker, 2005). The authors of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) called for major reforms to address the teachers'

knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enabled teachers to teach higher-level thinking in the areas of mathematics and science.

In *A Nation at Risk,* teachers' academic credentials were emphasized, noting that teacher candidates should hold a bachelor's degree in an academic discipline in addition to a degree in education, so all students could reach the same academic goals and standards. As a consequence, a standards-based reform movement flourished which impacted the education landscape with the enactment of the *No Child Left Behind Act (2001a)*, the standards-based reform that became national education policy having as an overarching goal to enhance educational outcomes for all students and close the racial and ethnic achievement gap. However, some scholars have argued that the complex requirements of this law have failed to achieve the intended goal provoking low expectations for students, especially for students from minority groups and lower socioeconomic classes (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010).

In summary, the spectrum regarding changes in the concept of *teacher capacity* reflects the social, economical, and political agendas during the course of the twentieth century. While the historical evolution of the needed knowledge, skills and dispositions for teachers reveals an emphasis in science, mathematics, and technology, little attention to issues of diversity have been addressed (Grant, 2008). The literature on teacher capacity as it relates to knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching non-white students and other traditionally marginalized groups is not extensive (Grant, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Teachers need to be better prepared to face the increasing number of diverse students in the

nation's classrooms. The need to explore multiple relationships and discourses between teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions in classrooms that are becoming increasingly diverse is evident (Grant, 2008). Examining what influence teachers' decision-making in planning for instruction in a Hispanic serving school can serve as a useful model to help provide student teachers, and to already-certified teachers, with the type of capacity that can contribute to their effectiveness in teaching and planning for diverse students.

Conceptual Framework

Henderson and Gornik's (2007) concept of *decision-making in planning curriculum goals* provided the conceptual framework that guided this study. Henderson and Gornik's theoretical propositions are drawn on the notion of planning and decision making as an ongoing process that provides teachers the required competencies for understanding and addressing the academic needs of all students. The authors defined the act of planning and decision-making as an ongoing process in which teachers first engage in their own personal knowing, and then move toward professional knowing. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2001), defines *decision* as the exact judgment taken by thinking on a task or a problem after consideration. The process of decision-making begins after this complex cognitive process. Shavelson (1973) argued that this reasoning, "leads to the hypothesis that the basic teaching skill is decision-making" (p.18). With the increasing diversity of students in the U.S. classrooms, teachers are faced with students who possess a wide range of educational needs (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Valenzuela, 2005). Therefore, to effectively address students' diverse academic needs, teachers must engage in skilled decision-making (Bishop, 2008; Borko, Roberts, & Shavelson, 2008; Shavelson, 1973) when planning for diverse students.

Decision Making in Planning

Henderson and Gornik (2007) described two fundamental challenges that are fundamental to the decision-making process: (1) the reconceptualization of subject standards and (2) the practice of cultivating reflective inquiry. These two challenges are the central components of the four interrelated curriculum decision-making processes that Henderson and Gornik categorized as the process of decision making in planning curriculum goals. The four interrelated decision-making processes that describe the entire sequence of decision making in planning are: (1) planning for classroom instruction; (2) implementation of planning once instructional decisions are made; (3) evaluating classroom practices through reflective inquiry; and (4) organizing and reorganizing curricula planning. Due to the scope of this study, the two first levels were employed as theoretical propositions: (1) planning for classroom instruction, and (2) implementation of planning once decisions are made. These two first levels of Henderson and Gornik's concept of decision-making in planning guided the study by providing a framework by which to examine the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influenced the participant teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school.

Planning for Classroom Instruction

The decision-making process in planning for instruction is a basic teaching skill (Shavelson, 1973). Henderson and Gornik (2007) noted that curriculum decision making is generally related to planning and teaching deliberations. The first level of decision making in planning for instruction suggested by Henderson and Gornik (2007) is the designing and planning process that guides teachers' classroom instructional planning.

Instructional planning includes: deciding what will happen in the classroom each day within the design of a lesson plan; developing integrated units with other teachers; planning a course that might last a semester or a year; or planning a full program that may include many courses (Henderson & Gornik, 2007). The most common practice for teachers regarding planning for instruction is planning for unit/lesson where the teachers design the instruction for a day-by-day plan. Because the unit/lesson planning is responsive to the needs of a particular group of students, a teacher may want to customize it. Henderson and Gornik (2007) suggested that teachers and students should work in collaboration to decide and plan together to include the scope and diversity of the students represented. The unit/lesson plan will hold elements of the vision laid out for the overall course, but it will contain more day-to-day details. The authors recommended that teachers planning a lesson should carefully read and understand the holistic curriculum, the goal of the course as well as the performance indicators that students should demonstrate.

Regarding the process of decision making in planning unit/lesson for instruction, Henderson and Gornik (2007) suggested five tasks:

(1) Develop a holistic understanding of the goals for the unit/lesson plan, describing the student-centered concerns and society-centered advocacies;

(2) Prioritize big ideas and essential questions, as well as time allotments to support goals and student performances;

(3) Differentiate instruction in order to address students' academic needs including the selection of curricular and instructional materials;

(4) Establish the criteria for the assessments by implementing rubrics in order to provide feedback to the students; and

(5) Reflect on the practice of implementing curriculum, planning, and teaching judgments in a humble and pragmatic openness.

Henderson and Gornink's (2007) concept of decision-making process for planning instruction provides opportunities for all students to learn from other students who are different, and at the same time, allow individual students to make sense of the subject matter in unique and diverse ways. Thereby, individual student meaning-making is as unique as the student herself. Henderson and Gornik argued that by following these five tasks, effective teachers must be able to plan units/lessons which are subtle and intelligent, avoiding what might seem to be "simple theoretical solutions to complex practical problems" (p. 116). The five tasks in planning for instruction are optimal for a classroom with a high number of diverse students. In diverse school settings, through everyday activities, students are challenged to find ways of interacting effectively with students who are cultural, linguistically, or ethnically different. Henderson and Gornik suggested that the implementation of these five tasks in decision making in planning for instruction might help to avoid cultural isolation that frequently works to students' disadvantage. In being exposed to this type of instruction, students develop important skills in cross-cultural competence, a critical skill in today's world.

Implementation of Planning

The second level of decision making in planning for instruction suggested by Henderson and Gornik (2007) is the implementation of planning once decisions are made. The implementation of planning includes teachers' decisions about their actual

performance that help the students express mastery of the subject matter and understandings, which reflect the big ideas and essential questions planned, included in the five tasks previously presented. Henderson and Gornik caution teachers about focusing on the use of activities that are only fun and interesting, but do not lead to critical thinking. Teachers must ensure that there are clear priorities and a guiding intellectual purpose to embrace and add value to the students' learning experience.

Henderson and Gornik (2007) also suggested that during the implementation of the lesson plan, teachers must define criteria for assessments based on rubrics. The rubrics must establish the needed evidence for assessment, reflection, and changes from the students' feedback. Henderson and Gornik argued that these types of rubrics help teachers protect credible evidence of learning that reveals much more than test scores. Drawn on Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) work, Henderson and Gornik provided a series of questions to ask students at any point while implementing the unit/lesson. These questions are:

(1) What are you doing?

(2) Why are you being asked to do it?

(3) What will it help you do?

(4) How does it fit with what you have learned previously?

(5) How will you show what you have learned?

The use of these questions guides students in uncovering the important ideas at the heart of each subject. It also provides an effective way to evaluate if the implementation of the lesson is effective or not. During the implementation of the lesson, the ongoing decision-making process is about teachers judging the quality of their own

work with students as the overall appraisal of their own educational practices. Evaluating classroom practices is about effective criticism and self-understanding within the art of education. Professional self-understanding is a central and critical feature during the implementation of a lesson and it requires wisdom and problem solving. In addition, during the implementation of the lesson, the decision-making process is an evaluation designed to improve ongoing practices. Implementation is treated as an integral and dynamic component of all designing, planning, and teaching deliberations that constructively guide teachers in judging the quality of their decision-making processes.

The reconceptualization of standards through the design and planning decision-making process and the practice of reflective inquiry capacity before and after a teaching moment-to-moment, may take the teachers to a self-reflective evaluation process; a process which is vital to sustaining the decision-making processes for effectively organizing education. Henderson and Gornik (2007) suggested that identifying and analyzing the levels of decision making in planning and implementing instruction enables teachers to see the process of planning and decision making in terms of teachers' personal knowledge and critical reflection, goals of teaching, content and pedagogical knowledge, students' prior knowledge, and learning differences between students.

Henderson and Gornik argued that teachers' decision-making processes are shaped by their personal and professional knowledge, as well as unforeseen classroom situations. Therefore, a necessary step toward planning and making instructional decisions is for teachers to question their personal knowledge and its relation to professional knowledge. Henderson and Gornik acknowledged the challenges involved in changing teachers' personal knowledge, which in turn, influence professional

knowledge, such as instructional planning, classroom practice, resource selections, and responses to classroom events. Furthermore, teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions can become barriers to teaching diverse students. This can occur, especially if teachers do not have sufficient awareness of how to integrate opportunities for all students to develop cross-cultural competence.

Therefore, the task is to enable teachers to understand, identify, and determine how their personal knowledge shapes their planning, decision-making process, and teaching practices. According to Henderson and Gornik (2007), teachers must question the limits of their own personal knowledge in order to learn how to attend to the academic needs of all students. Thus, teachers who have little experience interacting with culturally diverse students would benefit greatly from discussions on teachers' personal knowledge, instructional planning, and decision-making. Henderson and Gornik's (2007) conceptual framework provides an opening to identify, analyze, and reflect upon the different forms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions offering the teachers an opportunity to develop a more complex understanding of the ongoing process of decision making in planning for instruction.

Teacher Decision Making in Planning for Instruction

The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers bring to their profession are an important influence in the teachers' decision-making process when they are planning for instruction (Nuthall, 2005). Gándara and Contreras (2009) considered that the single most critical resource in any school is the teacher and what teachers know, are able to do, and believe in. These factors influence their teaching practices and their instructional decisions (Nuthall, 2005), which in turn impact student achievement (Darling-Hammond

& Richardson, 2009). Therefore, as the first step of the teaching and learning process, teachers' decision making in planning for instruction serves as the foundation and framework for classroom teaching (Borko, et al., 2008; Henderson & Gornik, 2007). In planning for instruction, teachers make decisions about what to teach and how to teach individually or in collaboration with other teachers and administrators (Henderson & Gornik, 2007).

At present, several models exist for assisting teachers in the planning and decision-making process. One of the earliest was proposed by Ralph Tyler (1949), a model that recommends a sequence of four steps: (1) writing specific learning objectives, (2) charting learning activities, (3) organizing how to sequence the learning experience, and (4) specifying testing and evaluation of what has been learned by students. A modified version was later proposed by Clark and Yinger (1979), as a three-step planning process: (1) content, objectives, and experience are combined in the first step to help teachers determine teaching and learning objectives; (2) activities are selected that will assist in achieving the objectives; and (3) the plan, and relevant evaluations are implemented to help inform the decision-making process. Later, Leinhardt (1983) suggested a more simplified model, in which the planning was broken down into three areas: goals, content, and activities. Leinhardt warned that previous planning models had become too scripted. As a consequence, teachers needed to rethink how they planned their teaching and spent more time evaluating the entire process of planning and decision making, toward problem solving, rather than enacting curriculum as a rehearsed script.

Going beyond Tyler (1949), Clark and Yinger (1979), and Leinhardt (1983), subsequent scholars have further elaborated on effective planning and decision making,

referring to it as a complex process that requires constant deliberation, evaluation, and reorganization. The planning process entails both concrete lesson plans, as well as conceptual engagement in the consideration of the needed steps teachers need to take in the course of a class period, day, week, month, semester, or year, and which may or may not be recorded on paper (Borko, et al., 2008).

In planning for instruction, teachers make decisions between several possible options and forces that influence what they include into planning and implementation of instruction. For instance, during the deliberation process, teachers are expected to teach complex subjects, break down complex topics into simplified units, and convey abstract ideas to students. In order to accomplish this, they must first plan based on their curriculum, and then, make instructional choices taking into account several factors (Meyen & Greer, 2009) and under multiple forces (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2006).

Forces that Influence Teachers' Decision Making in Planning for Instruction

During the decision-making process for instructional planning, teachers face different forces exerted upon by their knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influence their instructional decisions (Gallavan, 2003; Hewitt, 2006; Allan Ornstein, 1997; A. Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Some of the most common forces influencing teachers' decision making for instructional planning and implementation is the knowledge of the different standards and accountability systems from the federal, state, local governments, as well as multiple instructional materials including textbooks and technology (Hewitt, 2006).

The teachers' content knowledge is another force that influences their decisions regarding how and what to include in their instructional planning (Kapyla, Heikkinen, &

Asunta, 2009). The level of understanding of the subject matter enhances the appropriate skills to communicate the content effectively, so teachers can organize instruction in ways that allow students to create meaningful cognitive connections across content areas, and to everyday life (Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005). Understanding the content knowledge in this way, provides resources for pedagogical practices (Dawkins, Dickerson, McKinney, & Butler, 2008). The pedagogical knowledge also enables teachers with skills to represent accessible ideas through instructional strategies to assure that the subject matter is mastered by all students, thus, producing equitable educational outcomes.

Another factor that influences teachers' decisions during the instructional planning process is the knowledge regarding their students' interests and backgrounds. Knowledge of students includes understandings of how to support further growth in a number of domains (ex.: social, physical, emotional and cognitive). Teachers also need to interpret the curriculum through their students' eyes in order to successfully approach diverse students' academic needs that may arise from differences in culture, language, socio-economic level, family, and age (Hinnant, O'Brien, & Ghazarian, 2009; Meyer, 1994).

Teachers also need to be willing to work in collaboration with other teachers, since this practice allows more powerful, shared learning to occur (Thousand, et al., 2006). Finally, the teachers own philosophies, ethics, beliefs, professional concepts, and reflection about their own practices (Hewitt, 2006; Thousand, et al., 2006), influence the decision-making process during instructional planning. When teachers analyze their beliefs about how students are responding and what students are thinking and

understanding, in collaboration with other teachers, they can more effectively reshape their lessons to meet instructional and curricular goals, ensuring success for all students (Reid, 2009).

Standards

The U.S. Constitution framers granted the states the power of control over education. However, the federal government has a long history of involvement in education policies, and this role has increased, rather than decreased over time. With the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001, the federal government mandated two basic directives to all states. First, the states must create and publish standards for the core content areas and second, the states must design aligned assessments to measure the extent to which students reach the standards. As a result, the state standards and the standardized tests are possibly the most powerful force influencing the curriculum in today's classrooms (Marzano, 2003; Wiggins & Mc Tighe, 2005). In Texas, the standards and accountability are established and guided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), through the State Board of Education (SBOE), who in conjunction with the Commissioner of Education oversees the public education system of Texas in accordance with the Texas Education Code. Although every school, school-district, and state educational agency establishes the curriculum that teachers should follow, research shows that there are other factors that influence teachers' decision-making when planning for instruction. For example, through interviews, background questionnaires, and analysis of written lesson plans, Sardo (1988) found that teachers made planning decisions on the basis of the school schedule, instructional materials

available, the abilities and interest of their students, and what had worked for them in the past.

Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

In examining and deciding what to include in a lesson plan, researchers have found that teachers draw on an assortment of knowledge (Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Panasuk, et al., 2002). Shulman (1987) suggested that at the minimum, categories of teachers' knowledge base include: knowledge of content, pedagogical strategies, and curriculum. Shulman also stated that teachers must have knowledge about their learners' cognitive and emotional characteristics and the recognition of the educational ends, values, and philosophical grounds. A number of other researchers noted that teachers drew on an assortment of subject-matter knowledge, called *content knowledge* that aided them in their planning (Kapyla, et al., 2009; Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Panasuk, et al., 2002). Other scholars (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Penso & Shoham, 2003) suggested that *pedagogical knowledge* is the key indicator of high quality instruction. According to them, pedagogical knowledge is related to the instructional techniques teachers use to understand, represent, and convey subject matter to their students. This pedagogical knowledge has been conceived as teachers' thinking through decision-making process on how that knowledge is implemented, translated, and transferred into teaching decisions (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Harris & Hofer; Kapyla, et al., 2009; Rohaan, Taconis, & Jochems, 2009).

Since the late 1980s, researchers began unveiling how both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are critical components required to assist students construct knowledge (Kemp, Blake, Cooper Shaw, & Preston, 2009). In 1986, Lee Shulman

published the paper entitled, *Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching*. In it, he coined the phrase, *pedagogical content knowledge* and used it to describe how teachers create pedagogical content knowledge by transforming their content into a teachable form. Shulman argued that content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are interdependent and when teachers integrate, learn, and enact both in a convergent way, it helps them to implement, translate, and transfer their planning into instructional decisions. When teachers integrate content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, it results in the conception of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Howard & Aleman, 2008; Meyen & Greer, 2009; Penso & Shoham, 2003; Shulman, 1986).

A number of national and international studies that compare teachers' planning have caused many researchers to examine differences in the teachers' preparation of in content and pedagogical knowledge (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Fuson, Stigler, & Bartsch, 1989; Kapyla, et al., 2009; Shen, Popink, Cui, & Fan, 2000; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). These studies found that although teachers in other countries have completed fewer courses in content-related areas during pre-service education than their counterparts in the United States, their classroom instructional effectiveness appears to be based on a wider breadth and depth of content knowledge due the instructional strategies they implemented (Fuson, et al., 1989; Shen, et al., 2000). These studies have attributed this result, in part, to the amount of time teachers devote to developing, reflecting on, and modifying daily planning and instruction.

For instance, in their study, Shen, Popink, Cui, and Fan (2000) studied teachers from different countries and found that teachers in China developed gradually more content knowledge, spending an average of four hours daily in planning instructional

lessons. During the same hours, the teachers from Shen *et al.'s* study also spent time seeking additional content knowledge on an ongoing basis while developing detailed instructional lesson plans. On the contrary, in this same study, the United States teachers devoted less time to lesson planning and their lesson plans tended to be less specific and often focused on the implementation of activities, or the identification of what should be taught from resources such as textbooks or worksheets without formally incorporating the mandated standards into the lesson plans.

The role of the teacher at elementary and secondary schools is to stimulate students' minds toward a meaningful understanding of the subject matter for the purposes of lifelong learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Although expertise in the subject matter is part of the ability necessary to become a professional in a field, the ability to create learning environments in elementary and secondary education is as important as the content (Kemp, et al., 2009). Some researchers referred to *practical knowledge* as the teachers' ability to interrelate content and pedagogical knowledge, while they were deciding what and how to include in their lessons (Zanting, et al., 2003).

Some studies more focused on pedagogical knowledge, showed how teachers integrated their content knowledge to appropriate pedagogies in order to effectively communicate subject matter to students. For example, in their study Zanting *et al.,* (2003), called content and pedagogical knowledge, *practical knowledge*. They studied seventy student teachers from a teacher education program in the Netherlands. They employed various instruments, including interviews and concept mapping for teachers to express and write their own learning experiences in making decisions and planning in order to make visible content and pedagogical knowledge in the context of teaching

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practices. They found that practical knowledge is developed by integrating content knowledge, knowledge about students, the curriculum, the specific teaching situation, and pedagogy.

Other researchers (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006) reported that teachers can benefit from the exploration and explication of their own pedagogical knowledge by becoming conscious of the way they teach and the reasons behind it. Barnett and O'Mahony stated that when teachers are conscious about their own assumptions, beliefs, and values, they are developing ways for critical reflection creating opportunities for change and professional growth. Practical knowledge embed teachers' personal and general understanding about their own teaching practices as well as the contextual dilemmas they confront in carrying out actions in the educational settings (Milner, 2003).

Teachers' Beliefs

In addition to bringing and developing content and pedagogical knowledge and skills, teachers carry in and expand during their teacher profession, a set of beliefs that influence their instructional decisions, which in turn impact their learners (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Delpit, 2006; Kagan, 1992). As Kagan (1992) observed, teachers' beliefs lie "at the very heart of teaching" (p. 85). Gándara and Contreras (2009) believe that the single most critical resource in any school is the teacher, and what teachers know, perceive, believe in, and value affects curriculum decisions. Teachers' beliefs are the manifestations of their dispositions, that means the beliefs become habitual and crystallized, though still able to evolve or develop into new dispositions and interests.

Teacher education research (Levin & Wadmany, 2006; Ponte, Matos, Guimaraes, Leal, & Canavarro, 1994; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002) revealed that teacher beliefs are the

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single most influential factor affecting critical decisions that teachers make in the classroom. It is why the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE,2008) identified professional teaching dispositions, as "the values, beliefs, and attitudes that teachers demonstrate while using non-verbal and verbal communication in their interactions with communities, colleges, families and students". Some researchers argue that teachers may have the knowledge and skills to provide effective instruction, but not the dispositions to develop or use content and pedagogical knowledge effectively when they are planning and teaching (DeCoito, 2006; Duplass & Cruz, 2010; Levin & Wadmany, 2006). While having the content and pedagogical knowledge required to be an effective teacher, it is uncertain if the teachers possess the dispositions to ensure that the knowledge and skills will be employed during the decision-making process when planning for instruction (Duplass & Cruz, 2010).

For instance, the qualitative study by DeCoito (2006) explored new roles adopted by three teachers when the context of teaching and learning science was drastically changed in their school. The study was conducted in a high school, utilizing student-centered and self-paced learning. The traditional classrooms were replaced by subject-specific resource areas and seminar rooms. The DeCoito study revealed that when the teachers experienced the requested change in their instructional practices, the teachers' beliefs and convictions about teaching and learning science did not necessarily coincide with the pedagogical practices they were expected to implement nor with their new assignments. The study revealed that the teachers' beliefs had an impact on their teaching.

Teacher beliefs represent views of the world, the self, and the tangible context of classroom experience (Woolfolk Hoy, Davis, & Pape, 2006). Beliefs imply values and opinions, including those related to personal identity and identity of others, pedagogical methods that work or do not work, subject content and how to approach it, assumptions about students, classroom, community, school and both personal and their own abilities as a teacher (Woolfolk Hoy, et al., 2006). Although teachers' underlying instructional beliefs are difficult to accurately measure, they may provide a framework for understanding the thinking that underlies important pedagogical decisions made when teachers are planning for instruction and implementing lessons in the classroom.

Levin and Wadmany (2006) studied the continuum of six teachers' beliefs related to their teaching and learning practices using technology at elementary and middle school classrooms. Their three-year longitudinal case study utilized observations, interviews, and questionnaires, to focus on both teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. They demonstrated that spending three years in a technology-rich learning environment produced significant change in teachers' educational beliefs, teaching methods, and learning practices. Levin & Wadmany suggested that it was not just the use of technology, but also the teaching and learning environment in general, and more importantly, the exposure of teachers to a new vision of teaching and learning. Beliefs shape teachers' epistemological perspectives and strongly influence instruction, classroom practices, and classroom management (Gill, Ashton, & Algina, 2004; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Beliefs also influence teachers' curricula choices and performance, therefore, affect teachers' behaviors (Bruning, Schraw, Norby, & Ronning, 2004). At the same time, Wilcox-Herzog (2002) recognized that teacher beliefs

are instrumental in pedagogical decisions and are entwined with many of the critical decisions that teachers make in the classroom.

Collaboration

Teachers' decision making typically emerges from the professional work and deliberation of an individual or from a group of people. Effective teachers deliberate with their colleagues as they seek answers to curriculum questions, such as what to include in their lesson plans and how to deliver instruction (Thousand, et al., 2006). These conversations can start informally in an unplanned time or in a formal meeting. In a formal setting (ex.: planning time), teachers' conversations have the potential to provide further insight into teachers' underlying beliefs about teaching and learning by focusing on the rationales for their decision making. During collaboration time, teachers discuss subject matter, pedagogy, curriculum (Reid, 2009), as well as the students' prior knowledge and cultural background (Thousand, et al., 2006), providing a rich source of information for deciphering and analyzing teachers' underlying beliefs about what and how to plan for instruction.

Researchers report that frequent opportunities for interaction with colleagues are essential in creating professional school cultures (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In his qualitative study, Reid (2009) argued that a rigorous requirement for a collaborative environment in a school is the need to provide a support system, including sufficient planning time that permits a genuine input from the teachers involved. In his case study, Reid conducted interviews and formal observations to three fourth grade teachers who voluntarily met weekly to plan social studies and science. Through the teachers' success

with their lesson planning and implementation, the results of the case study demonstrated the value of sustained planning and the power of working in collaboration.

Teacher isolation has been identified as one of the critical causes that impedes the implementation of changes. Unless teachers constantly work in collaboration by observing, helping, and interacting with one another, little change will occur in schools or in improving teachers' practices. (Lortie, 1975). Jang (2006) studied two eighth grade mathematics teachers who collaborated in their planning and teaching. The mixed-method study showed teachers' planning and teaching together allowed them to engage in joint thinking, problem solving, and decision making, from which emerged new knowledge. Through their meetings and conversations, the participants were able to construct knowledge and opportunities to act on their ideas and reflect upon their actions, while considering the ideas of others. The teachers benefited from working in collaboration by increasing their repertoire of teaching and classroom management strategies. When teachers plan and teach in collaboration, they are better able to address the academic needs of all students in particular for those whose culture and language are different (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Knowledge of Students

Today's classrooms require teachers to educate students who vary in culture, language, abilities, learning styles, socio-economic level, gender, age, and other characteristics (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Teachers must provide learning environments where all students, regardless of their differences, are respected, encouraged, and exposed to multiple opportunities to learn. Effective teaching and learning occurs in a learning environment where the students' strengths are identified and utilized to promote student

achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In order to shape lessons based on what students know and how they learn better, teachers also need to adapt instruction for all students and interpret how students received the subject matter effectively.

Instructional planning and implementation requires teachers' awareness, knowledge, and understanding about the different needs of the students they teach (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). As noted by Meyer (1994), teachers may use the knowledge they possess about students to improve their work habits, assist the students with academic problems, and direct their personality development. Through in-depth interviews and observations, Meyer's exploratory study documented the knowledge a small number of effective teachers held to identify the way these teachers acquired knowledge about their students and used it during classroom instruction. Meyer' study described several of the strategies utilized by the teachers to obtain information about their students, including: meeting with parents and students; classroom observations; and reviewing school records. The participants in Meyer's study, expressed that much of the knowledge they attained about students, was developed gradually over a considerable amount of time, and included their observing students, working and talking with them, both academically and personally related matters, and also through conversations with their teaching partners.

Other scholars suggest that teachers' knowledge of students has a significance effect on the types of strategies teachers use in relation to their students (Anning, 1988) and on the instructional decisions customized or tailor-made to suit particular types of students (Marland & Osborne, 1990). However, when teachers are not aware of the need to understand their students' cognitive, cultural, social, and emotional background, they

may demonstrate lower expectations for diverse students (Good, 1987). In his study, Good documented how specific and concrete teachers' behaviors can convey differences in students' expectations. For example, Good described four teachers' behaviors that indicate differential teacher treatment of high and low achievers: (1) less praise for low-expectation (LE) students offering more criticism for failure; (2) less acceptance of ideas put forth by LE students; (3) less time allowed for LE to answer questions; and (4) lower expectations set for low achievers.

Lack of knowledge of diverse student populations can lead to teacher assumptions, such as a belief in the Deficit Theory. In education, the advocates of the Deficit Theory argue that diverse students, including those who are culturally, linguistically, racially, and socio-economically different, struggle academically and need remedial coursework (Gándara, 1993; Milner, 2010; Trueba, 2001; Valencia, 1997) and are exposed to low expectations from their teachers (Hinnant, et al., 2009). Following the deficit theory argument, some teachers may hold lower expectations for diverse students resulting in the "worst form of racism" (Holbrook, 2006, p. 110).

In addition to the content and pedagogical knowledge, according to Eley (2006), the key to developing effective teachers who succeed with diverse student populations is competency in the decision-making process in planning for instruction that is attentive to the academic needs of diverse student populations. Teachers need to understand the differences that may arise from culture and language that shape students' experiences, so teachers can interpret curriculum through their students' eyes (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In deciding what to include in the lesson plan and how to organize its implementation, research (Nieto, 2009) has shown that teachers need cultural knowledge of students,

especially when their culture and language differs from their own. Teachers serving diverse students need not only know how to meet the needs of the students academically, but develop comprehensive designing and planning for classroom instruction and a comprehensive implementation once instructional decisions are made (Horwitz *et al.,* 2009) to address students' academic needs.

<div align="center">The Social Studies Classroom</div>

One of the most prominent historic goals of American schooling has been to prepare youth to become future citizens through civic education (Chapin, 2006; Hinde, 2008). Throughout this literature review, the terms *citizenship education, civics,* and *civic education* are used interchangeably to identify the courses, dispositions, and content of education for democratic citizenship. Although different curriculum areas cover aspects of civic development, in the wide range of social studies subject matter, American History can be the most important subject matter because it is the one that influences students' civic education the most (Chapin, 2006; Hammond, 2010).

As stated in Title II, C-3 for civic education and C-4 for American History of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB,2001b), civic education and American history prepare students to participate in their local, state, national, and global communities. Therefore, students who learn and value American history will be well prepared to understand and exercise their civic rights and responsibilities (NCLB,2001b). Citizenship or civic education is the cornerstone and the central purpose of the social studies. As Parker (2005) stated, "Without historical understanding, there can be no wisdom. Without geographical understanding, there can be no social or environmental intelligence. And

without civic understanding, there can be no democratic citizens and, therefore, no democracy" (p. 4).

As a result, almost twenty years ago, the Board of Directors of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), the largest professional association for social studies educators in the world, provided social studies educators with standards published in the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (NCSS,1994), which served as a vehicle for curriculum development. This document, later revised in 2010 (NCSS,2010), integrates social science, behavioral science, and humanities approach for achieving academic and civic competence. The National Council for the Social Studies defines social studies as:

> …the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence…The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (National Council for the Social Studies, 1993, p.213).

The social studies national standards have been used widely as a framework for social studies curriculum alignment and instructional development tool. These regularly updated standards do not mandate the attempt to establish a national social studies curriculum. The United States Constitution gives the responsibility for establishing the standards of education to the individual states, and although there are federal guidelines, "the specific social studies requirements; the specific scope and sequence; and the frequency and nature of social studies assessments vary from state to state" (National Council for Social Studies, 2010).

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State of Social Studies in Today's Classrooms

Although citizenship education is historically one of the foremost purposes for formalized schooling in America and the primary mission of teaching social studies, providing citizenship education has lost prominence and priority in today's U.S. schools (Hinde, 2008; Vogler, 2003; Zarrillo, 2011). Due in part to the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), which focuses accountability requirements on reading and mathematics, most academic time in districts and schools is increasingly focusing curriculum planning and resources on the instruction of mathematics and reading (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). Social studies receives insufficient teachers' attention when they deliberate on what to include in planning their curriculum (Vogler, 2003).

The primary focus on reading and mathematics under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* in the last decade has led to lagging performance in other subjects, such as U.S. History. Of the seven subjects on the most recent national (NAEP) tests, students performed the most poorly in U.S. History. In 2010, the NAEP reported that in U.S. History at the eighth grade level, 69% of all tested students performed at or above the *basic* level only, 17% performed at or above the *proficient* level and one percent performed at *advanced* level (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2010). The NAEP (2010) reported that the scores for Hispanic students were higher in 2010 compared to 1994 and 2001 assessments years. However, this population has not reached the same level of performance of their White counterparts. The NAEP report shows that the Hispanic students are far from reaching the same level that their White counterparts reached in 2001. These statistics reveal that schools continue to struggle with closing the achievement gap in social studies and ensuring academic success for students in all

subject areas. Furthermore, these statistics indicate an urgent need to find ways to close the achievement gap for Hispanic students in the social studies content area nationally (Chapin, 2006).

In Texas' schools, social studies content area must be taught in all grade levels for a minimum of 45 minutes daily (Texas Education Agency, 2011a). The social studies K-12 Texas State curriculum consists of eight strands including: (1) History, (2) Geography, (3) Economics, (4) Government, (5) Citizenship, (6) Culture, (7) Science and Technology; and (8) Social Studies Skills. Although all grade levels include the eight strands, each grade focuses on a specific content area. For instance, at the elementary level, in K-3, social studies content area is taught as an integrated subject with the focus on home, school, state and nation communities. From fourth grade onward, the focus is on specific strands with Texas history being taught in fourth grade and American history in fifth grade. At the middle school level, sixth grade focuses on geography, seventh grade on the history of Texas, and eighth grade on U.S. history.

Many elementary teachers view social studies as a less important subject than reading and mathematics relegating social studies to a status of low priority in their teaching day (Chapin, 2006). For instance, Leming, Ellignton and Schug (2006) reported in their study that social studies at elementary level rank fourth overall in importance behind reading, mathematics, and science. In their nationwide study, they found that only 39 percent of the elementary teachers surveyed considered social studies very important, whereas reading and mathematics were considered important by 96 percent of the elementary teachers who participated.

In a different study, it was found that only four out of nineteen schools employed materials, resources, and time allocated to social studies comparable to those for reading and mathematics (Tanner, 2008). Tanner reported that the remaining fifteen schools showed that the K-3 students received social studies instruction on an average of one period per week and 4-5 grade levels received an average of three times per week. In this study, the time invested in teaching social studies was consistent with the perceived importance of the subject. Social studies content area is experiencing a phenomenon of curriculum narrowing throughout all grade levels. In curriculum narrowing, teachers tend to limit time for planning and teaching non-tested content areas (Tanner, 2008). Social studies is a non-tested content area in the majority of the U.S. elementary and middle schools. In Texas, students are required to take a standardized test in U.S. History for the first time at the eighth grade level, therefore, teachers at elementary and middle school level have a tendency to limit the time in making decisions in planning for social studies, reducing the time for social studies instruction as well.

Middle School Level

Historically, American schools in the early 20th century were organized into eight elementary levels and four high school grade levels (Kauchak, 2008; Wiles & Bondi, 1986). This 8-4 organization changed when emphasis shifted away from basic skills, such as reading and mathematics, and towards more intensive study of specific content areas, such as history, literature, and science. This shift towards more intensive study at the middle school level required teachers with more expertise in specific content areas (Guthrie, 2003; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2010; Short, 1993). The emphasis on the mastery of subject matter resulted in departmentalization. However, tension exists between this

emphasis on content and meeting the developmental needs of middle school students. At middle school level, it is common to find educators with little or no training in the specific needs of these adolescent learners (Wormeli, 2011). This lack of knowledge can limit the success of transition efforts and student learning during the teachers' process of decision-making in planning for middle school students.

The Middle School Student

Adolescence is a critical and special stage in a child's development (Conklin, 2007; Guthrie, 2003). At no other time in a person's life, except infancy, the physical, cognitive and emotional change is so fast and profound. Adolescence can be defined as a stage in a child's development characterized by various biological, cognitive, intellectual, and social transitions (Kingery, Erdley, & Marshall, 2011). In addition to dealing with these changes, early adolescents transition from elementary to middle school coping with many challenges in the shift (Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan, 1996). The transition involves moving from a self-contained classroom, where the teacher is closer to the students' needs, to a classroom with a larger and more impersonal environment where the students are little known by teachers. Middle grade teachers are often subject-matter specialists, with little knowledge about students' needs, and may believe it is difficult to impact effectively the achievement of a large number of students (Guthrie, 2003).

At middle school, adolescents also face new challenges on a regular basis, such as meeting peers, multiple teachers, the use of lockers, changing for gym class and different schedules with little time to interact and socialize. Although they are seeking independence, at this age, middle-level students are fiercely curious and at the same time, crave social connections. They make insightful, candid observations about their learning,

themselves, and the adults who guide them. The mismatch between the middle school students' characteristics and their needs created by the real middle school environment, provoke young adolescents to experience difficulties in adjusting to the transition to middle school (Eccles, et al., 1996).

During middle school, in addition to the rapid physical, emotional, and intellectual changes, adolescents encounter inconsistencies with their developmental characteristics, which include lack of motivation and the need for advanced cognitive abilities (Eccles, et al., 1996). Research on middle school students suggests that middle school educators need to recognize the unique emotional and intellectual needs of early adolescents (Guthrie, 2003; Haselhuhn, Al-Mabuk, Gabriele, Groen, & Galloway, 2007). In research that studied students' transition from elementary to middle school, Haselhuhn *et al.,* (2007) interviewed 69 elementary and 28 middle school teachers about their knowledge regarding approaches designed to motivate students to develop cognitive abilities. The study reported that teachers who are aware of the adolescents' changes and needs are more likely to provide a positive classroom climate.

According to Haselhuhn et al., (2007), numerous research studies have shown that student motivation declines for many students as they experienced the transition from elementary to middle school. As a result, researchers (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2010) have found that many educators believe that schools for young adolescents should be organized to meet the unique needs of these students' development. The developmental characteristics of middle school students refers to the physical changes in children, as well as changes in the way they think and relate to their

peers that result from maturation and experience (Guthrie, 2003; Jackson, 2000; McDevitt, 2004).

Ideally, middle schools are designed to help early adolescents make the transition between elementary and high school (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010; McDevitt, 2004). However, most of the time middle school educators are often subject-matter specialists and they instruct a large number of students, making it less likely that they will come to know students well (Guthrie, 2003; Salinas, Franquiz, & Michelle, 2008). Not knowing about middle school students' needs makes the inclusion of assertive instructional strategies a challenging decision-making process when planning for instruction. Planning effective lessons for middle school students is one of the critical components of successful secondary teaching (Conklin, 2007; Panasuk, et al., 2002).

Social Studies in Middle School

At the middle school level, the social studies curriculum is focused on helping students to understand about themselves and others by learning how society has developed in different regions of the world, now and in the past, how geography has affected people's lives, and how continuity and change are always present in the human story (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994; Smilowitz, 2011). Generally, social studies teachers at middle school level are prepared and certified mainly through two different teaching programs: generalist elementary programs or subject-specific secondary programs (Conklin, 2007; Tanner, 2008). In either of the pathways, middle school teachers have little preparation to align curriculum, assessments, and instruction in ways that fulfill the needs of young adolescents (Conklin, 2007). For example, in a generalist elementary program, the majority of the courses deal with methodology and

pedagogy, rather than content. On the other hand, in a subject-specific secondary

program the teachers develop content knowledge rather than methodology and pedagogy.

More importantly, they are not exposed to courses that specifically address the

intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of young adolescents.

According to Conklin (2007), within the context of history and social studies, it

has been well-articulated and documented that middle school teachers need to develop

pedagogical content knowledge such as: (a) in-depth knowledge of their students'

interests and abilities; (b) the conceptualization of the subject matter itself; and (c)

knowledge of strategies to deliver and characterize the subject matter. In one study,

Hilary Conklin (2007) interviewed pre-service teachers from an elementary and

secondary preparation program about their conceptions of teaching social studies at the

middle school level.

The participants repeatedly expressed that the social studies courses strongly

influenced their ideas about instructional strategies for teaching social studies but did

little facilitate them understanding of teaching young adolescents. The author concluded

that it is critical for secondary social studies teachers to develop a thorough

understanding of young adolescents' capabilities and needs as learners in the context of

social studies, as well as knowledge of ways to represent social studies content to middle

school students. As a result, various researchers have conducted studies at the secondary

level in order to fill the need of implementing instructional strategies to assist secondary

social studies teachers in teaching young adolescents (Conklin, 2007).

The Conklin (2007) study draws attention to the need for more research that is

focused on teachers' decision-making in planning social studies curriculum at the middle

school level. Existing research that addresses social studies at the middle school level is mainly focused on the study of the implementation of different instructional strategies and techniques in middle school classrooms and its impact on students learning social studies (Egbert & Simich-Dudgeon, 2001; Kingsley & Boone, 2008; Moos & Honkomp, 2011; Woelders, 2007a, 2007b). Consequently, since the social studies content area at a secondary level requires a high level of literacy and the concepts often deal with abstract ideas rooted in philosophy, anthropology, political science, and economics (Guidry, Cuthrell, O'Connor, & Good, 2010; Tanner, 2008), the following section presents research studies that address some of the issues faced by teachers in planning social studies instruction at the middle school level.

In a study conducted in 2008, Kingsley and Boone researched social studies achievement in a class in which the teacher planned and implemented innovative instructional strategies in the social studies classrooms. Overall, in this quasi-experiment, they found significant positive effects on overall achievement scores for middle students who utilized a multimedia-based American history software program to augment the textbook and lecture materials. The results suggested a strong relationship between use of a technology-enhanced intervention and higher outcome achievement scores for this group of middle school learners. Other researchers (Egbert & Simich-Dudgeon, 2001) investigated how technology fosters social studies learning in a junior high school social studies classroom. They showed how technology may be used to support verbal interaction in social studies-based activities. They argued that the use of technology tools supports the acquisition of language and content by fostering students' oral negotiation

and construction of social studies knowledge involving all students actively in the social studies classroom.

Moos and Honkomp (2011) also examined how technology, specifically a distance learning instructional strategy, provided authentic learning experiences to middle school students learning social studies. In their exploratory mixed method study, 182 seventh and eighth grade students followed their eighth grade geography teacher, who was climbing and exploring Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. Using innovative distance learning instructional strategies, the students were able to see and talk with the teacher. The teacher also sent students lessons and assignments via e-mail related to the activities they experienced virtually each day. Results from this study, shed light on the motivational and cognitive benefits of integrating the distance learning approach into the curriculum.

In a similar study, Woelders (2007a, 2007b) collected data including: focus group discussions, surveys, artifacts, and classroom observations. The researcher implemented two strategies in a middle school level, classroom-based research action to explore how historically-themed films can be used to scaffold activities that encourage middle school students to conduct inquiries of the past and critically evaluate feature film and documentaries. The findings suggested that students benefitted from well-structured activities that motivated them to compare historical accounts with cinematic portrayals of the past. The researcher recommended that middle school teachers use films to motivate students to conduct historical inquiry in combination with two scaffolding techniques, the K-W-L chart and graphic organizers. Findings from this study showed how well-planned and structured instruction, that include scaffolding strategies motivated and encouraged

the students to critically inquire about history helping them to develop ownership in their own learning.

Mastery of social studies content depends heavily on academic language development and prior knowledge connections, thereby, making this a difficult subject for middle school students and even more challenging for students with different cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds (Brown, 2007; Cho & Reich, 2008; Davis, 2007; Korenman, 2010; Pahl, 2007; Salinas, et al., 2008; Short, 1993; Szpara & Ahmad, 2007c). Vocabulary and language construction are critical components in acquiring literacy skills, the language, and the vocabulary used in social studies instructional materials and textbooks is often difficult to master for the average student who is fluent in English; thus, a student with different culture and language may face greater obstacles (Pahl, 2007). For instance, in analyzing social studies vocabulary in textbooks according to grade level, Dwyer (2007) reported that the increase of social studies vocabulary by grade exceeded other content areas such as English. Furthermore, a social studies textbook series specifically targeted to the needs of diverse students does not yet exist (Szpara & Ahmad, 2007b).

In helping middle school diverse students to succeed in learning social studies, numerous scholars have presented effective K-12 instructional strategies in their research studies (Cho & Reich, 2008; Davis, 2007; Egbert & Simich-Dudgeon, 2001; Salinas, et al., 2008; Szpara & Ahmad, 2007b; Weisman & Hansen, 2007). However, research on diverse students learning social studies at middle school level is not as extensive as in elementary and high school level. In presenting practical suggestions related to instruction and differentiation that are crucial for social studies teachers to help diverse

students effectively, most of these studies categorized findings into two main areas that identify the following gaps: (1) the need to raise social studies teachers' consciousness about the diverse students academic needs (Cho & Reich, 2008; Reeves, 2006; Salinas, et al., 2008), and (2) the teachers' need for support in instructional planning and professional development (Szpara & Ahmad, 2007b; Weisman & Hansen, 2007).

Szpara & Ahmad (2007b) focused on different approaches to develop an effective instructional environment for teaching secondary-level social studies curriculum to ELLs. They conducted a study in a low socioeconomic community in New York. The researchers used their expertise in social studies education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) to work with five high school social studies teachers. The researchers proposed a multi-tiered approach to meeting the needs of ELLs that guide the teachers in implementing the strategies in the classroom. Although the researchers argued that best practices for ELLs could help all students in the mainstream classroom, the teachers in their study, expressed not having enough time in the school day to plan, collaborate with colleagues, and rewrite curricular materials.

The studies mentioned in this literature review provided a perspective regarding what is happening in the middle school social studies classroom in the United States. Although the presence of the teacher is visible, it is evident that there is little to no evidence of research on what knowledge, skills and dispositions influence teachers' decisions in planning for social studies instruction. There is a need for further research on middle school level and in teachers' decision making in planning for instruction as they play a central role in educating students in schools (Milner, 2010). Research studies which investigate how teachers actually use curriculum materials to plan instruction are

few in number (Lewis, 1994). Ironically, the teachers' perspective has been missing from the efforts at research, development, reform, curriculum implementation and change during the last twenty-five or more years (Ohi, 2008).

Hispanic Demographics in Texas

In order to present an understanding of the specific local context of this study, this section provides a general overview of the changing Hispanic demographics in Texas. The study was conducted in a 92 percent Hispanic-serving South Texas school district, where the minority group is the majority. Although the great majority is Hispanic, South Texas has a long history of ethnic, class, and racial conflict and diversity (Richardson, 1999). With the influx of newcomers from both south and north, some local Hispanics are descendents of families that have lived in the area for hundreds of years, while others are recent immigrants. Therefore, South Texas has a unique combination of race and cultures on the border and is "one of the world's prime sites for firsthand observation of social change in such fields as sociology, political science, health care, multicultural education, and multinational development" (Richardson, 1999, p. 3). Though the study was conducted in a South Texas school, implications from the study have merit in other states where significant increases in diverse population, more specifically, Hispanic population are being experienced.

In today's classrooms, teachers need to be prepared with the relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions for the growing ethnic, racial, linguistic, and social class diversity. With the increasing diversity in classrooms, teachers are faced with an extensive range of students representing a wide variety of educational needs (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Valenzuela, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education, the United States is

faced with a student population that is becoming increasingly diverse over a short period of time. This diverse population comprises close to 40 percent of the U.S. school population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) estimates that by year 2050, African American, Asian American, and Hispanic students will constitute close to half of the entire U.S. student population. In a number of cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C., those minority groups already make up the overwhelming majority of the student population (Howard & Aleman, 2008). Much of that minority growing is happening in a larger scale in the South and the Midwest regions of the country, being the Hispanic population the largest ethnic majority group and will remain so over the next 40 years (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

Similarly, the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau reported that the Hispanic population rose by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, accounting for more than half of the nation's population increase of 27.3 million. "By 2025, the U.S. Census bureau predicts that one of every four students will be Latino and that the population will continue to become more Hispanic" (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 17). "In 2050, there will be more school-age Hispanic children [in the nation] than school-age non-Hispanic white children"(Fry & Gonzales, 2008, p. i). More than half of the Hispanic population in the United States lives in three states, California, Texas, and Florida (Fry, 2008). In those states, the number of Hispanic students has already passed that of whites and is expected to be over 50% in these states by the end of the decade.

Texas, only behind California, reports the second-largest Hispanic population in the United States. By 2040, it will have a Hispanic majority (Murdock, 2003). Texas'

population surge came in four main geographic areas: Dallas-Forth Worth, Houston-Galveston, San Antonio-Austin and the Rio Grande Valley; all of these areas have a high number of Hispanics. Hispanics accounted for 65% of the state's growth since 2000, while non-Hispanic whites experienced the smallest increase of any group, just 4.2% (Murdock, 2003). Some analysts predict that this demographic shift will leave the country with a less-educated population with smaller incomes and higher levels of poverty (Murdock, 2003).

Hispanic students are performing severely far behind academically than their white counterparts in the United States (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999). Of the Hispanic population under 25 years of age in the United States, nearly 27 percent have not completed high school, compared to 5 percent of non-Hispanics. Census data shows similar trends in Texas, where 51 percent of the Hispanic population under 25 years of age have not completed high school compared to 12 percent of non-Hispanics. The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that scores for Hispanic students have increased in 2009 since early 1990s in reading, mathematics, and science for 4th and 8th grade, but scores for White students have increased as well. While scores have improved for both groups, Hispanic students lag by the same amount today as they did in 1990, which means that the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has been largely unchanged for the past two decades, both nationally and for almost every sate (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

In working with a diverse student population, research shows that teachers need cultural knowledge of students whose culture and language differs from their own (Nieto,

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2009) and a curriculum as broad as the students are diverse (García, 1991, 2004; Gay, 2004a). Research also recognizes that the key to developing highly qualified teachers who succeed with diverse student populations is a competency in the decision-making process in planning for a curriculum that is attentive to the academic needs of diverse student populations (Eley, 2006; Meyen & Greer, 2009).
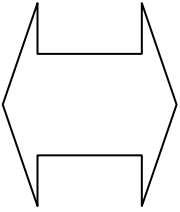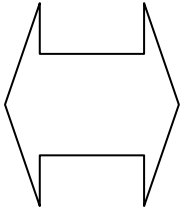
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study described what knowledge, skills, and dispositions influenced middle school teachers' decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. Table 3.1 represents the components of the research question and how these components are interrelated for the purpose of this study.

Table 3.1

Research Question

A priori Categories	Theoretical Propositions Literature Review	Context of the Study Literature Review
Knowledge	Decision-Making	Social Studies
Skills	Planning for Instruction	Middle School
Dispositions	Implementation of Planning once Instructional Decisions are made	Hispanic Serving School

This qualitative study used Yin's (2009) multiple-case study as a strategy of inquiry providing specific direction for procedures in the research design (Creswell, 2009). Yin (2009) suggested that one format for a multiple-case study is to begin with a theoretical framework as a starting point for filtering themes from a large amount of data. In order to achieve that purpose, Henderson and Gornik's (2007) concept of *decision making in planning curriculum goals* and the concepts of *knowledge, skills, and dispositions* (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 134) as *a priori*

categories (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88; Smith, 2000) provided the theoretical framework for this study.

Henderson and Gornik's (2007) conceptual framework described four interrelated curriculum decision-making processes: (1) designing and planning for classroom instruction; (2) implementation of planning once instructional decisions are made; (3) evaluating classroom practices through reflective inquiry; and (4) organizing and reorganizing curricula. Due to the scope of this study, the first two interrelated decision-making processes were selected: *designing and planning for classroom instruction* (what to teach), and the *implementation of planning once decisions are made* (how to teach). These two decision-making processes and the *a priori* categories, including knowledge, skills, and dispositions followed the "logical plan" (Yin, 2009, p. 26) for getting from the research question to be answered to the set of conclusions or answers about the research question guiding the researcher in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

This chapter describes the methodology used to address the following research question: What knowledge, skills, and dispositions influence middle school teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school? It is divided into the following sections: (1) research design; (2) participants; (3) setting; (4) role of the researcher; (5) data collection procedures; (6) data analysis procedures; and (7) limitations and delimitations of the study.

Multiple-Case Study as Research Design

This study used Yin's (2009) multiple-case study method as a research design because the study comprises five of Yin's critical features: (1) the study was focused on a

contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context that is experienced by multiple

individuals, and where the researcher has little control over events; (2) the study was

conducted in a natural setting in which the phenomenon occurs, making phenomenon and

context bound together; (3) the inquiry involved in-depth data collection that is content-

rich and from multiple sources such as interviews, documents, direct observation, and

researcher's field notes; (4) the goal was to replicate findings across cases (replication

logic); and (5) the study delineates differences within and between cases wherever

possible to highlight dissimilar results. Replication logic (Yin, 2009, pp. 44,55) is a

method used in cross-case analysis to test external validity. Table 3.2 represents the

research design principle to test external validity.

Table 3.2

Research Design Principle to Test External Validity

Tests	Multiple-Case Study Principle
External Validity	Use replication logic in
	multiple-case studies
	Literal/Theoretical

The "replication logic" used for multiple-case studies is the equivalent to

generalizations used in quantitative research. According to Yin (2009), each of the cases

in this study were carefully selected to predict similar results (literal replication) or to

predict contrasting results but for anticipated reasons (theoretical replication). Multiple-

case studies are the preferred method when questions are being posed to examine an event as experienced by multiple individuals in natural settings (Yin, 2009). Yin suggested that six to ten cases are sufficient to provide support for the initial set of propositions. This research method allowed the researcher to study the research question by collecting interviews, observations, and documents that explore *why* teachers make instructional planning decisions and *how* they implement those decisions and with *what* result (Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Since interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information, Seidman's (2006) model of in-depth interview "three-interview series" (p. 16) were conducted with each participant in order to provide insightful inferences and explanations. The first interview established the context of the participants' experience, the second reconstructs the details of their experience within the context, and the third encourages reflective practice.

As a part of the research design and before the actual collection of data, the implementation of Yin's (2009) three principles of data collection helped the researcher to plan the study in order to anticipate how themes and situations work together and how the case become gradually better understood (Stake, 2006). Yin's principles are: (1) the use of multiple sources of evidence; (2) the creation of a case study database; and (3) the maintenance of a chain of evidence. These three principles helped to establish the construction of validity and reliability of the evidence. Table 3.3 represents the data collection principles implemented in this study.

Table 3.3

Data Collection Principles to Construct Validity and Test Reliability

Tests	Multiple-Case Study Principles
Construct Validity	Use multiple sources of evidence
	Establish and maintain a chain of evidence
	*Have participants review the draft of the case study
Reliability	Develop a case study database

*Member-Checking principle was in place during the composition of the report

Multiple Sources of Evidence

A major aspect of the multiple-case study design is a strategy that enhances data credibility by using multiple data sources in order to provide an assurance of what is seen and heard (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). The process of gaining these assurances is called *triangulation*. *Triangulation* is typically a process of "repetitious data gathering and critical review of what is being said" (Stake, 2006, p. 34). For the principal findings at least three confirmations and assurances that key meanings are not being overlooked (Stake, 2006) need to be provided, which in turn, will allow for corroborating the same fact or phenomenon (Yin, 2006). In order to provide rich data for comparison across participants and for generalizing as a multiple-case study (replication logic), multiple types of data from each participant at different stages of the research process were collected.

Case Study Database

Creating a case study database involves organizing and documenting the data collected for case studies. The database or "records" (Merriam, 2009, p. 203) includes the

data collected organized for access chronologically and topically (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009), helping the researcher to locate specific data during the analysis and conduct a more intensive analysis. In order to increase reliability, the researcher developed a formal database to make the documents readily retrievable. This study database was stored electronically in computer files. The database included questionnaires, oral and written self-reflections, individual interviews, notes, audio records, and transcripts. The database was constructed in two sections: notes and documents.

The case study notes, which included the transcripts, the analysis worksheets (Stake, 2006), and the observations' field notes were organized and categorized in order to be easily accessible. These notes were in the form of handwritten, typed in, word-processing, or other electronic files. The specific computer programs used were Microsoft Office Word and Excel for easy manipulation and retrieval of data. Each file was saved with the corresponding label and date so it could be retrieved efficiently at a later date. The case study documents included all the artifacts collected throughout the study. The disposition of these documents was listed in an annotated bibliography. Such annotations facilitated storage and retrieval. The documents were stored electronically in portable document format (PDF).

Chain of Evidence

In order to increase the overall quality of this multiple-case study, the researcher maintained a chain of evidence. In maintaining a chain of evidence, the researcher followed the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions. The chain of evidence process ensured that the evidence presented in the report is the same evidence that was collected during the data collection process. The

researcher kept a journal to record the type of evidence, date, and circumstances under which the evidence was collected to prove that the data collection followed the procedures stipulated by the protocol.

By following Yin's (2009) three principles of data collection: (1) obtaining multiple sources of evidence; (2) creating a case study database; and (3) maintaining a chain of evidence, the benefits of the sources of evidence were maximized. Although a complete list of sources of evidence can be quite extensive, three out of the six most common-used sources of evidence in doing case studies, suggested by Yin (2009) were used. The researcher collected data through the following sources of evidence: interviews (face-to-face, and e-mail interviews), observations (complete-observer), and documents (researcher's journal, lesson plans, e-mails, and public documents) (Creswell, 2009). No single source had a complete advantage over the others; in fact, the various sources were highly complementary.

Study Participants

In conducting multiple-case studies, Yin (2009) suggested that the researcher identify and select as a preparatory step, cases that best fit the theoretical replication design prior to formal data collection. Following the study research question, what knowledge, skills, and dispositions influence middle school teachers in planning social studies instruction, the first step the researcher followed was to identify all the middle schools. With the principals' permission, the researcher sent an invitation to all social studies middle school teachers in the district to participate. A number of social studies teachers answered the call. However, just two out of the five middle schools informed that 100% of their social studies teachers accepted to participate in the study.

The researcher explicitly (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2009) selected one of these two middle schools to encompass instances in which the phenomena under study are likely to be found. The middle school selected had a common planning time once per week which provided more rich opportunities and better access (Jang, 2006) for data collection. In addition, during the selection process the researcher noted attributes of highest priority for this study including, the balance and variety in the participants' background, and relevance to the participants on what the researcher wants to understand more thoroughly (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006). Having access to observe and interact with the social studies team of teachers as a group provided opportunities to examine knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influenced teachers when they were planning social studies instruction.

The study included six middle school social studies teachers as participants. The setting is a 6th to 8th grade middle school that serves 723 students where 92% are Hispanics. The participants teach in the same school and have a similar number of students. In contrast, they have different ethnical backgrounds, different language proficiencies, and they present a variety in the number of years of experience (see Table 3.4). Accordingly, and for the purpose of the study, the participants were identified and purposefully selected according to their willingness to participate (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009).

The six participants hold a bachelor's degree, along with the state-mandated teaching certificate, including the certification in their content area. In addition, based on the NCLB definition, they are considered highly qualified teachers by the school district. The teachers comprise an average of 12 years of educational experience. All participants are identified as males; four out of the six participants are identified as Hispanics, one

White and one African-American. Three of the four Hispanic participants hold English as a Second Language (ESL) certificate and are fluent in Spanish. One participant holds a Bilingual certificate and is fluent in reading and writing in the Spanish language. After the systematic selection, the participants were asked to sign the *Informed Consent Form* approved by the University's IRB committee and then they filled out a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). Pseudonyms were used for the school, district, city, and participants in the study. Table 3.4 represents information about the characteristics of participants.

Table 3.4

Characteristics of Participants

Teacher	Ethnicity	Language	Yrs. of exp.	Degree	Certifications
Luis	H	Sp/Eng	27	Master	Generalist 1-8 Social Studies 6-8
Paul	W	English	20	Bachelor	Social Studies 6-12
Antonio	H	Sp/Eng	14	Bachelor	Social Studies K-12
Joaquin	H	Sp/Eng	18	Bachelor	Social Studies 8-12
Adam	H/W	English	1	Bachelor	Generalist K-12 Social Studies 4-8
Richard	A-A	English	30	Bachelor	Social Studies 6-12

Setting

The broad context for this study is a predominantly Hispanic serving South Texas school district. The school district includes 17 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. According to the *2011 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)*

report, the total district population is 18,339 students, where 90.4% of the students are Hispanics, 76.9% economically disadvantaged and 56.5% at risk. One of the five middle schools was selected as the setting for the study. The selected middle school serves 743 students in total where 41% of them are Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, 80.5% are economically disadvantaged, and 42.8% are at-risk students. This 6th to 8th grade middle school is comprised with the following student ethnic distribution: 91.8% Hispanic, 7.7 % White, 0.4% has two or more races and 0.1% Asian. The middle school selected has 67 teachers. According to the latest AEIS report, the selected middle school includes the following teacher ethnic distribution: 62.7% Hispanic, 33.8% White, 1.7% African American, and 1.7% two or more races. The average years of teacher experience is 17.5 years. The selected middle school includes 41.1% of male teachers and 58.9% female teachers.

Teachers within the selected middle school collaborate with other colleagues in writing lesson plans at least once per week during a common planning period. By having a common planning time, teachers have the opportunity to work on planning lessons and sharing instructional practices and resources. A common teacher planning time in the research setting allowed the researcher to have better access (Creswell, 2009; Jang, 2006; Yin, 2009) in studying what knowledge, skills, and dispositions influence teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction. Having access to observe and interact with the social studies team of teachers individually and as a group provided opportunities to examine how teachers were planning instruction in a different setting. One important task for the multiple-case research is to show how the phenomenon appears in different contexts (Yin, 2009). The individual and the collaborative lesson

planning activity took place in different settings, for instance, the teachers' classroom, in the teachers' meeting room, and in the teachers' lounge.

<div align="center">Role of Researcher as Primary Instrument</div>

In order to protect the validity of the results, in this section, the researcher's dual role (Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005) as a researcher and district curriculum specialist for social studies, is discussed. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is interpretative research, where the researcher is, "typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). This section describes the role of the researcher in conducting this study as the primary instrument (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). The researcher holds the position of district curriculum specialist for social studies content area in the larger setting for this study. As part of the researcher's job, the researcher has to schedule regular visits and meetings at different schools including all grade levels in order to provide curriculum related training and instructional support to social studies teams. Most of the visits to the schools are planned around teachers' planning time periods. The researcher, as the primary collection instrument (Creswell, 2009) of this qualitative study, conducted complete-observer observations, face-to-face and e-mail interviews, and collected public and private documents. The observations and interviews were digitally voice recorded and then transcribed. The e-mail interviews were stored as a Microsoft Office Word documents. Finally, the researcher conducted the necessary follow up interviews with the participants as the study evolved.

Challenges of Insider Research in Educational Contexts

As the primary instrument in a qualitative study, the researcher is an important part of the process of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Qualitative researchers cannot separate themselves from the topic and people studied, nor from the research methods chosen (Creswell, 2009; Mehra, 2002; Merriam, 2009). One of the challenges for the researcher in this study was to maintain a transparent and balanced participation as insider and outsider in conducting the research in the same site of work.

In this study, the insider/outsider dichotomy was a continuum with multiple insiders and outsiders, where each position has advantages and disadvantages depending on the particular circumstances, contexts, and purpose of the research (Mercer, 2007). Accordingly, the researcher in this study explored the pros and cons within the insider/outsider continuum, as the study was developing in order to make better decisions in helping maintain transparency in the research by making visible the constraints that may cause bias in the study.

Insider/Outsider Position Challenges

The study was conducted in a school district where the researcher and the participants function as employees. Although the study was conducted at the same school district, the specific setting of the study is different to the researcher's place of work. The participants perceived the researcher as an outsider since they are teachers working in a school and the researcher works at the administration building in the school district. On the other hand, the researcher had worked in the education field for twenty-two years as a teacher and as an administrator. As a result, the insider/outsider continuum in the study sometimes changed towards a more insider perspective.

As an experienced educator, most of time the participants perceived the researcher as an insider and a part of the group, while they participated in the study as a result of shared experiences (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Mercer, 2007). Although, the researcher as an insider had more access to the participants and setting, the permanent and easy access to the setting can be a disadvantage. For instance, the data collection was sometimes all consuming because as a part of the researcher's job, there is a requirement of visiting the schools in order to participate in the teachers' planning time, as well as provide curriculum and instruction training for them. This situation motivated the researcher to want to collect data about every single academic moment, making it challenging to decide when and how to stop the data collection, and during which opportunities to collect data that were strictly related to the research question.

Data Collection Procedures

A significant aspect of a multiple-case study is the use of multiple data sources acquired over a period of time, a strategy that enhances data credibility (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) suggested that researchers collect multiple types of data from each participant to provide rich data for comparison and contrast across participants, and for the purpose of thematic generalizations that are a key feature of a multiple-case study. Qualitative methods of data collection, namely, interviews (face-to-face and e-mail interviews), observations (complete-observer), and documents (researcher's journal, field notes, lesson plans, e-mails, and public documents) (Creswell, 2009) were employed. These data sets were used for triangulation to assure that the right information and interpretations were obtained (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009).

The data collected from this multiple-case study allowed for in-depth examination of participants' knowledge, skills, and dispositions during the process of decision making in planning instruction across the different contexts such as common planning time sessions and individual planning. The conceptual categories including (a) knowledge, (b) skills, and (c) dispositions, were identified as *a priori* themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Smith, 2000) before the data collection. According to Ryan and Bernard (2003), a priori themes emerge from the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied or from the already agreed on professional definitions found in literature reviews. Table 3.5 represents the systematic steps for the data collection plan.

Table 3.5

Data Collection Plan

Steps	Data collected during the school year 2011-2012
1	Initial Observation Group during common planning time
2	E-mail Interview 1 (Including e-mail follow-up)
3	Collect Documents and Physical Artifacts (Lesson plans) Classroom Observation Face-to-Face Post Observation Interview
4	E-mail Interview 2 (Including e-mail follow-up)
5	Collect Documents and Physical Artifacts (Lesson plans) Classroom Observation Face-to-Face Post Observation Interview
6	E-mail Interview 3 (Including e-mail follow-up)
7	Collect Documents and Physical Artifacts (Lesson plans) Classroom Observation Face-to-Face Post Observation Interview
8	Final Observation Group during common planning time

Multiple data sources provided rich description for mapping themes that emerged from the study. When necessary, the strategy for triangulation called *member checking* was in place. In this case, notes were checked by participants for accuracy. According to Stake (2006), this strategy is a vital technique for field researchers. Frequently, the researcher asked the participants to read the report for accuracy when the researcher found possible misrepresentation. The data collection took place during the 2011-2012 school year. The researcher negotiated the schedule to visit the participants for the interviews and observations via e-mail and during the meetings.

Interviews

Yin (2009) noted that data in multiple-case studies are rich when collected at different stages of the research process. A *three-interview series* is recommended by Seidman (2006) in order to place participants in the context of their lives to collect meaningful and understandable rich data (see Appendix B). The interview questions were designed to capture the continuum of development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers posses and how these capacities influence their decision-making when they plan lessons. Seidman noted that people's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable "when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them" (p. 17). Accordingly, three e-mail interviews were conducted in three different phases of the study following Seidman's (2006) three-interview series model of in-depth interviewing.

The three interviews were sent to the teacher participants via e-mail. Each e-mail was sent a week apart. The unique characteristic of e-mail interviews is that they allow the researcher to gather information in a systematic way, providing a less intrusive

environment to those participants who feel uncomfortable with face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2009). The researcher used e-mail follow-up questions when needed, in order to clarify or to obtain more information from the participants as a strategy to triangulate and assure credibility (Stake, 2006) . The follow-up questions helped to maintain the conversation during the e-mail interviews. Seidman (2006) recommended "how" questions because these type of questions better prompt participants to reconstruct their past and contextualize their current experiences.

The set of questions in the first e-mail interview were focused on life history (Seidman, 2006, p. 16) that helped to establish the context of the participants' experience. In this first set of questions, information about participants' educational background, professional training, linguistic background, employment history, and professional development were asked. The purpose of these questions was to gather information about what the participants bring with them including the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they developed in other settings prior to their teaching career (Lortie, 1975; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

Following the e-mail format, the second set of interview questions was focused on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions reflected in the teacher participants' current experiences within the context in which it occurs (see Appendix B). These questions provided information regarding participants' expectations from their students and school, perceptions of academic differences among students, knowledge of subject matter when they plan their classroom instruction, how they perceive their planning related to prior knowledge of students, and in what way students' prior knowledge and diversity might challenge their beliefs, goals, and understanding of their teaching.

The set of questions in the third e-mail interview encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them, both past and present (Seidman, 2006). These questions provided information on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers reflect upon when they implement their lessons once decisions are made and re-evaluate changes (see Appendix B).

In order to complement the information of the three e-mail interviews, a face-to-face interview was conducted after each classroom observations (more details in the subsequent "Observation" section) at a predetermined time and location convenient for the participants. In these post-observation interviews, the participants were asked to elaborate on: their planning and implementation; the ways they processed planning and the changes they made along the implementation process; and the impact of planning on their teaching, particularly the teaching in a Hispanic serving school. The post-observation interviews helped to trace participants' knowledge, skills and dispositions in the context of planning and decision making (Merriam, 2009). This enabled the careful analysis of each participant's: experience in planning and decision-making; changes in awareness of planning needs; and engagement with diverse learners. The face-to-face interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. After transcribing, all the data were organized in a computerized database to facilitate tracking of data sources.

Observations

Observations were conducted in order to generate a "relatively incontestable description" (Stake, 1995, p. 62) of the teachers' work. In qualitative observations, the researcher aims to become immersed in or become part of the participants. In this study, the researcher conducted observations as a complete observer – researcher observes

without participating (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, two observations were conducted while the teachers planned as a group. The first observation was conducted at the beginning of the study, and the second one, after the three e-mail interviews. In addition, after the collection of a lesson plan as part of the data (more details in the "Documents" section on the following pages) to provide triangulation, each participant was observed at least once while they were teaching in their own classrooms.

The researcher scheduled the classroom observations according to the teachers' availability. The observations were focused on participants' understanding of the relationship among social studies content knowledge, students' prior knowledge, and participants' perceptions of teaching social studies to diverse students. These classroom teachers' observations were conducted for an entire class period (45 minutes) and were documented with extensive field notes by the researcher. Directly after the observations, a write-up of both descriptive and reflective notes were written (Creswell, 2007) by the researcher. The observation field notes were transcribed and filed as hard copies, as well as entered into an electronic database to facilitate tracking of data sources. A face-to-face post observation interview was scheduled after the classroom observation for each participant.

Documents

The third type of data collected are the *documents* (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). The documents collected were the researcher's journal, teachers' lesson plans, e-mails, and public documents such as educational government documents that included federal and state educational policies and laws (i.e., *No Child Left Behind Act 2001, Texas Education Code*), national and state curriculum (*National Standards for*

Social Studies, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and English Language Proficiency Standards), and local curriculum (CSCOPE). These documents were filed and stored electronically and as hard copies to facilitate researcher access.

Data Analysis

Analysis began with the transcribing process, this enabled the researcher to develop initial insight about the data (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Analysis of data was an ongoing process and started with the transcription of the face-to-face interviews and the group meeting observations; as well as, the digitalization of the e-mail interviews, classroom observation's field notes, lesson plans, curriculum and educational policies. Next, the data were categorized, tabled, and sorted (Creswell, 2009) on a wall-size chart, as a preliminary manipulation of data and analysis and subsequently used it as a Master Matrix. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this display format "is the simplest form of juxtaposition-a stacking-up of all the single-cases on one very large sheet or wall chart" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178).

During the preliminary analysis, the data collected was displayed on the Master Matrix in which cell entries included brief descriptions and direct quotes taken from participants' interviews, researcher's observation notes, and participants' lessons. The texts in the Master Matrix were read by the researcher, while notes were made in the margins and initial codes were formed using different colors for each a priori category, knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Coding was done with an eye for both descriptive and thematic data (Creswell, 2007). Coding the data and intercoding of data continued throughout the analysis in order to maintain reliability and trustworthiness through a continuous process of co-analysis (Merriam, 2009). Following, for data management and

coding, the researcher used series of worksheets for analysis suggested by Stake (2006) (see Appendix C). The worksheets were constructed using MS Word processing and MS Excel programs. The researcher did not utilize software designed for qualitative analysis. Although the computer-assisted tools can be helpful, Yin (2009) argued that the value of the software programs is that they serve as an assistant and may be a reliable tool, but never do the analysis for the researcher.

Following Yin's (2009) multiple-case as a research design, each case was analyzed separately first and then an analysis across the cases was made. An analytical strategy and two analytical techniques were employed for data analysis in order to construct validity and reliability in the study (see Table 3.6). Following Yin's steps of analysis, the analytical strategy used in this study helped the researcher identify themes linked to the theoretical proposition and the research questions, and the literature review to build interpretations. The analytical techniques helped the researcher to first synthesize each case, and then, to present themes across the cases for literal replication to show similar results and theoretical replication to identify atypical cases (Yin, 2009). These steps, from the initial search for themes and patterns to the final step of identifying atypical cases were followed closely.

Analytical Strategy

As Yin recommended, "relying on theoretical propositions" (p. 130), is the first and most preferred analytical strategy that led case studies (Yin, 2009). As a starting point, the analytical strategy followed Henderson and Gornik's (2007) interrelated decision making in planning curriculum goals and the a priori themes embedded on the concept of teacher capacity presented in the literature review as the knowledge, skills,

and dispositions (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008) as theoretical propositions. All these elements were carefully planned in order to assure that the "data will be analyzable" (Yin, 2009, p. 131). This analytical strategy, as the initial step, helped to focus the researcher's attention on certain data and ignore other data in order to organize the study. Specifically, and based on Henderson and Gornik's (2007) theoretical framework, this analytical strategy was focused on the following processes: (1) designing and planning for classroom instruction and (2) the implementation of planning once decisions are made. These two decision-making processes assisted the researcher in examining the three a priori themes: (1) knowledge, (2) skills, and (3) dispositions (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008) that influence middle school teachers' decision making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school.

Analytical Techniques

Two analytical techniques were employed in this multiple case study. First, for the case-by-case level, each participant was analyzed using Yin's (2009) analytical technique "chronologies" (p. 148). The purpose of this technique was to present each case's events over time in order to understand the continuum of teacher capacities. In reporting case-by-case individually, the researcher presented brief profiles in a narrative form of each case, so that the individual cases were not lost in the multiple-case analysis (Stake, 2006). Crafting a profile is "an act of analysis" (Seidman, 2006, p. 128). The narrative form of a profile allows the interviewer to transform what was learned from the interviews into telling a story (Mishler, 1986; Seidman, 2006). As Seidman stated "telling stories is a compelling way to make sense of interview data (p. 120)." Secondly, to

synthesize the cases for replication logic, a cross-case analytical technique was employed. For the purpose of cross-case analysis, Stake (2006) suggested a series of simple worksheets (see Appendix C). These worksheets for analysis helped the researcher to capture in a systematic way the collection of cases and were intended to help the researcher in the analysis process, not to present data to readers. Table 3.6 represents the strategies and techniques used as analytical approaches that helped to construct external validity and reliability during the analysis.

Table 3.6

Analytical Approaches

Test	Multiple-Case Study Principles
Validity	Analytical Strategies ✓ Rely on theoretical propositions
Reliability	Analytical Techniques ✓ Chronologies ✓ Cross-Case

Preliminary Manipulation of Data

As a preliminary manipulation of data and having in mind the theoretical propositions planning for instruction and implementation and the a priori themes knowledge, skills and dispositions, a Master Matrix of categories was developed. As a starting point, Yin's recommended the researcher "play" (p. 129) with the data in order to create his/her own preliminary strategy to manipulate the data. This Master Matrix created by the researcher was useful for examining the data and for putting information in

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chronological order as a temporal scheme (Miles & Huberman, 1994) before using

Stake's (2006) worksheets. Table 3.7 shows an excerpt of one of the three a priori themes

(knowledge) and how the data was sorted and categorized following Seidman's (2006)

model of interviewing.

Table 3.7

Excerpt of the Format for the Master Matrix for Preliminary Manipulation Analysis

Knowledge		
Life History	Current Experiences	Reflective Practices
Demographic Quest First e-mail interview	Group Observations Classroom Observations Second e-mail interview Documents	Face-to-Face Interviews Third e-mail interview

This preliminary strategy helped the researcher explore the topics by

arranging participants' direct quotes and phrases in a one-shot visual tool. Having

this Master Matrix for each one of the a priori themes (knowledge, skills, and

dispositions) allowed the researcher to become immersed in a meaningful context. As

Patton (1990) stated, without context there is little possibility of exploring the

meaning of an experience. Table 3.8 represents a segment of the preliminary Master

Matrix, including responses from the participants. The complete, wall-size Master

Matrix contained the columns for skills and dispositions as well.

Table 3.8

Excerpt of the Master Matrix for Preliminary Manipulation Including Participants'
Responses

	Knowledge
	Life History
Participants	
Richard	"When I was a student, as African-American, the most demanding challenge was learning to accept myself in a world that ostracized me." "The majority of my friends were Hispanics, we faced the same difficulties…the worst was discrimination." "Yes…he was male, and yes he was Anglo, probably racist, it was really hurtful." "My baseball career aided me in seeing the whole picture, there was no hatred or racism in baseball we played. I learned about being appreciated when you give it your all."
Luis	"I learned to value and embrace my language and heritage at home." "I was told too many times not to speak Spanish at school."
Paul	"I was very much alone during middle school, my parents wanted me to perform well in school but did not follow up or stayed involved." "It was frequent to see how some teachers asked Spanish speaking students to not to use Spanish language in the classroom."
Antonio	"In one of my classes at middle school there was a lot of harassment and bullying…I was scared sometimes…the teacher had no control over behavior. I don't even remember learning in that class…I vowed, when I was studying to be a teacher to never be like that and it was a life lesson learned." "I had teachers that took time to listen to what I had to say and helped me with questions."
Joaquin	"I don't recall teachers intervening or really pushing students to succeed when I was in school." "When I was a student teacher, my mentor taught me to connect lessons to everyday life."
Adam	"One of the many challenges when I was a middle school student was the divergence that I felt existed between my peers and trying to find social acceptance." "The best teacher I had was really exceptional just as a person with great teaching abilities and very wise…he always had the right words to give."

After the preliminary stage of analysis, and utilizing the Master Matrix, the researcher identified data for each case as a first level of analysis. The data that were salient for each case were recorded in Worksheet 1 titled, *The Thematic Categories*. With this worksheet on the side, the researcher read the whole collection of data "at sitting" (Stake, 2006, p. 42) and keeping in mind the project as a whole, but mostly concentrating on each case's activity in its situation. The researcher kept systematic notes and marginal comments, and color-coding while completing Worksheet 1. The researcher also kept a log simultaneously that helped work on the next level of analysis-building interpretation of the cases (Yin, 2009).

A second level of analysis was focused on each case and recorded in Worksheet 2 titled, *Researcher's Notes While Reading a Case*. This second worksheet provided essential information from the cases, such as themes that were salient and the themes that were unique for each case. In this level of analysis, the researcher built interpretations regarding knowledge and skills in teaching social studies at the middle school level, personal knowledge implicit in participants' understanding of diverse students, and the participants' dispositions. All the important case findings were gathered on copies of Worksheet 2, one for each case. This level of analysis allowed the researcher to understand each case separately as a previous step of the cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006). Table 3.9 represents an example of the Worksheet 2. This worksheet shows one of the participant's thematic categories as an individual case. A worksheet such as Table 3.9 was created for each one of the participants. Table 3.9 represents Richard's unique themes and prominence of themes across the cases.

Table 3.9

Worksheet No. 2 Researcher's Notes While Reading a Case

Case Study Report Title: Richard

Uniqueness Among Other Cases Thematic Categories	Prominence of Themes Across the Cases
1 *Affective* Team Work ←――――――――――→	Team Work
2 Discrimination Inside and *Outside* the school ←―――――→	Discrimination
3 Failure is Never an Option	
4 I Want all My Students to be Successful	

Cross-Case Analysis

While the individual cases were being completed, the researcher also refined the plan for cross-case analysis. Once the researcher became more familiar with the cases, taking one thematic category at the time, the researcher considered the expected utility of each of the case reports for further development of the themes across the cases. This was the third level of analysis and was recorded on Worksheet 3, titled, *Ratings of Expected Utility of Each Case for each Theme*. The researcher rated the utility of the cases as H (high 7-9), M (middle 4-6), or L (low 1-3) in order of importance for understanding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influenced teachers in the decision-making process for planning instruction. The Master Matrix created as a preliminary strategy to manipulate the data shows nine cells for each participant, three for knowledge, three for skills and three for dispositions. For each merged finding, the researcher asked how important that merged finding is for the theme, and then counted the cells in which the theme appeared and then assign the rating with a number. Table 3.10 represents the

format of the Worksheet 3 showing the ratings of one of the themes, *Team Work,* as an example.

Table 3.10

Worksheet No. 3 Ratings of Expected Utility of Each Case for each Theme

Multiple-Case Themes	Richard	Luis	Paul	Antonio	Joaquin	Adam
Theme 1						
Team Work	8	4	7	7	6	3

The researcher entered the rating in Worksheet 3, until all themes received a rating of the estimated utility of the cases. Data was compared and contrasted across cases utilizing one of the Eisenhardt's (1989) tactics. Eisenhardt suggested to select thematic categories and then to "look for within-group similarities coupled with intergroup differences" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 540). Subsequently, all the data was re-examined to synthesize across contexts and analyzed how participants perceived changes in their planning and decision-making, the challenges they encountered, and how they negotiated these challenges. Keeping the common themes that emerged from individual cases, the cross-analysis of cases was studied as a multiple case study. Once the coding was complete, and in order to construct validity, a member-check (Stake, 2006) was conducted with all the participants to further verify interpretations of the data (see Table 3.3). This process gave participants the opportunity to clarify or make additional contributions to further validate or invalidate the findings. After the third level of analysis, each set of data were double-coded, a process of revisiting the data to make comparisons between the initial and the final coding (Yin, 2009). During this stage of the

data analysis, themes that emerged outside the literature and the theoretical framework were the prime focus.

In the final reporting, the emerged themes were used for literal replication, while the themes that emerged outside the literature or atypical cases were used to shed light on subtle and nuanced variations. A context-specific approach helped to make "thematic connections" (Seidman, 2006, p. 125) and associations across all participants without sacrificing individual trajectories or atypical cases. The multiple-case study using a cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to observe, explore, study, analyze, and interpret participants' experiences; make comparisons; and study the interactions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs of individuals aimed at locating common themes within and across participants. While the focus was on identifying themes across participants, the study also noted atypical responses and their implications for the study.

In summary, each case was analyzed separately, and then cross-case comparisons were made for thematic connections. A cross-case analysis helped to make visible not just what is common across the cases, but what is unique to each. This cross-case approach helped to treat the cases as forces to understand better the phenomenon. Findings from the study were reported as a multiple-case study. The study concluded with a discussion on the findings and implications for education. Using a multiple case study as a research design (Yin, 2009), this study examined how middle school teachers engaged in decision making for planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE CASE-BY-CASE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influence middle school teachers' decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. In this chapter, individual profiles of the six participants were developed as a way to report the case-by-case analysis. As Seidman (2006, p. 128) stated, "crafting a profile is an act of analysis." The narrative form of a profile allowed the researcher to transform and share what was learned from the data into telling a story as a "compelling way to make sense of the data" (Seidman, 2006, p. 120). As a result of the case-by-case analysis, each case suggested unique thematic categories or "expressions" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87). These thematic categories or expressions are presented as subheadings embedded in each of the profiles. Next, the thematic categories helped the researcher to describe, compare and explain the emerged themes across the cases as a collective group for the cross-case analysis, which is presented in the following section.

Each case is presented employing "chronologies" as an analytical technique (Yin, 2009, p. 148). Yin suggested the chronologies analytical technique to describe events that occur before other events or events that follow other events in order to present findings occurred over time. This technique helped to understand the continuum of teacher capacity development of the participants by describing their knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they brought into the teaching career, what they developed during their teaching practice and to understand how they reflect in their own practice in improving and refining planning for instruction.

Richard

In 1957, twelve year-old Richard was as excited, perhaps even more so, than the other members of his All-Stars Little League baseball team. They had just learned they would be playing against the champions from Monterrey, Mexico, a team so far undefeated in their last 28 games, and on their way to the World Series. Dare they hope to defeat this seemingly invincible group of players from a city famous for producing professional ball players? That year, Richard's team was the first to defeat the Mexican team.

Affective Team Work

Before he started his teaching career, Richard played for two years for a professional baseball club. "My baseball career aided me in seeing the whole picture. There was no hatred or racism in the baseball we played." Richard went on to serve in the U.S. Air Force for four years. Those activities helped him strengthen his confidence and self-esteem, while realizing that he could be in control of his own life. He learned team building and how it felt to be appreciated "when you give it your all." It was about that time that he set a goal to become a teacher, because he wanted to "make a difference in kids' lives." From the time he, and that small group of kids who shared a love for baseball defeated the formidable foe from Mexico, Richard learned that success was possible with affective teamwork. He truly enjoys the teachers' weekly conference periods, practicing teamwork in the middle school environment, sharing ideas, and helping others be successful teachers. His military training, his time playing professional baseball, and lessons he learned at the university, all contributed to his love of working as a team.

When asked about the biggest challenge teachers face, Richard described the many hats a teacher wears today. He said that it is not enough to be an expert in the content area they teach, but the teachers have to recognize the baggage students are carrying. Therefore, teachers need to help students deal with these challenges. The time required to achieve this, according to Richard, is time consuming and difficult, but must be done while meeting the deadlines of academic requirements.

Richard's vast experience as a teacher helps him prepare for these challenges. He has been teaching social studies at high school and middle school levels for the last 30 years. Richard earned a bachelor's degree in history with a minor in physical education. He is certified to teach social studies from 6th to 12th grade. His primary language is English, but he admitted that he understands some "words and phrases" in Spanish. Growing up in a middle class neighborhood in a city in South Texas, with parents that always encouraged Richard to be the best he can be and teaching him the value of education, he became a better than average student. Richard, an African-American, was surrounded mostly by Hispanic kids and attended primarily Hispanic serving schools. "When I was young the majority of my friends were Spanish-speaking… Hispanic kids… we faced the same difficulties…the worst was discrimination."

Discrimination Inside and Outside the School

Richard shared with his Hispanic friends and classmates the same kind of difficulties that were typical in a world where society was not very accepting of people of color in 1950's and 1960's. "When I was a student, the most demanding challenge was learning to accept myself in a world that ostracized me." Richard said that as a student he experienced discrimination frequently and almost everywhere "inside and outside the

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school." He mentioned that he learned to just accept it, "…but trust me, I did not get there overnight." When he was asked to share a situation where he felt he was discriminated against, he recalled something he didn't like from one of his teachers. "Well it's called selective memory. Yes, he was male, and yes, he was Anglo. Probably racist…it was really hurtful…I am a better person now because of those experiences."

Richard said that his parents always gave him peace and consolation. He described, "being at home was a different world…God was first in our home." Without fail, his parents' lives revolved around him and his siblings. His parents were always involved in Richard's education. He observed, "I didn't want to disappoint my parents… I wanted them to be proud of me." He went on to say that his parents gave him the love and support he needed to be a good teacher.

Failure Is Never an Option

Richard has been described as a wise and kindhearted teacher, whose only African-American teacher when he was in school taught him the lesson that he passes on to his students, generation after generation. He noted, "My teacher's faith in me was so strong that failure was never an option." This philosophy reigns in Richard's teaching. He recalled sadly, "it is a shame that America was so cruel during her lifetime." However, over the years, he has had an opportunity to carry on her legacy and share his teacher's life lesson with his students. He reminisced about his first group of students, mostly Mexican-American, many of them children of migrant workers. "They all wanted better lives...those kids really had dreams and incredible strength…they knew that education was the path to success." He expressed that those students' positive attitudes made his job much more pleasant and easy.

Richard believes that formal education is only a tool for learning and that our

current schools have some other agenda in addition to teaching, because they are

obligated to someone or something other than the students. Richard commented that he

does not always agree with all the changes within the school system. He observed,

"sometimes I feel that the ones in charge of implementing all these changes missed the

important goal…what's the best for the students." He believes and understands the

importance of advocating for all students, *"If you don't like it, do something about it…an*

important lesson to teach to our students nowadays is tolerance, compromise, and

building bridges, not fences…failure is never an option."

I Want All My Students to be Successful

Richard mentioned that the first time he wrote a lesson plan was in a training

course, in his first year of teaching, "The lessons revolved around the objectives…the

objectives were content-based." Richard's lesson plans follow the state standards. "The

standards are given by the district curriculum." He added that he works with his team to

establish standards-based objectives. The objective is given to the student in some form at

the beginning of the unit. Richard mentioned that students are more engaged when they

know and understand the rationale behind the new topic, "Students are also offered a

reason as to why this lesson is important." The second part of the lesson shows the

instructional materials he selects to address and supports the objective. This can take

many forms such as readings and photographs. Next, an evaluation follows measuring the

success of meeting the goals. At the end, an evaluation is aligned to the initial objective.

Richard's classes are about sharing ideas, with attempts at moving at the same

pace. Every day he tries to create a comfortable environment for learning in his

classroom. His classroom walls are covered with visuals and he keeps the students'

attention by using the latest technologies. Richard was observed interacting with his

students, moving around the classroom, rarely spending any time behind his desk, and

never seated in his chair. He encourages discussion of current events, movies of social

significance and news stories. Richard wants all students to be successful and believes

that, "Teachers should be rated not on how good they teach, but rather how well students

learn."

Luis

Luis liked to draw. He was sitting cross-legged on a soft mound of dirt, the paper

lying on his legs, and his cap pulled down low to protect his face from the sun. His

mother worked nearby. His mom made a good amount of money picking cotton and she

was going to buy him a backpack; he wanted the bright yellow one with the spider on the

back. His mother said he was going to start school next year. For a long time, Luis didn't

fully understand why his mother often cried when she talked about Luis going to school,

swearing that he would never work in the cotton fields like she did. Maybe she was

thinking about missing him and not having him help her pick the cotton. He would miss

her too.

Luis is a dedicated and experienced teacher. He is Hispanic and has been teaching

for 28 years. The first twenty-one years of his career, he taught at an elementary level and

eventually, seven years ago, moved to teaching social studies at a middle school level. He

is certified to teach from 1st to 8th grade generalist and social studies from 6th to 8th grade.

Luis holds a bachelor's degree in Science with a minor in Bilingual Education. He also

has a master's degree in Education with a minor in Bilingual/Bicultural Education.

Luis attended elementary, middle, and high schools in the area of South Texas. He was a shy student and he always did well in school. After high schoo,l he joined the Army and then started his college career in a South Texas university. As a college student, he liked to spend the weekends at the university library and invest almost all of his time to studying, "I basically devoted most of my time to education." Although the encouragement to go to college was self imposed, he said that his mother was always there for him, "She is the one that I give full credit to for my success… she didn't want to see me suffer the way she suffered in life without education. My mother never wanted me to work in the cotton fields."

Lack of Cultural Awareness

The first language he learned at home was Spanish. He said that his mother always asked him to speak Spanish at home, saying, "En esta casa se habla español," [In this house we speak Spanish]. He learned to value and to embrace his language and heritage at home. He was exposed to the English language for the first time when he started school. As a teacher, working with non-English speaking students allowed him to connect with his childhood experiences and helped him encourage his students to embrace and honor their own culture and language. He strongly believed, right from the beginning of his teaching career, that students can succeed academically if they maintain and develop literacy in their native language, while they learn English. He also mentioned "I think that developing literacy in your native language can be very helpful in learning a second language in an academic level."

He learned that the first step in helping these students succeed academically is to help them build their native language, while helping them maintain it. "I think that a

biliterate student has a tremendous advantage over a monolingual person in today's economy." Luis feels he may show his English Language Learners more respect than other teachers might, since he knows all the painful struggles they are going through. He vividly recalls the struggles he endured when he started school in an English environment, not knowing the language. "What I recall more vividly is not the struggling about not knowing the language…it was the perception that most of my teachers didn't know and understand that I was eager and capable to learn…I think it was more about a lack of cultural awareness."

Address All Students' Needs at the Same Time

Luis mentioned that during his first years of teaching, he maintained a strong influence that he had acquired while in college when planning his lessons. "College professors helped me understand how to connect learning objectives with strategies and activities that help all students." However, he goes on to say, that during the first years of teaching, the principal from the school in which he worked asked the teachers to write in detail regarding what they were using from the primary resource textbook. The principal always asked them not to deviate too much from the textbook. In addition, he mentioned that as the years passed by, he always complemented the lessons using a variety of resources, "Sometimes I needed to go to the public library or university libraries to look for material in Spanish, but now with the Internet, the search is much easier." Luis was transferred to the middle school level to teach social studies for recent immigrants, most of them from Mexico. He is aware of the different types of students' backgrounds, "Although almost all of them are Hispanics, they have different cultural and educational backgrounds." Luis explained that some students come to a U.S. classroom with a strong

academic background in their own language, while others have no schooling at all. "It is very challenging to address all of the students' needs at the same time."

Luis keeps his lesson plans close by on his desk and tries to follow them step-by-step. He follows the pace, sequence, units, and topics from the district's, "Year at a Glance" (YAG). He mentioned that he uses the curriculum documents provided by the adopted district curriculum called CSCOPE. Luis also stated that the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) are incorporated in all of his instructions. However, due to the inclusion of English Language Learners in his classroom, he usually finds it necessary to modify his plan to a certain extent. The instructional material Luis uses depends on the lesson that will be taught. Due to the lack of resources available for Spanish speakers in his school, Luis prepares a lot of his own materials to enhance the instruction. His lesson plan however includes the objective, instructional strategies, materials, activities, and evaluation exercises.

The Value of Work in Teams

Luis served in the U.S. Army and learned that a soldier's success depends on how well he collaborates with others. Teamwork was also necessary when Luis worked in retail stores while attending college, enabling him to value the significance of work. "I learned to appreciate the value of work in teams, which I also pass on to my students." He enjoys collaborating with other teachers in his school so that they know what he is teaching. Luis expressed that although he likes to work in collaboration and understand its value, most of the time he works in isolation since not all the teachers know and understand how to work with the different types of English Language Learners. "I need to make my own decisions when I plan for my students in particular."

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After many years of teaching, Luis still feels overwhelmed most of the time. He mentioned that he feels the pressure from the state and federal educational agencies that he believes could be more supportive of teachers. "Every school year we get more strict policies, harsh working conditions, over-crowding information, and more students entering the school system with emotional and behavioral problems." Luis expressed that all these challenges make the learning environment more difficult, creating new obstacles for educators. Luis lamented, "there is no room for professional development….we don't have time to continue to study and to keep ourselves updated…there is low morale." Luis observed that proper self-evaluation and reflection suffers as well.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Paul*</p>

Surely, Paul could have been a better student, and he now takes responsibility for any failures, or better said, lack of significant achievements in school. However, years ago when he was a student, if anyone had asked him about his experience with teachers, his response would have been that it appeared to him that his teachers were simply going through the motions. Showing movies as the day's lesson and getting angry with low performers, in other words trying to motivate by fear, didn't seem all that sophisticated. It's a good thing Paul's personal passion was playing tennis and that his school required a certain degree of academic success before allowing participation in athletics.

Motivated by Dreams

At the time the study was conducted, Paul had taught social studies in middle school for the last eight years of a twenty-year teaching career. He described himself as White and having English as his only language. He earned a bachelor's degree in Social Studies and Kinesiology and he is certified to teach social studies from 8th to 12th grade.

He attended schools located in South Texas. Paul mentioned that although he liked school, he did not do well academically because he was not motivated, adding that he was very much alone during these years. "My parents wanted me to perform in school, but did not follow up or stayed involved." As a student, he perceived that most of the teachers he had were trying to survive, "I had a science teacher that sat at her desk the entire year and showed films every day. Another teacher just screamed all day and had a wooden pass and would slam it on his desk."

Not having found encouragement in the classroom, a strong motivation for him was athletics, specifically, he played on the tennis teams in high school and college. "I knew that I would receive a scholarship for college, so this was my motivation….the only thing that seemed to keep me going were my dreams in athletics." As a result, Paul now involves his students in the learning experience every day. He understands that not all students are necessarily motivated and he makes himself available on Thursdays and Fridays for 'one-on-one' consultations. More than anything, he wants for students to trust him. He motivates his students to learn by providing "meaningful learning experiences." He encourages difficult questions, ones that challenge him as the teacher, and it pays off when other students recognize the teacher has been challenged and join in with the questions and comments. In visiting his classroom, an inquiry environment is predominant. He noted, "I use the Socratic method to motivate my students…regularly after I introduce a new topic, I asked the students to write down, in pairs or in teams, 3 questions related to the topic that start with how or why."

In his classroom, those questions were posted along a large wall for anyone to observe, it was called "the parking lot." Students visit the parking lot freely if they want

to answer or to even write more questions. "By the end of the week, you can see complex webs and graphic organizers that students created…sometimes they added figures or pictures." Paul mentioned that students select one of the webs and create an essay, a song, or simply connect the selected web with something that is happening now in a real context. "This activity motivates them to learn, to explore, and to create…and to reach their dreams." He mentioned that during his common planning time he shares and discusses the webs' questions with his colleagues and uses their students' interests as objectives for future lessons. He mentioned, "…sometimes we can get a glimpse of our students' dreams in what they write in those webs."

Building Bilingual Teams

Before he started college, Paul worked as a manager in a restaurant for about 5 years. He mentioned that the managerial position helped him improve his "people skills." It was through this job that Paul learned about team building. "It was not easy…people are unique individuals…I learned about the importance of knowing them first, finding their strengths, and then building trust." He said that he supervised people from different ethnic backgrounds, recalling, "it was not just about different languages…they had different cultures, different ways to solve problems…I looked for their talents and then I built a strong team." In talking about "differences," he mentioned that he taught at a high school for twelve years before he was moved to the middle school level to teach social studies.

When asked about the differences between teaching high school and middle school, he mentioned that in middle school, the students experienced more physical and emotional changes than in high school. In his experience, "students need to interact more

when they are in middle school…they really enjoy having conversations with adults…they need more emotional support and to feel that they belong to a group." Paul continued his thoughts, mentioning that the "need of acceptance and belonging" is more accentuated in recent immigrants and in English language learners. "You need to build trust and to identify the exact needs of each student when you prepare lessons for them." He mentioned that his success in the classroom stems from challenging the students, getting them involved and using the opportunity of one-on-one teaching with those students that need some personal attention, in addition to providing teamwork opportunities and creating an environment where they enjoy learning.

Paul mentioned that it is more common to have Spanish speakers or students who are still developing English at a middle school level than in high school. Paul uses his English speaking students, who speak Spanish as well, to help him connect with the English Language Learners, which often makes up the majority of his class, giving everyone ownership in the material and exposing all his students to the opportunity to develop team work skills. He mentioned that a student who can speak two or more languages is better equipped to work in this country. "To be multilingual in the United Sates today is an advantage…it is a shame when parents can speak Spanish and don't teach their children."

Reflecting: Improving Teaching Abilities

During his first years of teaching, Paul only used his textbook to prepare lesson plans, "I don't remember being trained in college on how to prepare lessons." He recalled struggling and learning everything on his own and over the years, learning from other teachers and during trainings. Paul now uses the State standards and the district adopted

curriculum, "During our common planning time, we discuss the TEKS we need to cover, and we visit CSCOPE to be sure we are covering the learning objectives...we also create or modify the learning objectives based on the assessments." He also takes advantage of the option to branch off from the CSCOPE plans when he feels he has a better lesson.

Paul plans and prepares his lessons a week ahead and spends time each day fine-tuning the next day's lessons. Paul finds that making notes while he is actually teaching a lesson, as reminders that he would like to do it a little different next time or put emphasis on something else, improves his teaching ability. He believes that reflective practices through conversations with his colleagues has helped him improve his teaching abilities overtime, however he feels frustrated because of the time constraint. "Sometimes we had a hard time agreeing when we discussed how to approach certain topics or TEKS…I feel we need to have some rules to conduct the meetings…time is not enough and we need to find ways to maximize our time effectively during common planning time."

Antonio

He hesitated at the door before entering. A few students loudly pushed past him, and he thought, "They are in typical form today!" Antonio hated this class. He had better go in now and avoid getting stuck sitting in the front of the classroom. If you sat in the front, you were pelted in the back of the head with paper, pencils, and who knows what else, with the occasional slap when one of the bullies walked past. You had to turn around whenever there was a commotion behind you; it was a natural reflex, but then you became part of the disruption to the class. Is the teacher blind, deaf, or both; or does he just enjoy mayhem? Why do these same students actually act like human beings in other classes? What is wrong with this room?

Antonio is an enthusiastic and extremely articulate teacher. He described himself as a Hispanic who has been teaching for fourteen years. He earned a bachelor's degree in Education and he is certified to teach Social Studies K-12. He was raised in a home where Spanish was the daily and primary language. Antonio mentioned that he was exposed to the English language when he started school. He attended school in South Texas area. He said that he was a "B" student in elementary and middle school and cared more about sports, but he eventually learned the importance of a good grade point average and focused more on academics, earning more "A" grades in high school. "I learned that counselors could help you with scholarships in order to attend colleges and universities, so I started to work harder in high school."

Peer Pressure to Belong Somewhere

When he started middle school he experienced challenges trying to balance out academics and sports. He said, "I remember there was a lot of peer pressure in belonging somewhere." It was hard for him to find support in his peers, "And the teachers were not very helpful when I started middle school…I missed my elementary teachers."

When he attended sixth grade, he had a teacher that made him feel uncomfortable. "There was a lot of harassment and bullying in that class and I was scared sometimes…I wanted to fit in with one of the groups, but I didn't like them…sometimes I just wanted to disappear." He mentioned that the teacher had no control over the behavior and that he does not even remember learning in that class. "I vowed, when I was studying to be a teacher, to never be like that and it was a life lesson truly learned." Antonio never talked about unpleasant situations in his school with his parents, "My parents divorced when I was young and my father was not around much except on birthdays or holidays." He

mentioned that his mother was very "loving", although not very involved with school affairs. He recognized that his mother did care for his academics and he learned from her that school was important. In fact, he said that he gives his mother credit when it comes to his decision to go to college, "She encouraged me when I was in doubt...I think she was great peer pressure for me."

"Seventh grade was much better." Antonio fondly recalled two teachers that helped him cope with the academic demands and the stress that came with the transition to seventh grade. He said that his 7th grade math teacher was very kind and "took the time to listen to what I had to say and helped me with questions." He also remembered an 8th grade English teacher who used a lot of hands-on activities and pictures, making his learning fun. "They showed me a different side of the school…they helped me become aware of the positive peer pressure…they were a good influence that helped me improve my social life and feel good about my decisions."

Get to Know Them First

Antonio started learning about team teaching, collaboration, and "inter-disciplinary" lesson planning during his student teaching in college. He also worked part-time in a work-study program at the university where he had the opportunity to seek tutoring. "Tutoring helped me improve on my academic and social skills and I could work and study at the same location…tutoring paid off because my GPA improved…those teachers took the time to get to know me and then to figure out how to help me." The time invested in tutoring was worth it; it helped him with the communication, social, and academic skills that he would later utilize when he became a teacher at the alternative education center.

The first time he wrote a lesson plan, he was supervised by his mentor teacher and

he used the objectives from "the curriculum guide book." He mentioned that his first

group of students was sympathetic towards him and he rapidly embraced them. "I made it

my personal goal to get to know them by first name and offered my tutoring assistance,

so they could feel comfortable with me and with their classmates." Since then, Antonio

continues to offer tutoring to his students after school, "It is simply the best way to keep

them engaged in academics during the whole year…I write the names of the students who

need or ask for tutoring in my lesson plans." He mentioned that he wants to be sure that

his students have trust in him, "the only way is to get to know them first."

Take Ownership in Learning Citizenship

Antonio uses CSCOPE as the basis for his lessons. "I like how CSCOPE provides

research-based strategies and how it connects the social studies topics…I don't rely

exclusively in the textbook anymore." He finds that hands-on activities and mini-projects

produce the most successful lessons. "We [the social studies teachers] have the tendency

to ask the students to write something connected with the topic we are teaching…I mean

in a narrative way, like an essay or in their journal." He mentioned that he allows the

students, at least once per week, to select a different option over different formats to

communicate their knowledge and understanding.

In observing his classroom, a big question posted on the wall was observed,

"Should the right of citizenship for all children born in the United States, regardless of

the immigration status of their parents, be removed?" Surrounding the question on the

wall were different students' artifacts, like songs, posters, poems, and a couple of

newspaper articles, which were all related to the question. "By placing the topic

citizenship in a different context, such as immigration, the students were exposed to a more challenging way of thinking…they make connections…it helps them to take ownership of their own learning."

Antonio shared that he always writes a big question in his weekly lesson plan. The big question usually has two or more different layers of information, so the students can make connections, debate, and "conceptualize the topic through different contexts." Antonio introduces each lesson discussing the big question. Antonio attempts to keep his students engaged and provide ways for them to take ownership in the lesson. He also uses videos from YouTube, current events, and real life experiences to enhance the lesson.

Make Adjustments that Fit Students' Needs

"Nowadays…and more than ever, there is a huge mismatch between the structure of our schools and the cultural backgrounds of our students." Talking about his own students, Antonio believes that, "they don't need more of the same or louder… or just work harder… or different materials or different instructional approaches than the other normal [*normal* emphasized] kids...my students are very smart, they don't need more labels." He mentioned that there is a need of focusing on adapting the school to the student, "Not the student to the system." He said that being aware of the students' needs is not enough, noting, "we need a system of support…we need to learn best practices to help all children succeed." While he was sharing those thoughts during a face-to-face conversation, he recalled a phrase he remembered from a book titled "*Rigor is Not a Four Letter Word.*" He recited,

for students who apparently don't understand as much…expose them

to a higher academic and critical thinking environment to understand

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more…if they already don't know much, you don't want to teach those students to not know much over and over.

Antonio enjoys working with his department head on a regular basis. They both take advantage of every opportunity offered by the Texas Region One Educational Service Center (Region One ESC), for workshops to broaden their own scope of learning. Antonio likes to read articles and books that offer more contemporary educational practices on his own time. He meets regularly with the teaching team in the school and they discuss successful lessons, sharing each others' experiences, and discuss students' learning styles. Antonio is constantly analyzing his own lessons and the different approaches he uses to make adjustments. Within his lessons, it was visibly his notes on the margins, "In case I need to do something different next time…the adjustments to fit students' needs should be for us, our educational system and in our style of teaching…not adjustments from the kids."

Joaquin

The pilot announced that they had been cleared for landing and would be on the ground in about 15 minutes. The jet banked to the left and Joaquin caught a glimpse of the Potomac River. When the plane leveled, he could see the monuments at the National Mall and further east, he could identify the Capitol Building. It was the first time in Washington DC. If only he could put in words the excitement he felt as he visited the monuments, the memorials, walking along Pennsylvania Avenue and walking so closely to the White House.

Joaquin is a dedicated and charismatic teacher. He has been teaching social studies for eighteen years. He earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science with a

minor in History and he is certified to teach social studies from 8th to 12th grade. He described himself as Hispanic. His first language was Spanish, but he started to develop English before he attended school. "My older brothers used to talk to me in English all the time, even before I started preschool." He attended schools in the south Texas area.

Joaquin was not a good student academically and did not like school, nor did he take it seriously until after he failed a school year. "After I failed my 7th grade year, I became an A/B student throughout high school." He said that he failed that year because most of the time he could not see the chalkboard and he tended to sit in the back of the class. He added, "I don't recall teachers intervening or really pushing students to succeed when I was in school." Joaquin's father was always working, so he does not recall him mentoring him on education, "My mother was the one, to some extent, to push me to succeed." Joaquin was encouraged and supported by his mom and by his older brothers to pursue a bachelor's degree. "They were always there for me, even after college."

Experiencing History in a Personal Way

He will attempt, once again, to share with his students what he saw, smelled, and felt in this historical city, "If they can't go, I can bring Washington DC to them." For three consecutive years, he has visited different historical places in the United States. This last trip was to Washington DC. He returned to his hometown and classroom with a renewed sense of respect and admiration for the people who built this country from the ground up, "I was very inspired, I prepared Power Points with pictures. I took videos and I brought flyers from the museums and all kind of artifacts for them."

For the last three years, in partnership with the Texas Region One Educational Service Center (Region One ESC), Joaquin and other teachers in his school have been

participating in the social studies comprehensive and integrated program aimed at improving instructional rigor for students through different workshops, activities, and field trips. One of the purposes of the Social Studies Region One initiative is to prepare social studies teachers in subjects such as Texas History, U.S. History, World History, Geography, Government, and Economics. Joaquin likes to participate in all kind of activities and professional development provided by Region One. "We work in partnership with them and they provide resources, field trips and materials for us…it is worth it, I have experienced U.S. History in a formidable way." Like all his past trips, this one would provide new inspiration for Joaquin and plenty of new lessons to share. Joaquin enjoys experiencing history in a personal way. He collects materials on his trips and looks close at artifacts, touches them when permitted, and shares these experiences with his students.

Caring About Students' Needs

Joaquin learned about team work while working in a big grocery store during high school and college. He mentioned that since the beginning of his teaching career, those learned skills were transferred to his classroom. He observed, "the business world is about taking care of the customers and education is about taking care of the students." As soon as Joaquin started taking college courses, he knew he wanted to be a social studies teacher. "I realized about the importance of teaching social studies in our schools…it deals with the study of the evolution of human life…students need to know and understand the importance of being active participants in public life."

When he started working as a teacher, he said that he was ready to apply what he learned in college about social studies and lesson planning, but he faced a different

scenario. "We were pretty much asked to go straight from the book." He mentioned that he immediately perceived during the first year of teaching that students were not engaged enough by reading "just what the book said." He said that it was "very frustrating." Another frustrating concern for Joaquin was that it seemed like extracurricular activities for students are scheduled during social studies periods and he loses students too frequently. "You know, they just don't get it…why band, pictures and extra math tutoring are more important than U.S. History? ...students need to learn about history, government, citizenship…they need a well-rounded curriculum."

Connecting Lessons to Everyday Life

Joaquin integrates the TEKS and ELPS in his lesson plans. He said, "I also visit the College and Career Readiness Standards frequently…a lot of the CCRS overlap with the social studies standards and skills from the TEKS." He also consults the TEKS clarification documents from CSCOPE. He searches the Internet for resources and incorporates ideas and materials from his trips. Joaquin's teaching style revolves around constantly asking questions and bridging together current events and information with content. When he is teaching, he breaks down the material in a simple manner. He draws pictures, webs, and shows a lot of visuals to introduce the theme, "We usually use the iPads and the students can use their iPhones when we visit websites."

When it was observed that he uses some Spanish, he mentioned, "I just want to be sure that all [*all* emphasized] my students have a meaningful understanding about the topic." Joaquin believes that if a student cannot participate in classroom discussions, the student is not learning. "It helps the ELLs to develop confidence and to feel comfortable in the classroom, eventually they will participate in discussions and later they will do it in

English… it works."

Joaquin soon learned, during his first years of teaching, from his mentor teacher and other colleagues that connecting the lessons to everyday life is very important in helping students succeed academically. He said, "I realized that it makes sense…I think that by exposing the students to the everyday news and current events, we are providing opportunities to make connections." During one of the common planning conferences, Joaquin was addressing with his peers different current events and news related to social studies topics they can use in class. They were brainstorming on current events and the different websites that provide links to watch those news, "This strategy helps all students, but it helps recent immigrants more, and ELLs…I want to challenge them, not to label them...I want to ensure their success rather than reinforcing negative feelings." He mentioned that these students watch television and search the Internet in their own language. They are exposed to the information and as a consequence they can form an opinion about the current event. Therefore, he mentioned that "by the time I explained or addressed the topic in class, the ELLs and recent immigrants already had a certain understanding and they were ready to build on that."

Adam

It was going to be nearly 100 degrees that day. Adam was going to be in the sun all day and was just thinking about how miserable it was going to be working outside. He instinctively glanced over at the white pickup truck parked in the driveway. Yes, the bright yellow water cooler with the blue cover was sitting on the tailgate, as usual. The crew he was working on had just begun the landscaping job for this new house in a rather upscale neighborhood, the kind of neighborhood he would probably never live in, and the

blueprints for the garden were quite extravagant. They would be there for weeks and the summer promised to be a hot one; it always was.

Today, he was appreciating his mother and father more than ever. Today, he loved his father. Today, he was very excited to be enrolled at the University. "If you don't go to college, you are on your own," his father had declared rather convincingly, after Adam had foolishly tried to provide a reason not to go to college after high school. Adam believed him. This summer, he will work hard labor in the hot sun and maybe the summers in between semesters, but he will finish college, get his degree, and never have to work like this again. He looked at the big house…perhaps, maybe someday… he would have one like it.

At the time of the study, Adam was working his first year as a teacher. However, he already had some teaching experience since he had worked for six years as a substitute teacher. He described himself as "half Hispanic and half White." The language used at home was, and still is, English. However, he indicated that he was exposed to the Spanish language because of his paternal grandparents and later with his friends in school. However, he does not consider himself bilingual. He earned a bachelor's degree in arts and is certified to teach Physical Education K-12 and Generalist K-12. In addition, he has a composite to teach Social Studies from 4th to 8th grade.

Learning is Not Optional in My Classroom

He learned about "high standards and cumulative effort," while working his first job during high school and college. Adam worked with a landscaping crew designing and creating all kinds of outdoor artistry. "I learned that working in a team is very strenuous, yet fulfilling…I learned to do the things just right and perfect on the first try, but I also

learned that you can fix it if you fail." He mentioned that, "we needed to create landscape designs, within a certain time, and finish it… there was no option."

Watching Adam teach, it was clear that learning was not optional in his classroom; "they learn no matter what…they need to reach the level where they can create something." He mentioned that he provided tutoring during lunch and after school, but he said that the best way to help the students was through formative assessments in a systematic way during instruction. "It is not fair for the students not to be ready for a more summative test." Consequently, Adam provided daily opportunities to correct and clarify concepts during instruction. He added, "I write on my lesson plans how I'm going to check students' understanding…I want them to know that learning is not optional." Asking him how he checks for students' understanding, he responded,, "for example, look at theses posters… just by looking at the colors, I know who is learning and who needs more support."

Looking at his lesson plans, the note *gallery walk* was written into the assessment section. The posters were full of student-made information in different colors, "It is like a structured opportunity to improve learning." That day, he had posters around the classroom with different titles: language, food, architecture, religion, and education. The students were working in teams and the topic was South Asian culture. The learning objectives were posted on the board and there were visuals and pictures all over the classroom. Each poster showed how Adam implemented formative assessment. The teams wrote information on the posters in different ways, such as sentences, pictures, and webs. Adam noted, "they take ownership of their learning and in some way they want to show others that they are learning...they like to compete." The particularity of these

posters was that the information was posted by the students in different colors. Each color corresponded to a specific team, and by looking at the posters Adam was able to monitor students' learning without interrupting. "I don't want them to feel like they are being put on the spot or questioned." Adam also noted that the environment in the classroom was very relaxed and productive. "I had no incidents, no students misbehave, no distractions…I think nobody asked permission to go to the restroom, and they were very engaged in learning about Asia."

Social Acceptance

Regarding his own education, Adam shared that he attended schools in south Texas and was a very shy student. "One of the many challenges that I experienced in middle school was the divergence that I felt existed between my peers…and I tried to find social acceptance." Fortunately, he found a lot of support from certain teachers. He described his best teacher as "really exceptional just as a person" with great teaching abilities and very wise. Adam reminisced, "he always had the right words to give." He mentioned that it was this teacher who inspired him when he decided to pursue a career in education. Adam shared that in general, he had good teachers. He said he only remembers one teacher with whom he experienced some negative situations. "I had a teacher who was arrogant, rude, and very biased…very intolerable toward some students…ethnicity may have been an issue."

Adam added that the impact that a teacher has on a middle school student's development and well-being is profound. "Most of the time the role of the teacher extends beyond the traditional classroom." He said that he would like to have had more professional development on how to teach teens. "They [students] spend most of the day

with us, maybe we are the only adults around them, and we need to be sure that they have a safe environment…free of bullying." During common planning time that Adam participated in, it was observed that the teachers were discussing how to involve the students in more meaningful learning and how to engage them in team activities. During their planning time, the teachers shared different approaches. When Adam shared his *gallery walk* activity, although some of the teachers were very familiar with the activity, they now saw it in a different way. Adam shared that although he used the activity with the purpose of assessing students' learning, the activity can be very helpful to approach other issues. "I noticed that students embrace others' ideas, they were showing their peers acceptance." He shared that he noticed that the activity encouraged the students to build relationships because they were learning together and they wanted to demonstrate it as a team.

Integrate Standards and Objectives

Adam learned for the first time about writing lesson plans in college. "The lesson plans had to be up to specifications…each and every detail had to be meticulously explained." He also mentioned that he learned about integrating objectives and the state mandated standards in the lesson plans. "TEKS were scrutinized and dissected and had to coincide with objectives and procedures to a certainty." Adams' lesson plans were guided by TEKS and the lesson plans included objectives, materials, procedures, assessments, and modifications. He mentioned that now that he is a "real" teacher; meaning that he is experiencing the way he plans for instruction differently. He noted, "I am not sure if being that specific in my lessons is worth it, now I have real students that require adjustments constantly." However, he expressed that the way he learned how to put

together a lesson plan in college helped him to internalize the process and the importance and value of each step. He mentioned that although he plans ahead of time because he needs to turn in a written lesson plan to the principal, he is experiencing planning as a daily mental process more often. "I found it very helpful to have a structured plan, but I need to reconceptualize very often the content in order to decide what is important and what has value for the students." For example, during one of the common planning times, the teachers were discussing what they needed to cover in relation to content and also shared some of the activities they could use.

Similar to other participants, Adam shared his concern about the time constraints that did not allow them much time to collaborate with his colleagues. He showed them his lesson and one of the more-experienced colleagues retorted, "I don't write my lessons like yours anymore… I don't have the time…I can't think about a question or an activity for every ten minutes, you will change it anyway." Adam still showed some uncertainty about the comment. Later, during an individual interview, Adam mentioned that he still needs to plan in detail, saying, "I think is a personality thing…I am always planning everything I do." Adam did agree that he finds the lesson planning process the way he carries it out to be very time consuming. "There is no time to plan in the way we were taught in college...I am wondering if this frustration is part of the learning [how to teach] process."

Case-by-Case Thematic Categories

The case-by-case analysis revealed that twenty thematic categories were present across the six participants. Some of the thematic categories were consistent among the participants and some others were unique for some of them. This chapter presented the

case-by-case analysis of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influenced the participant middle school teachers' decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. According to Stake (2006), the cases provide the opportunity to examine the phenomenon by bringing the findings from the individual case experiences to the research question.

In presenting the analysis of each case, thematic categories were emphasized using participants' expressions as subheadings while crafting the profiles. The case-by-case analysis helped the researcher understand each case separately first, then, to look for ways in which each case was both unique and similar to others as a preamble of the cross-case analysis. Table 4.1 shows the suggested thematic categories that emerged during the case-by-case analysis.

Table 4.1

Case-by-Case Thematic Categories

Participants	Thematic Categories
Richard	
	Affective Team Work
	Discrimination Inside and Outside the School
	Failure is Never an Option
	I Want All My Students to be Successful
Luis	
	Lack of Cultural Awareness
	Address All Students' Needs at the Same Time
	The Value of Work in Teams
Paul	
	Motivated by Dreams
	Building Bilingual Teams
	Reflecting: Improving Teaching Abilities
Antonio	
	Peer Pressure to Belong Somewhere
	Get to Know Them First
	Take Ownership in Learning Citizenship
	Make Adjustments to Fit Students' Needs
Joaquin	
	Experiencing History in a Personal Way
	Caring About Students' Needs
	Connecting Lessons to Everyday Life
Adam	
	Learning is Not Optional in My Classroom
	Social Acceptance
	Integrate Standards and Objectives

CHAPTER V

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this multiple-case study, the individual cases were first understood in depth

early in the analysis process and before analyzing the cross-case findings (Stake, 2006).

The process of becoming familiar with individual case data allowed unique patterns

(called *thematic categories* in this study) of each case to emerge before the researcher

searched for cross-case patterns. The multiple-case study research design provided the

opportunity to examine the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influence middle

school teachers when planning for social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school.

In this chapter, the analysis of the cases as a collective group enabled the researcher to

explore, understand, and draw themes across the cases. Having previously presented the

uniqueness of each case in the case-by-case analysis in Chapter 4, the researcher

proceeded with the cross-case analysis in order to maintain the "most important

experiential knowledge" (Stake, 2006, p. 44).

In searching for cross-case patterns, the researcher analyzed the data in divergent

ways (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Eisenhardt (1989) suggested a number

of "tactics" (p. 540) driven by the challenges that are implied in processing information.

The researcher regrouped the thematic categories and then looked, "for within-group

similarities coupled with intergroup differences" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 540). For this level

of analysis, the researcher developed Worksheet 3 (Stake, 2006) utilizing the information

from the cell design Master Matrix to compare and contrast the thematic categories

across the cases creating individual files for each emerged theme including participants'

direct quotes. Table 5.1 below demonstrates how the researcher grouped the individual

case thematic categories by group similarities, coupled with intergroup differences for

this cross-case analysis.

Table 5.1

Thematic Categories Within the Cross-Case Analysis

Thematic Categories	Themes
Affective Team Work The Value of Work in Teams Building Bilingual Teams	*Affective Team Work*
Discrimination Inside and Outside the School Lack Of Cultural Awareness Building Bilingual Teams Address all Students' Needs at the Same Time Failure is Never an Option	*Cultural Awareness*
I Want All My Students to Be Successful Take Ownership in Learning Citizenship Make Adjustments to Fit Students' Needs Learning is Not Optional in My Classroom	*Ownership in Learning*
Motivated by Dreams Get to Know Them First Caring About Students' Needs Peer Pressure to Belong Somewhere Social Acceptance	*Caring About Students' Needs*
Take Ownership in Learning Citizenship Experiencing History in a Personal Way Connecting Lessons to Everyday Life Integrate Standards and Objectives	*Connecting Lessons to Everyday Life*
Reflecting: Improving Teaching Abilities Make Adjustments to Fit Students' Needs	*Reflective Practices*

The cross-case analysis revealed that six themes were consistent across the

teachers that participated in this study. The themes were: (1) *affective team work; (2)*

cultural awareness; (3) ownership in learning; (4) caring about students' needs; (5)

connecting lessons to everyday life; and (6) reflective practices. The cross-case analysis

also revealed two atypical results from two of the teacher participants. In this study, an

atypical result is defined as a repetitive "unusual or extraordinary" (Stake, 2006, p. 55)

statement or action from a participant related to a theme that emerged across the

participants. The atypical results are described at the end of this chapter.

Table 5.2 provides a sampling of participant data in the form of direct quotes that

support each of the themes across the cases that highlights commonalities and differences

as a collective group. The cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to observe, explore,

study, analyze, and interpret participants' experiences; make comparisons; and study the

interactions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs of individuals aimed at locating common

themes within and across participants. While the focus was on identifying themes across

participants, two atypical results from different participants that had implications for this

study also emerged. A synthesis for each emerged theme and the two atypical results are

presented following Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Themes Across the Cases

Themes	Direct Quotes
Affective Team Work	"My baseball career aided me in seeing the whole picture. It helped me to strengthen my confidence and self-esteem. There was no hatred or racism in the baseball we played. I learned team building and how it felt to be appreciated when you give it your all."
	"The classes are about sharing ideas, with attempts at moving at the same pace. Every day the teacher tries to create a comfortable environment for learning in his classroom."
	"I worked in retail stores while attending college. It enabled me to value the significance of work. I learned to appreciate the value of work in teams, which I also pass on to my students."
	"I like to work in collaboration and I understand its value but, most of the time I work in isolation since not all the teachers know and

understand how to work with the different types of students like the English Language Learners. I need to make my own decisions when I plan for those students in particular."

"I involved my students in learning experiences every day…I understand that not all students are necessarily motivated, so I make myself available on Thursdays and Fridays for 'one-on-one' consultations. More than anything, I want for students to trust. I motivate my students to learn by providing meaningful learning experiences."

"I learned about team building before my teaching career working as a manager in a restaurant. People are unique individuals, I learned about the importance of knowing them first, finding their strengths, and then building trust. I supervised people from different ethnic backgrounds, it was not just about different languages…they had different cultures, different ways to solve problems…I looked for their talents and then I built a strong team."

"Students need to interact more when they are in middle school. They really enjoy having conversations among themselves and with adults… they need more emotional support and to feel that they belong to a group."

"I use English speaking students, who speak Spanish as well, to help me connect with the English Language Learners, which often makes up the majority of his class. I want to give everyone the opportunity to learn the material and expose all my students to the opportunity to develop team work skills."

"During our common planning time, we discuss the TEKS we need to cover. We visit CSCOPE to be sure we are covering the learning objectives. We also create or modify the learning objectives based on the assessments."

"We work in partnership with Region One. They provide resources, field trips, and materials for us…it is worth it, I have experienced U.S. History in a formidable way."

"When they work in teams, I am able to monitor better the students' learning without interrupting them. I don't want them to feel like they are being put on the spot or questioned. The environment in the classroom is more relaxed and productive. I have no incidents, no

	students misbehave, no distractions."
	"With the gallery walk activity, I can assess students' learning, but it also approaches other issues. I noticed that students embrace others' ideas, they were showing their peers acceptance and encourage the students to build relationships because they learn together and they wanted to demonstrate it as a team."
Cultural Awareness	"We need to recognize the baggage being carried by students and help them to deal with those challenges."
	"When I was a student, the most demanding challenge was learning to accept myself in a world that ostracized me."
	"My baseball career aided me in seeing the whole picture. It helped me to strengthen my confidence and self-esteem. There was no hatred or racism in the baseball we played. I learned team building and how it felt to be appreciated when you give it your all."
	"When I was young, the majority of my friends were Spanish speaking… Hispanic kids… we faced the same difficulties, the worst was discrimination."
	"Migrant students wanted better lives...those kids really had dreams and incredible strength…they knew that education was the path to success."
	"I learned to value and embrace my language and heritage at home."
	"As a teacher, working with non-English speaking students allowed me to connect with my childhood experiences and it helped me to encourage my students to embrace and honor their own culture and language."
	"I think that developing literacy in your native language can be very helpful in learning a second language in an academic level."
	"I think that a bi-literate student has a tremendous advantage over a monolingual person in today's economy."
	"What I recall more vividly about childhood is not the struggle about not knowing the language…it was the perception that most of my teachers didn't know and understand that I was eager and capable to learn…I think it was more about a lack of cultural awareness."
	"I always complemented the lessons using a variety of resources,

sometimes I needed to go to the public or university libraries to look for material in Spanish or with more visuals, but now with the Internet, the search is much easier."

"Although almost all of my students are Hispanics, they have different cultural and educational backgrounds. Some students come to U.S. classrooms with a strong academic background in their own language, while others have no schooling at all. It is very challenging to address all of the students' needs at the same time."

"I learned about team building before my teaching career working as a manager in a restaurant. People are unique individuals, I learned about the importance of knowing them first, finding their strengths, and then building trust. I supervised people from different ethnic backgrounds, it was not just about different languages…they had different cultures, different ways to solve problems…I looked for their talents and then I built a strong team."

"The need of acceptance and belonging is more accentuated in recent immigrants and in English language learners. I think we need to build trust and to identify the exact needs of each student when you prepare lessons for them."

"I use English speaking students, who speak Spanish as well, to help me connect with the English Language Learners, which often makes up the majority of his class. I want to give everyone the opportunity to learn the material and expose all my students to the opportunity to develop team work skills."

"To be multilingual in the United Sates today is an advantage…it is a shame when parents can speak Spanish and don't teach their children."

"Nowadays and more than ever, there is a huge mismatch between the structure of our schools and the cultural backgrounds of our students. My students don't need more of the same, or louder, or just work harder or different materials or different instructional approaches than the normal [*normal* emphasized] kids...my students are very smart, they don't need more labels."

"Being aware of the students' needs is not enough. We need a system of support… we need to learn best practices to help all

children succeed."

"Sometimes I use Spanish, I just want to be sure that all [*all* emphasized] my students have a meaningful understanding about the topic. If they don't participate it's because they are not learning. It helps the ELLs to develop confidence and to feel comfortable in the classroom, eventually they will participate in discussions and later they will do it in English… it works."

"Addressing different current events and news related to social studies topics helps all students, but it helps ELLs and recent immigrants more. I want to challenge them, not to label them...I want to ensure their success rather than reinforcing negative feelings."

Ownership in Learning	"My teacher's faith in me was so strong that failure was never an option."

"The objective is given to the student in some form at the beginning of the unit. Richard mentioned that students are more engaged when they know and understand the rationale behind the new topic, students are also offered a reason as to why this lesson is important."

"As a college student, I liked to spend the weekends at the university library and invest almost all my time to studying…I basically devoted most of my time to education."

"My mother is the one that I give full credit to for my success… she didn't want to see me suffer the way she suffered in life without education. My mother never wanted me to work in the cotton fields."

"An inquiry environment is predominant. I use the Socratic method to motivate my students…regularly, after I introduce a new topic, I asked the students to write down, in pairs or in teams, three questions related to the topic that start with how or why."

"I post questions along a large wall for anyone to observe. It is called "the parking lot." Students visit the parking lot freely if they want to answer or even to write more questions. "By the end of the week you can see complex webs and graphic organizers that students created…sometimes they added figures or pictures." Students select one of the webs and create an essay, a song, or simply connect the selected web with something that is happening now in a real

context."

"I use English speaking students, who speak Spanish as well, to help me connect with the English Language Learners, which often makes up the majority of his class. I want to give everyone the opportunity to learn the material and expose all my students to the opportunity to develop team work skills."

"I allow the students, at least once per week, to select a different option over different formats like posters, poems, or flyers to communicate their knowledge and understanding."

"By placing the topic citizenship in a different context, such as immigration, the students were exposed to a more challenging way of thinking…they make connections…it helps them to take ownership of their own learning."

"We work in partnership with Region One and they provide resources, field trips and materials for us…it is worth it, I have experienced U.S. History in a formidable way."

"They will learn no matter what…they need to reach the level where they can create something. The teams wrote information on the posters in different ways, such as sentences, pictures, and webs. They take ownership of their learning and in some way, they want to show others that they are learning...they like to compete."

"With the gallery walk activity, I can assess students' learning, but also it approaches other issues. I noticed that students embrace others' ideas, they were showing their peers acceptance and encourage the students to build relationships because they learn together and they wanted to demonstrate it as a team."

Caring About Students' Needs	"We need to recognize the baggage being carried by students and help them to deal with those challenges."
	"My teacher's faith in me was so strong that failure was never an option."
	"Migrant students wanted better lives...those kids really had dreams and incredible strength…they knew that education was the path to success."
	"Sometimes I feel that the ones in charge of implementing all these

changes missed the important goal…what's the best for the students."

"If you don't like it, do something about it…an important lesson to teach to our students nowadays is tolerance, compromise, and building bridges, not fences…failure is never an option."

"I think that developing literacy in your native language can be very helpful in learning a second language in an academic level."

"I think that a bi-literate student has a tremendous advantage over a monolingual person in today's economy."

"I always complemented the lessons using a variety of resources, sometimes I needed to go to the public or university libraries to look for material in Spanish or with more visuals, but now with the Internet, the search is much easier."

"Although almost all my students are Hispanics, they have different cultural and educational backgrounds. Some students come to U.S. classrooms with a strong academic background in their own language, while others have no schooling at all. It is very challenging to address all of the students' needs at the same time."

"I usually find it necessary to modify my plan to a certain extent. I prepare my own materials to enhance the instruction."

"I involved my students in learning experiences every day…I understand that not all students are necessarily motivated, so I make myself available on Thursdays and Fridays for 'one-on-one' consultations. More than anything, I want for students to trust. I motivate my students to learn by providing meaningful learning experiences."

"I learned about team building before my teaching career working as a manager in a restaurant. People are unique individuals, I learned about the importance of knowing them first, finding their strengths, and then building trust. I supervised people from different ethnic backgrounds, it was not just about different languages…they had different cultures, different ways to solve problems…I looked for their talents and then I built a strong team."

"Students need to interact more when they are in middle school. They really enjoy having conversations among themselves and with

adults. They need more emotional support and to feel that they belong to a group."

"The need of acceptance and belonging is more accentuated in recent immigrants and in English language learners. I think we need to build trust and to identify the exact needs of each student when you prepare lessons for them."

"I use English speaking students, who speak Spanish as well, to help me connect with the English Language Learners, which often makes up the majority of his class. I want to give everyone the opportunity to learn the material and expose all my students to the opportunity to develop team work skills."

"During our common planning time, we discuss the TEKS we need to cover, and we visit CSCOPE to be sure we are covering the learning objectives. We also create or modify the learning objectives based on the assessments."

"When I was in 7th grade, I had a math teacher who was very kind and took the time to listen to what I had to say and helped me with questions. I also remembered an 8th grade English teacher who used a lot of hands-on activities and pictures, making learning fun. They showed me a different side of the school…they helped me become aware of the positive peer pressure…they were a good influence that helped me improve my social life and feel good about my decisions."

"Tutoring helped me improve on my academic and social skills and I could work and study at the same location…tutoring paid off because my GPA improved…those teachers took the time to get to know me and then to figure out how to help me. The time invested in tutoring was worth it; it helped me with the communication, social, and academic skills that I would later utilize when I became a teacher."

"I made it my personal goal to get to know them by first name and offered my tutoring assistance, so they could feel comfortable with me and with their classmates. It is simply the best way to keep them engaged in academics during the whole year…I write the names of the students who need or ask for tutoring in my lesson plans."

"I allow the students, at least once per week, to select a different

option over different formats like posters, poems, or flyers to communicate their knowledge and understanding."

"Nowadays and more than ever, there is a huge mismatch between the structure of our schools and the cultural backgrounds of our students. My students don't need more of the same, or louder, or just work harder or different materials or different instructional approaches than the normal [*normal* he emphasized] kids...my students are very smart, they don't need more labels."

"Being aware of the students' needs is not enough. We need a system of support…we need to learn best practices to help all children succeed."

"I realized about the importance of teaching social studies in our schools…it deals with the study of the evolution of human life…students need to know and understand the importance of being active participants in public life."

"You know, they just don't get it…why band, pictures and extra math tutoring are more important than U.S. History?...students need to learn about history, government, citizenship…they need a well-rounded curriculum."

"I write on my lesson plans how I'm going to check students' understanding…I want them to know that learning is not optional."

"The impact that a teacher has on a middle school student's development and well-being is profound. Most of the time, the role of the teacher extends beyond the traditional classroom. I would like to have had more professional development on how to teach teens. They spend most of the day with us, maybe we are the only adults around them, and we need to be sure that they have a safe environment."

"I experience planning as a daily mental process more often. I found it very helpful to have a structured plan, but I need to reconceptualize very often the content in order to decide what is important and what has value for the students."

Connecting Lessons to Everyday Life	"The objective is given to the student in some form at the beginning of the unit. Students are more engaged when they know and understand the rationale behind a new topic…students are also offered a reason as to why this lesson is important."

"The teacher encourages discussion of current events, movies of social significance, and news stories."

"An inquiry environment is predominant. I use the Socratic method to motivate my students…regularly, after I introduce a new topic I asked the students to write down, in pairs or in teams, 3 questions related to the topic that start with how or why."

"I post questions along a large wall for anyone to observe. It is called "the parking lot." Students visit the parking lot freely if they want to answer or even to write more questions. "By the end of the week you can see complex webs and graphic organizers that students created…sometimes they added figures or pictures." Students select one of the webs and create an essay, a song, or simply connect the selected web with something that is happening now in a real context."

"I allow the students, at least once per week, to select a different option over different formats like posters, poems, or flyers to communicate their knowledge and understanding."

"By placing the topic citizenship in a different context, such as immigration, the students were exposed to a more challenging way of thinking…they make connections…it helps them to take ownership of their own learning."

"If they can't go, I can bring Washington, DC to them. After my trip I was very inspired, I prepared Power Points with pictures. I took videos and I brought flyers from the museums and all kind of artifacts for them."

"I constantly ask questions and bridge together current events and information with content. When I teach I break down the material in a simple manner. I draw pictures, webs, and show a lot of visuals to introduce the theme. We usually use the iPads and the students can use their iPhones when we visit websites."

"By exposing the students to the everyday news and current events, we are providing opportunities to make connections."

Reflective Practices	"We need to recognize the baggage being carried by students and help them to deal with those challenges."

"Well, it's called selective memory. Yes, he was male, and yes, he was Anglo. Probably racist…it was really hurtful…I am a better person now because of those experiences."

"Sometimes I feel that the ones in charge of implementing all these changes missed the important goal…what's best for the students."

"If you don't like it, do something about it…an important lesson to teach to our students nowadays is tolerance, compromise, and building bridges, not fences…failure is never an option."

"Teachers should be rated not on how good they teach, but rather how well students learn."

"I like to work in collaboration and I understand its value but, most of the time I work in isolation since not all the teachers know and understand how to work with the different types of students like the English Language Learners. I need to make my own decisions when I plan for those students in particular."

"We are experiencing more challenges within the school system, making the learning environment more difficult and creating new obstacles for educators. There is no room for professional development. We don't have time to continue to study and to keep ourselves updated…there is low morale…proper self-evaluation and reflection suffers as well."

"During our common planning time I share and discuss the webs' questions and students' interests with my colleagues and we use those interests as objectives for future lessons. Sometimes we can get a glimpse of our students' dreams in what they write in those graphic organizers."

"I find that making notes while I am actually teaching a lesson as reminders that I would like to do it a little different next time or put emphasis on something else."

"Sometimes we had a hard time agreeing when we discussed how to approach certain topics or TEKS…I feel we need to have some rules to conduct the meetings…time is not enough and we need to find ways to maximize our time effectively during common planning time."

"There was a lot of harassment and bullying in my class when I was

a middle school student and I was scared sometimes…I wanted to fit in with one of the groups, but I didn't like them…sometimes I just wanted to disappear. The teacher had no control over the behavior and I don't even remember learning in that class. I vowed, when I was studying to be a teacher, to never be like that and it was a life lesson truly learned. My mother encouraged me when I was in doubt...I think she was great peer pressure for me."

"When I was in 7th grade, I had a math teacher who was very kind and took the time to listen to what I had to say and helped me with questions. I also remembered an 8th grade English teacher who used a lot of hands-on activities and pictures, making learning fun. They showed me a different side of the school…they helped me become aware of the positive peer pressure…they were a good influence that helped me improve my social life and feel good about my decisions."

"Tutoring helped me improve on my academic and social skills and I could work and study at the same location…tutoring paid off because my GPA improved…those teachers took the time to get to know me and then to figure out how to help me. The time invested in tutoring was worth it; it helped me with the communication, social, and academic skills that I would later utilize when I became a teacher."

"Being aware of the students' needs is not enough. We need a system of support. We need to learn best practices to help all children succeed."

"We meet regularly and discuss successful lessons. We share each other's experiences, and discuss students' learning styles. We constantly analyze our own lessons and the different approaches we use to make adjustments. In my lessons, I write notes on the margins in case I need to do something different next time. The adjustments to fit students' needs should be for us, for our educational system and in our style of teaching…not adjustments from the kids."

"During common planning time, we address different current events and news related to social studies topics to use in class. We brainstorm on current events and the different websites that provide links to watch those news."

"The lesson plans had to be up to specifications each and every detail had to be meticulously explained. The lesson plans are guided by the TEKS and include objectives, materials, procedures, assessments and modifications."

"The way I learned how to put together a lesson plan in college helped me to internalize the process and the importance and value of each step."

"I experience planning as a daily mental process more often. I found it very helpful to have a structured plan, but I need to reconceptualize very often the content in order to decide what is important and what has value for the students. I think is a personality thing…I am always planning everything I do."

"I don't write my lessons in detail. I don't have the time. I can't think about a question or an activity for every ten minutes, I will change it anyway."

"There is no time to plan in the way we were taught in college...I am wondering if this frustration is part of the learning [how to teach] process."

Theme 1: Affective Team Work

The results of the cross-case analysis indicated that teachers use their previous personal team work experiences (outside of the teaching field) to help them develop affective team work while teaching. The teachers spoke of how this previous experience with team work strengthened their confidence, self-esteem, work ethic, and value as a member of the team. Their words told of how those experiences enabled them to seek out people's individuality, strengths, weaknesses, and talents. For the teacher participants, the past experiences taught them about how to collaborate effectively in a group, as one

participant noted "in playing professional baseball, I learned about team building and how it felt to be appreciated when you give it your all."

The cross-case analysis also revealed that the participants' previous experience with team members helped them build cooperation with other teachers. They spoke of valuing collaboration when planning lessons, as well as speaking to other teachers regarding how TEKS will be covered in the lessons, following learning objectives specified by CSCOPE, as well as learning objectives based on assessment results. The participants noted how they partnered with colleagues in the Texas Region One Education Service Center to provide them additional resources, materials, and field trips to enhance their curricular planning. While the majority of the teacher participants spoke of team work with colleagues in planning lessons, one teacher expressed how planning for lessons for ESL students takes him away from team work, since, "not all the teachers know how to work with the different types of students like the English language learners."

The participants described the type of classroom environment that is conducive to team work and the skills students develop when working as a team members. They spoke of having a comfortable environment, where students feel they belong to the group and where teachers can "give everyone ownership in the material" and opportunities to develop collaboration skills. For the teacher participants, team work helps students embrace others' ideas, build relationships, and desire to demonstrate the results of their work as a team.

Theme 2: Cultural Awareness

While each participant approached cultural awareness differently, the cross-case analysis demonstrated that all of them have a sense of cultural awareness. These teacher participants demonstrated cultural awareness as they thought back to their own experiences. They all recalled growing up being culturally and linguistically different from some of their teachers and peers. Three of the teachers voiced how challenging it was to fit in a world that often rejected them, discriminated against them, or did not perceive them as being capable of learning. Nonetheless, all the participants also experienced occasions in their lives when there was no racism or hatred, when they witnessed migrant students aspiring for better living conditions through education, and when they learned to value their native language and home heritage. By reflecting on their background, the participants' connections to their students' experiences prompted them to encourage their "students to embrace and honor their own culture and language" to help them "deal with those challenges."

Four out of six teacher participants talked about their awareness of the assets children bring with them to school by speaking a different language, educational experiences, and cultural background. They spoke of how being biliterate is an advantage in school and in today's economy adding that since biliteracy is helpful in learning many other skills, such as a second language, these children will have an advantage over monolingual individuals. The participant teachers' cultural awareness translates to their decision-making process in the classroom when they plan instruction. As one teacher participant mentioned, "I include cultural relevant readings to help them to develop literacy." The participants enthusiastically shared how they looked for and obtained

Spanish resources, built student trust, and the strategies they employed to help students succeed. One teacher expressed, "Sometimes I use Spanish…It helps the ELLs to develop confidence and to feel comfortable in the classroom." The teacher participants unanimously expressed and demonstrated the use of different actions and strategies to help students with different language and cultural background. They demonstrated understanding ELLs' challenges and needs when they made decisions for instructional planning.

Theme 3: Ownership in Learning

The results of the cross-case analysis revealed that all of the teacher participants expressed that they began to develop ownership of their own learning in their youth, before their teaching career. In some form or another, they each attributed this to the encouragement they received through their parents' words and actions, as well as their college learning experiences. One teacher participant expressed, "My mother is the one that I give full credit to for my success." He mentioned that his mother provided him with opportunities to embrace learning and to develop independent learning skills, "she wanted to be sure that I have all the needed resources available to get good grades at school." Another teacher indicated that the extra tutoring that was provided by professors when he was in college, helped him develop ownership in learning. He recalled, "they taught me study skills, how to look for information…at the end of my projects, I was proud of what I accomplished."

In developing independent learning skills, study skills, and how to look for information, the teacher participants developed and experienced ownership in learning. The participants mentioned that the past experiences helped them to continue in

developing knowledge, skills and dispositions throughout their teaching career. For example, the teacher participants maintained a constant connection with Texas Region One Educational Service Center (Region One) by participating in professional development related to U.S. history. The participants expressed how these learning opportunities have helped them to "experience U. S. history in a formidable way" by enhancing their knowledge about U.S. history. While teacher participants expressed how they developed and experienced ownership of their own learning, they also mentioned the need to pass on these skills to their students. For example, in order to help their students develop ownership in learning, the teacher participants included strategies based on the Region One sessions in their lesson plans. The strategies were designed to help influence the students develop a sense of learning in a personal way, thereby helping them develop life-long learning skills.

Interestingly, it was found across all of the teacher participants, that the majority of them begin the lessons with an activity that helps students understand the relevance and importance of the knowledge and skills addressed in the lesson. It was common to observe the teachers explaining to their students how and why the topic was important or how it was connected with previous lessons. One of the teacher participants mentioned that learning is more meaningful for students when they "know and understand the rationale behind the new topic." Similarly, the participant teachers connected the lesson to current events that, in the voice of one of the teacher participants, was "happening now in a real context." They also expressed that by addressing the lesson topic "in different contexts," the students' critical thinking was challenged, and it helped them see connections, which, in turn, helped to develop their ownership of learning. For example,

one teacher participant shared his use of the Socratic method of teaching. While planning

for instruction, he developed relevant questions to ask students continuously throughout

the lesson. Another teacher participant described how he has effectively used the "the

parking lot" poster technique to help encourage students to write ongoing questions about

the lesson topic, thus prompting them to ask questions freely. The teacher participants

also spoke of providing students options for presenting their learning to the teacher as

well as peers (e.g., posters, poems, flyers, etc.). They expressed how giving students a

rationale and options during lessons allows them to "show others that they are learning"

and "embrace others' ideas by developing peer acceptance," as well as build relationships

because "they are learning together."

Theme 4: Caring About Students' Needs

The fourth theme that emerged from this study, *Caring About Students' Needs*,

revealed that teacher participants consistently spoke about the impact that positive past

experiences with their own middle school teachers has had on their decision making with

their students. They addressed how, because of past positive teacher role models, they

seek to establish a similar, positive relationship with their students. One teacher

participant reflected, "more than anything, I want for students to trust. I motivate my

students to learn by providing meaningful learning experiences." The teacher participants

also addressed the importance of building trust and caring for the students' needs when

they receive additional academic support, such as tutoring. One participant observed,

"they spend most of the day with us, maybe we are the only adults around them, and we

need to be sure that they are exposed to a learning environment." A finding that emerged

from the cross-case analysis revealed that teacher participants concurred that current

educational policy might not seek to put students' needs first. One teacher participant voiced, "the ones in charge of implementing all these changes" and the "structure of our schools," miss the mark when it comes to educating culturally and linguistically different students. Teacher participants emphasized how they know their "students are very smart, they don't need more labels." A teacher participant added, "Although almost all my students are Hispanic, they have different cultural and educational backgrounds." The teacher participants revealed that every aspect of their decision making was influenced by their concern for students and that additional professional development was needed for teachers to learn how to help diverse students succeed.

Regarding the concern for diverse students' needs, the cross-case analysis also revealed teacher participants' understanding of students' emotional states, dreams, and strengths and how it impacted their decision making when planning instruction. Three participants shared that by including cooperative learning activities in their lesson plans, students have an opportunity to build a sense of belonging to the classroom and the school. Two other teacher participants discussed the need to acknowledge the baggage students carry and the importance of helping them to deal with those challenges. For example, during one of their common planning time meetings, the participants discussed how they needed to teach students how to overcome obstacles, to "do something about it…..tolerance, compromise, and building bridges." Teacher participants expressed that they taught students these qualities by preparing lessons that included teacher-prepared materials, materials in Spanish, additional visuals, Internet searches, and options for students. These teacher participants told how they reflect upon each lesson and jot down whether the lessons they implemented were effective in helping the students learn. An

analysis of the teacher participants' lesson plans revealed notes that teacher participants' wrote about how they check students' understanding, as well as how they are planning to improve for the next time by specifically focusing on students' learning needs.

Theme 5: Connecting Lessons to Everyday Life

In addition to providing students with a rationale for social studies lessons, the teacher participants in this study spoke of connecting lessons to current events, news, and movies with social significance. Although each teacher participant utilized different strategies, the analysis revealed that they have the similar goals and learning objectives documented in their lesson plans. However, it was also observed during the common planning time that they all shared and made notes about the different teaching strategies they implemented while planning for instruction and in the classroom. As a result of the cross-case analysis, it was found that each of the teacher participants in this study planned and implemented different strategies to help students develop critical thinking skills, while they learn through connections among the topics, current events, real life situations, and other subject areas. For example, four of the teacher participants, specifically expressed that they exposed his students to the current news and events in order to provide opportunities for the students to make connections and to engage in continuous inquiry, bridging information with the social studies content.

In observing the two teacher participants who partnered directly with the Texas Region One Educational Service Center, it was clear how they connect lessons to current events by preparing Power Point presentations with pictures, videos, and also include the museum flyers from trips to the nation's capital. In three other classes, it was observed how teacher participants use drawings, webs, and lots of visuals to teach where the

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students work in collaboration and share their knowledge giving students choices when making connections between social studies lessons and current events. For example, students could select to create a web, an essay, a song, or a poster in order to present their understanding. This includes allowing students to use smart phones and tablet PCs to visit websites relevant to the social studies topic.

Theme 6: Reflective Practices

Using the interview questions for this study, each of the teacher participants spoke of their past school experiences as a way of reflection. As a result of the cross-case analysis, each teacher participant expressed that through the help of family and teachers when they were students, they became stronger individuals. One teacher participant reflected that there was a lot of harassment and bullying in his class when he was a middle school student and although he was scared, he always got support from family and teachers. Another recalled that when he was in seventh grade, he had a math teacher who was very kind and took the time to listen to what he had to say and helped him with questions. Regarding the frequency of reflective practices, an interesting finding was that the teacher participants revealed that this was the first time they had been asked about their childhood learning experiences. They mentioned that this type of reflection helps them better understand how to apply the lessons they learned to help their students cope with similar challenges.

During this study, the teacher participants were also given the opportunity to also reflect on previous lesson planning experiences. Three out the six teacher participants recalled that the way they learned how to write lesson plans in college was helpful. They spoke of writing very specific, detailed, and meticulously prepared lesson plans, as well

as preparing mental frameworks for implementing lessons. However, they added, that now that they are teaching in a real classroom with real students, they have little time to write detailed plans similar to the ones they completed in the their teacher preparation courses. Those teacher participants expressed that frequently they end up changing the plans as they teach, but understand at the same time, that those changes are needed and are part of the planning process. They stated that they learned about reflecting on lesson plans while working as a teacher "in the real classroom." One teacher participant stated that he found it very helpful to have a structured plan, but he needed to re-conceptualize the content and strategies very often in order to determine what was important and what had value for the students.

Regarding reflective practices, during common planning time, it was also observed that the teacher participants brainstormed and discussed social studies related current events, websites, and the state standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills-TEKS). These teachers spoke of a common planning time as a time for collaborating with other teachers about students' interests, work, and academic progress. In reflecting upon teaching strategies, one of the teachers shared with the group during a common planning time, that he could get a glimpse of the students' dreams through what they wrote when using wall-size graphic organizers. Another teacher responded that it was very helpful for lesson planning to take into consideration what students wrote on those graphic organizers. He added that students are telling them "indirectly" what they are interested in learning, as well as what they are actually learning and not learning. However, the cross-case analysis revealed, that conversely, there are times when collaborative planning times are not conducive to reflective practice. One teacher

participant expressed how there are times when there are disagreements during planning, and teachers have to make their own decisions when planning, in particular, for ELL students.

When reflecting about what is most effective for students in regards to deciding what to include in the lesson plan, teacher participants expressed disagreements with current educational policy. Specifically, two teacher participants observed how teachers today are facing numerous challenges, making the learning environment more difficult, contributing to low morale, decreased time for professional development, and no time for self-evaluation. Nevertheless, in spite of the challenges, teachers spoke of how they find time to reflect by writing themselves notes on their lesson plans during class "as a reminder that I would like to do it a little different next time or put emphasis on something else."

Atypical Results

An additional purpose of cross-case analysis is to attend to the atypical themes or atypical results between cases (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). In this multiple case study, while six themes were consistent across the teacher participants, there were two atypical results. Although these two atypical results were connected with emerged themes, the "atypicality" (Stake, 2006, p. 54) is derived by the fact that these results were not consistent among the participants but repetitive in just one of the participants. The cross-case revealed two atypical results that were "unusual and extraordinary" (Stake, 2006, p. 55) among the teacher participants. The atypical results include:

Atypical Result for Theme 2: Cultural Awareness

All of the teacher participants demonstrated through the observed activities and their responses to the interview questions that they were aware of their students' cultural background. However, one of the teacher participants (Luis) indicated that his colleagues' awareness is limited because "they treat all students equal." He stated that, "not because a student speaks Spanish, or came from Mexico does that means that they are in the same level of education." Luis expressed that although the majority of the students in the school are Hispanic, "they have different cultural and educational backgrounds." He mentioned that while some students come to U.S. classrooms with a strong academic background in their own language, others have no schooling at all or come with both languages developed. He commented that it is very challenging to address all of the students' needs at the same time, "more time is needed to plan for instruction."

Atypical Result for Theme 6: Reflective Practices

Adam was the only teacher participant who explicitly mentioned several times that his lesson plans "had to be up to specifications and each and every detail had to be meticulously explained." Although all the teacher participants recognized the need to have a well developed lesson plan, which included the standards, objectives, activities, assessments, and all of them plan in collaboration, none of them elaborated meticulous lesson plans, except Adam. He mentioned that the way he learned how to put together a lesson plan in college courses helped him to internalize the process, as well as the importance and the value of each step and component of the lesson plan. To this end, Adam reported that he experienced planning as a daily mental process more often and

planning in detail and reflecting during the planning process had helped him to re-conceptualize constantly the content and pedagogical strategies. In the process of re-conceptualization, he is able to better decide what it is important and what has value for the students, "I think it's a personal thing…I am always planning everything I do."

Summary

In this chapter, six emerged themes across the cases, and two atypical results were described as a result of the cross-case analysis. A detailed table that includes the emerged themes across the cases was presented as evidence of the cross-case analysis. After the table, a synthesis of each emerged theme was presented in a narrative form. Chapter Six, presents the discussion of the findings of this study, as well as, implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Teachers continuously develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that shape their capacities (Grant, 2008). However, there is no consensus on the critical competencies that teachers must have to effectively meet students' needs, including those students who have been historically disadvantaged and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Gándara, et al., 2003; Hanushek, 2006). Social studies curriculum is one of the most challenging subjects for diverse students at the middle school level and educators are concerned about their ability to prepare all students, including diverse learners, to become active citizens, as well as the long-term viability of the nation's democracy (Cho & Reich, 2008; Conklin, 2007, 2008; Gay, 2004a, 2004b; Szpara & Ahmad, 2007a). Since teachers' capacities affect their decisions about instructional approaches (Y. A. Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010), this study considered teachers' voices by conducting research on how teacher capacities influence their decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. Therefore, using Henderson and Gornik's (2007) concept of *decision-making in planning curriculum goals* as theoretical proposition for analysis, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influenced a group of middle school teachers' decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school were studied.

In order to accomplish this, six social studies middle school teachers were purposefully selected in a Hispanic serving school. These teachers were recruited to participate in this multiple-case study (Yin, 2009), which included e-mail and face to face interviews (Seidman, 2006), non-participant observations and written documents

including their lesson plans. The data were analyzed, first case-by-case and then, using a cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006). As a result of the case-by-case, twenty-three thematic categories emerged that served as a preamble for the cross-case analysis. From the cross-case analysis six themes and two atypical results emerged across the cases. The themes that arose across the cases were: (1) *affective team work,* (2) *cultural awareness,* (3) *ownership in learning,* (4) *caring about students' needs,* (5) *connecting lessons to everyday life,* and (6) *reflective practices.* The two atypical results were related to (2) *cultural awareness,* and (3) *reflective practices.* The following section presents a discussion of the six themes highlighting similarities and differences of the results of the study to the literature to support the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Next, the implications for practice and future research are discussed followed by the final conclusion.

Discussion of Findings

In addressing what teachers need to know, need to do, and care about, this study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers should possess specifically when they are planning for instruction in social studies. The six middle school teacher participants in this study spoke about how they brought to their teaching career their previous personal-life experiences that enabled them to seek out people and students' strengths, weaknesses, and talents and how this influences their planning and instruction. In discussing the needed skills, teachers in this study recognized the value of working in collaboration with their colleagues. For instance, teachers described how they discussed as a team what was to be covered in the lessons, including the standards, learning objectives, and methods for assessment. Consistent with research on working in collaboration (Thousand, et al., 2006), teachers

need to be willing to plan with other teachers, since this practice allows more powerful and shared learning to occur.

The teacher participants expressed that although they did not always agree with one another, they found it very productive and effective to work in collaboration. They talked about how during the common planning time, they shared what they were teaching in the classroom, as well as strategies they employed in helping students to learn in teams. Previous research revealed that when teachers analyze how students are responding and what students are thinking and understanding, in collaboration with other teachers, they can more effectively reshape their lessons to meet the instructional and curricular goals, ensuring success for all students (Reid, 2009). As Lortie (1975) also mentioned in her research, change will occur in public schools when teachers constantly observe, help, and interact with one another.

In helping students develop collaboration skills, the teacher participants spoke of creating a comfortable environment where students feel they belong to the group and where teachers can provide opportunities for students to develop team work skills while they are learning content. Research has also highlighted that the teachers' ability to create learning environments in their classrooms is as important as being an expert in the content (Kemp, et al., 2009; Zanting, et al., 2003). This study supports previous studies in supporting the importance of the interrelation of the content knowledge to appropriate pedagogies to effectively communicate subject matter to students within the creation of learning environments. However, the teacher participants highlighted the importance of creating a convivial and cordial learning environment as a first and critical step in providing students an *affective team work* environment with opportunities to learn team

work skills. Through the gallery-walk activity and the parking lot graphic organizers that they talked about during the interviews, teachers demonstrated how they created convivial and cordial environments by first establishing norms of respect and encouragement. Gollnick and Chinn (2002) along with others (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Meyer, 1994) found that teachers must create learning environments where all students, regardless of their differences, are respected, encouraged, and provided with the best opportunity to learn.

By exploring teachers' knowledge and dispositions, this study also responds to the call for the need to develop a more thoughtful consideration of the process of decision-making in planning for instruction in cultural and linguistic diverse contexts in order to provide diverse students the best opportunity to learn (Howard & Aleman, 2008; Milner, 2010). In reflecting on their own experiences, the teacher participants expressed that as students, they learned to embrace languages and cultures in and out of their homes with family and/or with friends. The teacher participants indicated that their life experiences have helped them to keep connected with their current students, regardless of their background. Their prior life experiences have also helped them to teach their students how to effectively deal with academic and social challenges. The extant literature suggests that teachers' knowledge about students and dispositions can be barriers to teaching diverse students. This can occur, especially if teachers do not have sufficient awareness of how to integrate opportunities for all students to develop cross-cultural competence (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Grant, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008).

Regarding the theme of *cultural awareness*, all of the teacher participants expressed that they lived similar home and school experiences than those of their current

students. As a consequence, their knowledge about their students' cultural backgrounds is limited to their own experiences and assumptions. Although it was observed that they provided and implemented pedagogical practices in helping their students to learn at a higher thinking level, it was revealed through observations and interviews that the teacher participants were not sufficiently aware about how to identify the different types of learners in their classroom and the importance and significance of understanding students' culture and educational background individually.

Although it was observed that teachers demonstrated best practices in teaching and the use of research-based instructional strategies, they were not aware about how to specifically differentiate instruction for different types of learners. The teacher participants implemented same instruction and same research-based strategies to all students in general, regardless of their academic needs. In fact, the data revealed one *atypical result* related to the emerged theme *cultural awareness,* which addresses the teacher participants' lack of fully understanding cultural awareness and how it is related to students' academic needs. One of the teachers mentioned repeatedly that his colleagues were culturally aware up to a certain point. He mentioned that although they were aware of the need to implement research-based teaching practices and were implementing those strategies, the teachers planned the same instructional practices for all students in general. It was confirmed through observations that teachers were planning and addressing all the students without differentiating. The results of this study support the findings in the literature that argues for the need to require teachers to be formally and consciously prepared to educate students who vary in culture, language, abilities, learning styles, socio-economic level, gender, age, and other characteristics (Gándara & Contreras, 2009;

García, 1991; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Olsen, 2010). Instructional planning and implementation require teachers' awareness and knowledge about the diverse cultural and linguistic students' backgrounds in order to understand the different academic needs of the students they teach (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

By analyzing teacher participants' attitudes and values, the study findings also revealed that teacher participants began to develop *ownership of their own learning* in different ways before starting their teaching career. Several of the teacher participants emphasized how they experienced support at home by having their parents attentive to their academic growth. Other participants shared how they learned independent learner skills in college courses that helped them to develop ownership of their own learning. The participants mentioned that the past experiences helped them to continue in developing knowledge and dispositions throughout their teaching career. In fact, two of the teacher participants maintain a regular connection with the Texas Region One Educational Service Center (Region One). They mentioned that participating in the Region One social studies professional development helped them to enhance their knowledge about U.S. History and pedagogical strategies for teaching. The teachers mentioned that participating in those sessions helped them to embrace learning as a way of life, share best practices with their colleagues, and more importantly, to be better prepared to teach their students and help them to develop ownership in learning. These findings support the results of previous research that highlights the importance of teachers' understanding of the subject matter in order to enhance the appropriate pedagogical strategies to communicate the content effectively in ways that allow students

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to create meaningful understanding (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005). The teachers in this study embraced new learning and new ideas by participating in professional development, which is consistent with Henderson and Gornik's (2007) contribution regarding the importance of enhancing teachers' knowledge. Henderson and Gornik stated that when teachers are willing to challenge their personal knowledge about subject matter and pedagogical strategies, it influences directly their instructional planning, classroom practice, resource selections, and responses to classroom events.

In preparing activities where students were exposed to meaningful learning, teacher participants spoke of providing students different options for presenting what and how they learn the material (e.g., posters, poems, or flyers). Teachers in this study used their pedagogical knowledge to implement instructional strategies to assure that the subject matter is mastered by all students, thus, producing opportunities for learning for all students. However, without knowing specifically the different academic backgrounds of their students in the classroom and exposing to all of them to the same strategy, teacher participants were not providing equitable educational opportunities (Dawkins, et al., 2008). The teacher participants provided their students a rationale and options during the lessons, allowing the students to develop ownership of their own learning and to embrace others' ideas. However, instructional planning and implementation requires teachers' awareness, knowledge, and understanding about the different educational needs of the students they teach (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

With the increasing number of diverse student population in the U.S. classrooms, today's teachers face students who possess a wide range of educational needs (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Valenzuela, 2005). In this study, teacher participants' knowledge,

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attitudes, and values in regards to *students' needs,* were reflected by the multiple opportunities they provided to build trust among their students. The teachers voluntarily provided extra academic support to their students through after-school tutoring. They also reflected collaboratively with their colleagues on how to meet the academic needs for their students through instructional planning. An analysis of the teachers' lesson plans revealed notes that they wrote about how they checked students' understanding, as well as how, during the next planning time, they were planning to improve by specifically focusing on students' learning needs.

Although teachers in the study echoed their caring about their students' educational needs, they indicated that they would like to have additional professional development to learn how to identify their diverse students in order to provide equal opportunities of learning. Teachers' knowledge of students has a significant effect on the types of strategies teachers use in relation to their students (Anning, 1988) and on the instructional decisions to suit particular types of students (Marland & Osborne, 1990). Although teacher participants implemented research-based practices for all students, it was evident that they needed to learn how to evaluate whether or not the diverse students are being provided with equal opportunities for learning. Knowing and caring about the students' needs may help teachers to improve their teaching skills to assist the students with academic problems (Meyer, 1994).

Research has shown that when teachers are not aware of the need to understand their students' cognitive, cultural, social, and emotional background, they may expose students to low expectations (Gándara, 1993; Good, 1987; Holbrook, 2006; Milner, 2010). It is important for teachers to understand the differences that may arise from

students' background, so teachers can interpret curriculum, make decisions for planning, and to implement instruction through their students' eyes (Darling-Hammond, 1999) to stimulate understanding and connections to everyday life.

One of the critical roles of the teacher is to stimulate students' minds toward meaningful understanding of the subject matter for the purposes of lifelong learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). The teacher participants indicated that during the process of decision-making for planning and instruction they selected current events, news, and movies with contemporary and social significance to teach social studies. They mentioned that during the common planning time, as a team they reviewed the social studies standards and then they looked and shared resources and strategies that helped the students *to make connections to everyday life*. The teacher participants indicated that this practice helped them to enhance their knowledge about social studies topics and their knowledge about instructional strategies providing students a high quality learning environment.

The instructional techniques teachers use to understand, represent, and convey subject matter to their students is called pedagogical knowledge. Numerous studies suggest that pedagogical knowledge is the key indicator of a high quality instruction (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Penso & Shoham, 2003). The teacher participants expressed that by sharing and having conversations during their common planning time about content and instructional strategies have helped them to continue in developing pedagogical knowledge to understand, represent, and convey content knowledge to their students. Some of the planning practices the teacher participants demonstrated in this study are similar with Shen et al.'s (2000) findings, which suggested

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that teachers develop gradually more content and pedagogical knowledge when they spend time with other teachers when planning instruction. However, some researchers argue that teachers may have the knowledge and skills to be an effective teacher, but not the dispositions to develop or use the knowledge and skills (DeCoito, 2006; Duplass & Cruz, 2010; Levin & Wadmany, 2006).

In deciding expectations for students, teachers' dispositions impact the preparation of lessons and activities on a daily basis, knowing that this is a process of conscious and unconscious decision-making (Eley, 2006; Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Milner, 2003). *Dispositions* are a set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and commitments that influence teachers' instructional decisions which in turn impact the students' learning (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Although teachers' underlying dispositions are difficult to be accurately measured, in this study, through the interviews and observations, it was possible to establish a framework for understanding the decision-making process that underlies important instructional planning and decisions.

Teacher education research revealed that teacher beliefs are the single most influential factor affecting critical decisions that teachers make in the classroom (Levin & Wadmany, 2006; Ponte, et al., 1994; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). In order to help the teachers to understand and reflect on their dispositions, through individual interviews and post-classroom observations interviews, the teacher participants in this study were given the *opportunity to reflect* on their assumptions, beliefs, values, and commitments when planning instruction for their students. Barnett and O'Mahony (2006) stated that teachers can benefit from the exploration and reflection of their own pedagogical knowledge in planning for instruction. Barnett and O'Mahony argued that when teachers learn about

their own assumptions, beliefs and values, it paves the way for critical reflection and creates opportunities for change and professional growth.

Consistent with previous research that has found that teachers' decision-making typically emerges from the professional work and deliberation of an individual or from a group of people (Thousand, et al., 2006), the teachers in this study spent time together brainstorming about the social studies standards, topics, resources, and instructional strategies during their common planning time. However, they were limited just to the "share, talk, and make notes" process without writing detailed lesson plans together arguing that the time was limited. Shen et al.'s (2000) study found that teachers provide high quality instructional opportunities when the lesson plans are developed in detail and in collaboration with other teachers. The same study revealed that when teachers devoted less time for lesson planning and did it in isolation, the lesson tended to be general and focused exclusively on activity development and textbook pages. Thousand et al.'s (2006) research also researched how effective teachers, deliberate with their colleagues as they seek answers to curriculum questions and how conversations have the potential to provide further insight into teachers' underlying beliefs about teaching and learning.

As a result of the opportunity to reflect on their own planning and instructional dispositions, a second *atypical result* was revealed by one of the participants. One of the teachers shared repeatedly that his lesson plans needed to be meticulously detailed and he develops them to specifications, while some of the other teachers argued that it was not necessary to plan in detail. Others tried to convince him that that there was no time for that. The teacher, who showed the atypical results, mentioned that the time he invested in planning detailed lesson plans was worth it because it helped him to internalize the

planning process and provided him with opportunities to learn and enhance content and pedagogical knowledge.

Although all the teacher participants recognized the need to work as a team in developing detailed and reflective lesson plans, only one teacher elaborated meticulous lesson plans. This teacher participant mentioned that the way he learned how to put a lesson plan together in college, helped him to value the importance of each step and component of the lesson plan. In addition, as a group, the teacher participants expressed that there are times when collaborative planning times are not conducive to reflective practice. One teacher participant indicated that there were times when there were disagreements during the common planning time meeting, so they ended up making their own decisions when planning. Two teacher participants observed how teachers today are facing numerous challenges in regards to deciding what to include in the lesson plans and how to teach the required curriculum. They spoke about how these challenges made the learning environment more difficult, contributed to low morale, decreased time for professional development, and left no time for self-evaluation. The extant research argued that teachers need systems of support from their school administrators, including sufficient planning time that permits a genuine input from the teachers involved sustained on the power of working in collaboration (Reid, 2009).

<center>Implications</center>

Drawing on the findings from the cross-case analysis, six themes were identified that revealed the interrelation and complexity of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influence teachers' decision-making in planning social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. The following section, presents implications for teachers, school

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administrators and teacher preparation programs following by the recommendations for further research. First, the implications for teachers are presented within the context of what the teachers in this study demonstrated they know (knowledge), what they do (skills), and what they care about (dispositions), when planning for classroom instruction. Second, as a critical support for in-service teachers, the implications for school administrators are presented for those who are willing to support teachers to continue developing their teaching capacities. Third, in preparing future teachers, the implications for teacher preparation programs are focused on the need to better prepare pre-service teachers for the increasing diversity population in United States. Finally, recommendations for further research are presented in light of the fact that the study revealed the need of conduct more research on what the teachers do in the classroom by studying how teachers evaluate classroom practices and reconceptualize curricula in helping diverse students to reach academic success.

Implications for Teachers

Reflective inquiry during teachers' instructional planning time is about effective criticism and self-understanding on their practices (Henderson & Gornik, 2007). During the ongoing decision-making process in planning for instruction, teachers have the opportunity to practice reflective inquiry to reconceptualize the state-mandated standards. This is vital to sustaining the decision-making process for effective planning and classroom implementation (Henderson & Gornik, 2007).

The first implication addresses teachers' need to schedule time for reflective inquiry though collaboration with other teachers during their planning periods. Teachers need to look for opportunities to practice reflective inquiry by scheduling the needed

planning time where they can plan collaboratively in order to prepare effective lessons for diverse students. In this study, the teacher participants expressed that they are willing to plan with others and they recognized that this practice allowed them more powerful and shared learning to occur. They emphasized that when they have the time to share and have professional conversations during their common planning time it helps them to gradually develop more content and pedagogical knowledge and knowledge about their students' needs. However, they mentioned that the insufficient time to write detailed plans and to reflect about them in group, reduce the opportunity to practice reflective inquiry on the instructional and curricular goals. When teachers have the time to plan detailed lessons in collaboration with other teachers, they develop capacities that enable them to provide high quality instructional opportunities to their students (Shen, et al., 2000). Effective teachers deliberate with their colleagues as they seek answers to curriculum questions (Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Thousand, et al., 2006). By deliberating, teachers have the potential to further insight and reflect into their own content and pedagogical knowledge by becoming conscious of the way they teach and the reasons behind it creating opportunities for change and growth (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006).

Teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge are critical components required to assist students in constructing knowledge. Teachers integrate content and pedagogical knowledge to implement, translate, and transfer their planning into instructional decisions (Kemp, et al., 2009; Shulman, 1986). In integrating content and pedagogical knowledge, teachers have the opportunity to learn and create different strategies that may help to close the achievement gap for Hispanic students in learning social studies content area

(Chapin, 2006). The second implication addresses teachers' need to continuously developing knowledge and skills to better serve diverse students. In order to continue developing pedagogical content knowledge, teachers must participate in professional development that will help them to master the subject matter they teach as well as the appropriate pedagogical strategies to communicate effectively in ways that allow diverse students to create meaningful understanding. Teachers need to provide students with a rationale for learning social studies by connecting lessons to current events and stories with social significance. In this study, the teacher participants maintained a constant connection with Texas Region One Educational Service Center (Region One) by participating in professional development related to U.S. History. The participants expressed how these learning opportunities have helped them to enhance their knowledge about U.S. History. The teacher participants provide their students with opportunities to develop life-long learning skills by creating an inquiry environment where the students develop critical thinking skills and ownership in learning. In this study, it was common to observe how the social studies teachers begin the lessons with an activity that helps students understand the relevance and importance of the past event in today's world, making learning more meaningful for students. When teachers are willing to challenge their knowledge about the subject matter and pedagogical strategies, it influences directly their instructional planning, classroom practice, and resource selections that are culturally relevant for diverse students (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005).

Effective instructional planning and classroom implementation requires teachers to be prepared to educate students who vary in culture, language, abilities, learning styles,

socio-economic level, gender, age, and other characteristics (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; García, 1991; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002) in order to understand the different academic needs of the students they teach (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). The third implication for teachers is related to the challenge that today's teachers face in teaching diverse students. In teaching Hispanic students, teachers need to be aware about the differences on their students' cognitive, cultural, and linguistic background to expose them to equal educational opportunities. Teachers need to be prepared to provide differentiated instruction based on the different types of learners to help them develop academic competence. Teachers need to select social studies resources that help diverse students develop critical thinking skills so students can easily connect their learning to their everyday experiences, including current events, news' stories, movies with contemporary and social significance to social studies, and the use of technology. In this study, the teacher participants echoed their caring about their students' educational needs. However, they were not fully aware about Hispanic students having different educational backgrounds. The teachers expressed that they find necessary to learn how to identify the different academic backgrounds among their Hispanic students in order to provide equal opportunities of learning. When teachers are not aware of the need to understand their students' cognitive, cultural, social, and emotional background, they may expose students to low expectations (Gándara, 1993; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Teachers must create lessons where all students, regardless of their differences, are respected, encouraged, and provided with the best opportunity to learn (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Finally, teachers' dispositions are what make a teacher unique and special. Dispositions are a compilation of beliefs, attitudes, values, and commitments that a

teacher brings to his/her teaching career. Dispositions continuously change throughout the years, and are the single most influential factor affecting critical decisions that teachers make in the classroom. Teachers' dispositions impact the preparation of lessons and selection of activities on a daily basis, which, in turn, impact the students' learning (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Teachers need to constantly reflect on their beliefs, values, attitudes, and commitments and be willing to challenge them. Teachers participating in this study benefitted from the exploration and reflection of their own past and current dispositions, as well as how these beliefs, values, attitudes, and commitments have impacted their instructional planning process. When a teacher learns and practices how to reflect on his/her assumptions, beliefs, and values, it paves the way for critical reflection and creates opportunities for change and professional growth (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006).

Implications for School Administrators

School administrators can have a significant impact in helping teachers develop the continuum of teacher capacities. School administrators need to provide teachers systems of support that provide for all the needed resources for effective teaching and for effective planning, as well as a protocol of norms and processes to follow during the planning meetings to maximize time and effectiveness. School administration staff needs to provide sufficient time for teachers to be able to share learning, have professional conversations, and make instructional decisions. With adequate time to work collaboratively, teachers can more effectively design lessons that are aligned with what students are expected to learn as defined by the state, national, and global standards; work on analyzing data to assess and then modify and adapt lessons; and select authentic and

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cultural relevant resources for all students. In this study, the teacher participants

mentioned that they had insufficient time to write detailed plans and to reflect about them

collaboratively, reducing the opportunity to practice reflective inquiry on the instructional

and curricular goals. The teachers in this study emphasized that when they have enough

time to share and have professional conversations during their common planning time, it

helps them to gradually develop more content and pedagogical knowledge and

knowledge about their students' needs. According to Sardo (1988), effective teaching

usually starts from a well-planned and well-organized lesson plan. When teachers have

the time to discuss and deliberate about planning in collaboration with other teachers,

they develop capacities that enable them to provide high quality instructional

opportunities to their students (Shen, et al., 2000). By deliberating, teachers have the

potential for further insight and to reflect into their own content and pedagogical

knowledge by becoming conscious of the way they teach and the reasons behind it,

creating opportunities for professional growth (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006)

By integrating content and pedagogical knowledge, teachers have the opportunity

to learn and create different strategies that may help close the achievement gap for

Hispanic students in learning social studies content area (Chapin, 2006). In maximizing

teachers' potential, school administrators need to provide teachers with opportunities to

develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that help them educate students who vary

in culture, language, abilities, and learning styles. From this study and relevant research

in the review of literature, it is clear that teachers would greatly benefit from school

administrators providing opportunities for teachers to participate in professional

development that will help them to master the subject matter they teach, as well as the

appropriate pedagogical strategies to communicate effectively in ways that allow diverse students to create meaningful understanding. In this study, the teacher participants described their participation in professional development related to U.S. History. The participants expressed how these learning opportunities have helped them to enhance their knowledge about U.S. History and how those opportunities provided them pedagogical strategies that helped the students develop critical thinking skills and ownership in learning. Research (Dawkins, et al., 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005) supports the finding that participating in professional development helps teachers to challenge their knowledge about the subject matter and pedagogical strategies, and it influences directly their instructional planning, classroom practice, and resource selections that are culturally relevant for diverse students.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

Today's teachers face the increasingly number of diverse students in the U.S. classrooms. Teachers need to be formally and consciously prepared to educate students who vary in culture, language, abilities, learning styles, socio-economic level, gender, age, and other characteristics (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; García, 1991; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Olsen, 2010). Pre-service teachers need to learn and be aware about the differences of their students' cognitive, cultural, and linguistic background to be able to expose them to equal educational opportunities. Teachers also need to be prepared to provide differentiated instruction based on the different types of learners to help them to develop academic competence. In this study, the teacher participants demonstrated their caring about their students' educational needs. However, they said that they were not fully aware about Hispanic students having different educational backgrounds. The

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teacher participants expressed that they are aware that they need to learn how to identify the different academic backgrounds of their students in order to provide learning opportunities that more specifically meet the needs of Hispanic students. To facilitate this, teacher preparation programs need to include and align in their curriculum program, the courses that help future teachers to be prepared for the increasingly diverse U.S. classroom (García, 1991; Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Being provided with opportunities to learn about the need to understand students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds will help pre-service teachers develop heightened cultural awareness and recognize their role in ensuring that all students develop the knowledge and skills to become responsible and active citizens in building America's future.

Recommendation for Further Research

Teachers' capacities influence their decisions about instructional approaches (Y. A. Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010) that ultimately, influence the students' educational process. This multiple case study considered teachers' voices by conducting research on how teacher capacities influence their decision making in planning social studies instruction. The question, then, becomes how teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions can be cultivated, developed and enhanced to meet the educational needs of today's students. Specifically, more research needs to be conducted in the following areas.

First, there is a need to further examine teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions in different subject areas (ex., mathematics and science), different grade levels (ex., elementary and high school), with different student populations (ex., at-risk, economically disadvantaged), and in different geographical areas.

Second, while this study brought attention to the teachers' voices, more research needs to be conducted on their actions; specifically, what the teachers do in the classroom by systematically observing them, combined with providing them with opportunities to reflect on their practices.

Third, while this multiple case study provided opportunities for comprehensive in-depth interpretation of the teacher participants' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, more research is recommended to enhance and expand the understanding of teacher capacity using a larger group of teachers and different research tools and methodology, including quantitative methods. For instance, further research is needed on the effects of the teacher preparation courses on the teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; or the correlation between teacher capacity and their students' learning.

Conclusion

The achievement gap has no one universal solution. Due to the complexities and challenges faced by the United States' educational system, it requires a combination of solutions and continued research. Inadequacies in the U.S. educational system need to be addressed, not only in the classroom, but in the philosophy, practices, and political decisions made regarding teaching and learning. According to Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English (2009) "the blame game becomes unnecessary, when everyone is part of the problem and everyone is part of the solution" (p. 7). The achievement gap is not just evident in students from different races, nor is it caused by a single problem. Closing the achievement gap requires ongoing research and more individualized solutions to address the needs of children in the United States. As research (Hollins & Torres Guzman, 2005;

Zumwalt & Craig, 2005) has demonstrated, providing effective and high-quality teacher preparation is a part of the solution.

Today's teachers must be prepared for the increasingly diverse U.S. classroom with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to face the complex challenge of offering equal learning opportunities to all types of learners (Grant, 2008; Y. A. Lee & Hemer-Patnode, 2010; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008; Villegas, 2002). Thus, with the increasing participation of diverse students in the classroom, the concept of teacher capacity was extended to include the "awareness of the social and political contexts of education and the development of critical consciousness about issues such as race, class, gender, culture, language, and educational equity" (Howard & Aleman, 2008, p. 158). However, since there is no consensus regarding the needed capacities that teachers must possess to effectively meet diverse students' needs, including those students who have been historically disadvantaged and those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Gándara, et al., 2003; Hanushek, 2006), the need to explore multiple relationships and discourses between teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions in classrooms, that are becoming increasingly diverse, is evident (Grant, 2008).

This multiple case study contributes to the body of knowledge by enhancing the understanding of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that influence middle school teachers when they plan social studies instruction in a Hispanic serving school. In addition, a rigorous way to integrate qualitative research methodologies was developed to research the complexity embedded in the teacher capacity concept. By examining teachers' life history and current experiences, the study sheds light on existing teacher

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capacities and on new ways to cultivate and continue their development. This study can serve as a useful model to help provide student teachers and in-service teachers with the insights on the needed teacher capacities that can contribute to their effectiveness in teaching and planning for diverse students.

Appendix A

Initial Demographic Questionnaire

1. Full Name
2. Please select a pseudonym
3. School
4. Gender
5. Race/Ethnicity
6. First Language
7. Second Language
8. Where did you go to school, K-12?
9. List the educational certifications in Texas and/or from other States/Countries
10. How many years have you taught social studies?
11. What % of English Language Learners (ELL) do you currently teach in each class?
12. Who identifies the students as ELL?
13. What steps do you take to facilitate ELLs' academic achievement?
14. What special training/workshops/college courses have prepared you to teach social studies?
15. Have you received professional development credits in social studies teaching after becoming a certified teacher?
16. If yes, name the type of courses taken.
17. List the school, outside school, and web resources you use to prepare your lessons?
18. Choose one area of social studies teaching (preparation, content, instruction, or assessment) that you would like to change in your classroom.
19. How much time a week (or a day) do you spend on the following:
20. Course preparation
21. Classroom instruction
22. Student assessment
23. Extra-curricular activities
24. What % of time in each class is devoted to classroom management?
25. What % of time in each class is devoted to teaching for standardized testing?
26. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best score, how would you rate your job satisfaction?
27. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best score how would you rate the professional support you receive from the following:
28. School administration
29. District administration
30. Colleagues
31. Community

Appendix B

Interview One: Focused Life History
(Seidman, 2006)

The purpose of this interview is to gather a focused life history that highlights the participants' knowledge, skills, and dispositions absorbed unconsciously (Lortie, 1975) before they started their teaching career. (Williamson McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

1. Could you describe yourself as a student?
2. Tell me about the challenges you experienced when you attended middle school.
3. How would you describe your favorite middle school teacher?
4. Tell me about the worst teacher you ever had.
5. Give me an example of a time when you worked as a member of a team before you entered/started the teaching career?
6. What extent of involvement did your parents/mentors demonstrate when you were attending middle school? Describe a specific situation.
7. What career did you have before teaching, if any?
8. How does that career complement your teaching career?
9. Who supported/encouraged you to attend college? How?
10. How did you decide/choose to teach social studies at middle school level?
11. What do you think it means for a Spanish speaking student to know English?
12. What do you think it means for a Spanish speaking student to know Spanish?
13. Have you thought about teaching at the elementary or high school levels? Why? Why not?
14. Who would you consider your greatest influence when you plan for instruction? (a teacher, mentor, author…) Why?
15. Tell me about the first time you wrote a lesson plan.
16. How did you select your objectives in designing that first lesson plan?
17. Tell me about your first group of students.

Interview Two: Participants' Current Experiences within the Context

(Seidman, 2006)

The purpose of this interview is to gain details in understanding teacher capacity. According to Williamson McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright (2008) the term "teacher capacity" (pp. 135-136) suggests the potential for teachers to continue to develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions along the continuum in the current social contexts in which teachers find themselves.

1. Describe your current group of students.
2. What are the challenges your students face in today's classrooms?
3. How would your students describe you as a teacher?
4. Tell me about your teacher preparation program and certifications.
5. In your classroom, do you have students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
6. How do you help your students from diverse backgrounds become part of the class?
7. How do you select social studies curriculum when writing your lesson plans?
8. Do other social studies teachers know the topics/units you are teaching? How do they know what you are teaching?
9. If you were asked to team-teach, what characteristics would you like for that other teacher to have? Why?
10. If you were given ten or more hours a week (with the provision that it be used for teaching-related areas), what would you choose to spend that extra time on? (adapted from Lortie, 1975, 2002). Why?
11. How do you know when a student is not learning?
12. How do you contact a student's parents/guardians? What do you do when they don't speak English?
13. What components do you include in your lesson plan?
14. How do you relate your lesson plan objectives to the State standards?
15. How do you integrate in your lesson plan checks for understandings?
16. Do you translate the material when your non-English speakers don't understand?
17. Describe your most memorable student.
18. How do you integrate ESL strategies in your lesson plan?
19. How do you decide on the instructional material (textbooks, readings, etc…) for your class? Such as textbooks, readings, etc…
20. How do you connect with students that are more challenging to reach?
21. What are the pros and cons of using the Internet in school?
22. What is the best professional development you have ever had?

Interview Three: Participants' Reflection: Finding Meaning in their Own Practice
(Seidman, 2006)

The purpose of this interview is to gain fuller understanding of teachers' critical reflection about their classroom instruction practices. According to Darling-Hammond (1999), teachers need to be able to analyze and reflect in their own practice, to assess the effects of their teaching and to refine and improve their instruction. Teachers must continuously evaluate what students are thinking and understanding and reshape their plans to take account of what they've discovered as they build instruction.

1. Describe your most successful lesson. Why was it successful?
2. What adjustments need to be made in the learning environment so that your students can work and learn efficiently?
3. Besides lecture, what methods of teaching do you use?
4. Do you place your lesson plans on your desk?
5. How do you monitor the pace and sequence of your lesson plan? Do you follow the lesson plan step by step? How closely do you follow your lesson plans?
6. What do you think about the following phrase: "Plan before, during, and after instruction"?
7. Do you integrate students' interests in your lessons? Do they ask for specific strategies? Which ones?
8. How do you empower your students to learn?
9. How do you respond to a bad question from your students?
10. Where do you see yourself in the future?
11. What are the biggest challenges that teachers face today?
12. How often do you read about educational topics such as curriculum planning, instruction, and strategies to improve student achievement? What do you read?
13. Which scholar (s)' work would you consider as most influential to your teaching? How has it influenced you?
14. To what extent do you plan for instruction? (Why do you plan or not plan?) What does it typically involve?
15. What do you think makes learning the English language difficult for students?
16. How do you think English language learners learn English?
17. What differences do you notice between yourself and other teachers in regards to how you interact with students?
18. What is your definition of life-long learner? How can you promote life-long learning in your classroom?

Appendix C

Worksheet 1

(Stake, 2006)

"The Thematic Categories" (Research Question) of the multiple-case study.

Part.	T. C. 1	T. C 2	T. C. 3	T. C. 4	T. C. 5	T. C. 6
Case 1						
Case 2						
Case 3						
Case 4						
Case 5						
Case 6						

Worksheet 2

Researcher's Notes While Reading a Case

(Stake, 2006)

Note: One worksheet for each case

Case Study Report Title: (pseudonym)

Uniqueness among other cases:

Prominence of Theme 1 in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 2 in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 3 in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 4 in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 5 in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 6 in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 7 in This Case:

Worksheet 3

Ratings of Expected Utility of Each Case for Each Theme

(Stake, 2006)

H=High utility7-9; M=Middle utility 4-6; L=Low utility 1-3

Utility of Cases	Richard	Luis	Paul	Antonio	Joaquin	Adam
Multiple-Case Themes						
Theme 1						
Theme 2						
Theme 3						
Theme 4						
Theme 5						
Theme 6						
Theme 7						

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