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Novice Special Education Teachers' Experiences with Students with Disabilities from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds: The Effects of Perceptions on Interactions

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Novice Special Education Teachers' Experiences with Students with Disabilities
from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds:
The Effects of Perceptions on Interactions

A Dissertation

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by

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DEDICATION

It is with great pleasure and honor that I dedicate this labor of love to all of the students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that were taught by my mother, Mrs. Mary Southall Wheeler, during the early 1980's. Although this research has been in development for over 20 years (and I did not even realize it at the time), I am so proud to finally have an outlet to give you a voice. It was through the love, joy, laughs, and concerns you all showed Baby Sassy that inspired me to bring your plight into the forefront of the education arena. At that time, I did not know how much interacting with all of you would mean to me in the future, but I am so fortunate to have had that opportunity. Just know that I will continue my mission of bringing a voice to a group that has been marginalized, and I hope to always make you proud.

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ABSTRACT

Novice special education teachers often enter their professions with unique perspectives that contribute to the overall educational experience of their students. This research was designed to inform the existing literature revolving around novice special education teachers' experiences, and how they subsequently effect the perceptions and interactions engaged in with students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Five novice special education teachers who currently serve students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds offered their unique perspectives for this research. This research study consisted of individual interviews, two direct classroom observations, and responses to three reflections of recent experiences. The data yielded three main categories: (a) student attributes, (b) establishing rapport, and (c) teacher responsibilities, which included properties and sub-properties.

To verify findings rival explanations were sought and triangulation procedures were utilized. Findings of this research are discussed in detail, with implications relating to novice special education teachers, K-12 school administrators, and special education teacher educators being addressed. Methods to address potential limitations to this research are presented, followed by suggestions for future research.

KEYWORDS: novice special education teachers, culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, teacher perceptions, interactions with students

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A Case in Point

Several years ago I had the opportunity to embark on a new academic appointment; I was asked to be a cohort facilitator for an accelerated special education teacher certification program. I was assigned to several in-service teachers at various schools, to support and guide them as they began their teaching careers. In addition, one of my major responsibilities was to observe each teacher in his/her classroom. During these observations I evaluated their classroom environment, teaching abilities and techniques, dispositions, and interactions with students.

While conducting these observations I began to wonder how the teachers' background and personal experiences impacted their perceptions, and subsequent interactions, of their students. Noticing that the majority of the students in the classes I visited were from diverse backgrounds, I also contemplated how the teachers perceived the students who were from a different cultural background than theirs. Initially, I would only reflect on these points personally, but I then began to ask my practitioner teachers questions about how they felt they related to their students, how they felt about their students, and finally how they felt their perceptions altered the interactions they engaged in with their students.

I was surprised to discover that several of the practitioners did indeed alter their interactions with their students based on what they knew about the students' personal background. The teachers often stated how they felt as though they had to be more empathetic, supportive, understanding, and compassionate towards students from backgrounds different than their own, for fear of being labeled cold, uncaring, rigid, and distant. Needless to say, this brought about an entirely different set of questions for me, but it also led me to the revelation that I needed to explore this phenomenon further. I truly became enthralled in understanding how special education teachers perceive and interact with students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds.

Overview

The previous narrative of background information is intended to provide a glimpse into my history which has inspired my interest in this topic. The potential for novice teachers to hold preconceived perceptions of their students and alter the interactions they engage in with their students is extremely high, and can ultimately impact the students' educational development. It is my hope that this research provides enlightenment into how novice special education teachers' perceive students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds, and subsequently how those perceptions impact the teacher/student relationship (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).

Being a special education teacher is often a job reserved for "special" people. In order to teach any students, especially those with disabilities, an individual must possess a plethora of altruistic character traits (Wadsworth,

2001). In most school settings, special educators can be found frequenting each other's company. They begin to rely on each other for support, encouragement, advice, and guidance in professional matters (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). This cohesiveness creates a distinct relationship between special educators that can perpetuate into specific teaching behaviors displayed in the classroom, depending on the depth of the relationships.

Teachers of students with disabilities are increasingly faced with difficult situations in which they must quickly adapt, adjust, and accommodate a variety of needs. Although many professional adaptation and modification skills are taught regarding professional contexts, the personal attributes required to respond to such situations are often not addressed. Therefore, novice teachers may not be prepared for the onslaught of diverse issues they will come in contact with. If the teachers' perspectives are uncovered, understood, and treated as valid barometers for what information needs to be taught in training programs, then it may be possible to begin assisting future special educators in addressing the needs of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

As a preliminary review of existing literature was conducted, it was discovered that very little information exists regarding novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Although not a startling discovery, it can be seen as unfortunate for the students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. This lack of literature in the current area shows that there have not been concerted efforts to understand how teachers who serve students from backgrounds different than their own perceive their students,

determine how the novice teachers' perceptions alter the interactions with the students, and subsequently how this information may be used to modify special education teacher training programs.

Hamilton (2000) found that when teachers understand the students' racial identity, they may become more comfortable interacting with the students thereby creating a relationship that is based on mutual respect for differences, dialogue, and reflection. If teachers possess a thorough understanding of their students' ethnic backgrounds, they may be more willing and able to engage in productive interactions. Casteel (2000) found that differences in the treatment of students of different ethnicities did exist when the teacher was of another culture than the students. His research did not differentiate between the levels of experience possessed by the teacher, but rather spoke to teachers in general. Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996) assessed how African American and Latino students perceived school climate. They found that students were more likely to strive for higher academic success in classrooms where their teachers cared for them, made themselves available to comfort them, and were concerned with helping them cope with their school and personal problems. This research shows that students are indeed perceptive regarding their teachers' views of them, and that how their teachers perceive and interact with them can ultimately effect the students' academic achievement.

In summary, the information contained in this overview provided a foundation that guided this naturalistic investigation of novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities who are from CLD

backgrounds. In the following section, I will provide a succinct description of the specific components that create the conceptual framework for this research.

Conceptual Framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) described a conceptual framework as an explanation of the topic to be studied, the main idea about the purpose, and the significance of the ideas about the purpose. The focus of this study was novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds. An investigation of teachers' perceptions of, interactions with, and reactions to students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds was explored within the context of the novice teachers' natural work environment. The purpose for investigating this topic was to gain an understanding of novice special education teachers' perceptions as they relate to the ways they interact with their students. This information was used to inform the current teacher education practices as they relate to novice teacher/student relationships. This information will illuminate the implications related to the teacher preparation process, and how future teachers can be instructed in relation to serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Herein lays the significance of this study.

Helms (1984) investigated and developed a framework for understanding the dyadic relationship between counselors and clients who are of differing ethnic and racial backgrounds. Contained within her framework is the conceptualization of the idea that an individual's personal background, beliefs, cognitions, and behaviors interact with the effectiveness of any relationship. Although initially focusing on counseling relationships, Helms (1984) did determine that this

framework could be extrapolated from the original relationship dynamic to include any relationship involving a difference in social power or status due to role expectations. It was determined that the individual's background will affect the relationships engaged in with others. The basis and major supposition of Helms' (1984) theory is that the racial background and identity of each of the individuals in the interactions will affect the relationship. This information can be seen in Table 1 which is a representation of Helms' interactional model. Helms' (1990) model explains the various stages of identity a teacher will experience based on their racial identity stage. The model provides affective issues, teacher strategies, and teaching outcomes that can be associated with the various relationships and individual stages of identity. For example, a teacher who is in the Disintegration stage of identity may experience anxiety when confronted with any mixed-race issues. These feelings of anxiety may exhibit themselves as extremely reserved interactions with students. Typically in these instances the students can sense the teacher's discomfort and will attempt to withdraw from the situation.

To further assist in the generalization of her theory to disciplines besides counseling, Helms (1990) stated that a mere change in terminology can assist in the adaptation of her theory. For example, in her theory the person in the authoritarian position in the relationship is the counselor, and the person who is perceived as more dependent is the client. To apply her theory to the field of education, the terms counselor and client would be substituted in her model with teacher and student, respectively. In addition to this, the term counseling process

Table 1

Teaching Relationships Based on Racial Identity Stages

Stages of Identity

Teacher's	Student's	Type of Relationship
Preencounter	Reintegration	Parallel
Immersion	Reintegration	Crossed
Internalization	Disintegration	Progressive
Disintegration	Internalization	Regressive

Teaching Process

Common Affective Issues	Teacher Strategies	Teaching Outcomes
Mutual anxiety; teacher wants to prove competence; student displaces anger	Abusive relationship; student tests and manipulates; teacher is unassertive and task oriented	Relationship may be long lasting because it reinforces stereotypes; little symptom remission
Direct overt expression of hostility and anger by both	Debates; refusal to become involved with one another	Short-lived; leaves both frustrated about original beliefs
Student's self-concept issues, feelings of confusion, and helplessness are focus	Teacher attempts to model positive adjustment and to elicit denied feelings	Potential for student cross-racial skill development and improved self-confidence is good
Teacher experiences pain and/or anxiety about cross-racial issues	Teacher interacts with undue reserve and incongruence; student senses teacher's discomfort	Student will seek a teacher more in tune with their needs

Helms, J. E. (1990)

should be replaced with the more all encompassing term relationship dynamics. The final term that must be understood is termination. In the constraints of teaching relationships, termination refers to a student's attempts to drop out of school, miss substantial amounts of school, or be placed in another class setting.

To further understand the implications and explicit meaning of Helms' model, a brief explanation of the stages of identity development and types of relationships will now be provided. For the purposes of this study, the five stages of identity that are relevant are Preencounter, Immersion, Reintegration, Disintegration, and Internalization (Helms, 1990). These stages will now receive a cursory discussion.

The first stage, Preencounter is characterized by the idealization of one race, while denigrating another race. Individuals at this stage may exhibit behaviors such as anxiety, poor self-esteem, and defensiveness. The individuals at the Preencounter phase will possess either a negative or idealized positive personal identity. The next phase to be discussed is Immersion. The Immersion phase is constituted by an honest appraisal of racism and its effects, and individuals at this stage may exhibit behaviors including rage, self-destructiveness, impulsivity, and euphoria. Reintegration is the next stage of racial identity to be discussed.

The Reintegration stage explains the notion that individuals at this stage accept the belief that one race is superior and others are inferior. Emotions and behaviors exhibited by individuals at this stage may include fear and anger towards those of other races. The next stage of discussion is Disintegration.

Individuals at this stage are conscious of their racial identity, but are conflicted as to what that means to them and those they encounter. It is not uncommon at this stage to experience moral dilemmas regarding race (Dennis, 1981). This stage is filled with feelings of inner dissonance. The final stage to be discussed is Internalization. Internalization is the stage in which individuals internalize a positive personally relevant identity. Cross (1971) posited that Internalization is a reflection of one's level of cognitive development. It must be understood here that for individuals in this phase what the person feels, believes, or thinks is not as important as how he or she believes. When looking at an individual at this stage one can expect to see behaviors that are extremely free and expressive, as the individual has transcended the need to judge others and can find value in people who are different from him or her (Helms, 1984). Given this information regarding the various stages involved in teacher/ student dyadic relationships it is now apropos to explain the types of relationships that may exist, as seen by Helms.

According to Helms (1984), there are several types of relationships that can develop between interactional dyads that may alter the teaching process. Of particular interest to this study are parallel, crossed, progressive, and regressive relationships. A parallel relationship is one in which the teacher and student share similar racial attitudes about various races. Helms identified a crossed relationship as one in which the teacher and student are positioned in opposite stages of racial identity development, and they have opposite attitudes about various races. A progressive relationship occurs when the teacher's stage of racial identity is more advanced than that of the student, conversely a regressive

relationship is one in which the student's stage of racial identity development is more advanced than the teacher.

It must be noted at this point that although Helms' (1984) model focuses on mixed-race (two individuals from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds) interactions, she does include in her model information for singular race (two individuals from the same cultural and ethnic background) interactions as well. For the purpose of this study both the mixed-race and singular race relationship interactions were investigated.

By being cognizant of how novice special education teachers perceive their students who are from CLD backgrounds, university special education instructors who educate pre-service teachers can modify their current curricular efforts that relate to serving students with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. These modifications can be done by increasing the depth of information covered regarding students from CLD backgrounds. The restructured curricula will allow novice teachers to be more effective with serving students with disabilities. By assisting the novice teachers in establishing effective and comprehensive skills for understanding, relating, and interacting with their students, this will enable them to perform their job responsibilities more effectively.

On an organizational level, learning more about novice teachers' perceptions of their students from diverse backgrounds may assist school administrators in selecting more holistic staff development programs that will address the perpetually changing needs of future teachers. This knowledge may generate ideas for school administrators to address more pointed and specific

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needs of future teachers as they relate to diversity education. For example, if school administrators dialogue with local school district administration and university personnel they may discover that a major complaint of novice teachers is that they feel ill equipped to serve students from diverse backgrounds (Mastropieri, 2001; Tonnsen & Patterson, 1992; Whitaker, 2000; Whitaker, 2001. The novice teachers may have expressed that their personal backgrounds did not afford them the opportunity to interact with a myriad of diverse individuals, thereby creating a silent distance between them and their students. The university personnel may then choose to adopt a revised curriculum for special education teacher training to provide more insightful opportunities for understanding, relating to, and interacting with students who are from CLD backgrounds.

Having provided an overview and conceptual framework for this study, a summary of relevant literature on teacher perceptions of students, teacher/student relationships, and the impact of said relationships is presented to establish a rationale for this research. Given the explanation of the premise for this research, a succinct summary of background and existing research on this topic will now be provided.

Background and Existing Research

Literature sources pertaining to novice special education teachers are extremely limited (Billingsley, 1993; Bobbit & McMillen, 1994; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999; Whitaker, 2001). Among the few available sources, information about the unique challenges, perceptions, and interactions engaged in is rare

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(Whitaker, 2000; Whitaker, 2001). Qualitative studies exploring these topics from the perspective of novice special educators do not exist. A miniscule number of publications were found that comment on the necessary mentoring components needed to retain novice special educators (Billingsley & Tomchin, 1992; Glidewell, Tucker, Todt, & Cox, 1983; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Mastropieri, 2001; Whitaker, 2000).

Due to the limited nature of literature specifically addressing novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, background literature on teacher perceptions in general was consulted. Such information about teachers' perceptions is provided to describe the universal characteristics of perception associated with the teaching profession. Within the context of novice special education teacher culture, specific information on teachers' perceptions of students and interactions with students was discussed. Then, the CLD special education student population was summarized, with an emphasis on student demographics and students' perceptions of teachers. Finally, the professional development needs of novice special educators were discussed including education and training issues and implementing culturally responsive curriculums. Several terms and key concepts will now be defined according to how they pertain to this study.

Definition of Terms and Key Concepts

The following definitions of the key terms and concepts were derived from a combination of resources including: special education literature, special education publications, and various sources of information on teacher/student

relationships, students with disabilities, and cultural and linguistic diversity. These terms and concepts are being operationally defined according to how they were applied for the purposes of this study.

Asset-Based Framework

Kea and Utley (1998) described an asset-based framework as one in which students are viewed in a positive manner. This is done by focusing on their strengths, abilities, skills, and efforts as a means for promoting positive school achievement.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

With the continuously evolving social and political makeup of this country, language and terms are in a perpetual state of change. Nieto (2004) stated that given the inexactness of language we can never fully encompass who an individual is with just one term. Therefore, for use in this study, individuals from CLD backgrounds will refer to any person who is (1) of non-White ancestry and (2) utilizes English as a second language. Some specific terms to describe an individual's ethnic heritage that were used in accordance with this study are White, African American (AA), Hispanic American (HA), American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), and Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PA). These terms were selected based on Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Special Populations (Louisiana Department of Education {LADOE}, 2004) and the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs {OSEP} (United States Department of Education {USDOE}, 2003).

Deficit-Based Framework

Kea and Utley (1998) utilized the term deficit-based framework as one in which students are viewed negatively based on disruptive behaviors, lack of achievement, lack of social skills, or other personal variables that may contribute to decreased performance.

Interactions

Casteel (2000) offered the definition of interactions to include providing another individual with praise, feedback, gestures, and written comments in a relationship that is reciprocal in nature. Engaging in interactions with another individual can occur in any setting, personal or professional, private or public, and singular or reoccurring.

Novice Special Education Teachers

This term was utilized to refer to a special educator who is new to the field of special education. The special educator must have between one and five years of teaching experience. This term refers to individuals who are in direct teaching positions dealing with students with disabilities.

Perceptions

Cardell and Parmar (1988) defined perceptions as those views and ideas of another person's social competence, temperament, and achievement that impact the way in which an individual is viewed. An individual's personal perception of another is often an isolated view, but may be altered by the comments of others.

Professional Development

According to the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), professional development is a multifaceted arena. Professional development focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement. Professional development seeks to find effective methods for implementing recommended practices in teaching, learning, and leadership. Professional development is meant to be a collaborative effort between schools, school districts, universities, state, and local education agencies that promote continuous inquiry and improvement.

Race

For the purposes of this research, the definition of race espoused by Casas (1984) was utilized. Casas operationalized race as a sub-group of people possessing a definite combination of physical characteristics of genetic origin. Casas' biological definition has no behavioral, social, or psychological implications.

Racial Identity

Helms (1984) defined racial identity as a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group. This racial identity is characterized by the sense that a common historical experience is shared between the members of the racial group.

School Administrators

Borra (2001) identified school administrators as those individuals who are in the role of principal or assistant principal. This definition was also extended to

the central school district office personnel who may be assigned to a specific school.

Students with Disabilities

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, a child with a disability is defined as a child evaluated as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, thereby, requires special education and related services.

Research Questions

The research question for this study was, "How does the variety of perceptions of new teachers regarding students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds affect the interactions with those students?" More specific questions to be answered were: (a) How do novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students?; (b) How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?; (c) What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice teachers and students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?; and (d) How do novice teachers' personal backgrounds shape the perceptions they have

regarding students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

Overview of Methodology

Based on the notion that naturalistic inquiry is best suited for discovery oriented research, a qualitative design was utilized to investigate novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. A phenomenological approach was used to enhance the understanding of the perceptions and interactions novice special education teachers experience regarding their students. The role of the researcher, research process, and scope of this study are summarized to provide an overview of this research.

Role of the Researcher

Given my unique position as both a former novice special education teacher who served students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds and as a teacher preparation instructor, I have a potentially useful perspective to lend to this research. In an effort to ensure my own biases do not impact this investigation, several methods to bracket my own subjectivity was included as part of my research design. An example of these methods can be seen in that this research design is flexible, thus allowing the research questions to become refined as the research process progresses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Research Process

Snowballing, a type of purposeful, convenience sampling was used to recruit participants from local public school systems in southeastern Louisiana. Weiss

(1994) defined snowballing as a process by which participants are identified from an individual who has direct contact with potential participants. Those potential participants were contacted for participation, and were also questioned to determine if they may have knowledge of other potential participants. Volunteers participated in an individual interview, two direct classroom observations, and three reflections of recent experience responses. The individual interview was conducted to collect verbal data. The direct classroom observations were conducted to collect observational data, and the reflections of recent experiences were used to collect archival data. Phenomenological methods allowed for the increased understanding of the circumstances surrounding novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Scope of the Study

This study sought to provide a review of what is known about education and training, students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and professional development as they relate to novice special education teachers in southeastern Louisiana. A goal of this study was to provide insight into the experiences and needs of novice special education teachers serving students from CLD backgrounds, as a means of aiding both teacher education programs and K-12 school administrators in providing practitioner teachers with an adequate and functional foundation of knowledge to assist them in their service to students from CLD backgrounds. Additionally, this information will be useful for informing university personnel of novice teachers' perceptions.

Summary

This chapter began with a story to demonstrate the challenges facing teachers of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Then, an overview was provided as a backdrop for the conceptual framework that guided this research. General statements about relevant literature relating to racial identity, the unique needs of novice special education teachers, teachers' perceptions of students from CLD backgrounds, and teachers' interactions with students from CLD backgrounds were included, followed by definitions of terms and the key concepts used in this study. Finally, specific research questions and an overview of the methodology were summarized.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature supporting the major topics within this study. This chapter also provides a context for this study. To provide a backdrop for this research, a summary of literature on the culture surrounding novice special education teachers is included. Next, relevant literature on teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, teachers' interactions with students with disabilities, and the demographics pertaining to students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds was discussed in depth. After this, the research and methodological issues relating to this study were highlighted. A summary will serve as an illustration of how the purposes of this research will contribute to expanding existing literature in this area.

Novice Special Education Teacher Literature

Although novice special education teachers can be found with ease in classrooms across the country, the same can not be said of finding literature focusing on this population; especially information directed at the perceptions and interactions these teachers have with their students who are from CLD backgrounds. A perusal of the literature failed to reveal any substantial contribution to the knowledge base of novice special educators' perceptions and

interactions with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Within the literature that was found on this population, one resounding fact of concern is that of attrition. It was stated explicitly that a large percentage of novice special educators will leave the field of special education within their first five years of teaching (Billingsley, 1993; Bobbit & McMillen, 1994; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). From these grim perspectives, it may be surmised that the constant revolving door for the teachers in the field of special education may contribute to the lack of a substantial literature base. Nonetheless, this population, and the literature surrounding it, was investigated to gain a better understanding of the culture that is specific to novice special educators.

General Education Teacher Culture

With the increasing disability, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity present in schools across the country today, general education teachers become adept at serving a myriad of students (Sapon-Shevin & Zollers, 1999). General education teachers must be prepared to reach a new cross-section of student population, those students with disabilities and from CLD backgrounds (Dilworth, 1992). Unfortunately, both disability and multiculturalism have been marginalized in general education teacher preparation programs (Sapon-Shevin & Zollers, 1999). Due to this, moves have been made toward incorporating multicultural and diversity education into general education teacher preparation programs (Bogdan & Taylor, 1994; Goodlad & Field, 1993; Sapon-Shevin & Zollers, 1999).

Obstacles are always present that must be overcome in any educational setting, however, these barriers are larger when focusing on the education of

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future general education teachers in reference to students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds (Pajares, 1992; Wilson, 1990). These obstacles may at times appear insurmountable due to the preconceived ideas, beliefs, values, and perceptions the general education teachers hold in regards to students who possess various differences (Sindelar, 1995).

The perceptions general education teachers have relating to students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds are often embedded in their personal backgrounds (Billings, 1991; Casteel, 1998; Sindelar, 1995; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). Other factors that may affect the general education teacher's perceptions include student behavior difficulties, role ambiguity, and school climate (Busch, Pederson, Espin, & Weissenburger, 2001). These various factors can lead to negative, disconnected treatment by the general education teachers as a result of feelings of frustration and fatigue (Busch, Pederson, Espin, & Weissenburger, 2001; Casteel, 1998; Casteel, 2000).

Several researchers have stated that in an effort to circumvent the potential detrimental effects of negative perceptions, a quality general education teacher preparation program can have a positive impact on repairing negative preconceived beliefs (Brownell, Smith, & McNellis, 1997; Busch, Pederson, Espin, & Weissenburger, 2001; Yee, 1990). In research conducted by Busch, Pederson, Edsin, and Weissenburger (2001) it was found that first year teachers cited the quality of their teacher preparation programs as a major contributor to their ability to accept students from various backgrounds and ability levels. Busch and colleagues found that teacher preparation programs that focused on theory

and instruction, offered supportive faculty and mentors, and a varied curriculum assisted in the level of preparedness and openness novice teachers experienced. Therefore, it can be concluded from the research presented that careful, deliberate consideration must be given to the selection of material included in general education teacher education programs so that future general educators can enter their classrooms with a willingness to serve all students (Busch, Pederson, Espin, & Weissenburger, 2001; Casteel, 1998; Casteel, 2000).

Novice Special Education Teacher Culture

For any novice teacher entering the field of special education, the first few years are the most critical (Whitaker, 2001). These crucial years may be indicative of the future results a novice special educator may have. These beginning years outline an essential shift in role and responsibility for the teacher from being a student who is the recipient of knowledge, to being the educator in charge of distributing knowledge (Cooke & Pang, 1991). Given this sudden shift in role, many novice special educators may become disillusioned, disheartened, and/or discouraged by the lack of support, bureaucratic hurdles, and daily challenges of the teaching profession (Tonnsen & Patterson, 1992). Whitaker (2001) stated that these feelings may also be heightened by a lack of resources, overwhelming paperwork, lack of parental and peer support, and students who present challenging or difficult behaviors.

Given these sometimes insurmountable circumstances, it is estimated that 25% of beginning teachers, both general and special education, do not teach

more than two years and 40% – 50% leave the teaching profession within the

first five years (Harris & Associates, 1992; Huling-Austin, 1986; Kirby & Grissmer,

1993; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). The depletion of viable, certified candidates to

enter special education classrooms has led to the employment of non-certified

individuals who are hired under the condition that they enroll in relevant

coursework leading to the appropriate licensures and certifications (Boe, Cook,

Bobbitt, & Terbanian, 1998; Goor & Mastropieri, 2001). In attempts to counteract

these deficits Brownell, Smith, and McNellis (1997) researched the factors that

seem to encourage novice special education teachers to remain in their chosen

field. They accomplished this by looking at veteran special educators to

determine what methods they used to cope, adjust, and adapt to their job

situations.

Other researchers took a different approach by focusing on the novice

special educators, and what specifically happens during those first years of

teaching (Billingsley & Tomchin, 1992; Kilgore & Griffin, 1998). These

researchers found that the induction year is critical for teacher socialization and

the development of a professional identity and attitude regarding the teaching

profession. Mastropieri (2001) stated that although it is important to study the first

year experiences of novice special education teachers it is also essential to

understand what happens during that year and isolate variables associated with

positive experiences. Mastropieri stated that this is critical so that teacher

educators and employing school districts can then begin to hone those positive

attributes of the first year, and seek solutions to the negative variables experienced by novices.

In subsequent research efforts, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found several challenges that were faced by novice special educators. These challenges include, but are not limited to, lack of time, lack of resources, lack of support, and lack of training. It was found that all these feelings consequently led to stress and teacher burnout (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997). In their research, Wisniewski and Gargiulo discovered that these feelings are shared by several generations of novice special educators.

Whitaker (2001) described five factors that may be related to the negative experiences novice special educators face during their first years of teaching. These factors include: (1) an inability to transfer learning from theory into practice; (2) a lack of preparation for many of the difficulties and demands of teaching; (3) reluctance to ask questions and seek help; (4) difficulty in the assigned teaching assignment and inadequate resources; and (5) unrealistic expectations regarding their job. Whitaker stated that these factors may be a significant influence on the needs and concerns of novice special education teachers. From this information the question begs to be asked, "What can be done to circumvent negative novice special educator experiences?"

In an effort to better assist novice special educators in the adjustment to their new professional positions, several key factors have been identified as being crucial to successful retention. Of these factors, three appeared repeatedly in the literature as being most important in creating positive induction year

experiences. These factors include: clear description of roles and responsibilities, the presence of mentors and social supports, and accessibility to adequate resources (Whitaker, 2001).

Swan and Sirvis (1992) found that having clear guidelines regarding the roles and responsibilities for novice special education teachers assists in decreasing the ambiguous nature of the job. These researchers clearly stated that the obvious role of novice special educators is not the issue (teaching students with disabilities) instead it is in fact the more latent roles and obligations that often seem to overwhelm novices such as the completion of individualized education plans (IEP's), behavior management issues, and fulfilling assigned school-based duties. By providing detailed outlines of specific roles and responsibilities, the professional obligations of novice special educators can become demystified.

Another pertinent factor that can be in place for novice special educators to have positive experiences is the presence of mentors who can provide social support (Mastropieri, 2001). It was found that the need for mentors and support expressed by novices transcended the type of classroom or student population being served. Mastropieri revealed that the teachers who were surveyed in this study stated it would have been helpful to have someone at their disposal that possessed a sufficient understanding of their present teaching placement. Whitaker (2000) found that effective mentoring programs may be correlated with increased job satisfaction and improved retention of novice special educators. Lortie (1975) found that beginning teachers infrequently asked for help, and

veterans rarely offered assistance. Therefore, if mentoring programs are established, this may dissipate the barriers between novice and veteran special educators. Glidewell, Tucker, Todt, and Cox (1983) confirmed that a lack of support for novice special educators may lead to feelings of emotional, social, and professional isolation. This support may come from several sources including other special education teachers, special education administrators, and higher education faculty. Therefore, the presence of mentors may in fact aid novices in become more acclimated to their new occupation (Mastropieri, 2001).

Having access to adequate resources is another factor contributing to positive experiences (Mastropieri, 2001). Novice special educators found it increasingly difficult to properly teach their students with lackluster materials and curricular options. Mastropieri's research found that most novices had been taught of the myriad array of resources available during their teacher certification programs, only to enter the teaching force and be disappointed by the limited, outdated, and sometimes nonexistent resources. The National Association of State Boards of Education {NASBE}, (2000) stated that novices are often given the most undesirable classrooms, with the most ineffective resources to teach the most difficult students.

Given each of these factors facing novice special education teachers, it may be possible to understand the unique culture that surrounds this distinct population. However, these factors are not to be dissected in isolation. In order to be truly understood they must be investigated with a working knowledge of the population these teachers are there to serve, the students with disabilities.

Therefore, the focus must not be myopic to only the novice teacher's

experiences, but it must also include their perceptions of their students, as well

as the interactions they engage in with their students.

<center>*Perceptions of Students with Disabilities*</center>

The research focused on novice special education teacher's perceptions

of their students is limited. However, there is a sparse collection of literature

focusing on special education teacher's perceptions of students from CLD

backgrounds. Each of these contingents will now be discussed. The limited

literature on this dynamic is mainly focused on affective characteristics and

behaviors (Oakland, Shermis, & Coleman, 1990). When teachers are asked to

describe their perceptions of students, these descriptions often involve direct

observational criteria that can be deemed subjective. Oakland and colleagues

found that a number of teachers' perceptions of their students are determined by

several factors including: (1) the student's respect for authority; (2) respect for

others; (3) ability to follow rules and directions; (4) student's ability to take

responsibility for their behavior; (5) student's displayed interest in school; (6)

student's ability to pay attention; (7) organizational skills; (8) response to praise

and criticism; and (9) manner in which tasks are approached.

Hoge (1983) found that special education teachers often make decisions

about their students based upon intangible perceptions of what they feel, rather

than cognitive reasons. This research further went on to state that these

intangible perceptions may be about the perceived personality or temperament of

their students. From this, Bender (1985) examined how the temperament of

students relates back to their disability, as well as how these behaviors express themselves. This research showed that the temperament characteristics displayed by students with disabilities are byproducts of both the social environment of the classroom and the situational context of events evolving in the classroom (Bender, 1985, 1987). Lerner, Lerner, and Zabski (1985) maintain that low student adaptability and low student approachability negatively affect teacher perceptions of their students.

Comparative studies have been conducted to determine how teachers view students with disabilities and their typical peers. Bryan and Bryan (1981) found that students with disabilities were identified as being less cooperative, less attentive, less able to organize themselves, less able to cope with new situations, less socially acceptable to others, less accepting of responsibility, less able to complete assignments, and less tactful than their typical peers. It is suggested that teachers become increasingly aware of their perceptions and the impact their perceptions have on their students (Cardell & Parmar, 1988). Pullis (1985) suggests pre-service and in-service training programs as a method of accommodating awareness of teacher perceptions. This research states that by assisting teachers in expanding their ideals of non-cognitive factors, they may be better equipped to deal with all student characteristics and temperament. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to develop a more comprehensive, multidimensional view of their students, thereby possibly alleviating negative, potentially detrimental perceptions.

Given that students spend a majority of their time in school settings, teachers play an integral role in these student's lives. The attention, direction, comfort, praise, and respect that teachers have the opportunity to provide can be seen as a vital component in each student's total development. How special education teachers perceive their students can ultimately affect these interactions over time. Wilson and Bullock (1989) determined that students' ethnicity, physical attractiveness, and gender may affect teacher judgments. If a special educator has not had numerous positive interactions with various ethnic groups, their judgment was tainted by their lack of knowledge of other cultures.

Certain ethnic groups are more prone to these types of judgments based on attractiveness than others. Students from A/PA (Asian/Pacific Islander) backgrounds are more likely than the other minority groups to be judged without knowledge and understanding of who they are. According to Bullock and Gable (2002), students of A/PA descent are viewed as the "model minority" and are expected to excel academically while their emotional and behavioral needs go virtually ignored. Because of the high percentage of students from A/PA backgrounds receiving gifted/talented services, special education teachers often assume that all of the members of this ethnic group are extremely intelligent. If a special educator does recognize a behavior problem that a student of A/PA heritage in special education is having, the teachers often believe that the problem is correlated to the students' limited English proficiency (Tam, 2002). Special education teachers of students from A/PA backgrounds will often assume the students was able to achieve if they are just given the time to acclimate to

their new environment, but this is not often the case. The fact that teachers of students from A/PA backgrounds are overly concerned with language abilities rather than behavior problems (Tam, 2002), further displays the need for increased knowledge about providing services to students from CLD backgrounds. With this new knowledge should also come an understanding of the various ethnic groups. It is important for special education teachers of students from A/PA backgrounds to be able to distinguish between the various ethnic groups within the culture, and recognize that each culture has differences in values, norms, and customs (Tam, 2002).

Another issue regarding the perceptions that are held by special educators regarding students from CLD backgrounds is in their ability to identify and accept their own preconceived notions of the various ethnic groups, and how these ideas affect the special educator's expectations of the students. If special educators have not had exposure to ethnic groups outside of their own, they may possess faulty perceptions and/or lowered expectations for students from CLD backgrounds' academic and social needs (Bullock & Gable, 2002). How special educators perceive their students directly affects the social and academic behaviors exhibited by the students. Rosenthal (1968) found that a positive relationship exists between teacher expectations, differential treatment, and student self-fulfilling prophecy. Basically stated, the impressions that the teacher exudes about the students will in fact enable the students to react in that manner. When focusing on overall teacher expectations of students Proctor (1984) found that low teacher expectations are associated with minority group membership,

low socioeconomic status (SES), male gender, and physical unattractiveness. Proctor (1984) also found that in regards to teacher expectations, teachers are less likely to direct instruction to students for whom they have low expectations and will ultimately place fewer demands on these students for class performance, homework assignments, and overall academic effort. It can then be concluded from the research presented by Rosenthal (1968), that how a special education teacher perceives students from CLD backgrounds is determined by the group to which they belong, their gender, and how attractive they are, thereby affecting the expectations that these teachers have for their students.

If special educator's perceptions and expectations have such a profound affect on students from CLD backgrounds, then how students in special education from CLD backgrounds perceive special education teachers must be addressed, in addition to how the special educator's perceptions guide their interactions with their students. The special educator's interactions with their students will now be discussed.

Interactions with Students with Disabilities

The depth, quality, and level of interactions with students from CLD backgrounds that special education teachers initiate can affect each student's learning potential. Several researchers have suggested that the racial bias, treatment, and attitudes displayed by teachers can ultimately have devastating effects on their students (Brophy, 1983; Cooper, Hinkel, & Good, 1980; Good, 1981; Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989; Rabinow & Cooper, 1981; Robinson, Robinson, & Bickel, 1980; Weinstein, Marshall, Brattesani, & Middlestadt, 1982).

These researchers also evoked the argument that the negative treatments the students are subjected to may adversely affect students' self-esteem, motivation, and academic performance. It must also be stated that research has indicated that behaviors surrounding teacher-student interactions are mutually inclusive. Wubbels, Creton, and Hooymayers (1985) stated the behavior of a teacher is influenced by the students' behavior, thereby directly re-influencing the student behavior.

Casteel (1998) conducted research in mono-racial, bi-racial, and tri-racial classrooms. It was found that teacher-student interactions were racially biased in integrated classrooms, suggesting that race may play a significant role in the amount and quality of contact a student receives. Other research has postulated that teachers often treat students differently on both an unconscious and conscious level (Billings, 1991; Grant, 1988; Marcus, Gross, & Seefeldt, 1991). This research states that such varying treatment and interactions may be passed on a perceived notion that students from CLD backgrounds have different needs and abilities than other students.

As well, attempts have been made to classify teacher-student interactions. Brady, Swank, Taylor, and Freiberg (1988) isolated teacher-student interactions into two categories: academic and nonacademic. Within these two categories, six interactive behavioral descriptors were identified. The six descriptors of the types of academic and nonacademic interactions are (1) questions; (2) guidance; (3) information; (4) corrections; (5) reinforcement; and (6) negatives. From this, the researchers found that there was a difference in the interactive patterns of

general education teachers in classes with both special education and general education students.

Discrepancies between school and home may also affect student perceptions of teachers. Phillips (1972) found cultural incongruity between the interactions of home and school for Native American (AI/AN) children. This research found that these interactional incongruities resulted in conflict, discomfort, and school failure for the students.

Given the focus of the present research, the target population was special education teachers. However, it is also essential to include research and statistics relating to the students whom these special educators serve. Therefore, the focus of this literature review will now shift to the CLD student population.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Student Populations

Statistically, the majority of students receiving special education services are from CLD backgrounds (United States Department of Education {USDOE}, 2003). Therefore, depending upon the geographic location of the teacher, it is extremely implausible that a special education can teach their entire career without serving a student from a CLD background. This student population which is diverse in two respects, warrants more in depth research so the services they receive can become more tailored to their specific needs. This tailoring of services can only occur once their unique situations and needs are understood. This portion of the current review of the literature is to address the population of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Student Demographics

As we continue to move into the 21st century, a plethora of changes have begun in the United States. One of these changes is the ethnic and racial constitution of the country (U.S. Census, 2004). The changing racial dynamic in the United States does more than merely affect the census; it also brings new dynamics to other aspects of the social structure in the country. Many aspects of the country are affected by the growing population. Employment, business and industry, and education are among the structures that are also affected. The education system has been greatly affected by the changing demographics (U.S. Census, 2004) in the country given the increasing number of minority students. Although students require cross-cultural competence to understand their peers, special educators must also have cross-cultural competence to a much greater degree given the numbers of students from CLD backgrounds for which they was required to provide services.

The number of students from CLD backgrounds in special education has risen drastically over the past several years. Until recently the actual statistics for this population was not monitored, but for the few years (1992-present) that data has been collected through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Annual Report to Congress, the data reveal the true number of students from CLD backgrounds receiving special education services. According to the USDOE, OSEP, statistics for the 2001-2002 school year for students from CLD backgrounds receiving special education services (Table 2) revealed that 1.3% were American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), 1.9% were Asian/Pacific Islander

Table 2

United States Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
2001-2002 Statistics for Students with Disabilities from Culturally and
Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

Ethnicity	Population Percentage
American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)	1.3
Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PA)	1.9
Hispanic American (HA)	14.6
African American (AA)	20.5

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education
Programs (2003)

(A/PA), 14.6% were Hispanic American (HA), and 20.5% were African American

(AA) (USDOE, 2003). These statistics include all 13 of the disability categories as

identified by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997. Given

these data, most special educators will, at some point in their career, provide

services to students from CLD backgrounds, and therefore should have at least a

minimal knowledge of other cultures. Based on OSEP's 2003 Annual Report to

Congress (2005), the cultures of the various ethnic groups should also be taken

into account as the breakdown into disability categories is researched, because

the cultural nuances of each group may in fact affect the students' classification.

Students of AA descent received special education services at higher

rates than the other ethnic groups for mental retardation (17.4%) and emotional

disturbance (11.3%). HA (58.9%) and AI/AN (56.0%) were identified as having

specific learning disabilities at higher rates than the other minority groups.

However, it was reported that students of A/PA heritage received services for

speech and language impairments (25.1%) and autism (4.1%) at the highest

rates (Table 3).

Table 3

United States Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
2001-2002 Percentage of Students Provided Special Education Services

Disability	AI/AN	A/PA	HA	AA
Specific Learning Disability	56.0	42.1	58.9	45.4
Speech Impairments	16.8	25.1	17.7	14.6
Mental Retardation	8.2	9.4	8.1	17.4
Emotional Disturbance	7.7	5.0	5.0	11.3
Autism	0.8	4.1	1.1	1.4

Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education
Programs (2003)

Although these statistics directly address the special education population in the

United States, it is imperative that all special educators become aware of the

cultural dynamics in special education. Given the zeitgeist that is inclusion

general educators also require a substantive knowledge base from which to draw

upon when dealing with students from CLD backgrounds. Depending on the

geographical location in which the teacher works, the numbers of students from

CLD backgrounds will vary. Therefore, all special education teachers stand to

receive additional training for providing effective services to diverse populations.

In the state of Louisiana for the 2003-2004 year, the numbers of students from CLD backgrounds receiving special education services (Table 4) vary both higher and lower than the numbers reported for the United States. The A/PA population receiving special education services were totaled at .45%, .73% were AI/AN, 1.15% were HA, and 52.49% were AA (Louisiana Department of Education {LADOE}, 2005).

Table 4

Louisiana State Department of Education
Division of Special Populations
2003-2004 Statistics for Students with Disabilities from Culturally and
Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

Ethnicity	Population Percentage
American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)	.73%
Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PA)	.45%
Hispanic American (HA)	1.15%
African American (AA)	52.49%

Source: Louisiana State Department of Education (2005)

The numbers for the A/PA, AI/AN, and HA populations in Louisiana were dramatically less than those reported for the country, while the demographics for students of AA heritage were drastically higher.

The variations in the statistics that have been presented, although only of the United States and Louisiana, demonstrate that cultural and linguistic diversity awareness is a necessary skill for special education teaches in the education of students identified as special needs from CLD backgrounds.

Students Perceptions of Teachers

In an effort to present a balanced view of special education teacher's perceptions of students from CLD backgrounds, it is important to understand and realize how students perceive special educators, as well as how the student's perceptions about these exchanges interact with their behavior (Labonty & Danielson, 1988; Miron & Lauria, 1998). Howard (2001) performed an analysis of student perceptions in an effort to examine viewpoints from the group that is often marginalized, the students. Waxman and Huang (1997) hypothesized that understanding student's perceptions of the variables involved in their learning environments may be more useful than the opinions and speculations of outside assessors and observers. Can students actually perceive if special education teachers have preferences in the classroom and school? If so, does this affect how the students perform?

Research has shown that students from CLD backgrounds feel silenced in the discourse regarding school reform, teacher satisfaction, and other school related issues (Fine, 1987; Nieto, 2004; Weiss & Fine, 1993). Several researchers have focused their studies on the student's perceptions of their teachers. Howard (2001) found that student's perceptions of their teachers often relied on their ability to interpret their teacher's behavior as being positively related to their academic performance. Spencer (1990) found that AA students revealed that positive relationships between them and their teachers affected their academic achievement. In this same study, it was also found that these students identified their teacher's responsiveness to their personal lives as a

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motivating factor in increasing effort in school. Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996) discovered that students attribute much of their personal growth to positive teacher-student relationships. These researchers findings stated that teachers who cared for their students, made themselves available to comfort their students, and were concerned with assisting them in coping with school and personal problems made a significant difference in the student's overall schooling experience.

Conversely, student-centered research has also shown the negative aspects of teacher-student relationships. Phelan, Yo, and Davidson's (1994) research described how students felt as though they were often singled out due to their ethnic background, cultural norms, and beliefs. Miron and Lauria (1998) discovered that students felt that a lack of caring, failure to show concern for academic success, and gossip as factors contributing to their poor academic and behavioral performance. Lee (1999) found that overall perceptions of a lack of teacher apathy contributed to student underachievement.

According to Townsend, Thomas, Witty, and Lee (1996), minority students more often reported that special educators did not care about them because of their indifference to their culture. Furthermore, these students felt that the special education teachers did not care because they were of a different racial background. As a result of the Townsend et al. (1996) data, it is important for special educators to present a compassionate and caring persona when interacting with students from CLD backgrounds. This will aid in the establishment of healthy, productive relationships built on mutual respect.

However, Howard (2001) found that while students identified certain teacher characteristics they perceive as positive (caring, establishing community, engaging classroom environments), none of these characteristics are race-specific, therefore not requiring teachers to be members of the same racial group as their students.

Research and Methodological Issues

Based on the present review of the literature, several researchers have stated that more comprehensive research is needed to better inform the body of knowledge relating to teacher's perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Upon completion of this literature review, I concur. In addition to this, it appears that an accurate understanding of special education teacher's perceptions and interactions with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds is needed to develop realistic and practical pre-service and in-service training methods.

Early publications contributing to this topical discourse included both research and non-research articles written by current or former special educators or teachers who served students from CLD backgrounds. Early studies raised methodological concerns by using only one racial group, and focused mainly on teachers who were of a racial background differing from their students. A portion of the research included in this review of the literature was found in journals outside of the field of education, including psychology and sociology. These references focused more directly on causality and relationships.

In addition to a need for more comprehensive research on special education teacher's perceptions of students with disabilities form CLD backgrounds, Tam (2002) and Bullock and Gable (2002) added that more information is needed that specifically addresses novice special education teacher's perceptions and interactions with their students from CLD backgrounds. Because this is an area that has received little attention, exploratory research using qualitative methods is appropriate. The current qualitative study attempted to facilitate an understanding of novice special education teacher's perceptions and interactions with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Summary

The primary purpose of this review was to explore literature on novice special education teachers. Particular attention was given to sources that addressed novice special education teacher culture, their perceptions and interactions with students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds, as well as the student demographics pertaining to students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds. Given the minute amount of information on novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds, additional literature is necessary. Such research should focus on learning more about this population because existing literature is deficient in addressing the affective needs of the novice special education teachers.

The literature that applies to all teachers' perceptions and interactions as a whole offered significantly more information than that based solely on novice

special education teachers. However, this literature appeared to reflect several methodological limitations, one of which is a lack of qualitative studies.

To address deficiencies in literature as identified throughout this review, this study used a qualitative methodology to explore the general experiences, perceptions, and interactions engaged in by novice special education teachers serving students from CLD backgrounds. Teachers were asked to describe their experiences as they directly related to their students, as well as any perceptions and interactions they developed based on these experiences. Teachers' descriptions and discussions will broaden their perspective and allow for the emergence of new areas of support and instruction in certification programs for future special education teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter includes a discussion of the qualitative methods that were used in this study. After the research questions are presented, a detailed presentation of qualitative research is provided. Then, I will describe my role as the researcher and address my relationship to and its potential impact on the research participants. Next, I will provide a detailed description of the research plan and the data collection and analysis procedures. This chapter will end with a summary of the methods I used to address issues of trustworthiness and credibility of research findings.

The Research Question

The research question for this study was, "How does the variety of perceptions of new teachers regarding students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds affect the interactions with those students?" More specific questions to be answered were: (a) How do novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students?; (b) How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?; (c) What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice teachers and students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?; and (d) How do novice teachers' personal backgrounds shape the perceptions they have

regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds? The relationship

between the overarching research question and the four secondary questions

can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Relationship between Research Questions

| Main Question: How does the variety of perceptions of new teachers regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds affect the interactions with those students? | Question B: How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?

Question C: What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice teachers and students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?

Question D: How do novice teachers' personal backgrounds shape the perceptions they have regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds? | Question A: How do novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students? |

Qualitative Research Design

Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that qualitative data have

traditionally been useful in fields such as anthropology, history, political science,

and social science. In a very broad sense, Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined

qualitative research as:

Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical

procedures or other means of quantification. Qualitative research can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movement, and cultural phenomena between nations. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p.10-11)

There are many ways to conceptualize qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated that there are a wide variety of qualitative research genres, each having its own assumptions, methods, procedures, and considerations. They described qualitative research as naturalistic, interactive, humanistic, emergent, and interpretive. Just as there are many perspectives regarding the definition of qualitative research, there are also numerous perspectives regarding reasons for conducting a qualitative study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that qualitative research is conducted to: (a) confirm previous research on a topic, (b) provide more intimate detail about something that is already known, (c) gain a new perspective or a new way of viewing something, and (d) expand the scope of an existing study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) added that a qualitative approach is best used when the methods are: (a) complimentary to the preferences and personal experiences of the researcher, (b) congruent with the nature of the research problem and (c) employed to explore areas about which little is known. Several of these reasons have a direct application to my rationale for proposing a qualitative approach to this study, namely gaining a new perspective of viewing something, the qualitative methods are complimentary to my personal experiences, and exploring an area in which little is known.

Rationale for Using a Qualitative Approach

To date, research specific to novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has been limited. Because limited information is available, a qualitative design was appropriate for this exploratory and discovery oriented research. In addition, naturalistic inquiry is appropriate for use when investigating participants' experiences and perceptions regarding phenomena. Because the goal of this research was to describe novice teachers' perceptions regarding students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, qualitative methods were utilized.

Assumptions of Qualitative Research

Qualitative methodology rests on several basic assumptions. These assumptions suggest that qualitative research involves an inductive reasoning process. Inductive reasoning means that, as the researcher, I will allow for the discovery of themes and concepts as they emerge through research participants' descriptions and my observations (Creswell, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Merriam (1988) suggested that qualitative research reemploys naturalistic inquiry to discover how people conceptualize their experiences and describe their worldviews from their own perspectives. More interested in process as opposed to outcome, qualitative researchers are the instruments used to collect and analyze data. Therefore, researchers apply inductive reasoning to draw abstractions, concepts, or theories from the data (Creswell, 1994; Merriam,

1988). This can be done in various ways. Based on the purpose of this investigation, I used phenomenology procedures.

Phenomenology

Given the exploratory nature of this research project, and the fact that I attempted to gain a keener understanding of the phenomenon surrounding novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, a phenomenological approach was used to investigate the concepts at hand. In 2000, Moran described phenomenology as a non-traditional method of philosophizing about exact phenomena. He posited that the very nature of this methodological construct is to delve into exact behaviors as they are brought into conscious manifestation by the individual experiencing the selected phenomena. Merleau-Ponty (1962) stated that phenomenology is specifically a matter of describing phenomena, not a method of explaining or analyzing events. Husserl (1964) further informed the idea of phenomenology with the notion that this method is concerned with describing specific psychological acts, not with the causal explanations of the acts, behaviors, feelings, or cognitions associated thereof. According to Heidegger (1962), the phenomenological research approach concentrates on the world the research participants subjectively experience. This research approach utilizes the researcher as the primary data collection instrument. It is the purpose of phenomenology to uncover the concealed meaning in the phenomenon being studied (Sorrell & Redmond, 1995).

In the case of this research project, the phenomenon being investigated was teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Furthermore, phenomenological research allows the researcher to focus on the descriptions the participants give to their cultural world, by allowing participants to describe situations, experiences, thoughts, and feelings in their own words. In this study, the culture to be investigated was that of novice teachers in special education classrooms where there is a large percentage of students from CLD backgrounds.

This research approach applied to my study, as I was attempting to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of novice teachers who serve students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. In particular, I was interested in how novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with these students. I utilized the information gathered from the preliminary document submission, individual interview, direct classroom observations, and reflections of recent experiences to assist in the development of themes that were descriptive of the novice special education teachers' experiences. As a result of the information gained from this research, I offered suggestions to assist the teacher educators and administrators who may work with novice special education teachers, so they may be better equipped to instruct students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher's role is very complex. Identifying a meaningful topic, formulating appropriate research questions, and developing a comprehensive research plan are very intricate and time-consuming tasks. There is also the added pressure to make a meaningful contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field. In addition to these basic responsibilities, qualitative researchers have several unique roles.

As a researcher, I consistently monitored my behavior and how it impacts others. Maintaining an appropriate level of self-awareness helped me present a professional researcher image. As the primary researcher, it was also my responsibility to gain entry into the selected research sites, secure access to participants, and protect participant confidentiality. This meant that, among other things, I needed to gain acceptance at my chosen locations and identify novice teachers who are willing to participate in my research.

In another role I am a learner. I took care to communicate this to participants and to assure them that I do not claim to be an expert concerning their experiences. This is related to my role as an advocate. In this capacity, I am interested in learning more about participants to understand their unique perspectives and provide an accurate picture of their world views.

The role of researcher as instrument indicates that I was responsible for deciding what to observe, explore, and analyze during data collection and analysis. In this capacity, I needed to continuously challenge myself to put my own ideas and assumptions aside to allow the true experiences and perspectives

of participants to emerge. To facilitate this, it is important for me to state my assumptions regarding the present research, present the unique contributions that I bring to this topic, and techniques for managing subjectivity.

Assumptions of the Researcher

My primary assumption regarding this research was that upon entering the classroom, novice special education teachers bring with them certain perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Helms (1984) presented an interactional model that served to explain the influence of racial identity on counseling interactions. This model was used as a basis to determine if these influences impact other social interactions besides those in counseling relationships, more so those relationships and interactions between teachers and students. According to Helm, it is the racial identity developed by the individuals in the interactional relationship that define the depth of relationships and interactions engaged in by each individual. Each of us is a unique individual who has distinct experiences, backgrounds, and ideals that impact how we perceive others. These prior experiences are constantly etching our subconsciousness, which ultimately may affect how we interact with those around us.

My second major assumption was that the perceptions novice special education teachers have about their students influence the interactions teachers engage in with their students. Concomitantly, I assume novice special educators are unable to separate their perceptions from the interactions they engage in with their students, thereby impacting the teacher/student relationship.

My final assumption was that novice special educators who have familial backgrounds similar to their students may be more empathic, nurturing, and understanding in regards to the students' personal conditions. I felt that those individuals who can easily relate to the personal situations of others may be more apt to provide additional assistance. In addition to this, the teachers may be able to offer advice to their students to help them cope with the difficulties they may face as they grow and develop.

Unique Contribution

The current research was inspired by my personal experiences teaching students with disabilities, as well as my ethnic background. Given the varied and ample experiences I have had throughout my academic endeavors, personal situations, and professional experiences, I wanted to focus on an area that was of personal significance to me. Having a myriad of experiences to revert to during this research, I am in a unique position to provide insight on the topics discussed. To review the experiences that have led me to this research topic, I will commence with my childhood and culminate with my professional experiences.

My first actual memory of positive interactions with students receiving special education services occurred when I was 3-years old. My mother was a special education teacher at a middle school in suburban New Orleans. The students she served were classified as having mild-mental handicaps (now students with mild/moderate disabilities). The mere shift in terminology for the classification of students with disabilities makes me feel old because I have existed long enough to experience the shift. I often visited my mother's

classroom throughout the school year. During these visits her students grew extremely fond of me. I can recall one of my mother's students in particular. He was very protective of me, believing that I was his personal baby doll and no one else could touch, talk, or play with me. This is a very warm thought that always keeps a special place in my heart because it showed me for the first time how compassionate and loving people can be.

I suppose the fact that my mother is a teacher should have given me some sense of foreboding about my future, but as a child we rarely want to follow in our parents' footsteps. But indeed I did, and the experiences I had in my formative years showed the natural talent that was developing within me. My next vivid memory is when I was eight years old. I had to go to school with my mother because my elementary school had records day. My day began very nondescriptly with coloring, drawing, reading, and doing puzzles. But the excitement ensued when one of my mother's students asked me what I was reading. After sharing the title of my book, one of the other students asked my mother if they could read my book. She said "no", but instead offered that I could read the story to them. I read the story with enthusiasm, suspense, and clarity. After I would read a few pages, I would then ask if there were any questions, and also inquired about possible alternatives to the plot. The students actually responded to me, they listened to what I said, and valued my interpretations, opinions, and explanations. This experience provided a solid foundation into how wonderful it can be to help others learn.

My inauguration into teaching was not as eloquent as my prior experiences. I had received my bachelor's degree in psychology in 1997, and immediately took a 2-year hiatus. Upon the completion of my hiatus, I began teaching English to students with emotional and behavior disorders at my former high school. I never thought twice about the content because I believed that my degree in psychology would help me understand and provide services to the students. What I did not bargain for was the street-wise knowledge my students had, and how manipulative and cunning they could be. That first year was an adventure, a pleasant one, but an adventure nonetheless. All of those years of pretending to teach and being empathic to students with disabilities came crashing down around me because, I was no longer a visitor in the class; the class was now mine.

But, I survived. Through hard work, perseverance, and tenacity I made it. I loved it so much that I continued to teach for three more years, earned certification in mild/moderate disabilities through an accelerated licensure program, and received my master's degree in special education.

My beliefs about students receiving special education services are simple: these students are loving, resilient, dynamic, sensitive individuals who require a little more love to succeed. Each of my early experiences was positive because all of the students I encountered had positive qualities. With the exception of no more than five students across the three encounters described, all of the students that I interacted with were from backgrounds that were different from mine. Being a scholar, I realize we are all diverse, and we must be

aware of them, as these diversities must be embraced and acknowledged, not ignored. This was a novel situation for me because until my high school tenure, I had always been the only minority child in my classes. I had never really been exposed to children of my ethnicity, so this was exciting for me. Given my personal background and familial influence I do not perceive that my perspective will resemble that of my participants. I had varied and unusual experiences that are not common to many teachers.

I view students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in an asset-based framework. This means that I look for the positive, find ways to accentuate it, and build on this to provide services for these students. I believe that many novice special educators view the students with more of a deficit-based framework. This type of thinking may lead to sympathy rather than empathy, and also devalue the person.

This is problematic to me; however, I am not alarmed by this because I realize that I was fortunate to be exposed to the situations that I encountered and those experiences have made me stronger. I have thought of this often, and reflect on it each time I complete field-observations for novice special education teachers in certification programs. When I visit their classrooms, I see where a void exists between the subject, the students, and the passion. For some, the passion for the students and teaching is not even a flame that is flickering, but for others there is a spark that can possibly be ignited if the passion continues to flourish.

As I worked with the accelerated special education teacher certification program and realized how different the teachers' backgrounds were from their students' backgrounds, I began to wonder what types of perceptions and interactions teachers who come from backgrounds that are similar to the students would elicit. It was then obvious that for it to be particularly meaningful to me, my dissertation must address how novice special education teachers perceive students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In order to effectively prepare new teachers for work with students with disabilities, more information is needed regarding their perceptions of these individuals. Without this prior knowledge, teacher preparation programs were devoid of novel teaching strategy information. Therefore, this natural curiosity emerged for conducting a qualitative exploration of novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In addition to the aforementioned dynamics that impinge upon my unique contribution, I must also consider my background as a qualitative researcher during my tenure in the doctoral program. I conducted research projects that enabled me to identify both my interests and limitations as a qualitative researcher. Conducting preliminary research on this topic positively enlightened my views of qualitative research through the preparation to conduct the research, interactions I had with my participants, and the analysis of data. I was able to clearly identify an exact area of interest, and pinpoint where deficient knowledge

on my topic exists. All of these factors have impacted how I view the current research.

My unique perspective affords me the opportunity to conduct research in what seems to be virtually uncharted territory. The personal and professional experiences that I bring to this research will challenge me as a researcher, special educator, teacher preparation instructor, doctoral student, and individual as I attempt to be aware of and balance my subjectivities. For this, I am amply prepared for the challenge.

<div align="center">Bracketing Researcher Subjectivity</div>

According to Peshkin (1991), subjectivity can be a positive factor that can enable a researcher to make distinctive contributions to her studies. However, subjectivities can also be a negative factor if the researcher does not adequately deal with the issues that may be present. In order for a pure research product to be developed, an effective researcher must create a balanced medium between the positive and negative influences on subjectivity. For this research study, I utilized memoing, peer debriefing, and maintaining a reflective journal.

<u>Memoing</u>

Frequent recording and subsequent review of reflective comments was one of my primary methods to address researcher subjectivity. As a means of facilitating a broadened perspective, memos were used to record my ideas and impressions as they relate to my overall conceptualization of data. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested memo writing to begin with initial field data and continue through the final report. Doing so offered an opportunity for me to

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differentiate between my ideas and those expressed by participants. It has been recommended that memos be reviewed regularly by peer debriefers who may provide insight about the impact of the researcher's subjectivity on the interpretations (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Peer Debriefer

I enlisted the assistance of a peer to review all aspects of this research. The peer debriefer reviewed memos and my reflective journal on a consistent basis. Upon commencement of data collection and data analysis, the peer debriefer reviewed procedures implemented and conclusions developed. The peer debriefer also reviewed data displays, serving as a resource in the establishment of trustworthiness and dependability regarding the research findings.

Reflective Journal

For the duration of this research, a detailed reflective journal was kept. Spall (1998) described reflective journaling as a qualitative researcher's personal account of the events, details, thoughts, and opinions of the process and content throughout data collection and analysis. My activities, ideas, decisions, and dilemmas were recorded in their entirety in the reflective journal. I also included a calendar containing interview appointments, telephone calls, observation dates, and deadlines (researcher and participant). This journal was used to record all interactions with the participants of the study.

Research Plan

In order to effectively study the phenomenon surrounding teachers'
perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse
backgrounds, the teachers' experiences must be explored, thus the purpose of
this study. Once I learn more about teachers' perceptions regarding their
students, and how these perceptions influence the interactions the teachers
engage in with their students, I can then begin to explore the implications for
teacher preparation.

Qualitative methodology was employed because it allows the researcher
to utilize an evolving research design, thus allowing for the emergence of the
socially constructed realities of teachers who serve students with disabilities from
CLD backgrounds. This plan was guided by the idea presented by Marshall and
Rossman (1999) that qualitative research proposals should allow flexibility in
research questions and design because these are likely to become refined as the
research progresses. Considering this, the following framework is presented as a
guide for this research.

Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling is utilized in naturalistic inquiry to focus on the variety
of realities that constitute an individual's perspective rather than being concerned
with generalizing to a broader population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on this
philosophy, I targeted a sample population of five novice special education
teachers from local school systems to gain an in-depth understanding about their
experiences as teachers of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

The participants for the current research project were selected based upon specific criteria. Initial selections occurred from graduates of local university's alternative certification programs. These programs provide coursework and support to individuals in the process of receiving their initial certification in special education, with an emphasis on mild/moderate disabilities. All of the individuals in the post-baccalaureate certification program are entering education as a second career, and are currently in teaching positions in mild/moderate special education settings. This program has been in existence at local university's since 2001.

Within any school setting, there are teachers who possess varying levels of experience in their careers. Most teachers can be compared in the polar opposite categories of novice or veteran. For the purposes of this research novice teachers referred to those having between one and five years of experience and veteran teachers refers to those having six or more years in the teaching profession. For the purposes of this research I chose to focus on novice special education teachers. Given the attrition rates within the teaching profession, novice teachers constitute a large number of teachers in schools in this state. According to the Louisiana Department of Education's 2002-2003 Annual Financial and Statistical Report (LADOE, 2004), there were 5,514 new teachers, compared with 5,832 for the 2001-2002 school year, and 2,972 for the 2000-2001 school year. In addition to this, novice special education teachers are often the population who can most benefit from modifications in teaching

practices due to the constantly changing practices in the field of special education.

For this study, teachers who have been identified as novices serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds were considered as possible participants. This decision is based on the assertions of McMillan and Shumacher (1997) that theoretical sampling is based on the selection of information rich persons and situations known to experience the concepts of interest. Since the nature of teaching dictates that many teachers serving special populations encounter students from CLD backgrounds, additional considerations related to sampling criteria served to narrow the pool of potential participants.

Narrowing the number of potential participants can be achieved by making sampling decisions that involve issues about which people to observe or interview, as well as the settings, events, and social processes to be considered (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Given that the setting, events, and social processes have been loosely identified, other sampling decisions to narrow the pool of potential participants for this study were required.

The participants for this investigation were selected from a list of eligible teachers who completed an accelerated teacher certification program. This program is designed for those individuals who are entering the field of education as a second career. These individuals already possess an undergraduate degree, and returned to the university setting to receive their initial teaching certification. I decided that potential participants must have between one and five

years of experience as teachers of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds and teaching must be their second career. For the purposes of this research teachers with between one and five years experience were considered novices. The second parameter was chosen because many of the individuals in the post-baccalaureate certification program are entering this field as a second career, and there may be specific reasons why these individuals have chosen special education as their next career. All of the participants were selected from local school systems, which employ novice special education teachers possessing the above desired characteristics.

Participant Selection

Participant selection proceeded according to what is termed "snowballing", or chain sampling. This type of sampling strategy required the aid of designated liaisons from local education agencies who directed me to potential participants who were considered information rich cases as suggested by Kuzel (1992) and Patton (1990). These liaisons worked with me in securing participants. Upon identification of potential participants, each individual completed a participant demographic sheet [see Appendix B]. This document assisted in selecting the most viable participants. Potential participants identified by the liaisons were required to fit the sampling criteria and were among those who were considered most likely to participate in the study. Although geographical locations were not limited, the locations from which participants were selected were affected by the liaisons' referrals. I gave consideration to participant accessibility when selecting individuals to be included in this study.

Gaining Entry

As a qualitative researcher, it is my responsibility to gain access to the environment within which I wish to conduct my research (Creswell, 1994). Since I was conducting research in local school systems, I was responsible for approaching administrators within the school system in order to gain entry. I initiated this process by relying on professional contacts that I have become acquainted with during my professional educational tenure.

Establishing Contact

Initial contact with potential participants was made by telephone to ascertain their interest in participation with this study. A general description of the study, including information about the interview process, amount of time required, and issues related to confidentiality were addressed. For those interested a date, time, and location, within their immediate area, for an initial introductory meeting was scheduled and a brief description of what they might expect at the first meeting was offered.

At the initial introductory meeting, participants were presented with an introductory letter [see Appendix C] describing this research. In addition to allowing time for the teachers to review this information, I gave a verbal summary of the project. I introduced myself and provided basic information about my background in an effort to establish rapport and inform participants about my general occupational experiences.

After this, I presented and reviewed a consent form [see Appendix D]. After discussing this study and my commitment to confidentiality, participants

were asked to sign the consent form, indicating they understand their rights regarding participation and the activities of the research. I then collected basic demographic information from participants such as years of teaching, previous careers, and relevant background information. These steps were taken before conducting the individual interviews with the participants.

Participant Profile

After I met with each participant and collected demographic information, I constructed profiles for each participant. The profiles included demographic information about each participant, as well as information about their experience, background, and characteristics related to their current teaching positions acquired through their completion of a teacher profile form [see Appendix E].

Measures to Ensure Participant Confidentiality

In an effort to ensure participant confidentiality several safety methods were applied. First, participants were asked to select a pseudonym by which they were identified throughout the study. Next, I ensured all audiotapes of interviews, transcripts, reflections, and signed consent forms were kept separate from one another to protect participants' identities. Furthermore, these items and any other documents and materials obtained for the purposes of this study were stored in a locked, private, secure location in my home. Aside from me or members of my committee who may wish to verify procedural methods or analysis, no one had access to the confidential information.

Data Collection

Data collection methods in qualitative research can be categorized in four areas: participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In order to gain information specific to the participants' perspectives, direct observation was the primary method of data collection for this research. Document analysis was utilized as a secondary source of data collection. A detailed description of each method includes specific procedures used for data collection in this study.

For this research, the initial data collection occurred during individual interviews. These individual interviews were conducted with each of the research participants in solitude, and were used to gather information about the participants' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. The participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts, feelings, and emotions as they related to their students. The information gathered from these individual interviews was utilized during the direct classroom observations.

Two individual classroom observations were utilized as a data collection method. These observations were chronicled according to activities, to determine if the teachers' perceptions of the students are manifested in varying interactions with the students.

A direct variant of direct observation, kinesic analysis, was also utilized during the current research project (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The principles of kinesic analysis indicate that certain body movements, gestures, and speech patterns imply additional information to what is verbally stated. The fact that

people communicate on both verbal and non-verbal levels offers a rationalization for the use of kinesics. Although the non-verbal messages can provide a more accurate indication of participants' feelings or perspectives, Marshall and Rossman (1999) cautioned that researchers must consider the impact of cultural differences when interpreting the meaning of non-verbal cues. Nonetheless, kinesic analysis can provide the opportunity to observe unconscious feelings and thoughts that may evolve during the research process.

During the direct classroom observations I documented the types of activities engaged in by the novice special education teacher and students, variety of interactions with the students, and any other pertinent information that occurred during the visit. The direct classroom observations served to inform the specific research question: "How do novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students?" The manner in which the novice special education teachers act and react to their students may add a different dimension to the information they choose to share during the initial focus group interview and reflective questions.

As another source of data collection, the participants received three prompts for reflections of recent experiences via e-mail over the course of this research study. The purpose of these reflections of recent experiences was to gain increased depth and understanding into their perceptions and interactions with their students. These prompts were formatted in such a manner as to learn more about the teachers' experiences with their students, the interactions they

engage in with their students, and how they qualify these experiences and interactions. Once the reflections of recent experience were received from the participants, the documents were analyzed to determine the presence of emerging themes.

These reflections of recent experience were used to inform the specific research questions of: "How do novice special education teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?" and "What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice special education teachers and students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?" The reflections of recent experience also informed the grand research question: "How does the variety of perceptions of new special education teachers regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds affect the interactions with those students?"

Data Analysis

The goal of qualitative data analysis is two-fold: to understand participants' perspectives and to answer research questions. Data analysis was done simultaneously and continually throughout the process of data collection. As a qualitative researcher, I remained flexible about specific analytical techniques as they are applied, giving consideration to the nature of the information being collected and the techniques that will apply to specific data.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) defined qualitative data analysis in terms of organizing and attributing meaning to the data that are being collected. Obviously an enormous task, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested an approach for

qualitative data analysis which includes: (a) data reduction, (b) data display, and (c) conclusion drawing and verification. A detailed discussion of how I accomplished these phases is presented in this section.

Data Reduction

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined data reduction as the process of selecting, simplifying, and extracting themes and patterns in the data from written field notes and transcripts. To accomplish this task I read and re-read field notes, observation information, and transcribed data, while I searched for similarities and differences in themes. Initial constraints about themes were drawn from the conceptual framework, research questions, and the personal ideas I brought to this study. It is also recognized that the activities, attitudes, and characteristics chronicled during the direct classroom observations was pre-determined based on identified variables in the literature, whereas the focus group interview was a free-flowing, naturally occurring discussion.

Data Display

Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that data displays are intended to present information obtained from data reduction and incorporate it into an accessible summary that facilitates conclusion drawing. Techniques for displaying data include matrices and networks. Matrices present data in rows and columns. The data included in matrices will vary. Examples of data displayed in matrices include quotations, metaphors, or particular words and phrases. In addition to this, data can be displayed according to time, roles, processes, or critical events. Networks are akin to organizational charts. Networks summarize

large amounts of information by providing a picture of something as it exists within a particular context. Data that can be displayed in a network include timelines to show links between points in time and context charts to show relationships between different phenomena.

Conclusion Drawing

While Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that qualitative researchers enter into the task of data collection with ideas about potential outcomes, they encouraged researchers to remain cognizant of their ideas, yet remain aware that final conclusions may differ from preconceived notions and can only emerge as data collection evolves. Initial conclusions were drawn from information contained in the data displays. Themes that were identified in the data were analyzed across all available cases. General statements, ideas, and concepts that apply across most of the participants were identified according to patterns, themes, similarities, and differences.

<u>Verification Procedures</u>

Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that initial conclusions require verification. Verification included a review of participants' words and actions to verify that the conclusions are appropriate. I attempted to verify initial conclusions by exploring surprising findings and checking for rival explanations. Triangulating conclusions with data collected from analysis, observations, and reflections served as a means of verification in this study.

Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative research which relies on measures of reliability and validity to evaluate the utility of a study, qualitative research can be evaluated by its trustworthiness. Coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the term is representative of several constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these constructs provides a unique and distinct insight into the trustworthiness of a study, and they each can operate in isolation. Therefore, for the purposes of this study I utilized the construct of confirmability.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of alternate data sources to corroborate themes that emerge from collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I utilized an individual interview, direct classroom observations, and reflections of recent experiences as triangulation procedures. In addition to being useful for verification, triangulation methods were used in an effort to enhance the credibility of research findings.

Individual Interviews

Once initial meetings with prospective participants were completed, an individual interview was conducted. These individual interviews were approximately twenty to forty-five minutes in duration, and were based around several open-ended questions [see Appendix F]. This served as an opportunity to question the participants about specific aspects of the research question, gain insight into their personal beliefs, and allow participants to ask any emerging questions regarding this research. The individual interviews were audio-taped

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and transcribed. The information gathered during the interviews was utilized to verify initial conclusions.

<u>*Direct Classroom Observations*</u>

Two classroom observations were conducted with each participant individually. The observations lasted between thirty five minutes and one hour. I recorded the exact activities and interactions that occurred during the observation period, and recorded my thoughts and feelings about the observations in a Reflective journal.

<u>*Reflections of Recent Experiences*</u>

The participants each received three prompts asking for reflections of recent experiences over the duration of this research. These prompts were emailed to the participants, and they thereafter provide their responses to me. These prompts focused on various aspects of the teacher/student relationship including, but not limited to positive or negative experiences they had with their students, perceptions of specific students, and steps in decision making [see Appendix G]. Once received, these reflections of recent experiences were analyzed to discover emerging themes from the participants.

Confirmability

Confirmability, or objectivity, assumes that the conclusions of a study are reflective of participants' perspectives, as evident in the data rather than being reflective of my personal biases and subjectivity. A certain neutrality or freedom from unanticipated research bias should exist in the presentation of conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I stated explicitly my biases

and assumptions about my topic, population, and method of inquiry as they develop or were brought into awareness. This was done through the use of a reflective journal.

Reflective Journal

I kept a Reflective journal to record my thoughts, feelings, ideas, perceptions, predictions, and hypotheses about my topic and population. I also used my journal to record activities, events, and decisions as they related to this research.

Summary

This chapter presented a qualitative research agenda designed to address the essence of novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. A rationale for utilizing a qualitative methodology was offered. The role of the researcher and a detailed research plan, including methods for data collection and analysis, were discussed. Finally, the methods that were used to enhance trustworthiness of findings were described.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from participants'
responses to the guiding research question for this study: *How does the variety
of perceptions of new teachers regarding students with disabilities from culturally
and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds affect the interactions with those
students?* Results presented in this chapter are reflective of my interpretations of
data collected in the forms of (a) individual interviews with each participant, (b)
direct classroom observations of the participants' teaching, (c) document review
of reflective responses submitted by each participant, and (d) reflective journal.

This chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section
contains the profiles that were created to introduce the participants who shared
their experiences and contributed to this research project. The second section
presents data collection procedures as they progressed over the course of the
individual interviews, direct classroom observations, and reflections of recent
experiences. In addition to this, themes that emerged from analysis of
participants' responses are also discussed. The third section, conclusion drawing
and verification, discusses procedures utilized to validate the theoretical
framework.

Participant Profiles

Participant profiles were created to provide a description of each participant, to enable the reader to formulate an image of each individual. Information utilized to create the participant profiles was derived from several sources: (a) individual interviews, (b) behaviors observed during direct classroom observations, and (c) the researcher's reflective journal. Participants were identified through the use of self-selected pseudonyms to enhance anonymity. To provide a summary of participant demographics, characteristics of the entire sample are presented. A detailed description of each participant follows under individual profiles.

Sample Characteristics

General demographic information was compiled to create a summary of the participant pool for the study. Three participants were female, and two were male. Three of the participants were European American, and two were African American. All participants met the sampling criteria which included (a) being a novice special education teacher with between one and five years experience, (b) teaching students with disabilities who are from CLD backgrounds, and (c) completing an accelerated teacher certification program. All participants were teachers in public school systems in southern Louisiana.

It must be noted that immediately preceding this research project, was the devastating catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina. Given that this research transpired in Southern Louisiana, each of the participants was impacted professionally and personally. Further descriptions of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the

participants and the events that followed were discussed by several participants during their individual interviews.

Years of experience as special education teachers among participants ranged from two to four years. Three participants, Free Spirit, George, and Sunflower were in their second year of teaching. Duke and Shelby, respectively, were in their third and fourth years of teaching students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

In reference to school assignments, four of the five participants have been at the same school for their entire teaching career. Duke, the exception, moved to his current school system following hurricane Katrina.

Information contained in the sample characteristics was intended to provide a general overview of participants' basic demographic information as it pertained to the study. The following section contains more specific details to provide an image of each research participant.

Individual Profiles

The following profiles serve to introduce and create an image to be associated with each participant. Each profile consists of descriptions of the initial contact during the individual interviews and participant characteristics. The information presented here addresses two of the intermediate research questions: *How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?* and *How do novice teachers' personal backgrounds shape the perceptions they have regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?*

I met with Free Spirit in her classroom after school had adjourned for the
day. Free Spirit is an African American woman of fair complexion and average
height who is in her second year of teaching. She is 36-years-old and married
with children. Upon entering her classroom, she was engaged in a conversation
with her school's Assistant Principal. Hearing the end of their discussion it was
clear they were discussing something biblical in nature, as the Assistant Principal
uttered a bible verse he wanted Free Spirit to review at a later date. They were
both extremely cordial and welcoming as I entered the classroom.

From our initial telephone contact to schedule the individual interview I
perceived Free Spirit to be an extremely outgoing, positive, and helpful individual.
When I telephoned her the phone was answered by her husband, as she later
stated. I could hear him tell her who was on the phone, and she promptly picked
up another extension. She answered the phone with a comfortable and familiar
air. Upon meeting her, all of my positive thoughts were proven correct. She
smiled throughout the entire interview. In addition to this, she eagerly showed me
various artifacts which her students created over the course of the school year.
Free Spirit teaches in a relatively new school, and her classroom was a direct
reflection of the overall school upkeep. There was ample technology present in
the room including several computers, digital overhead projector, and Smart
board. The classroom was neat and free of clutter, but did have various
decorations. Pictures of the students and their work could be seen in the room,

as well as pictures of Free Spirit's children. Other education related posters also adorned the walls.

Free Spirit is a middle school inclusion/resource teacher. When we began our interview, Free Spirit immediately began discussing how much she enjoys teaching. She stated her love of her students, teaching in general, and education as the reasons why she feels so committed to special education. When asked what guided her decision to become a special education teacher, she stated her first undergraduate degree was in business but that she wanted to do something she loved. She recalled volunteer experiences with various community organizations that dealt with individuals with disabilities stating:

> Before, I did a lot of volunteer work at my kids' schools, and with the community volunteering. I met a diverse group of adults, and even at work when I was working I was with a diverse group of adults. Some had disabilities. In fact, there was an adult learner I was helping through tutoring…and I would think when he was talking that these were some of the same things when he was in school. It just made me think, eventually somebody has to, so why not just come on this level and work with them?

This made her realize that if she had the patience to work with individuals with disabilities on a volunteer basis, there must be younger children who require educational assistance. She stated that she decided to focus on special education because it would allow for a closer, individualized relationship with the students.

Throughout the interview, Free Spirit would repeat each interview question prior to answering in her soft, mild-mannered, motherly tone. It was evident she thought carefully and cautiously about her statements prior to speaking. She would expound in great detail on each of the questions, and then look to me with questioning eyes for clues as to whether her responses were sufficient.

Once the interview was finished, my conversation with Free Spirit continued. We conversed for at least 15 – 20 minutes after the tape recording ended. During this time she shared more information about how much she enjoys teaching and how her personal home life helped her create a familial atmosphere in the classroom. She also shared how she was eager for me to meet her students because she felt as though they had made tremendous progress thus far under her guidance.

Participant #2: George

George was interviewed in his classroom at the conclusion of the school day. I finished a previous appointment earlier than expected, so I contacted George to ascertain if we could move forward our meeting time. He graciously accepted, stating that he had actually left school to grocery shop while waiting for me to arrive. George's accommodating nature is consistent with both the telephone conversations and email messages we exchanged prior to our meeting.

From our initial telephone conversation, I knew George was not a Louisiana native. Both his accent and dialect were distinctly different from that heard in southern Louisiana. After speaking with him for several minutes on the

telephone, I deduced he was from the New England area of the country. Upon meeting George, a 25-year-old European American male, I quickly decided his accent, which is stronger in person, was that of a native Bostonian. When I expressed my assertion to him, he laughed and stated that most people can not specifically state where he is from; they simply know he is not native to Louisiana. Hearing and then seeing George can cause a dichotomy in one's mind. His voice is in no way reflective of his appearance. George is of a medium height and build; but this is not the conflict. He has dark brown, almost black, thick wavy hair. He also has an olive-like complexion. At first sight, one could possibly assume that he was either of Hispanic or Greek descent. He alluded to this during the interview when he discussed his students' reactions to him stating:

> I think I am the closest they have ever come to a white man in their lives. The curiosity bridges the gap. Recently I had to explain to my kids that I'm white because one day they were talking about white people; not in a particularly bad way, but just about white people. So, I interrupted them and said, "Are you talking about the other white people because you know I'm white?" And they refused to believe me! They thought I was Hispanic. And I don't know if it is because of my complexion or hair color.

As we walked to his classroom, we discussed how he arrived in southern Louisiana. He informed me that he was a participant in a nationally renowned teacher recruitment program that seeks individuals to teach in diverse urban areas, and had no input as to his placement. George provided me with background information regarding his brief Louisiana life pre-Katrina, but offered

much greater detail about his post-Katrina lifestyle. He stated that a large component of his social support was derived from other participants in the nationally renowned teacher recruitment program in which he was involved. George said that he often socializes after work and on the weekend with his cohorts.

Once we entered George's classroom, he seemed rushed and disheveled. He explained that he was having issues with his automobile, and he had just received a rental car. After hearing this, I expeditiously began the interview so as to not detain him longer than necessary.

During the interview, George, an elementary inclusion/resource teacher, elaborately answered all questions. He provided detail and background information to illuminate the points he presented. He spoke in great detail about his upbringing in Boston, stating that he has always lived around diverse populations. He provided insight into his childhood living in a housing project, and explained that this had been the case for three generations in his family. He also discussed how both his mother and grandmother were paraprofessionals in special education classrooms during his childhood. He felt this offered him a unique glimpse into the world of disabilities, although he stated that did not erase some of the stereotypical ideas he held regarding this population stating:

> When thinking about teaching special education] the first vision that came to my head was, were there going to be people with helmets banging their heads on the wall? Are the kids gonna be un-teachable? What should I expect?

As he spoke, George was very expressive. He spoke with great inflection and had a fast-paced rate of speech. He was fidgety during the interview - shaking his foot, repeatedly smoothing back his hair, and continuously playing with various items on his desk. This proved to be slightly distracting because as he spoke I was considering how the transcription of his interview may be difficult given his accent, so I tried to focus extra closely to what he said.

At the conclusion of the interview we walked to the parking lot together, discussing his plans for the evening and how he would handle his automotive difficulties. George is a very relatable individual with whom it is easy to converse. I thanked him for his time, wished him well with his car troubles, and stated that I would contact him soon to schedule the first classroom observation.

Participant #3: Shelby

My interview with Shelby was scheduled for what would have been her planning period during the school day. After signing in at the front desk, the secretary contacted Shelby's classroom via intercom; Shelby promptly arrived at the front desk. She escorted me to a secluded teacher's lounge area. This was a small room tucked quietly in the back of the front office. There was a refrigerator, microwave, table, water cooler, and storage closet. Shelby and I sat at the table that was placed in the middle of the room. On the table were several recipes for fish dishes that had been submitted by various faculty members. This quickly caught my attention because it was the middle of the Lenten season.

Given the brevity of our initial telephone conversation, there was nothing distinguishing about Shelby. Therefore, when we met I had no preconceived

ideas on which to reflect. Shelby is a thirty one-year-old, thin, European American female of average height. She presented herself in a very business-like and direct manner.

After reviewing the consent form, Shelby suddenly remembered that her Principal had been absent from school for the past month and might not be aware of my conducting the research. So, I sat and waited anxiously while a paper trail outlining the approval of my study was found. Luckily, everything was cleared and I was able to proceed with Shelby's individual interview.

During the interview, Shelby was succinct and clear in all of her responses regarding her elementary level students; not offering to expound much on any topic despite my attempts at probing. Her affect was very dry, low, and unfriendly; this immediately made me wonder how this would translate into her classroom behaviors. Shelby's affect and delivery were also interesting to me given that she is the most experienced of all the participants having been a teacher for four years. However, this does directly coincide with her previous occupation of being a public relations consultant which can be seen as a more concrete, poised discipline.

Shelby did appear to require a lot of clarification on the interview questions. When she would respond she almost appeared to evade some responses by not giving detailed answers. This could be seen in the way she would start a response, pause, gaze upward and to the side, and then finish her statement with "yes, I believe that should be all."   An upside to Shelby's interview was that she seemed very knowledgeable about special education.

This can be attributed to the fact that she has already obtained her Master's degree in special education. When asked why she became a special education teacher, Shelby stated:

> I wanted to work with kids who struggled in school and to help them out. To assist them so that they can get up to par…with their regular education peers. I just wanted to help them out. They needed some teachers to work with them who had patience, and a lot of teachers left the kids who were struggling behind more to work with the more successful students.

After repeatedly attempting to probe Shelby for further explanation to her responses, I realized that our interview was reaching a natural conclusion. After stopping the tape, we further discussed how the remainder of the research would progress. At this time her Principal entered the lounge to introduce herself to me and retrieve her lunch from the refrigerator. The Principal then took a seat at the table where Shelby and I were seated. The three of us conversed for at least 15 additional minutes. In an effort to end the conversation, I began to shift about in my seat and gather my belongings. When our conversation was complete, I shook both Shelby and the Principal's hands, and promptly made my exit.

Participant #4: Duke

Duke and I planned to meet on a Saturday morning to conduct his individual interview. We met in a secluded café near the river. After he arrived and we introduced ourselves, we sat at a quiet table in the back of the establishment. When I first saw Duke, it was as if I had seen him before because the thoughts I had conjured of him in my mind were perfectly vivid and correct. I

easily identified him as he drove up in his oversized sports utility vehicle. From our telephone conversations, I resolved that Duke was a middle-aged, African American male of considerable size. I hypothesized he was large in stature based on the dulled, short syncopation of his breathing. Duke's deep, unwavering voice resonated with every word and added an intense feel to his domineering presence and intense gaze.

Our conversation began nondescriptly enough as we discussed his current home renovation issues following hurricane Katrina, which he identified as the reason for his tardiness. He also told me about his driving duties for the day as he had to chauffeur his wife to various appointments. We then discussed other education related issues, previous career choices, and future career options before beginning the interview.

From the onset of the interview the majority of the words Duke used in his answers were negative when referring to his middle/high school aged students. Every story, comment, and explanation revolved around something negative or unflattering about his students. When asked why he became a teacher, Duke said:

> It all happened through a conversation I had with my wife who has been a teacher for a while. From time to time I would stop by her class and teach them math. I've always loved teaching and there was this big discussion about the problems with education…frankly I got tired of listening to people who had no clue about education, discussing education. It is very

difficult if you don't walk in someone's shoes to actually know what is going on; and so I decided to become a teacher.

Duke's interview proceeded for 45 minutes. Throughout the various situations he recounted, he provided explicit detail of the exact occurrences and statements that were exchanged between him and his students. Duke would express amusement frequently while he spoke, his laugh erupting in a cacophony of sound as it reached its crescendo. He spoke of his childhood and the difficulties he had never knowing his father, and losing his mother as a teenager. Duke, who is 52-years-old, spoke proudly of his 34 year marriage and how he has been a constant figure in his children's lives. He stated that he often discussed his troubled upbringing with his students in an effort to establish rapport. Duke stated:

The first thing I do is to tell them about my background, and to let them know about how poor I was as a youngster. I also tell them about the fact that I have no idea who my father is, and the fact that when I was 16 my mom died, so I was all alone. I was a junior in high school with no one to guide me at that point. So, I had to make a decision: did I want to be seduced by the dark side or do what my mom had taught me…they refuse to believe that changing their station in life is a result of their own volition. Bottom line is that they believe for whatever reason that their lot in life is the best it is going to be and there is nothing they can do to change it, and I try everyday to teach them that they are wrong.

Duke shared this sentiment at the beginning of the interview. From this point he proceeded to provide ample details illuminating his points.

As our interview reached its' conclusion, Duke and I re-discussed the remaining components of the research project that were covered during the review of the consent form. After this, he asked me several detailed questions about various miscellaneous topics that he stated came to him over the course of the interview. Given that time was rapidly moving and I had another appointment, I attempted to answer him thoroughly and succinctly to bring this meeting to a close. When all possible topics of discussion were exhausted, I thanked him for his time and we exited the café together heading for our respective vehicles and next destinations.

Participant #5: Sunflower

Sunflower and I met in her elementary classroom after school. Given that I had never been in the secluded, rural, industrial area in which the school was located, I luckily began my journey with ample travel time. Unbeknownst to me, I was half way to the school when I turned around thinking I was headed in the wrong direction. After placing a telephone call to the school's office, I was assured that I was previously on the correct route; so, I turned around and finally arrived at the school.

I was escorted to Sunflower's classroom by a wonderfully personable custodian who was obviously a native to the area based on her strong, south Louisiana accent. When I arrived at Sunflower's classroom, she was sitting quietly handling paperwork and tidying her classroom. Sunflower is a 25-year-

old, red-haired, European American female who seemed delicate and doll-like in the expansive room.

The classroom was large and full. There were several desks, three large tables, numerous lounge chairs (which I later learned were a part of the reading center), two teacher's desks, a wall full of books, and a preponderance of learning materials and decorations covering every inch of the walls. Sunflower explained that she shared the room with another special education teacher, but stated that we would schedule the observations for times when she would have the room to herself.

From our initial introduction upon my arrival, I knew Sunflower would not be extremely forthcoming with details and stories relating to the research topic. She seemed apprehensive to provide in depth responses during the actual interview, but spoke freely once the tape recorder was turned off. However, she did provide detail into her decision to enter special education stating:

> I've always wanted to work with children and I was actually in child psychology. I found I was getting too emotionally involved and I wasn't allowed to. So, it kind of pushed me towards education. And then once I got into it I fell in love with it and...just meeting the needs of these children, I am here to help them with everything. They are really struggling and I am the person they can come to. Just seeing the smiles on their faces when they get it is very powerful to me.

As Sunflower spoke, her comments alluded to a sense of hope, encouragement, and belief in the abilities of her students.

Sunflower possesses a nurturing, calm aura which could prove beneficial in her relationships with her students. She expressed that her students come from an array of economic backgrounds, and that she toured the various areas of the city in which the school is located to see where her students lived. She discussed freely how she feels fortunate to have four students that she taught last year in her class again this school year. She also shared that she frequently attends the extracurricular activities of her students in an effort to build positive, productive bonds.

At the close of our interview, Sunflower shared her final thoughts on being a special education teacher stating:

I really enjoy my students and I think of every single one of them as my child, and how would I want my child to be treated if they had a disability…or not.

At this point it was well into the evening hours, so Sunflower and I packed our belongings together to depart the classroom. As we walked to our cars in the sunset, we discussed the various courses she was taking as she completed her Master's degree. We reached her luxury sports sedan prior to arriving at my vehicle, so I thanked her for her time, shook her hand, and stated that I would contact her soon.

Summary of Participant Profiles

This section introduced the participants who graciously participated in this research project. The sample characteristics resulted from the compilation of basic demographic information. Then, individual profiles were constructed to

provide an overview of my impressions and descriptions of each participant. Having provided this information to the reader, I will now discuss the data collection methods utilized in this research project.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of one individual interview, two direct classroom observations, three responses to reflections of recent experiences, and my reflective journal I maintained throughout the data collection process. Data collection occurred throughout the entire month of March and the first week of April, 2007.

Individual interviews were conducted at the onset of the research process. These interviews were between 20-45 minutes in duration. The participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and emotions as they relate to their students. The direct classroom observations occurred two weeks apart. These observations were chronicled according to activities engaged in by the participants with their students, the variety of interactions with the students, and any other pertinent information that occurred during the visit. The reflections of recent experiences were sent to the participants once a week for three weeks via email. The reflection prompts were formatted in such a manner as to learn more about the participants' experiences with their students, the interactions in which they engage, and how they qualify these experiences and interactions. An audit trail [see Appendix G] has been included that outlines the specific research encounters with each participant.

Overview of Individual Interviews

For the individual interviews I held face-to-face meetings with each of the five research participants. Four of the five interviews were held at the participants respective schools, while one interview was held at a secluded location because the interview was conducted on the weekend. Individual interview questions consisted of: (a) "What guided your decision to become a special education teacher?" (b) "What attributes would you use to describe a typical student with a disability who is from a CLD background?" (c) What methods do you utilize to establish rapport with students from CLD backgrounds in your classroom?" (d) "Before you began teaching, what perceptions did you have regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?" and (e) How did your educational training prepare you for serving students from CLD backgrounds?"

Analysis of Individual Interviews

Early analytical procedures began once interview data were converted from audiotape to transcribed text. The audiotape transcriptions were conducted by the researcher. Open coding procedures were utilized to organize emergent themes into categories. As themes were organized, it became clear that the themes could be organized according to the order of the interview questions. From this organization, four general categories, or themes, emerged: (a) student attributes, (b) establishing rapport, (c) preexisting perceptions, and (d) teacher responsibilities. A detailed description of these categories follows.

Category I: Student Attributes

Information contained in this category evolved from the interview question: "What attributes would you use to describe a typical student with a disability who is from a CLD background?" Information gained from this question and subsequent information gained from conversations with each participant indicated that specific similarities or descriptors were applied to the students. The general category of student attributes could easily be organized into three subcategories of attributes: character traits, behavioral, and academic. Each of these three subcategories will be described and supported based on participants' comments.

<u>Character Traits</u>

Participants revealed various student characteristics that they each directly associated with students from CLD backgrounds. Although variation of student character traits was exhibited by differences in participants' responses, they provided insight into character traits they see as being static across the student population being discussed. The character traits discussed by these participants did vacillate between being positive and negative, with some being ambiguous in nature.

During her interview, Free Spirit was the only participant to discuss a positive character trait she has seen in her students. She stated that there is a hopeful nature present in her students. She felt the students longed for someone to assist them in their areas of difficulty, and to provide them with the encouragement and support that has been lacking.

On the opposite side, several participants shared negative character traits exhibited in many of their students from CLD backgrounds. Free Spirit stated that students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds she has encountered have low self-esteem. She felt this was important because it may explain some of their academic difficulties, and the lack of effort put forth in school. Keeping with the idea of effort exhibited, Sunflower discussed her experiences with students giving up easily. She felt as though these students would rather give up, than try and be successful.

George and Duke discussed issues surrounding development and sustaining positive adult relationships as barriers they have faced with their students. George explained how his students have difficulty understanding, accepting, and adhering to preexisting authority structures. It was his feeling that this difficulty inhibited the establishment of positive relationships with adults. Duke elaborated on his thoughts that students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds do not trust and believe that teachers are there to help them. He freely discussed how it is his experience that many of these students can not accept that someone outside of their families care for them enough to be concerned about their well being and success. Duke further explained how he believes that this is a deterrent in the students fully committing themselves to their academic endeavors.

Of all the research participants, Shelby was the only participant to address the linguistic diversity, in addition to the cultural diversity, that can be found in students with disabilities. Her comments focused more so on student

characteristics, rather than character traits. In her interview, Shelby discussed how the looks and speech of her students from CLD backgrounds are different than the other students, and how this often turns out to be an asset to the classroom by offering a myriad of teachable moments.

Behavioral

Based on participants' comments, behavioral attributes were one of the predominant types of student attributes that evolved through the natural flow of the interview. Students' behavioral attributes, as described by participants, were typically of a negative nature. Four of the five participants addressed behavioral student attributes in their interview responses.

Free Spirit and Sunflower both discussed how they see frustration in their students' actions. Sunflower went further in her response, stating that she has found that her student "seem to have little to no positive attitude towards learning". From conversations in his classroom, Duke expressed that his students exhibit self-loathing behaviors, which manifest as outward anger. He went on to explain that these types of behaviors are continual, and that he has not found a successful method of handling these issues. These participant responses' indicate that novice special education teachers must be in tuned with their students, so they can sense when difficulties are present.

In his response, George offered clear and exact ideas of the behavioral issues displayed in students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. He referred to both an inability to exhibit impulse control and difficulty accepting consequences as behaviors he has consistently witnessed in his students. In

addition to this, he also acknowledged that this student population often has difficulty with code switching. George stated, "I am trying to get them to understand that in different places you act and speak different ways. How you speak at church, school, and home are different." He discussed how addressing code switching is a constant struggle for him in his classroom, and how this is often viewed as a method of receiving attention.

Academic

Given the population being studied in this research project, it is interesting that student attributes surrounding academics were not at the forefront of participants' discussions. Participants did describe various academic issues that impact the students' overall school success. In addition to this, participants did provide insight into the reasons they believe contribute to the students' academic deficits. Four of the five participants discussed this area, with Shelby being the only participant who did not address student attributes surrounding academics during her interview.

Free Sprit expressed sympathy in her response when she shared her thoughts about the students having been through many difficulties academically, and being older than many of their typical peers in the same grade. Through her response, Free Spirit related that she believes that if her students can at least believe they can achieve, then they will eventually be able to do so. Along the same line of thought, Sunflower discussed her thoughts that all students in the same grade would be on the same academic level. She explained that it took a moment for her to realize that this was not the case, and that she would have to

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augment her approach with her students. Once she was able to adjust her teaching strategies to specifically accommodate her students, she then began to experience success with her students.

Duke expressed his views in a more definitive manner, when he stated, "I don't care what the subject is; they just refuse to participate consistently." He went on to discuss how his students have shown him they are not interested in education, and do not want to be taught. He expressed that this is a barrier to his students' education, regardless as to how interactive or interesting he attempts to make the lessons he teaches.

Of the participants, George was the only one who specifically identified academic subject areas he found to be problematic for students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. The areas of difficulty George identified were those of reading and writing. He explicitly stated:

> A lot of the students here have reading problems, but they never received a core foundation to be literate. So, I have fourth and fifth graders and we have been doing phonics remediation. I think that's partly explained by reading disability. Also, the students have difficulty writing. They don't enjoy reading because they haven't learned properly. Writing out of dialect is a problem because Standard English is not modeled at home.

George's response offers a glimpse into the specific academic deficits exhibited by students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and how these difficulties are often the result of preexisting academic deficits.

Category II: Establishing Rapport

Information contained in this category addresses the interview question, "What methods do you utilize to establish rapport with students form CLD backgrounds in your classroom?" Participants' responses to this question were clearly segmented into three subcategories of methods implemented by the participants. The three identified as including: (a) student centered methods, (b) family centered methods, and (c) classroom environment. Participant responses that are descriptive of the three subcategories will be discussed below.

<u>*Student Centered Methods*</u>

When initially asked this interview question, participants firstly revealed methods they utilize for establishing rapport that focus directly on their interactions with their students. The responses varied in nature from specific classroom techniques to methods of relating and interacting with the students. Each participant offered their unique perspective of student centered methods utilized for establishing rapport.

Free Spirit and Sunflower each shared that they view their students as their own children, and treat them like they would want any other teacher to treat their children. These participants shared how they simply love their students as they are, and do not try to change them. In addition to this, these two participants also referenced extracurricular time they spent with their students. Furthermore, three of the five participants' responses focused on affective and personal methods for establishing rapport. Free Spirit, Sunflower, and Duke each

discussed methods that can be viewed as separate from the curriculum, yet still essential in their quest for mutually beneficial relationships with their students.

Free Spirit furthered her explanation by revealing how she wrote letters to her students in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She expressed how this allowed her to maintain open lines of communication, in an attempt to impart a sense of normality and continuity in her students' lives. Free Spirit expressed how the written communication exchanged between she and her students after Hurricane Katrina provided them with a closer connection after they returned to school.

Sunflower provided in depth explanation in to her decision to refer to her students by a prefix (Mr. or Miss) and their last name. She stated that this offered a sense of respect to the students, and that this would prompt them to give her the same respect in return. From this, Sunflower also shared how she often frequents the school sponsored and community based athletic events of her students. The time she spends with her students outside of the classroom has allowed her relationship with her students to flourish in a way she feels it could not have by simply spending time together during school hours.

Of the participants in this research, Duke was the only one who stated that he discussed his personal background with his students. Although the other participants did not specifically state that they discuss their personal backgrounds with their students, it could be inferred from other comments provided during the individual interviews and the reflections of recent experiences that this does occur in their classrooms. Nonetheless, Duke felt this

type of sharing with his students was important to show them that he had a difficult upbringing, but was able to overcome and succeed. However, he was a tad disheartened that his students typically do not believe his stories, and he then referred back to his belief that the students do not believe the teachers are there for their benefit.

In his discussion of rapport building methods, George alluded to structured methods he has utilized. He stated:

I set very clear rules on how they will behave and perform. From there they know there are consequences and rewards for behavior. Then rapport is developed naturally as we get to know each other.

It is important to note that a consistent pattern can be seen in George's responses to each of the interview questions, in that he often bases classroom success and functionality on the presence and adherence to clear, concise rules.

In Shelby's discussion of student centered rapport building methods she utilizes, she also focused on curricular efforts and teachable moments. As previously stated, Shelby is the only participant who has linguistic diversity present in her classroom. Therefore, she uses the differences in her students' language as method of bridging the divide between cultures. Shelby stated that this is something she has done for years, and has found it to be extremely beneficial for everyone in her classroom.

Family Centered Methods

Participants revealed several methods they employ with the families of their students as well. It was evidenced by the inflection in their voices while

responding, and the erect posture assumed when discussing this area that the participants felt the family centered methods displayed an acute sense of involvement in their students' lives as if to imply they have gone above and beyond in their professional duties. Participants did however express appreciation for the ability to confer with their students' families easily.

Both Free Spirit and Shelby enthusiastically expressed that it is essential to have open, clear lines of communication between home and school when dealing with students with disabilities. These participants felt this was critical in understanding their students' needs, wants, and behaviors. Each stated that talking with their students parents early and often afforded them the opportunity to avoid potential pitfalls later. Free Spirit furthered her establishment of rapport with her students' families by visiting them at home. She stated that this action showed her students that she cared about them, and wanted to know who they were outside of school.

Of the five participants in this research, George was the only to explicitly state that he was not from the area in which he taught. Because of this, he felt it was more difficult to gain the trust, support, and acceptance of his students' families. To facilitate his efforts of establishing rapport, George stated that he was thankful to have other teachers and his paraeducator to assist him. Given that other teachers in the school and his paraeducator are from the same neighborhoods as his students, they were able to help him navigate the unfamiliar territory. George shared that once the students' families saw how the other adults accepted him, they did the same.

Of the participants' responses to the methods utilized to establish rapport, Duke and Sunflower did not share specific family centered methods during their interviews. However, it must be noted that in other response areas Sunflower did discuss conversations she has had with her students' parents. These conversations were typically during parent-teacher conferences when the students were having trouble either academically or behaviorally.

Classroom Environment

The final area in which participants discussed methods applied to establish rapport surrounded the classroom environment and specific practices implemented therein. Participants outlined simple practices they felt were effective in creating a harmonious classroom environment. For this subcategory, each participant offered their insight.

Free Spirit discussed at length how she and her paraeducator handle their classroom as if it were a family. She stated that they constantly tell all of the students that they are all a part of the family, and that they all must take care of their home (her classroom). For George, classroom environment was centered on the existence of clear boundaries. These boundaries were to designate the difference between adults and children. Shelby offered reflections of the multicultural day held by her school, and the inclusion of specific aspects of Korean culture by inviting the parents of one of her students to visit her classroom. Duke's efforts are wholly focused on the community building component of his curriculum, which is taught daily. Sunflower works to improve her classroom environment by sitting with her students individually and talking

with them about recent happenings in their lives. After this she is able to utilize some of this information in her lessons, as a method of including relevant examples and situations in her required curriculum.

Category III: Preexisting Perceptions

This category represents information garnered from the interview question: *"Before you began teaching, what perceptions did you have regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?"* During the interviews, this question seemed to pose the most difficulty in answering for the participants. Upon initial thought and immediate reflex reaction, most of the participants stated that they had no previous perceptions of the student population in question. However, after moments of contemplation the participants were able to elaborate on their responses, which tended to be negative.

Three of the five participants' immediately began their responses by stating that they did not have preexisting perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. George, Duke, and Sunflower each stated that they did not have specific perceptions of this student population. George further dissected his comment to state that he had separate and distinct perceptions of students with disabilities and students from CLD background, but not perceptions of the two combined. He stated:

> I can answer that question separately, but not together because I had no
> perceptions of culturally diverse students with disabilities. Certainly
> through the disabilities I had a negative perception. The particular cultural
> diversity here I had no frame of reference for. I didn't know black, poor,

and rural. I had no sense of what that meant outside of "The Color Purple".

I grew up in the city, a diverse city, but this rural diversity…I freaked out! George, Duke, and Sunflower all briefly discussed how this student population was not something they had thought of prior to entering the field of education, but did each state that they had negative perceptions of students with disabilities in general.

Free Spirit and Shelby discussed the problems and barriers they perceived to exist for students with disabilities from LD backgrounds. Free Spirit expressed concerns that she believed this student population would possess a plethora of mental and emotional baggage. She stated that her preconceived ideas relating to this student population led her to the conclusion that it would require a "special" individual to work with these students effectively. The barrier discussed by Shelby was that of language. She believed that having students who were English language learners would be problematic in the every day operation of her classroom. However, Shelby stated that she soon realized this was not an issue given the young age of her students.

Category IV: Teacher Responsibilities

Teacher responsibilities, the fourth categorical theme that emerged from the individual interviews with the participants evolved from the interview question: *"If you could give advice to a new special education teacher, what would it be?"* Although not part of the original interview protocol, this question was added at the end of each interview in an effort to bring closure to the interview. However, after reading and rereading the interview transcripts, I did find that the

participants did discuss an array of teacher responsibilities throughout their interviews. The teacher responsibilities identified by the participants were a mixture of those self imposed, and responsibilities outlined as components of their job. Characteristics and behaviors are the two subcategories that evolved with the teacher responsibility category.

Characteristics

Participants identified various characteristics they felt were needed by teachers to effectively teach students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Four of the five participants' revealed characteristics they felt were integral for all novice special education teachers. The predominant characteristic discussed by George and Sunflower was the ability to be flexible, while Shelby and Duke alluded to knowing and wanting to work with the students.

George and Sunflower both stated that one must be willing to deviate from that which is comfortable or ineffective, and employ a different method in an effort to achieve the desired result of student success. George elaborated further by stating that novice special educators must not get disheartened with situations they encounter, stating that it is indeed easy to do so and become dejected by their career circumstances. Shelby expressed that novice special education teachers must learn who their students are, and what works best for each of them individually. Duke implored future special educators to be absolutely certain that this is the career they want prior to entering the classroom.

Behaviors

As participants responded to various interview questions, they often

alluded to behaviors in which special education teachers will be required to engage. Overlap can be seen in the responses provided by participants. Each of the participants offered their unique insight into the required teacher behaviors needed for success.

Three of the five participants stated that reading the cumulative folders of the students is essential for every special education teacher. Free Spirit, George, and Shelby furthered their statements by saying that novice special educators should not only read, but also understand all of the information contained in their students cumulative folders. George added that once the cumulative folder has been read, the teacher should also conduct research on the specific disabilities of the students so that appropriate learning centers can be created. Free Spirit continued by saying that it is also the responsibility of the teacher to adequately motivate their students. Shelby shared her thoughts that it is wise of novice special educators to collaborate with a veteran teacher in the school, so they can have a built in support system.

Of the participants, Duke solely suggested that future special educators visit the type of classroom they would like to teach. He expressed that this would offer valuable insight into the daily operation of a typical special education classroom. However, he did state that several lengthy visits would be best so that a myopic view of the classroom would not be received.

In addition to these areas, each of the participants did discuss the ability to

effectively multi-task. The participants each felt that the required paperwork and professional obligations that arise on a daily basis add to the stress felt by novice special education teachers.

Reflections of Recent Experiences

Participants received prompts on which they were to reflect upon recent experiences involving their students with disabilities who were from CLD backgrounds. The purpose of these reflections was to gain increased depth and understanding into their perceptions and interactions with their students. These prompts were formatted in such a manner as to learn more about the teachers' experiences with their students, the interactions they engage in with their students, and how they qualify various experiences as either positive or negative. The reflections of recent experiences serve to inform the secondary research questions of: *How do novice special education teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?* and *What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice special education teachers and students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?*

Participants received three prompts over the duration of the research project to reflect on recent experiences. These prompts were sent once weekly for three weeks. Two prompts were sent on consecutive weeks during the data collection period. The third prompt was sent after a week's hiatus due to standardized testing in the schools where the participants were employed.

General Experiences

The first request for a reflection of a recent experience with a student who is from a CLD background elicited a variety of responses from participants. This prompt did not ask for any specific type of experience, but allowed the participants to choose which recent experiences with a student were most poignant. Participants described an array of experiences that illuminated their passion and concern for their students.

Free Spirit	This week I worked with a student who struggles with reading. The class assignment was to orally present a poem from his/her poetry portfolio. This student typically does not complete assignments and gets frustrated. I worked with this student meeting him at his level and including his interest in this creative assignment. I remained patient and positive to encourage the student to remain on task. It was very uplifting to see him practice and practice and then finally recite his poem in front of his peers. It was one of those moments that reminded me why I chose to go into special education as a teacher.
George	One of my students is autistic and has difficulty with expressing himself. He has not been able to complete writing assignments that do not relate to his direct experience. I have had success in getting him to write about things that happened over the weekend or during and after school, but I worry that his disability will disadvantage him on standardized exams.
Shelby	Several days ago, my student with autism attempted to leave the playground area during recess. I was aware that he sometimes wants to leave the play area mainly because he doesn't understand boundaries. I positioned myself at one end of the playground with an assistant at the other. When he ran from the designated area, I grabbed him and reprimanded him with "no, stop" and sat with him on the bench for a while to make him aware there was a consequence for his behavior. I also used sign language to make it clear to him of what I was saying. He does cry, but I

	know that he's receiving an immediate consequence for his behavior, therefore having a greater chance of getting him to understand his behavior is unacceptable.
Sunflower	I have been having problems with some of my culturally diverse students. They seem to have given up. One in particular, asked me "what is the point?" I told him there is a point. That he is smart, and has too many people that are there for him, including me. I told him I would never give up on him. His attitude changed for the rest of the week. Another student went back to her old ways; defiant, not listening, and questioning the teacher. I believe this is because I was not there for two days. It got better once I was back.

It must be noted that each participant shared an experience that directly related to a specific incident with their students. Duke however, was the only participant who related a vague overall issue he faces with his students on a recurring basis.

Duke	My class is currently comprised of two black students, two white students, and one mixed race student. Depending on the day, the mixed race student refers to himself as black, white, Mexican, or Native American. With respect to linguistic diversity, the white and mixed race students spend an inordinate amount of time trying to emulate black slang and black dialect. Though I am black, most black slang (or any slang) is foreign to me. Understanding black dialect is relatively easy for me; however, speaking with a black dialect presents serious challenges.

In the general reflections of recent experiences, the participants offered a variety of descriptions of interactions with their students. Four of the five participants provided examples of ways in which they support their students academically and behaviorally. For these four participants, their comments illuminate the idea that it is a teacher's obligation to assist their students in any

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ways necessary in order to provide a positive, safe, productive learning environment. In addition to this, these four reflections emphasize the importance of how individualized attention, time, and instruction can benefit students.

One participant, Duke, offered a recent experience that addressed the barriers that can be faced by a teacher who teaches students originating from a background different than their own. The barrier discussed by this participant is that of linguistic differences. The disconnect that exists between Duke and his students may also be attributed to the age variations. Given that Duke is significantly older than his students, in comparison to the other participants, may add to the difficulties found in understanding the student's dialectical patterns. This may also be seen in that no other participants stated this type of dialectical difference as a barrier in communication with their students.

The depth of information gained from the participants' reflections of recent experiences offer keen insight to the current discourse. The choice of four participants to discuss examples that showed them in situations assisting their students directly informs the research question, *What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice teachers and students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?*, while the reflection of the fifth participant pertaining to linguistic barriers offers insight into the research question, *How do novice teachers' personal backgrounds shape the perceptions they have regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?*

Participants were asked to reflect on a positive experience that occurred during the previous week involving a student from a CLD background. The experiences discussed by the participants displayed a heightened sense of success and fulfillment in their interactions with their students. The participants provided details of experiences that vividly displayed the impact they had on their students, by being able to extinguish unproductive actions typically engaged in by the students.

Free Spirit	This past week, I received three pairs of homemade Easter hair barrettes from a student. The barrettes are for my two year old daughter. You may wonder why I consider this to be a positive experience. I consider this to be so because the barrettes were made by the student's mother for me. This token was a symbol of appreciation for the work I do with their family. The student and her family's ethnicity is different than mine; however, this week I was reminded that love is color blind!
George	My students recently accompanied a first grade special education classroom to the aquarium on a field trip. They were models of good behavior and assisted teachers with managing their classes. They were role models and received compliments from other staff members. Overall, it was a very positive and satisfying day.
Shelby	When my class is small as it was one day this week with two of my students absent, I am able to spend more quality time with each student individually. I am working with one student in particular to increase his verbalizations and speech, which is very limited. He only speaks when made, so I use a lot of things he enjoys to make him request as a way to have him practice speaking. On this particular day, I spent a lot of the day with him reading, writing, doing puzzles, and playing on the floor with toys. I talked to him constantly. He suddenly looked me in the eye, put

	both his hands on my cheeks, and said "cheeks" (something we covered during our body parts game earlier in circle time). He never talks to an adult unless told and rarely interacts with them so personally. It was nice to have him initiate a personal moment outside of forced prompting. He spoke a lot using the words "sad" and "cry" to let me know how he was feeling when he was frustrated, a pivotal achievement.
Duke	I make it a point to imbed black history and/or Native American history across the curricula and into as many lessons as possible. During a discussion of the Battle of Thermopylae, a white student asked me why I did not mention an example of black or Native American history that was similar. I asked, "Why did you ask that question?" his response was that he has learned more about black and native American history from me than all his other teachers combined. I thanked him for paying attention.
Sunflower	This week I had a student who had a change in his demeanor. He did not want to do anything. After talking to him, he said, "What is the point?" I told him that I was not going to give up on him, and that he shouldn't either. We sat there for a while, his mother, dad, the student, and I talking. After that, he has come into my class ready to learn, and he has been working hard. All he needed to know was that we were here for him, and we believed in him.

Reflections of recent experience were solicited from participants to bring clarity to the research question, *How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?* This prompt elicited an array of reflections on various interactions and experiences from the participants. Although each participant reflected on an experience directly relating to a student, the underlying meaning of each reflection reverted back to the participants themselves.

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Four of the five participants first offered detailed descriptions of the precipitating events they found to be positive, leading into how their personal actions laid the foundation for their students' positive behaviors. This was done under the guise of sharing how they in essence have shaped and changed their students. Each of these four participants specifically stated that the recognition, success, and accomplishments of their students are a direct result of their behaviors. One the five participants only one, George, did not explicitly state that his actions were the catalyst for the positive behaviors of the students. However, through interactions and conversations with George it is clear that he does internalize the behaviors of his students as a reflection of his teaching behaviors, thereby giving him intrinsic pleasure when his students are well behaved. Therefore, George's reflection is of the same accord with the other participants' in that each of them take personal responsibility, and receive internal satisfaction for the positive behaviors of their students.

Negative Experiences

As a final reflection of recent experience, the participants were asked to describe a negative experience that transpired with a student from a CLD background. The instances depicted in these reflections provide insight into the daily rigors associated with being a special education teacher. These experiences encompass a variety of school related factors including violence, administrative issues, and disruptive behaviors.

| Free Spirit | A negative experience I had during the past week involved two of my students being arrested for fighting one another during a school wide field day event. The two were eventually handcuffed and brought to jail for |

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their parents to pick them up. I watched reflectively as the process took place. I thought about them and the choice each made to engage in the fight. I thought about the thoughts they must be thinking. I wondered what affect this experience would have on their attitude toward school, life.

George | I have a student with a severe behavior disorder who can be defiant and disrespectful. He recently threw a fit when not allowed to participate in an event due to his behavior. He screamed and hollered, knocking over furniture and calling names. After ignoring this attention-getting behavior for thirty minutes or so, he relaxed, cleaned his mess and apologized. It was however a stressful experience.

Shelby | I felt very frustrated and sad when this specific student pushed an innocent classmate out of anger for being corrected. When this child is corrected for inappropriate behavior, he usually cries and falls on the floor out of anger toward me. In this incident, he pushed a classmate very hard, causing him to hit the table. His classmate was hurt and inconsolable. I am mainly frustrated because I don't know how to deal with this child's streaks of anger because he is so aggressive and so strong. It hurts me that he's getting even harder to handle, especially after an entire year of working hard with him to prepare him for kindergarten.

Duke | One particular student consistently challenges my authority. In those stressful moments, I am usually able to control my emotions. I admonished this student about a uniform violation. He refused to comply; so, I escorted the student to the office. The principal said that she would take care of the situation. A few minutes later the principal escorted the student back into my classroom. The uniform violation had, apparently, not been addressed. The student came back into my room with a smirk on his face. I informed the principal that I refuse to allow this student back into my class until the issue was addressed to my satisfaction.

Sunflower | My students are starting to give up. They have been coming in with a bad attitude towards learning. I do

not know if it is because testing is over, or some of them are realizing their grades are failing. One student misses at least one day a week. Then, he comes back with an attitude that he just does not want to do anything. Another student has been having problems with disrespect. Everyone that works with her has noticed it. She got written up on Friday. She is very angry with her mom. We talked to her, and hopefully she will be able to separate home from school.

The final reflective prompt asked participants to recall a recent negative experience with a student who is from a CLD background. It is interesting that of the three reflective prompts, this one was returned with delay by the participants. In the previous weeks, participants typically responded within one to two days; however, receipt of this reflection was longer.

Three of the five participants' reflections dealt with issues of violence towards others and inappropriate behaviors. These participants offered clear details of the circumstances surrounding the events, but in each there was no discussion of personal involvement in the events leading up to the disruptive episode displayed by the students. Duke's reflection indicated that his student has issues of disrespect for individuals in a position of authority and an inability to follow rules. From his reflection one can deduce that this is a constant struggle within his classroom. Of the participants, Sunflower's reflection can be seen as possessing qualities of both the inappropriate behaviors and disrespect. In addition to this, Sunflower began her reflection referencing all of her students in general, then providing specific examples about two students.

Upon further review of the reflections of negative experiences provided by the participants, it was shown that three of the five participants disassociated

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themselves and their actions from the negative behaviors of the students. Two participants, Shelby and Duke, used words in their reflections that revealed their feelings of personal accountability in the negative behaviors displayed by their students. The responses to this prompt offer explanation to the specific research question, *How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?*

Classroom Observations

As a third component of the research, participants participated in two direct classroom observations. During the classroom observations I documented the types of activities engaged in by the participants with their students. In addition to this, documentation was also made of the variety of interactions between the participants and their students. This information was sought in an effort to determine if the participants' perceptions of their students were manifested in varying interactions.

Each of the classroom observations were scheduled with the participants either in person during the individual interview or previous observation, or via email. Observation dates were confirmed via email. Only one observation, George's second, had to be rescheduled due to participant illness. As is typical in special education, paraeducators were present in the classrooms. However, it must be noted that Duke's paraeducator was in the classroom upon my arrival but exited during both observations within five minutes, never to return. During Shelby's first classroom observation her assigned paraeducator was not present, but she did have a substitute paraeducator in the classroom.

The specific observational details solicited during the classroom visits served to inform the specific research question: *How do novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students?* The data collected during the classroom observations serve to inform both the information garnered through the individual interviews and the occurrences shared in the reflections of recent experiences. The following sections provide a detailed recapitulation of the types of activities and variety of interactions engaged in by all of the participants during their classroom observations.

Types of Activities

The types of activities engaged in by the participants were static across all participants. Provided that all participants are special education teachers, it is not surprising that the exact instructional methods and engaged learning activities were similar across participants. Three of the participants, Shelby, Duke, and Sunflower, teach in self-contained settings. Free Spirit and George are both inclusion teachers who have daily resource time with their students. During this time they provide assistance to their students in areas of difficulty relating to their academic subjects. All classroom observations were conducted in the participants' classrooms, with the exception of Free Spirit's first observation which occurred in the students' general education math class.

Participants engaged in direct instructional techniques over the course of both of their classroom observations. Shelby did not use direct instruction during her first classroom observation; this was due to several disruptions that

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transpired the morning of the observation. She informed me prior to my arrival that the day would not be typical because her paraeducator would not be present, and that she would have an occupational therapist, speech therapist, and school nurse in the room because of the health conditions of one of her students. During the instructional portion of each participant's lesson, they all questioned their students to ensure understanding of the topics presented.

During the observations, participants continuously walked around their classrooms assisting their students and monitoring their progress. Each participant also engaged in individualized assistance with at least one student during the observational periods. This was done by sitting beside the students' desk, and providing in-depth explanations and remediation.

Over the course of all classroom observations, three participants read aloud to their students. Free Spirit, Shelby, and Sunflower read various materials to their students during whole class instruction. Free Spirit also read one-on-one with a student who required added assistance due to absences. During her second classroom observation, Shelby sang a song to her students while showing them corresponding pictures.

The typical classroom arrangement of students in desks and the teacher in the front of the classroom was utilized during the classroom observations. However, Shelby, Duke, and Sunflower did gather the students closely around them during the visits. Both Shelby and Duke used this format during their second observations, while Sunflower implemented this arrangement during portions of both of her observations.

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Variety of Interactions

A variety of interactions were witnessed during the classroom observations. The most observed interaction was private conversations between the participants and various students. During the observations, four of the five participants at some point discreetly spoke with a student. Duke was the only participant who did not have this type of interaction with any of his students. The private conversations were typically brief in nature, and were always initiated by the participants. These exchanges occurred at the students' desks.

In both classroom observations of Free Spirit, she spoke quietly with a student at their desk. Her interactions with the students were longer in duration than the other participants, typically lasting approximately five minutes. During these conversations, Free Spirit would sit in a desk adjacent to the students' for the duration of their discussions. She could also be seen touching the students gently on the arm or shoulder. In the interactions observed of George, Shelby, and Sunflower with their respective students, they would each bend down to become eye level with the seated students.

Of the four participants who engaged in this type of interaction with their students, George and Shelby's interactions were done to redirect inappropriate student behavior. When these incidents transpired, both participants would quickly position themselves at the students' desks and begin speaking to them in a calm, hushed tone. Both George and Shelby would maintain this proximity of control until the situation was sufficiently diffused.

Another interaction that was commonly seen was slight touches on the shoulder. The participants would move near a student, and gently place their hand on either the students' shoulder or back. Each participant displayed this gesture during the observations. Free Spirit, George, and Sunflower utilized this display frequently while talking with their students. Shelby and Duke opted to use this gesture in an effort to calm, relax, or diffuse tense situations. Aside from the gentle touches provided by the participants, they could often be seen in close proximity of their students. The participants frequently allowed their students within their personal space, typically when the students had questions needing to be answered. Of the participants, Duke did not allow students within his personal space. In the one instance when a student attempted to approach him, Duke quickly implored him to take his seat.

Voice tone and inflection were noted to vary amongst participants. Free Spirit, George, Shelby, and Sunflower maintained a monotone speaking voice throughout the observations. Although George and Shelby each had several instances of classroom disturbance caused by their students, their voices remained at a consistent level. Duke was the only participant who yelled at his students. On two separate occasions, Duke's voice rose to a high level as he attempted to redirect his students. Duke also maintained a stern voice throughout his lessons.

From the voice tone of the participants, another characteristic displayed was the use of terms of endearment. Throughout the observations two of the five participants could be heard using various terms of endearment when speaking

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with their students. Terms such as "darling", "sweetie", and "dude" could be heard in both observations of Free Spirit and Sunflower. Both participants regularly used these terms during conversations and questioning. Each of the other participants typically said the students' name when they were being addressed.

Warmth and ease of conversation were displayed by several participants. Four of the five participants spoke effortlessly and comfortably with their students. This was seen across both observations of Free Spirit, George, Shelby, and Sunflower. Of the participants, Duke's conversations with his students did not appear warm, comfortable, or effortless; his interactions were typically dry and direct.

During the observations, participants could be seen smiling and laughing with their students. Each of the participants smiled and laughed during the various interactions with their students. Participants typically exhibited this reaction in response to a comment provided by a student.

Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final stage of data analysis utilized in this research involved conclusion drawing and verification procedures. Tentative conclusions were subjected to several verification procedures prior to being presented as final conclusions. The verification procedures utilized in this research project included: (a) seeking rival explanations, and (b) triangulation procedures.

Rival Explanations

At each stage of analysis I looked for alternate possibilities for organizing categories and actively explored rival explanations for emergent themes and patterns. I reexamined the literature contained in chapter two and compared my initial findings with the results of previous investigations that pertained to novice special education teacher's interactions with, and perceptions of, their students. I utilized the existing literature to make comparisons and to determine if alternate explanations existed.

Several concepts that emerged during data analysis were addressed in existing literature. A reexamination of existing literature yielded support for the categories and subcategories described in the current study. However, the perceptions, and subsequent interactions, novice special education teachers possess regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds does not exist in the literature. Therefore, available literature could not be utilized to suggest alternate explanations of the current findings.

To this end, there are several possible explanations to elucidate the current research findings. In a comparison of the information gathered from each of the three data sources, it became clear that the participants placed a great emphasis on helping and supporting students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. The formation of these helping relationships was often stated early, and repeatedly, by the participants during the individual interviews. Each participant stated that they wanted to become a teacher so they could assist students in areas in which they lacked, in an effort to achieve academic success.

Linkages can be formed from the participants' needs to form positive helping relationships with their students, and the research parameter of entering the field of teaching as a second career. The participants freely discussed how they felt something was missing in their previous careers, and the fact that they wanted to contribute to the educational tapestry of the country. Therefore, the positive interactions of individual communication with students, gentle personal contact during interactions, and creating open communicative pathways with students' families further illustrate the participants' desires to form helping relationships with their students. Each of these outcomes further exemplifies the themes that emerged and were presented in the research categories establishing rapport and teacher responsibilities.

The manner in which participants chose to discuss student attributes can be seen as a direct reflection of the training involved in becoming a special education teacher. In their individual interviews, participants' clearly classified student attributes into three categories: character traits, behavioral attributes, and academic attributes. This is poignant because special education teachers are required to explicitly discuss these areas in their students individualized education plans (IEP). The fact that these participants subconsciously categorized their descriptors into these categories reverts back to their educational training and subsequent work in the field of special education.

Responses to the prompts provided for reflections of recent experience present an interesting finding in this research. In their responses participants described general, positive, and negative experiences that occurred with their

students. In the participants recount of positive experiences they each overwhelming internalized the positive behavior of their students as something they had created based on their interactions with the students. However, when discussing the negative experiences engaged in by their students, the participants took no ownership of these events, but rather externalized the behaviors to be a direct result of student character traits. This phenomenon may be due to the fact that the participants all stated how much time and effort they contribute to ensure their students' success; therefore, when students exhibit positive attributes the participants feel they have caused these behaviors to manifest, whereas they still ascribe negative behaviors as the result of less than desirable student attributes for which the students can control.

Triangulation Procedures

Alternative data sources were utilized to provide triangulation for preliminary findings. In the development of this research project, the three methods of data collection were selected in an effort to verify the other sources. These sources were (a) individual interviews, (b) reflections of recent experiences, and (c) direct classroom observations. In addition to this, across the entire research study I utilized kinesic analysis. This was done in an effort to monitor participants' communications for congruency among verbal and non-verbal messages. Incongruent messages were not observed during this research project. The characteristic of each participant, their non-verbal language, and the information verbally offered by each participant in their initial interviews was

clearly manifested in their behaviors observed during the direct classroom observations.

Individual interviews were conducted at the onset of the research process. These interviews served as a foundation for the research proceedings, providing a verbal record of how the participants felt they acted, reacted, and interacted with their students. The direct classroom observations occurred to determine if that which the participants said and wrote (in the submission of their reflections of recent experiences) would be exhibited in classroom teacher behaviors. These observations were chronicled according to activities engaged in by the participants with their students, the variety of interactions with the students, and any other pertinent information that occurred during the visit. The reflections of recent experiences were sent to the participants via email throughout the research period. The reflection prompts were formatted in such a manner as to learn more about the participants' experiences with their students, the interactions in which they engage, and how they qualify these experiences and interactions.

The triangulated structure of the data sources contained within this study contributed to providing credibility for preliminary conclusions. This triangulated structure also illustrated that such conclusions exhibited a plausible explanation for the interactions of novice special education teachers with their students who are from CLD backgrounds.

Summary

This chapter presented research findings that were extrapolated from analytic procedures to inform the overarching research question for this study: *How does the variety of perceptions of new teachers regarding students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds affect the interactions with those students?* Profiles were created to introduce and describe the participants who participated in this research study. Various coding procedures were applied to organize information gathered during individual interviews. This allowed for the emergence of four primary categories, or themes: (a) student attributes, (b) establishing rapport, (c) preexisting perceptions, and (d) teacher responsibilities. These categories were organized according to the order of the interview questions. During conclusion drawing and verification, the research scheme was subjected to procedures for clarification and validation of initial conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the purpose of the study, followed by the setting of the study, a summary of the methodological procedures, and a summary of findings. Efforts to address possible limitations of the findings in this study are then discussed. Implications of findings for novice special education teachers, K-12 school administrators, and special education teacher educators are then discussed. Suggestions for future research are then offered, with this chapter ending with concluding remarks.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the overall research question, *How does the variety of perceptions of new teachers regarding students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds affect the interactions with those students?* To satisfy this purpose novice special education teachers' perspectives were sought to answer several intermediate research questions: (a) How do novice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students?; (b) How do novice teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?; (c) What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice teachers and students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?; and (d) How do novice teachers' personal backgrounds shape the

perceptions they have regarding students with disabilities from CLD

backgrounds?

Setting of the Study

This study occurred with five novice special education teachers in

southern Louisiana. Each participant was a teacher of students with disabilities

from CLD backgrounds who reside in rural areas. The initial interviews were held

individually in secluded locations. Each of the direct classroom observations

were held in the participants' respective schools and classrooms. All data for this

research was collected during March and early April of 2007.

Methodology

For this research, the initial data collection occurred during individual

interviews. These individual interviews were conducted with each of the research

participants in solitude, and were used to gather information about the

participants' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. The

participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts, feelings, and emotions

as they related to their students. The information gathered from these individual

interviews was utilized during the direct classroom observations.

Two individual classroom observations were utilized as a data collection

method. These observations were chronicled according to activities, to determine

if the teachers' perceptions of the students are manifested in varying interactions

with the students. During the direct classroom observations I documented the

types of activities engaged in by the novice special education teacher and

students, variety of interactions with the students, and any other pertinent

information that occurred during the visit. The direct classroom observations served to inform the specific research question: "How do novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds alter the interactions they engage in with their students?"

The participants also received three prompts for reflections of recent experiences via e-mail over the course of this research study. The purpose of these reflections of recent experiences was to gain increased depth and understanding into their perceptions and interactions with their students. These prompts were formatted in such a manner as to learn more about the teachers' experiences with their students, the interactions they engage in with their students, and how they qualify these experiences and interactions. Once the reflections of recent experience were received from the participants, the documents were analyzed to determine the presence of emerging themes. These reflections of recent experience were used to inform the specific research questions of: "How do novice special education teachers qualify their perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?" and "What types of interactions are predominant in the relationships of novice special education teachers and students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?" The reflections of recent experience also informed the grand research question: "How does the variety of perceptions of new special education teachers regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds affect the interactions with those students?"

To analyze the data collected, coding procedures were utilized. To accomplish this task I read and re-read field notes, observation information, and transcribed data, while I searched for similarities and differences in themes. Initial constraints about themes were drawn from the conceptual framework, research questions, and the personal ideas I brought to this study. Verification of findings was accomplished through the use of triangulation procedures and searches for rival explanations.

Summary of Findings

Literature focusing on novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds is extremely limited. This study specifically sought to address how the perceptions held by novice special education teachers regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds manifest themselves into the interactions engaged in by these two groups. Findings from this study are presented in the following sections as they relate to the attributes ascribed to the students by the novices special education teachers, methods utilized to establish rapport with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and what the participants of this study identified as teacher responsibilities in the process of serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Student Attributes

Novice special education teachers were asked to identify attributes they found to be descriptive of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Participants discussed several student attributes they felt consistently

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characterized the student population in question. These attributes were found

consistently among each participant's responses, and were therefore

subcategorized to contain the three predominant areas of student attributes that

emerged from the teacher's responses. The three subcategories of student

attributes that comprised their descriptions were (a) character traits, (b)

behavioral, and (c) academic. The following sections contain descriptions of each

of these subcategories.

Character Traits

Special education students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds'

character traits were at the forefront of participants' responses during the

individual interviews. Participants clearly identified various character traits they

believe exemplify the students they serve. This finding is supported by the

research of Oakland, Shermis, and Coleman (1990) who found that teacher's

perceptions of students with disabilities is primarily focused on affective

characteristics. These researchers stated that teacher's perceptions of their

students are determined by factors such as student's respect for authority,

respect for others, ability to follow rules and directions, ability to take

responsibility for their behavior, and student's displayed interest in school.

Illustrations of this can be seen when George commented that students do not

know, or understand, the authority structure present in schools. This concept can

further be seen in Duke's statement, "They refuse to believe that changing their

station in life is a result of their own volition." Variations in teacher's responses

were evident in that some participants typically provided negative character traits

while others offered more neutral comments. This can be explained by the research of Lerner, Lerner, and Zabaski (1985). They found that low student adaptability negatively effect teacher perceptions of their students, which was reinforced by the current study.

Behavioral

When discussing student attributes, novice special education teachers often referred to the behavioral characteristics of their students. Hoge (1983) stated that special education teachers often make decisions about their students based upon intangible perceptions, more specifically the perceived temperament of their students. Given the subjective nature of such determinations, it is understandable that the participants' responses in this study were negative in nature. Sunflower's response alluded to this idea when she stated that she sensed frustration in her students, and in Duke's interview he added his perception of the students' self-loathing behaviors. To sense frustration in an individual is a perfect example of a subjective concept. What one individual perceives as frustration can be seen by others as deep thought, tiredness, or lack of understanding. In addition to this, the research of Oakland, Shermis, and Coleman (1990) becomes relevant again. Knowing that teacher's descriptions of students involve observational, subjective criteria one must fully understand the setting, background, and individuals involved in the interactions for these perceptions to become meaningful. This phenomenon can be explained further by George when he stated, "The biggest problems I see behaviorally with impulse control and accepting consequences. A lot of behavior problems that

focus around attention getting and noncompliance." Further evidence of this can be seen in Sunflower's assertion, "They shutdown a lot easier when it doesn't come easier to them. They want to give up instead of trying." This subcategory showed little dimensional variation amongst participant responses, which can be viewed as a constant characteristic observed by teachers of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Academic

In all participant responses, student attributes surrounding academics were not readily discussed. This related back to Hoge (1983) when the research stated that special education teachers often make decisions about their students based on what they feel, rather than cognitive reasons. This remains consistent with the previous subjective perceptions asserted by participants, but the cognitive reasons to which Hoge (1983) referred were those of the teacher, not the student. Given the deficiency of literature involving the current topic, no specific literature exists that focuses on novice special education teachers' perceptions of the academic attributes of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. However, this research found that the novice special educators were able to provide insight into the causes they felt factored into their students' academic difficulties. Each participant consistently stated they believed the basis for their students' academic deficiencies was because of their life experiences and the circumstances surrounding their childhoods. George clearly expressed this sentiment when he stated, "A lot of the students here have reading problems, but they never received a core foundation to be literate." Another clear example

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of the belief that students' life circumstances directly influence their current situations was found in Sunflower's comment, "I've always looked at my students as all on an equal playing filed. It wasn't until I started teaching that I realized, for certain students they didn't have the background knowledge I thought they would have." What is of interest in this subcategory is that the majority of the participants comments were directed towards how the students have been failed previously, but one participant did assert his feeling that students plainly have no interest in education. Duke stated, "Many of them are really not interested in education. They don't want to be taught. I don't care what the subject is; they just refuse to participate consistently. Although not a majority attitude, this was not found as prevailing argument in any literature surrounding teacher perceptions of students with disabilities.

Based on the novice special education teachers' responses imparted in this study, the character traits, behavioral attributes, and academic attributes of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds can be acknowledged as being paramount in the formation of perceptions regarding these students. The succession of the preeminent student attributes discussed by participants is clearly supported by previous research stating most teacher perceptions are based upon subjective criteria. Therefore, as declared by Cardell and Parmar (1988), teachers must broaden the awareness of their perceptions and the impact their perceptions retain on their students.

Establishing Rapport

The second predominant theme that emerged through this research was that of the methods utilized by participants to establish rapport with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Participants defined this construct in terms of specific methods, techniques, and strategies used by novice special education teachers that serve to build positive, productive, open relationships with their students. Specific literature on this topic is nonexistent; therefore, literature focused on the interactions with students with disabilities and students perceptions of teachers was consulted to make linkages to existing research. Wubbels, Creton, and Hooymayers (1985) stated the behavior of a teacher is influenced by the students' behavior, thereby directly re-influencing the student behavior. Hence, the methods teachers choose to implement in their respective classrooms can be seen as both a result and catalyst for student behavior. Participants reported specific rapport building efforts to be contained within the use of (a) student centered methods, (b) family centered methods, and (c) classroom environment.

<u>Student Centered Methods</u>

Initial participant responses helped form this subcategory focused on rapport building strategies they utilize directly with their students. Participants mentioned various methods that ranged from personal to formal. For example Free Spirit, Shelby, Duke, and Sunflower each discussed subjective techniques such as writing letters, introducing their ideas and traditions, and providing insight into the teacher's background. Rapport building methods of nature would be

described by Brady, Swank, Taylor, and Freiberg (1988) as nonacademic interactive patterns focused on guidance and information. Each of these interactive patterns is seen as being positive and beneficial in the establishment of cohesive learning environments. Research conducted by Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996) found that teachers who made themselves available to students and were concerned with assisting them in coping with school made a significant difference in the student's overall schooling experience. Shelby's choice to introduce the personal cultures, norms, and ideals of her students' backgrounds into the classroom displayed her care for her students. However, Townsend, Thomas, Witty, and Lee (1996) stated that minority students often reported that special educators did not care about them because of the teacher's indifference to their culture. Therefore, Shelby's actions would offer her students a more positive view of special educators.

Of the methods discussed by participants, George was the only novice special education teacher who immediately focused on the importance having clear rules, boundaries, and consequences as the most important method of establishing rapport. According to Howard (2001), the students in George's class may feel positively that he is invested in their academic performance; thereby causing rapport to be established in response to his clear delineation of classroom regulations. This could easily be seen in visits to George's classroom, in that his students easily acquiesced to his academic requests and they often smiled and laughed together.

Family Centered Methods

　　Of the subcategorical themes that emerged during this research, the issue of rapport building methods focused on family involvement was most interesting. Family centered methods implemented to build rapport are not foreign to special education because teachers are required to consult with students' families yearly for individualized education plan (IEP) and individualized transition plan (ITP) updates. Therefore, it was expected to materialize in participants' discussions. When participants discussed family centered methods they presented displays of pride which were interpreted as the participants feeling employing family centered methods were above and beyond the typical interactions of special education teachers. These novice special education teachers perceived the family centered methods to be most poignant and beneficial in establishing rapport and maintaining open communication between school and home. In research conducted by Philips (1972), it was found that discrepancies between school and home may affect student perceptions of teachers. Philips' research stated that the interactional disconnects resulted in conflict, discomfort, and school failure for the students. Therefore, it can be postulated that by the teachers' decisions to implement family centered rapport building methods, students will feel less disconnected between their home and school life as they observe their teachers' conscious efforts to understand their personal situations. This increased continuity may enhance the likelihood that students will become more comfortable with their teachers, thereby leading to improved academic and behavioral outcomes.

Participants clearly stated their pleasure in being able to converse easily

and frequently with parents, feeling that this relationship afforded them an

opportunity to better understand their students. Free Spirit and Sunflower openly

shared how they visit their students' homes and attend student events after

school hours. Both participants felt this was a positive way to show their students

that they are there for them not just on an academic level, but personally as well.

Although initial communication for George is not directly with the families of his

students, he does find another means to traverse the path to his students' home

life. George explained how his paraeducator is from the same area as many of

his students, and she knows their families intimately. He explained how he uses

her knowledge of the family histories as means for gaining entry and acceptance

into the families of his students. As all of the participants described their family

centered methods utilized for building rapport, they consistently indicated that

these techniques were inextricably linked to improved student performance and

outcomes.

Classroom Environment

Howard (2001) identified various teacher characteristics that students

perceived as positive. These characteristics were not specifically academic, and

included establishing community and engaging classroom environments. The

results of Howards' research provide valuable insight into the novice special

education teachers' inclusion of classroom environment in the establishment of

rapport with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Some of these

techniques were as simple as Free Spirit's choice to explain to her students that

their class is a family. She stated that from the beginning of the school year she always conveys to her students that her classroom is their home, and that everyone in the classroom is family; these sentiments are solidified by the relationship between Free Spirit and her paraeducator.

Subsequently, Duke and Sunflower stated that their classroom environment is built on honest, unguarded, candid lines of communication. These participants perceived that being able to discuss all topics and issues with their students created a sense of openness in their classrooms. If the methods implemented by the participants create positive rapport in their classrooms and decrease undesirable student behavior, this would be in direct correlation with research conducted by Labonty and Danielson (1988) and Miron and Lauria (1998). A student's sense of caring, acceptance, non-judgment tend to improve the overall interactions and relationships between students and teachers, which provides a linkage to the hypotheses of Waxman and Huang (1997) that stated that understanding student's perceptions of the variables involved in their learning environments are useful indicators of potential future outcomes.

All of the rapport building techniques described by the participants served to create healthy, productive, mutually respectful relationships with their students. Spencer (1990) found that positive relationships between students and teachers affected academic achievement. This offers credence to the inclusion of questions in the current research involving rapport building mechanisms. Being able to sufficiently identify and isolate specific methods applied by novice special education teachers can potentially provide a framework for creating rapport

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building methods that can be implemented across various settings when serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

<div align="center">*Teacher Responsibilities*</div>

According to participants, an inevitable byproduct of serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds is a heightened understanding of teacher responsibilities. The evolution of this theme was not surprising given the participants in this study: novice special education teachers. Previous research has found that novice special education teachers often concentrate on teacher responsibilities to the detriment of student achievement, functioning, and outcomes. Tonnsen and Patterson (1992) and Whitaker (2001) found this phenomenon to not be related to teacher apathy, but rather by novice special education teachers becoming disheartened due to daily challenges of the teaching profession, overwhelming paperwork, and students who present challenging or difficult behaviors. Within the participants' descriptions of teacher responsibilities they felt are paramount in their professional lives, these participants identified two subcategories, characteristics and behaviors, as integral to their serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

<u>*Characteristics*</u>

Although the category of teacher responsibilities evolved as a tertiary theme in the current research, that in no way diminishes its' importance or relevance to the study. Participants carefully identified the characteristics they believed to be essential in the effective teaching of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. The overarching characteristics presented by participants'

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comments were the ability to be flexible and a strong commitment to serve the students. Whitaker (2001) described factors that may relate to negative experiences of novice special education teachers, one of which directly relates to the findings of this study: unrealistic expectations regarding their job. The participants in this study repeatedly stated how novice special education teachers must be flexible in what the initially perceived their job responsibilities to entail. As George eloquently stated, "Adapt, be flexible; push outside of your comfort zone." This sentiment was furthered by Sunflower when she commented, "You have to be willing to be flexible because if it's not working you have to be able to switch gears and go back." These statements also allude to the findings of the inquiry presented by Swan and Sirvis (1992) asserting that having clear guidelines regarding the roles and responsibilities of novice special education teachers can assist in decreasing the ambiguous nature of the job. The aptitude of the novice special education teachers in this study to unearth their professional identity is consistent with findings presented by Billingsley and Tomchin (1992) and Kilgore and Griffin (1998) that declared the induction year of teaching is critical for the development of a professional identity and attitude regarding the teaching profession. The current participants were capable of accomplishing this objective while continuing to develop their professional identity.

Behaviors

The professional behaviors of novice special education teachers materialized as an area of substance during this research. This subcategory was

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conceptualized by participants in terms of behaviors novice special education teachers would be required to engage as a component of the innumerable teaching responsibilities. Among the behaviors discussed by the participants reviewing cumulative folder documents, observing a classroom of the student population you would like to teach, and seeking a veteran special education teacher mentor were cited as the most integral to successfully completing the initial years of teaching special education. The perspectives of the novice teachers included in this study allude to the findings of previous research conducted by Mastropieri (2001) and Whitaker (2000) who each found that adequate existing social support systems for novice special education teachers is positively correlated with increased job satisfaction and improved retention. If novice special education teachers can confidently comprehend the extensive realm of their responsibilities, this may decrease the overwhelming feelings expressed by countless novices. Swan and Sirvis (1992) stated that the latent roles and obligations of novice special education teachers such as completion of paperwork and behavior management issues often intensify the disillusioned and disheartened feelings the teachers possess.

Given that research conducted by Billingsley (1993), Bobbit and McMillen (1994), and Miller, Brownell, and Smith (1999) has shown that the majority of special education teachers will leave the field within the first five years, the current research proves to be more valuable. These previous studies served as a catalyst for the current research to declare participation selection parameters of novice special education teachers not exceeding five years in the field. The first

five years are a pivotal time in the novice special education professional's career, and can ultimately determine their decisions to remain in special education. The current research findings enlightened the existing literature by providing an unambiguous voice to novice special education teachers concerning their perspectives of teacher responsibilities.

Limitations

Three limitations were identified as relative to this study: researcher bias, sample size, and the data collection time frame. Each limitation received attention for purposes of reducing its impact on the study.

Researcher Bias

In qualitative studies the main instrument for data collection is the researcher, and because of this I remained aware of my biases throughout the entire data collection and analysis process. An effective researcher must create a balanced medium between the positive and negative influences on subjectivity. For this research study, I utilized several methods to bracket my subjectivities in an attempt to reduce biases. Frequent recording and subsequent review of reflective comments was one of my primary methods to address researcher subjectivity. As a means of facilitating a broadened perspective, memos were used to record my ideas and impressions as they relate to my overall conceptualization of data. For the duration of this research, a detailed reflective journal was kept. My activities, ideas, decisions, and dilemmas were recorded in their entirety in the reflective journal. I also included a calendar containing interview appointments, telephone calls, observation dates, and deadlines

(researcher and participant). This journal was used to record all interactions with the participants of the study.

Sample Size

Another limitation of this study was my limited sample size. Initially I targeted a sample population of six to eight novice special education teachers from local school systems to gain an in-depth understanding about their experiences as teachers of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Upon several attempts to secure participants through the use of gate keepers in various school districts, I was unable to secure the original number of participants; instead having to conduct the study with the five participants presented here. Although the final participant number was only one below my lower limit, this may have affected the research results by presenting a partial perspective of novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. The diminished population from which I had to obtain participants may in part be due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina. In the aftermath of the storm many educators were forced to relocate outside of the Southern Louisiana area, thereby reducing my ability to access potentially viable participants. In the future, I will more carefully dictate my research parameters in order to ensure a sufficient sample size.

Data Collection Time Frame

Despite my efforts to coordinate the data collection for this research at midway point in the school year, I was unable to collect data prior to April 2007. In Southern Louisiana this is an extremely chaotic time in K-12 education

because teachers and students are preparing for standardized testing. I originally

planned to conduct the research project within a one month time frame; however,

due to a week long break for standardized tests I was forced to continue data

collection in May. Additionally, the information provided to me by participants

about their may have been skewed by having been involved with these students

for an entire school year. At the time of data collection, participants had already

completed seven and one half months of school with their students. Therefore,

the preexisting relationships, experiences, and perceptions held by the

participants may have impacted the perspectives they chose to share.

Implications

Due to the extremely limited amount of literature focusing on novice

special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD

backgrounds, these findings offer new information grounded in the experiences

of novice special education teachers. This section includes implications for

novice special education teachers, K-12 administrators, and special education

teacher educators and suggests how these groups may benefit from the results

of this study.

Novice Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers serve their students in an environment that

should be safe, open, and comfortable for both groups. Ideally, special education

teachers should be nonjudgmental of the backgrounds, lifestyles, or attributes of

their students. This research has shown that although special education teachers

may not place personal judgments on their students' respective upbringings, they

did find it essential to understand their students' personal situations. As evidenced by these participants, visiting students' homes, talking with parents, and attending the extracurricular events of the students proved to be effective methods for gaining keen insight into the personal backgrounds of their students. Given the multicultural society in which we live, special education teachers are increasingly cognizant of the differences between themselves and their students. It is the hope, that teachers can appreciate, embrace, and accentuate these differences rather than using them as points of alienation and contention. To facilitate this process, novice special educators must first understand their personal backgrounds and how they impact their current views. Knowing why they hold their beliefs and how these beliefs impact their interactions with others, can abet the novice special educators in becoming more comfortable serving students from various ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Special education teachers need to be aware of the myriad worldviews present in special education students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and must understand the cultural contexts in which their students live on a daily basis. This includes how special education students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds express themselves verbally and nonverbally, the importance of family, gender roles, and the value systems, norms, and mores of each cultural group. The current participants expressed their methods of achieving this goal by visiting the homes and neighborhoods of their students, as well as by reading the cumulative folder for each student. This research has shown that through the

participants' initial efforts to understand and relate to their students, they were able to facilitate productive relationships throughout the school year.

Novice special education teachers serving multicultural populations may want to thoroughly review literature focused on the ethnic backgrounds of the students they serve. This will afford them the opportunity to better comprehend the etiology of their students behaviors, and if there is a cultural significance. In addition to this, when serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds novice special education can seek to cultivate better communication between home and school. The current research clearly indicates this type of communication to be an essential tool in creating a harmonious learning environment for the students. Clear communication between home and school afforded the participants in this study an opportunity to learn how best to communicate with their students, what certain non-verbal cues meant, and alerted them to disturbances at home that could impact school behavior. Each of the participants in this study repeatedly indicated the value and necessity of frequent communication with the parents of their students. Effective, collaborative, mutually respectful relationships can aid in providing a secure balance for the students. The development of this type of relationship must be done with consideration to the academic and behavioral needs of the student, cultural norms of the students' family, education level of the parents or guardians, and needs of the family. If each of these aspects are appraised and accounted for, a positive communication pathway can be developed and sustained by the novice special education teacher.

K-12 School Administrators

K-12 school administrators play an integral role in the professional development of novice special education teachers. It is up to the discretion of the administrators to determine the usage of mentoring programs, professional development workshops, and school/home collaborative programs. Therefore it is of paramount importance that K-12 administrators understand the magnitude of their decision making in retention and recruitment of novice special education teachers.

Since K-12 school administrators serve as conduits for facilitating teachers' in-service professional development, they must carefully consider how best to provide needed training opportunities to novice teachers. School administrators may benefit in increasing their knowledge of the obstacles faced by novice special education teachers, and how these difficulties influence both the teachers and students whom they serve. Additionally, K-12 school administrators may utilize findings from this investigation to develop mentoring programs that pair novice special educators with a veteran special educator. This process can be elucidated by the school administrators stating the outcomes they wish to see evolve from the mentoring relationships in regards to student development.

Special Education Teacher Educators

The task of educating and supervising future special education teachers can be monumental when viewed in respect to the fragile nature of the students with disabilities ultimately being served. Special education teacher educators

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provide guidance and supervision to prospective special educators who aspire to teach students with disabilities. The findings of this study can be used to revise the curriculum of special education teacher training programs by providing greater depth into the (a) possible student attributes to be encountered in the classroom, (b) methods to adequately and effectively establish and maintain rapport with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and (c) the enormity of responsibilities facing special education teachers. Special education teacher educators may want to explore various field experience settings in which to place future special education teachers, in an effort to expose them to the plethora of possible situations they may encounter.

Specifically, special education teacher educators may want to include detailed discussions of techniques, strategies, and methods to use in serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. These results may prompt open dialogue between special education teacher educators and future special education teachers regarding the multiplicity of student characteristics that can be encountered in a school setting. Special education teacher educators may also find ways to reemphasize the need to develop empathetic understanding for the diverse needs, backgrounds, and abilities of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Similarly, these research findings can help expand the meaning of multiculturalism in special education, and enable special education teacher educators to introduce novel methods for accommodating the diversities present in today's students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

Suggestions for Future Research

From conception, this research project was intended to address the lack of formal literature focused on novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and the subsequent interactions evolving from these perceptions. In this endeavor, this exploratory study discovered that novice special education teachers employ common descriptors when characterizing and categorizing their perceptions, interactions, and experiences relating to students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Qualitative methods were utilized to investigate the current phenomenon. By building on these current findings, more research could contribute to the knowledge base in this still under researched area.

A logical first step in future research would be to explore the perspectives of veteran special education teachers surrounding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. This would provide an eloquent juxtaposition of the perspectives of special education teachers at varying stages in their professional careers. Within group differences could also be assessed through investigations of disparity at the elementary, middle, and senior high school levels.

Similarly, research on the socialization processes of special education teachers and the professional culture could provide insight into the impact collegial relationships play in the development of perceptions of students. Furthermore, qualitative studies may be useful in analyzing the communication styles, both verbal and non-verbal, of special education teachers when interacting with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. A study with

this focus could easily segue into the discrepancy between how teachers believe they perform, and how students perceive their actions.

Another variation of this study could be isolated to examine how special education teachers of singular genders and races interact with students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Participants in this type of investigation would posses the same gender and/or race, and their perceptions, experiences, and interactions with the students could be dissected to determine the similarities and differences within, and across, specific gender or racial group varies in their perspectives. Each of these potential future research areas would provide invaluable insight for service providers of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds on various levels, by offering new directions in training, service delivery, and services needed to effectively accommodate the needs of both the students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds and special education teachers.

In each case, the findings of this research could serve as a pivotal starting point for future research and may lead to the development of effective educational training programs to address the spectrum of needs of special education teachers serving students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. Given the personal nature of these types of investigations, qualitative methods would remain the preferred method of collecting and analyzing information. Because each of these areas have received little attention, research undertakings emphasizing the students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds and special education teacher relationships would prove beneficial to both populations.

Concluding Remarks

This research was important to me because of my commitment of providing service to individuals with disabilities, advocating on behalf of individuals whose voices have been marginalized, and offering adequate training to teachers who serve students with disabilities. Throughout my studies, I noticed the glaring absence of literature focusing on the perceptions held by teachers regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and how these perceptions influence the interactions engaged in with these students. Given my previous history with novice teachers, it became abundantly clear that this would be the population to best allow my investigation of this phenomenon. Therefore, I was prompted to formulate a study that would elucidate the novice special education teacher perspective of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds.

The results of this research project are a response to the lack of information on novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds, and the subsequent interactions engaged in between these two populations. Because research on novice special education teachers is skewed towards all students in general, alternative methods were in order. This need prompted the current study which sought to illuminate the experiences, thoughts, and ideas of novice special education teachers. Qualitative methods were the tools that allowed the teacher's perspectives to be heard. Thus, it was their voices that answered the research questions that guided this study.

Finally, this research project has awakened my inner researcher; I was exposed to research in a unique way being the major instrument of data collection and analysis. I am certainly well under way to finding my exceptional voice as a qualitative researcher specifically, but more importantly as an investigator of the phenomenon surrounding novice special education teachers and students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. This research endeavor was an expression of a passion I have sensed within for many years, and it was deeply fulfilling to finally see it come to fruition.

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APPENDIX A

Human Subjects Approval

*University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans*

(please refer to this number in all future correspondence concerning this protocol)
Principal Investigator: Mary Cronin   Title: Professor

Department: Special Education & Habilitative Services   **College:** Education

Project Title: A naturalistic observation of novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Dates of Proposed Project Period   From: April 10, 2006
Approval Status:
Full Board Review
Expedite
Exempt

Full Board Review   Approved Date
Expedite   Deferred Date:
Exempt   Disapproved Date:
Project requires review more than annually. Review every _____ months.
approval is for lyear from approval date only and may be renewed yearly.

1st continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:
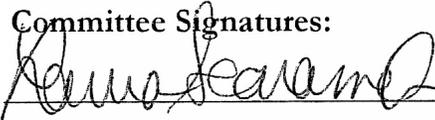
2 continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

3rd continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

4th continuation Signature of IRB Chair   Date:

Committee Signatures:

	Laura Scaramella, Ph.D. (Chair)
	Pamela Jenkins, Ph.D.
	Anthony Kontos, Ph.D. (Associate chair)
	Richard B. Speaker, Ph.D.
	Gary Talarchek, Ph.D.
	Kari Walsh
	Kathleen Whalen, LCSW
	L. Allen Witt, Ph.D.
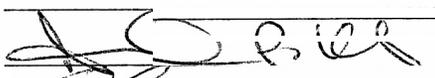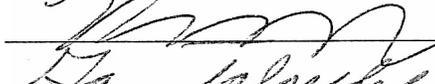
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APPENDIX B

Participant Demographic Sheet

UNIVERSITY of NEW ORLEANS

**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND HABILITATIVE SERVICES**

Participant Demographic Sheet

Name: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Contact Phone Numbers: (1) _____
                                        (2) _____

Current School Assignment: _____

Student Population Served: _____

Number of Years Teaching: _____

Year of Certification: _____

University Granting Certification: _____

Previous Professions: _____

Please indicate your availability by circling the three (3) most convenient choices:
Monday 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Thursday 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturday 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Saturday 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sunday 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Sunday 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

246 Bicentennial Education Center Lakefront Campus 2000 Lakeshore Drive New Orleans, Louisiana 70148 504.280.6609 Fax 504.280.5588
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APPENDIX C

Introductory Letters

**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND HABILITATIVE SERVICES**

Research Participant Introductory Letter

Thursday, February 23, 2006

Potential Research Participant
Education Street
Learning, Louisiana 70000

Research Participant:
As a doctoral student, I am responsible for gaining extensive experience with the methods and procedures used to conduct independent research. In accordance with the guidelines for completing my dissertation, I am pleased to be conducting a research project based on novice teacher's perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. I am specifically interested in how novice teachers view their students who are from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and how these perceptions guide the interactions the teachers engage in with their students. By learning how you feel about this critical and timely topic, I hope to contribute to the professional knowledge base on this important topic. This information may be used to enhance training, support, and supervision given to teachers who work with students with disabilities who are from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
You may be surprised that there have been limited studies focusing on novice teacher's perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. One of the goals of this project is to gain insight from those individuals who are in daily contact with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. I would like to conduct an interview with you within the next few weeks. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. I completely understand if you wish to refrain from participating in the current project.
I would like to offer you some insight into what your participation would entail. The research period is projected to last approximately one month. During this time you would be asked to participate in three components: (1) a 60-90 minute focus group interview to be held at the onset of the research, (2) two 45-60 minute classroom observations approximately two weeks apart, and (3) responding to three reflective questions, once a week for the duration of the research. The focus group interview would occur with the other research participants, while the other two components would occur in isolation.
I hope that you will choose to be a part of this important work, and I look forward to an opportunity to talk with you. I believe that sharing your insights will make a valuable contribution to this research. I was contacting you via telephone and/or email within the upcoming week to ascertain whether or not you are interested in participating. You are welcomed to contact me at any time should you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this project. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Research Investigator:	Research Advisor:
Sassy C. Wheeler, M.Ed.	Dr. Mary E. Cronin, Professor
University of New Orleans	University of New Orleans
Dept. of Special Education &	Dept. of Special Education &
Habilitative Services	Habilitative Services
Phone Number: (504) 621-1110	Phone Number: (504) 280-6609
swheeler@uno.edu	mcronin@uno.edu

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**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND HABILITATIVE SERVICES**

District Superintendent Introductory Letter

Thursday, February 23, 2006

District Superintendent
Education Street
Learning, Louisiana 70000

District Superintendent:

As a doctoral student, I am responsible for gaining extensive experience with the methods and procedures used to conduct independent research. In accordance with the guidelines for completing my dissertation, I am pleased to be conducting a research project based on novice teacher's perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. I am specifically interested in how novice teachers view their students who are from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and how these perceptions guide the interactions the teachers engage in with their students. By learning how novice teachers feel about this critical and timely topic, I hope to contribute to the professional knowledge base on this important topic. This information may be used to enhance training, support, and supervision given to teachers who work with students with disabilities who are from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

You may be surprised that there have been limited studies focusing on novice teacher's perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. One of the goals of this project is to gain insight from those individuals who are in daily contact with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. I would like to conduct this research with a few teachers in your district within the next few weeks. Your decision to allow your teachers to participate in this project is entirely voluntary; I completely understand if you wish to refrain from participating in the current project.

I would like to offer you some insight into what your teacher's participation would entail. The research period is projected to last approximately one month. During this time the teachers would be asked to participate in three components: (1) a 60-90 minute focus group interview to be held at the onset of the research, (2) two 45-60 minute classroom observations approximately two weeks apart, and (3) responding to three reflective questions, once a week for the duration of the research. The focus group interview would occur with the all of the research participants, while the other two components would occur in isolation.

I hope you will allow your teachers to be a part of this important work, and I look forward to an opportunity to talk with you. I was contacting you via telephone and/or email within the upcoming week to ascertain whether or not you are interested in allowing your teachers to participate. You are welcomed to contact me at any time should you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this project. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Research Investigator:	**Research Advisor**:
Sassy C. Wheeler, M.Ed.	Dr. Mary E. Cronin, Professor
University of New Orleans	University of New Orleans
Dept. of Special Education &	Dept. of Special Education &
Habilitative Services	Habilitative Services
Phone Number: (504) 621-1110	Phone Number: (504) 280-6609
swheeler@uno.edu	mcronin@uno.edu

APPENDIX D

Research Consent Forms

**UNIVERSITY of
NEW ORLEANS**

**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND HABILITATIVE SERVICES**
<u>**Statement of Informed Consent**</u>

**A Naturalistic Observation of Novice Special Education Teachers'
Perceptions of Students With Disabilities From Culturally and Linguistically
Diverse Backgrounds**

<u>**Investigator:**</u> Sassy C. Wheeler, M.Ed. , Doctoral Student
University of New Orleans
Department of Special Education and Habilitative Services
(504) 621-1110
<u>**Supervisor**</u>: Mary E. Cronin, Ph.D., Professor
University of New Orleans
Department of Special Education and Habilitative Services
(504) 280-6609

You are invited to participate in a research study. Prior to deciding to participate in this study, you need to know and understand the risks and benefits associated with your participation in this study. This consent form tells you about this study. If you have any questions, please ask the investigator. Signing this form means you agree to participate in this study.
Why are you doing this study? The purpose of this research study is to effectively understand the phenomenon surrounding the experiences of novice special education teachers', and their perceptions of students with disabilities who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

What do we have to do? Novice special education teachers, such as yourself, are being solicited to describe, explore, and discuss their experiences in serving students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion. This focus group will be conducted with all of the research participants, and will be used to gather information about your perceptions of students with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The duration of the focus group will be between 60-90 minutes, and will occur at the onset of the research project.

In addition to this, you will also participate in two classroom observations, lasting approximately one hour each. These observations will be chronicled according to activities, to determine if your perceptions of the students are manifested in varying interactions with the students. These observations will occur at least every other week during the research period.

Finally, you will also receive three reflective questions via e-mail over the course of the research study. The purpose of these reflective questions is to gain

increased depth and understanding into their perceptions and interactions with their students. The reflective questions will be distributed once a week for three weeks, and should be at least one paragraph in length; answering one of the reflective questions should take approximately 30 minutes.

What are the risks or discomforts I may experience? It is not expected that you will exposed to any risks or discomforts. However, if you begin to display signs of emotional distress or fatigue, the Investigator will gladly discuss any discomforts with you. Please be mindful that all aspects of your participation in this study are voluntary.

What are the benefits to me? By participating in this study, you are serving to inform the body of knowledge that exists relating to novice special education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Are there alternative procedures for participating in this study? There are no alternative procedures. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence.

Will my information be kept confidential? Yes, all information will be kept confidential**.** In an effort to ensure your confidentiality several safety methods will be applied. First, you will be asked to select a pseudonym by which you will be identified throughout the study. Next, I will ensure all audiotapes of interviews, transcripts, reflections, and signed consent forms will be kept separate from one another to protect your identity. Furthermore, these items and any other documents and materials obtained for the purposes of this study will be stored in a locked, private, secure location in my home.

Signatures and Consent to Participate
By signing this consent form, you are giving your permission to participate in this study. You also agree that this study has been explained to you and your questions have been answered. You do not forfeit any rights by signing this consent form, and you will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Name of Participant (Print)

I have carefully explained the nature of this study to the above named participant.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Permission to Reproduce Research Materials

I, **Sassy C. Wheeler**, am requesting permission to reproduce the

following measure(s): **Table: Counseling Relationships Based On Racial Identity Stages** as seen in "Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice" by Janet E. Helms

I agree that in exchange for permission to reproduce the scales that I have listed, I will provide Dr. Janet Helms with the raw data involving her measures. Raw data means participants' response to each item rather than scaled scores. I also agree to collect demographic data from respondents to the measures including (but not limited to) the following: **age, gender, ethnicity (e.g., Haitian, Italian, etc.), socioeconomic status, percentage of the respondents' last school (e.g. high school if the person is now in college) or work environment who were of his or her ethnicity.** Please also include a copy of the version of the measure used in your study. I understand that permission to reproduce the measures will only be granted for the project that I have described herein and that if I wish to reproduce the measures for other projects, I must obtain additional approval. I also understand this agreement does not include permission to publish the measure(s) in a journal or on-line.

_____   Thursday, February 23, 2006
Signature of the Requester   Date

Sassy C. Wheeler
Printed name of Requester

4980 Lower Zachary Road #59   Zachary, Louisiana 70791
Mailing address

(504) 621-1110   (225) 570-2062   (225) 280-5588   swheeler@uno.edu
Telephone: cell   Telephone: home   Fax   Email

_____   Thursday, February 23, 2006
Advisor's signature   Date

Dr. Mary E. Cronin   Professor   University of New Orleans
Printed Name of Advisor   Title   Organization

University of New Orleans, Lakefront Campus – Department of Special Education & Habilitative Services   New Orleans, Louisiana 70148
Mailing address

(504) 280-6609   (504) 835-7246   (504) 280-5588   mcronin@uno.edu
Telephone: work   Telephone: home   Fax   Email

I, Janet E. Helms, give the above signed person permission to reproduce _____
_____for the above-described project.

_____
Janet E. Helms   Date
PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO:
Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture
Department of Counseling Psychology
Campion 318, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, 02467
Telephone: 617-552-2482, ext. 1   FAX: 617-552-1981   Email: isprc@bc.edu

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University of New Orleans

5/8/2006

University of New Orleans
Ms Sassy Wheeler
Lakefront Campus
Dept of Special Ed and Habilitative Sen ices
New Orleans. Louisiana 70148

Your title: *A NA TURALISTIC OBSERVATION OF NOVICE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS*
Publisher: UMI COMPANY

Dear Ms Wheeler:

Thank yon for your recent request (copy attached) for permission to Reprint material from pages Table: Counseling Relationships Based on Racial Identity in *Black and White Racial Identity* (GP 2/15/1990).

We are pleased to grant permission for use of materials described in your request, subject to the following conditions:

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APPENDIX E

Participant Profile Form

UNIVERSITY of NEW ORLEANS

**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
AND HABILITATIVE SERVICES**

Participant Profile Form

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____

E-Mail: _____

Contact Phone Numbers: (1) _____
(2) _____

Current School Assignment: _____

Number of Years Teaching: _____

Year of Certification: _____

University Granting Certification: _____

Please describe the student population you currently serve:

Please describe the student populations you have served in the past:

Please describe your prior work experiences outside the field of education:

Please describe your family background and upbringing. Include any details you feel may be pertinent to this research:

APPENDIX F

Individual Interview Protocol

<u>Individual Interview Protocol</u>

1. What guided your decision to become a special education teacher?

2. What attributes would you use to describe a typical student with a disability who is from a CLD background?

3. What methods do you utilize to establish rapport with students from CLD backgrounds in your classroom?

4. Before you began teaching, what perceptions did you have regarding students with disabilities from CLD backgrounds?

5. How did your educational training prepare you for serving students from CLD backgrounds?

APPENDIX G

Prompts for Reflections of Recent Experiences

<u>Prompts for Reflections of Recent Experiences</u>

1. Describe an experience you had during the past week involving a student from a CLD background.

2. Describe a positive experience you had during the past week involving a student from a CLD background.

3. Describe a negative experience you had during the past week involving a student from a CLD background.

4. Using specific descriptive terms, describe the characteristics (emotional, behavioral, physical) of one of your students who is from a CLD background.

APPENDIX H

Audit Trail

Audit Trail

For the duration of this research project various forms of data were collected from each participant. Each participant participated in an initial individual interview. After this, participants were observed on two separate occasions in direct classroom observations. Over the course of the entire data collection period, each participant received three prompts to which they wrote brief reflections of recent experiences. Below is an audit trail of the specific dates data was collected with each research participant. For the interviews and classroom observations the dates shown reflect when these events occurred, while the dates listed for the reflections of recent experience indicate the date the artifact was received from the participant.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Free Spirit – Thursday, March 1, 2007
George – Wednesday, March 7, 2007
Shelby – Wednesday, March 7, 2007
Duke – Saturday, March 3, 2007
Sunflower – Thursday, March 1, 2007

FIRST CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Free Spirit – Friday, March 16, 2007
George - Friday, March 16, 2007
Shelby – Wednesday, March 21, 2007
Duke - Friday, March 16, 2007
Sunflower – Tuesday, March 27, 2007

SECOND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Free Spirit – Wednesday, March 28, 2007
George – Thursday, April 5, 2007
Shelby – Wednesday, March 28, 2007
Duke – Thursday, March 29, 2007
Sunflower – Tuesday, April 3, 2007

1ST REFLECTION OF RECENT EXPERIENCE

Free Spirit – Tuesday, March 13, 2007
George – Thursday, April 19, 2007
Shelby – Friday, March 9, 2007
Duke – Monday, March 12, 2007
Sunflower – Friday, March 16, 2007

2ND REFLECTION OF RECENT EXPERIENCE

Free Spirit – Tuesday, March 20, 2007
George - Thursday, April 19, 2007
Shelby - Friday, March 16, 2007
Duke – Saturday, March 17, 2007
Sunflower - Friday, March 16, 2007

3RD REFLECTION OF RECENT EXPERIENCE

Free Spirit – Monday, April 16, 2007
George - Thursday, April 19, 2007
Shelby – Tuesday, April 3, 2007
Duke – Thursday, April 5, 2007
Sunflower – Monday, April 2, 2007

VITA

Sassy C. Wheeler earned her Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from Southern University and A&M College in May 1997, and a Master of Education in special education (mild/moderate disabilities) from the University of New Orleans in May 2002. She is a certified special education teacher and child search coordinator, and has taught in several special education settings over the course of many years.

Sassy has been extremely active in academia, teaching countless undergraduate and graduate courses. In addition, Sassy has presented at a plethora of local, regional, and national special education conferences. She is currently a member of several professional organizations, including the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Council for Children with Behavior Disorders (CEC-CCBD), Division for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners (CEC-DDEL), Council for Learning Disabilities (CEC-CLD), Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi, and National Association of University Women.

Sassy is currently a faculty member of the College of Education in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice at Louisiana State University where she serves as both an instructor and clinical supervisor of student teaching. Her research interests include culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, socialization processes of novice special education teachers, inclusive educational settings, self-determination skills, and students with learning and behavior difficulties.