PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF EDUCATORS WORKING IN AN MLK STREET COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA

By

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Charlane F. Starks

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends. I dedicate it to the memory of my late parents, John B. and Maggie B. Wilson and my late brother and sister, John B. Wilson, Jr. and Patricia Jackson who were a constant inspiration for me. My siblings: Frederick, Keith, Karen and Cherylane who have always been my cheerleaders and relief. I also dedicate this dissertation to my other close family members and friends. Thank you for supporting me in so many ways, and I shall forever be grateful for your help and encouragement. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to the two people I could not have completed this journey without their unyielding encouragement, support and sacrifice. Sam and Mariah, your love and care sustained me all the way. I love and cherish you.

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PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF EDUCATORS WORKING IN AN MLK STREET COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA

Abstract

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2014

This dissertation utilized constructivism and identity frameworks to describe educators' interpretations of their work in an urban school located on a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street (MLK Streets). MLK Streets have become more associated with the locality rather than the ideas of the late civil rights leader. Accordingly, how educators construct their knowledge of the community is as important as the development of instructional practices. The present case study analyzed data to explore the overarching research question: What are educators' interpretations of the work, the school, and community surrounding their school located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California? Emergent themes included urban teacher identity formation, teaching beyond academics, making connections, understanding community layers, and constructing knowledge of MLK Street localities. Findings indicated educators had an implied social justice awareness that led to significant understandings of the socio-cultural, economic, pedagogical influences, and historical understanding within the MLK Street community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Critical to teaching in any urban community school is having knowledge, or at least an understanding of a specific urban sociocultural constructs framing that community—past and present experience of the people and institutions, including the schools. When teachers understand how these constructs influence school to community relationships, they can better understand how their work is tied to other community organizations (Kincheloe, 2004; Onore & Gildin, 2010). Kincheloe (2004) advised that teachers "understand the historical, cultural, and political context of urban education" (p.14). Therefore, how teachers construct and use knowledge of the community in which they work is as important as the development of pedagogical skills.

For example, the social knowledge of a street named to honor the life and social justice legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. conflates a significant reference point for urban area residents, workers (Buendía, 2011) and visitors to the area. From a constructivist view, information of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. like any other information is a construct of individual experiences and realities. Meyer (2009) argued that the more past events become less memorable, knowledge of the event, or persons in this case, become less significant. Meyer argued further that the remains—books, media representations, and other artifacts become non-representations of data, and thus "individuals may construct meaning based on these artifacts, but the concept of truth has no meaning" (Meyer, 2009, p. 338). The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's work for equality fits within this paradigm.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began his ministry for social change in the pulpit of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1955, the community voted Dr. King to head the Montgomery Improvement Association. Under his leadership, the organization successfully organized a 381-day bus boycott to end segregation in the city's busing system (King, 1981). Through non-violent demonstrations for social justice and equality, Dr. King challenged communities to reconsider the rampant norms of inequality and injustices, replacing them with human dignity and worth. In the decades following the bus boycott, Dr. King inspired many toward pursuing civil rights for all. His actions eventually led to countless honors such as *Time* Magazine's *Man of the Year* and the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize (Lincoln, 1970). However, not everyone heard the clarion call of *The Dream* speech made at the 1963 March on Washington for Civil Rights in which Dr. King urged Americans to live together as brothers. In 1968, during his last stand for social justice, Dr. King went to Memphis, Tennessee in support of the for garbage collectors' right for better wages and improved working conditions. While in Memphis, Dr. King was assassinated.

Fifteen years after the 1968 assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, the United States created a national holiday on every third Monday in January to commemorate Dr. King's global contributions to civil rights and social justice (www.mlkday.gov). United States President Ronald Reagan signed the legislation to recognize the federal holiday, which proved as contentious an act for many Americans, including elected officials (Wolfson, 2003). During the Congressional debates on Dr. Martin Luther King Day, liberal and conservative views of Dr. King ranged from praise for championed social justice to disparagement of King's opposition of the Vietnam War

and alleged ties to communism (Wolfson, 2003). Although the contentiousness continued, the US Congress eventually voted to honor Dr. King's legacy with a federal holiday.

Statement of the Problem

Cities in mostly urban communities across the United States began commemorating Dr. King's legacy in the form of naming and renaming streets in his honor (Alderman, 2008). This study used Martin Luther King Jr. Street, or MLK Street (Mitchelson, Alderman, & Popke, 2007) to represent the collection of drives, boulevards, and avenues in 40 states across the United States named to honor King. Ironically, the commonly held perception of streets named after the Nobel Peace Prize recipient is one being violent, crime riddled and economically distressed. Further, once a street is renamed to honor a person, the legacy of the person tends to become historically obscured (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2010). Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu (2010) argued names become more associated with an area, and then contended:

> Kennedy, Bismarck, Martin Luther King, and Ben Gurion come to answer 'where' rather than 'who.' As a result of the conversion of historical names into place names, the geography denotation takes over while the existence of a historical referent becomes increasingly obscure to most users in the city (p.459).

Rather than the present study seem as an indictment of the urban classroom teacher, it indeed represents a description of perceptions and understandings of working in a school on an MLK Street. In other words, educators will need to understand how their previous perceptions might induce an image of students, or whether their prior cultural knowledge impedes academic achievement (see Buendía, 2011), and connect it back to their work in an urban school. Contextualizing the meaning of MLK Streets is

necessary for understanding how political and social ideologies held by policymakers and other community members influence curriculum development and practice within an urban school place.

Communities across the US have begun to address the deficit perceptions associated with life on an MLK Streets through street beautification and economic development. The causes for the conditions of most MLK Streets tend to be both confusing and complex (Tilove, 2003). Similarly, schools located on MLK Street suffer, in many cases, the same conditions of economic neglect, blight and despair.

In order for a renamed urban neighborhood street to continue to exist as a viable source of community pride, it must maintain and reflect the relevant values of the community (Tilove, 2003). Renamed streets provide those who work in the community with an insight into the ideas and values about that community. Moreover, education researchers (Onore & Gildin, 2010; Reed, 2009) expanded Tilove's idea by including the meaning of the community's political, social (Noel, 2010), and urban educational structures. In the book, *Along Martin Luther King: Travels on Black America's Main Street,* Photojournalist, Tilove (2003) chronicled his journey while traveling on what he called the phenomenon of "streets being named for Martin Luther King around the country" (Tilove, 2003, p. xviii). He argued these symbolic representations provided a sense of hope, an abstract symbol of social and cultural continued existence.

Paradoxically, many teachers working in urban schools indicate a desire for social justice and education equality, yet they seem misinformed about the relevance of King's legacy of advocating for favorable educational outcomes (Haggerty, 1978) even in neighborhoods that commemorate his name and work. Moreover, scholarship on urban

education (Gay, 2000; Kincheloe, 2004; Kohli, 2012; Ladsen-Billings, 2001; Noel, 2010; Tyack, 1974), teacher education (Maye & Day, 2012) and the historical and social contestation of (re)street-naming to honor Dr. King (Alderman, 2006; Rhea, 1997; Rose-Redwood et al., 2010; Tretter, 2011) and others (Whelan, 2011) is substantial. However, given the implications of the ideological perspectives (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010) and the experience of Dr. King's involvement in education equality (Haggerty, 1978), there is a negligible amount of attention in the literature on teachers' interpretations of working in urban schools near an MLK Street.

Teachers are working in schools near an MLK Street educate and influence people in the whole community, not just in the classroom. Tilove (2003) contended "to name a street for King is to invite an accounting of how that street makes good on King's promise or mocks it" (p.122). For community organizations located on or in proximity to an MLK Street, there should be an even greater degree of scrutiny and accountability for teachers who acknowledge the legacy of Dr. King's work every third Monday in January to examine their own ideas about the community and school.

Most teachers will read, teach, and reflect on his legacy at least one week every year. Yet the Reverend Jessie Jackson, a civil rights advocate, advised:

> Read and learn about Dr. Martin Luther King. But do not stop there, for he would not have [it]. Apply the lessons of his life and example as we re-dedicate ourselves to fulfilling his dream. There is much work yet to be done (Jackson as cited in Schulke & McPhee, 1986, p. x).

It is inspiring to teach the curriculum as an introduction (Nieto, 2005) to Dr. King's legacy of non-violent, peaceful demonstrations. However, understanding what it means to work in a school located on a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street is itself transforming.

The complexities related to improving the living conditions in lower socioeconomic locations necessitates teacher preparation for work in these areas, including engaging in discussions about the impact of the street name. If Dr. King's legacy includes social justice and equality in education (Nieto, 2005), and if many teachers in urban schools grapple with the classroom operations while balancing a standardized curriculum and a "democratic vision of education" (Darder, 2010, p. xviii), then perhaps these conditions warrant new questions about urban education specifically in a school located on an MLK Street.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe teachers' interpretations of the work, school, and community surrounding their school located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California.

Research Questions

Central Research Study Question: What are educators' interpretations of the work, the school, and community surrounding their school that is located on a MLK Street in the Central Valley of California?

Supportive Research Questions:

1. How do educators construct their knowledge of the MLK Street community?
2. What social issues, knowledge, and perceptions of the MLK Street community affect decisions to work or stay employed in an urban school location?
3. What are the characteristics of an educator who teaches in a school near a MLK Street?

4. How do social issues, knowledge, and interpretations of the MLK Street community affect pedagogical decisions in the classroom or on campus?
5. How do educators working in a MLK Street school interpret and develop social connections in the community?

Significance of the Study

The present case study was essential for several reasons. First, it provided for a needed understanding of (re)constructing the purpose for work in MLK Street communities. Streets named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are significant-symbolic representations of hope over despair (Tilove, 2003). Although studies examine the significance of the street name (Alderman, 2003, 2006, 2008; Mitchelson et al., 2007), none examined the constructed knowledge of the street name and its connection to urban teacher education. Teachers who work in schools located on an MLK Street school should have socio-constructed knowledge of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a means for better understanding the community and teaching their students.

Urban teachers work in complex school environments with a multitude of interpretations of the school structure, students, and the community (Liggett, 2008; Maye & Day, 2012; Sleeter, 2008). *In The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscapes of a Teacher's Life*, Palmer (1998) argued good teaching requires a sense of connectedness that magnifies the capacity to connect self to student and student to the world. Connections eventually "are held not in their methods but in their hearts, meaning heart in its ancient sense, as a place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). A deeper consideration of self and construction an understanding of the world connects to the ways of thinking and

interpreting the world based on actions within self and others (Hausfather, 2001; Sutinen, 2008).

Next, this study supported self-reflection on perceptions of work in urban neighborhoods, especially those with an MLK Street. The dismantling of inequitable practices that were once status quo for educating urban area students needs unpacking and examining biases in education through the prism of postmodern language remains the concern of numerous educators (Slattery, 2013). Moreover, general issues associated with urban education have roots in an era of history that endeavored to keep education as a task rather than a right in order to maintain the wealth of political and social ideologies.

The perspectives of that period also established a precedent for views and practices of contemporary pedagogical appearances in urban schools (Tyack, 1974). The complexity of teaching in an urban area with an MLK Street embodies contradictions. Those discrepancies tend to exist somewhere between the urban community advocacy and education apathy. Communities with an MLK Street are both oasis of educational equity and social justice (Tilove, 2003) and "complex terrains of urban schools" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 10) struggling to survive amidst a bleak and fragile neighborhood economy (Noel, 2010).

Lastly, set images of an urban community such as an MLK Street seem to represent perceptions of a community overwhelmed by high crime, poverty, and distressed schools. Researchers have shown that urban schools include images of failing schools with insufficient resources (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Hampton, Peng, & Ann, 2008; Ingersoll, 2004; Murrell, 2006; Noel, 2010). Urban schools have only a cadre of

indifferent or novice teachers (Delpit, 1995; Hampton et al., 2008; Ingersoll, 2004; Kincheloe, 2004; Murrell, 2006; Noel, 2010) among its teaching forces.

The present study demonstrates the usefulness of historically, culturally, and politically references of urban communities and schools. It will help teachers not only consider their role in the larger context as an urban teacher, but it also makes possible the ability the construct their purpose (Kincheloe, 2004). Reconstructing, and in some cases, deconstructing knowledge (Hausfather, 2001) is the beginning of knowing oneself as an educator further deepening connections (Kincheloe, 2004; Palmer, 1998) within the urban community and in the classroom. Palmer (1998) put it this way:

> When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well (p. 2).

An MLK Street locality serves as a reality reference point for teachers toward instructing students based on the significance of Dr. King's social justice legacy. Interestingly, though neighborhoods with an MLK Street consist of images associated with violence, blight and limited economic resources (Noel, 2010), they seem also to embody positive cultural identity (Tilove, 2003). These realities form a paradox in understanding the legacy of Dr. King and the interactions with the students and community residents. Finally, an analysis of histories plus the link to the processes in which teachers construct knowledge, develop conclusions and interpretations about others, remain significant components of understanding teacher identity in the classroom and community (Sleeter, 2008). The next section will define conceptual and operational terms and preview the remaining chapters.

Definition of Terms

Asian Americans

The 2010 Census defined "Asian" in reference to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "Asian" or reported entries such as "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," and "Other Asian" or provided other detailed Asian responses (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011).

Black or African Americans

The 2010 Census defined "Black or African American" in reference to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "Black, African Am., or Negro" or reported entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian (Humes et al., 2011).

Generational Constant

Social issues such as poverty that have been a part of the generational family structure

In loco parentis

Latin term meaning to act in place of the parent

Knowledge

Sociological defined as certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. vi).

Latino/a or Hispanic Americans

2010 Census defined this term as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (Humes et al., 2011).

MLK Streets

A term coined by Alderman (2006) to signify any street, road, or boulevard named or, in many cases, re-named for the slain civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Perception

Derived from the Latin term, *perceptio (n-)* and from the verb *percipere* 'seize, understand', Oxford Dictionary (2005) defined perception as the ability see, hear, and understand something through human senses; a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression.

Reality

Defined as quality appertaining to phenomenon that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. vi).

Social Justice

The full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007, p. 1).

Socio-Constructivism

A theoretical framework evolved to suggest a cognitive and actionable consideration of interactive ideas between those observing and the observed (Beck & Kosnik, 2006).

Teacher Hope

A sense of call to teach in relation to a commitment to teach.

Urban Education

Comprehensively defined as schools operate in areas with high population density. Schools are bigger and school districts serve more students. Schools function in areas marked by profound economic disparity. Urban areas and urban schools have a higher rate of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. Urban schools experience factionalized infighting on school boards over issues concerning resources and influence. Urban school systems are undermined by ineffective business operations. Poor urban students are more likely to experience health problems. Urban schools experience higher student, teacher, and administrator mobility. Urban schools serve higher immigrant populations. Urban schools are characterized by linguistic diversity. Urban schools experience unique transportation problems. Teachers working in poor urban schools are less likely to live in the communities neighboring the schools than are teachers in suburban and rural systems (Kincheloe, hayes, Rose, & Anderson, 2007, p. xii).

Violence Acknowledgement

Working with an understanding of teacher role in the community despite violence in the community

White-Americans

The 2010 Census defined “White” in reference to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as “White” or reported entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian (Humes et al., 2011).

Preview of Study

This study divides into five chapters and an appendix section. Chapter One introduced a connection between memorial street-naming for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and urban teacher education, the background and significance of the study, statement of the problem, and research questions. Chapter Two gives a general synopsis of the literature to interlink the socio-constructivism and teacher identity theoretical frameworks to an interpretation of research elucidating the gaps in the literature on teacher education and knowledge of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Chapter Three details the methodology for the present study. Particularly, it explains the philosophical approach to and assumptions about the research and defends the suitability of a case study research design for the study. Then it outlines the data protocol, respondent and setting selection, trustworthiness, and my role as a researcher and limitations to the research. Chapter Four presents the data analysis and findings. Lastly, Chapter Five considers the implications of the present study and offers recommendations for future research. The appendix section contains a copy of the informed consent form, interview protocol, observation protocol and other supportive documents.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to describe teachers' perceptions and understandings of work, school, and the community surrounding their school located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California. First, the literature provided rationale for socio-constructivism and identity frameworks that were necessary to examine teachers' perceptions and understandings of teaching near an MLK Street. Events, attitudes and actions have historically contextualized current educational assumptions and pedagogical practices in urban education. Second, a historical and sociological overview of urban education relative to actions and ideologies have led up to current interpretations of urban education (Buendía, 2011). Then, the review synthesized research on streets named to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Lastly, a review of the literature showed the relationship between urban teacher experiences and teacher education practices. An examination of the literature on street names, urban teachers and education was essential to discussions on how the current ideological and sociological underpinnings of curriculum studies and applications perpetuate inequalities persistent in urban schools.

The literature reviewed includes research on education issues related to the African American culture such as Butchart's (2010) research describing the legacy of inequitable schooling practicing and the relationship to the current disproportionate number of African American students at risk of academic failure. However, other social groups' in the urban education system have educational experiences worth reviewing

given that the student enrollment patterns in urban schools include these other cultural groups. Other scholars explored Asian Americans and urban education (Lew, 2007; Redondo, 2008), Latinos and education (Irizarry & Raible, 2011), and a modern African American (Fairlie, 2002) voice to the methods associated with novel school programs and changes in the demographic structure of urban schools.

Theoretical Framework

Questions about interpretations and making meaning of symbolic representations require a framework to understand how an individual constructs knowledge based on these representations and other dimensions such as race and gender. This present study called into question how teachers know what they know, and when knowledge has been based on symbolic representations and social constructs, considers the effect on realities when interacting with others. The first section discusses the socio-cultural constructivism framework and a complementary identity framework for this case study.

Socio-Constructivism Framework

Constructivism is a multifaceted theory with multiple scientific and social adaptations and interpretations (Phillips, 1995). Numerous complex variations and paradigms related to constructivism include radical, psychological, social and others, each with a theoretical understanding penned by theorists such as Vico, Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Gordon, 2009). Socio-constructivism, one of many theoretical adaptations of constructivism, is useful for a research study that involves the complexities associated with understanding someone else's experiences (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). The evolution of the socio-constructivism framework made it useful for this study on the experiences of teaching in a complex school environment proximal to an MLK Street.

In the 1700s, Giambattista Vico's writings illuminated the idea of a constructivism, or making knowledge, aligned with religious underpinnings (von Glasersfeld, 1989). For centuries, researchers applied it theoretically as a teaching method or to understand the observer's way of constructing knowledge or understanding of reality (Fosnot, 1996; Oxford, 1997; von Glasersfeld, 1989). Constructivism has two philosophical roots—ontology and epistemology (von Glasersfeld, 1989). Ontology refers to understanding the ideal of being, reality (Creswell, 2013; Oxford, 1997). However, the epistemological root of constructivism considers the origin, process, and construct of knowledge (Creswell, 2012; Fosnot, 1996; Oxford, 1997). Thus, one questions how does the observer know and in what ways do the observer's historical and social experience construct realities (Creswell, 2013; Oxford, 1997). Conceptually true to the nature of the construct of knowledge, applications of constructivism have evolved over time to include other interpretations (Beck & Kosnik, 2006).

Piaget argued knowledge is not based on non-cognitive events and objects, but more on the cognitive system of thoughts operating from the observer's experiences, constructed concept, and perceptions (von Glasersfeld, 1996). Dewey (1938) contended education is developmental and indirect from the social observations. Rather than to separate theoretical contributions to the constructivism theory, it is important to appreciate the contributions as a collection of theories with different contributions to the field of education (Meyer, 2009). Three major theoretical contributors—Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky—shown in Table 1 on the next page provided important groundwork for the constructivism framework.

Table 1. Contributions to the constructivism theoretical framework

---

Piaget

Research formed psychological basis of constructivism; Semiotic Interactionist; Studied process; Knowledge is a mapping of actions and the observer reflects on those actions; Interactions based on previously constructed concepts and perceptions (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Fosnot, 1996; von Glasersfeld, 1995, 1996).

Dewey

Knowledge constructed indirectly from the environment-world, society, and individually; Education is a social process (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Oxford; 1997).

Vygotsky

Research formed psychological basis of constructivism; Semiotic Interactionist; Adult and children converse, explain, and negotiate meaning (knowledge); Individual and cultural development intersect early in life; research formed socio-historical basis of constructivism (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Bigge & Shermis, 2004; Fosnot, 1996).

Broadly, constructivism theory has a two-pronged analysis of how observers construct knowledge (Oxford, 1997). Oxford's interpretation of constructivism echoed Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky, whom many contemporary scholars consider major influencers of modern constructivism (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Fosnot, 1996; Oxford, 1997; von Glasersfeld, 1996; see Table 1). According to Oxford:

> Loosely speaking, there are two general schools of constructivism: those considering the knower or knowledge constructor to be the individual (these are the individual/psychological constructivists) and those viewing the knower or

> knowledge constructor as the whole society or group or as the person as firmly embedded in the group (the social/cultural constructivists). The individual/ psychological constructivists seldom directly addressed issues of power, authority, and the place of formal knowledge that are central to some versions of social/cultural constructivism. On the other hand, social/constructivist perspectives were not uniformly well developed, and these perspectives sometimes paid little attention to individual knowledge construction (Oxford, 1997, p. 45).

Oxford's argument for an increased attention to individual knowledge construction sets was a significant, modern interpretation of socio-constructivism and the usefulness in urban education research.

Foundations of Socio-Constructivism Theory. The Vygotskian theory of constructivism has framed numerous educational learning methods. Vygotsky argued knowledge originates from social interactions (Oxford, 1997) and that social experiences shape views and interpretations of the world (Jaramillo, 1996). Although Vygotsky and Piaget similarly argued a semiotic relationship between learner, experiences and activities, Vygotsky also argued a broader scope to include socio-cultural influences within the community, and that is fundamental to learning (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; von Glasersfeld, 1996). Additionally, Wertsch (1991) asserted a socio-cultural approach "creates an account of human mental processes that recognize the essential relationships between these processes and their cultural, historical and institutional settings" (p.6).

A shift from constructivism to embrace a social component introduced another theoretical framework, socio-constructivism. This interpretive theory relies upon the lived experiences and perceptions of the situation in order to understand a setting (Creswell, 2013). In other words, historical, social, and cultural norms maneuver in a manner that set up unique interpretations of the setting (Creswell, 2013). Schallert and Martin (2003) further illustrated using socio-constructivism by arguing that while

"construct interpretations of ongoing events, actively making sense of language and life, the socio-constructivist view also includes the cultural/social/historical milieu into that every person is born and lives" (Schallert & Martin, 2003, p. 34).

The socio-constructivist perspective considers historical, social, and cultural views and what affects these constructs have on the larger society (Creswell, 2013; Beck & Kosnik, 2006). In a further change from the traditional understanding of constructivism, Vygotsky considered socio-constructivism as a two-component learning theory that suggests (Beck & Kosnik, 2006, p.12-13):

1) Knowledge is dependent on social interacting and on people's attitudes, emotions, values and actions
2) Academic knowledge and pop-culture can have either a negative or positive impact either a seducing/ bringing insight or indoctrinating/enhancing life

Socio-constructivism is a complex, passionate approach (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) to understanding a phenomenon with an equal weightiness. Teachers construct knowledge based on their emotions, values and actions (Van Huizen, Van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005), and their knowledge impact on pedagogical and social practices (Gordon, 2009; Hausfather, 2001; Sutinen, 2008). Thus, "teacher input has a major role within a socio-constructivist framework" (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). The next section reviews identity theory, and a nuanced teacher identity theory, as a complementary framework to examine participant background and historical experiences in relation to professional identity (Van Huizen et al., 2005).

Prior to any discussion on social constructivism and the relationship to identity formation, require a few ideas to consider about these constructs. First, Berger and Luckmann (1966) offered definitions, analogy and views about the interconnections between identity formation and the construction of "reality" and "knowledge." Reality is

"a quality appertaining to phenomenon that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition" (p. vi) and knowledge is "the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics" (p. 3). They further explained these terms, whether viewed as a man walking a street or as a philosopher, have relevance that is unique to that person. As such, "putting quotation marks around reality and knowledge is not necessary for the sociological context" and to use their analogy, "what is real to the Tibetan monk may not be real to an American business, and the knowledge of the criminal differs from the knowledge of the criminologist" (p. 3). Therefore, the realities are subjective, interpretive and evocative solely to the logical world of the person (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). So, contextualizing fact, knowledge construction and identity formation resides in the person.

Identity Framework

Following social constructivism, identity forms when an individual self-categorizes in different ways according to social categories and classification (Stets & Burke, 2000), social processes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and reshapes based on social structure (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Tatum, 1997) and self-examination (Maye & Day, 2008; Sleeter, 2008). Van Huizen, Van Oers, and Wubbels (2005) drew upon a Vygotskian perspective to suggest ways that teacher professional identity develops through socially oriented activities. Moreover, social, political, and historical factors shape what individuals think about equity and diversity (Liggett, 2008) and mean to understand identity in relation to how an individual view others (Maye & Day, 2012). Application of the Vygotskian view connected to teacher identity given the continuous

developmental aspects from pre-service to in-service teacher development (Van Huizen et al., 2005).

Identity formation involved some basic principles (Van Huizen et al., 2005). From a socio-constructivist position, identity is complex with multiple dimensions such as gender, class, and ethnicity (Holloway, 2000). Additionally, Tatum (1997) argued racial identity development is much like a spiral staircase in terms of how identity develops, and that re-examining racial identity continues throughout adulthood as does an analysis of gender and other self-identities. Such re-examinations are continuous processes as society shifts and shapes different phases of life (Tatum, 1997). Similar to Tatum (1997, 2007), Cosier (2011) argued students enter teacher education programs with a preconceived notion about identity without additional analysis. In a course utilizing narrative inquiry, Cosier further suggested teacher candidates engaging in inquiries about identity is challenging for many reasons (Cosier, 2011, p.42):

1. Little thought of their own identity
2. Little knowledge of identity markers such as gender and class
3. Taken for granted life experiences that they see as normal
4. Possess a global view that has been informed by other narratives, from family and community, media and pop culture

An analysis of identity leads to pedagogical opportunities for both teacher candidates and in-service teachers to explore historical influences on their own racial or cultural identity (Liggett, 2008; Maye & Day, 2012; Sleeter, 2008). Maye and Day (2008) asserted teachers will need to understand the significance of their identity and how it may impact classroom instructional practices. For example, teachers' cultural identity

formative understanding increases the likelihood that teachers will promote more meaningful "relationships to recognize socio-economic inequities that exist in schools and society" (Maye & Day, 2012, p. 20).

Other studies (Terwilliger, 2010; Wilson & Deaney, 2010) positioned identity theory to frame research on teacher education. Terwilliger (2010) studied racial identity construction with a group of White American pre-service teachers to facilitate recognizing how their personal identity can impact classroom practices. The findings suggested that teacher educators could provide pre-service teachers with urban education experience and the opportunity to engage in conversations on race identity. Teacher candidates could leave programs without understanding culturally relevant teaching practices (Terwilliger, 2012).

Wilson and Deaney (2010) longitudinally studied mid-career teachers' transitional experiences from other career areas to classroom teaching. Using the identity theory, they chronicled the process of understanding teacher positionality for one science teacher as she transitioned from a previous career to teaching through her teacher education program and first teaching assignment. While the authors understood the limitations of a single case study analysis, they argued, whether first or mid-career, self-efficacy and teacher self-identity awareness are critical areas for development and attention in a teacher education program as well as first year teaching assignments (Wilson & Deaney, 2010). Background experiences and memories of race, ethnicity, and identity also reveal construction of power and privilege (Sleeter, 2008). Teacher recognition of their own cultural identity affects and informs pedagogical practices and professional identity (Maye & Day, 2012; Van Huizen et al., 2005).

Historical and Social Overview of Urban Education

The 2010 United States Census defined an urban area as one with a densely developed territory of residential, commercial, and nonresidential land usage with a 50,000 or more people and urban clusters of at least 2,500 population (US Census Bureau, 2011). Other research suggested that an urban area be synonymous with non-White, such as African American and Latino American, and social groups with challenges associated with poverty, underfunding and over-crowdedness (Carlisle, Jackson & George, 2006; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Steinberg, 2010). Urban education is markedly different from traditional, North American rural and suburban education because of the “higher concentration and diverse community mix of race, class, and ethnic groupings” (Steinberg, 2010, p. xi).

Teachers’ level of pedagogical efficiency related to unfamiliarity with culturally responsive teaching especially in an urban school place continues to provoke substantial notice in education research. That said contextualizing urban education through a historical lens is needed for understanding how political and social ideologies held by policy makers and other community members influence curriculum development and practice within an urban school location. Moreover, education history scholar Murrow (2006) argued a study on education history contributes greatly to teachers’ knowledge about current educational conditions. It provides teachers with narratives and reference points for problem-solving strategies, analysis of contemporary education conditions, and the ideological genesis of thoughts about the current education system.

Although certain federal laws and acts dismantled inequitable practices that were once the status quo of educating urban area students, unpacking and examining biases in

education through the prism of postmodern language remains the concern of many educators (Slattery, 2013). Moreover, modern urban education has its root metaphors, or causes, in an era of history that not only sought to keep education as a task rather than a right in order to sustain the wealth for a few. It also initiated the precedent for attitudes and behaviors of present day educational outlook for students matriculating and teachers working in urban schools (Tyack, 1974). Studying the historical aspect of education is part of teachers' capacity to have "critical perspective on the relationship between schooling and society" (Murrow, 2006, p.10). The next part synthesized historical events, behaviors, and ideologies among the politicians, community activists, and educators leading up to current interpretations, or constructed knowledge of urban education.

Historical Perspective of Urban Education

An interpretive historical framework modeled in Tyack's seminal work, *The One Best System: A History of Urban Education* aligned to knowledge about an urban schooling. Other scholars (Au, 2012; Buendía, 2011) supported a historical analysis of beliefs and ideological construction. In his book, *Critical Curriculum Studies: Education, Consciousness, and the Politics of Knowing,* Au (2012) argued that "certain conceptual understanding about learning in relation to the educational environment, one that proposes a relationship between the learner and the environment transcends over time-past, present, and future" (Au, 2012, p. 34).

A general, historical view necessitated an outline of several significant concepts about urban education and schooling (Buendía, 2011). Literature recommended nineteenth and twentieth century American political and social ideologies influenced

contemporary approaches to urban education and curriculum development (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). In the latter nineteenth century, Reconstruction Era politicians, community activists and educators, began grappling with the educational needs of diverse student populations living in both rural and urban America (Butchart, 2011; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). It was also a time when the United States struggled with a growing plurality of ethnic, racial, and religious consciousness in relation to the American education system (Tyack, 1974).

Early American educational ideologies. Literature reviewed on urban education history suggested junctures of significant social development in the United States. However, literature reviewed in this section focused on the latter nineteenth century for analysis and interpretation. To begin, rural schools were an important part of rural American communities and significant to current urban education. Schools both shaped and influenced relationships in the community (Tyack, 1974). Citizens had politically motivated ideas about the necessities of schooling and to whom the school should benefit. Simultaneously, scholars (Benedict, 1934) were studying the integration of cultures in western civilizations. In the book, *Patterns of Culture*, Benedict (1934) commented Western social cultures were more stratified with separate sets of standards and acted differently based on separate motivations. Moreover, business ideologues determined that the rural school officials did not know what they were doing for education. Rural school also had issues with teacher education and selection, and building usage (Tyack, 1974).

A historical analysis of the events, behaviors and attitudes leading up to the current analysis of urban education was consistent with previous interpretations of urban

education (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007; Tyack, 1974). Competing nineteenth century philosophies, college preparation and practical work skills, seemingly lead to inequitable education practices in the United States. As such, the nation has been in a state of educational chaos without remedy. From 1880s to present, the imbalance of education control and policy influenced by political and sociological ideologies that seemingly move and gather new ideological voices to ages-old concerns about education attainment and to what degree are students afforded equitable education.

In the 1880s, common rural schools struggled for control and adequate support from the political and social ideologies. Curriculum, equipment and materials were scarce; teacher selection and development were problematic, and education reformers mounted consistent and powerful attacks for control of the function of education (Tyack, 1974). The population growth in villages, or urban area led to a series of decisions among education philosophers and leaders within the community. In 1892, National Education Association (NEA) influenced the *Committee of Ten*, a group of education leaders, to create a system of accountability in schools with mandates for standardization of curriculum, methods and conservative ideology about the systems of education in America (Bohan, 2003; Pulliam & Van Patten; 2007; Tyack, 1974). William T. Harris, Superintendent of the St. Louis School District, argued the new high schools needed to teach students to conform to the needs of the society (Bohan, 2003; Tyack, 1974). His argument aligned with the Committee of Ten which was to design and promote education as a functionary supplier of workers fulfilling obligations to the society, which in many cases did not include attending higher education institutions. The *Committee of Ten*

based reports on scientific and psychological testing of students, mainly, European immigrants and African Americans.

Other decisions based on the same report were forerunners to modern bilingualism and biculturalism in education (Tyack, 1974). In the 1900s, German immigrants in Ohio argued that their children needed to have studies in their language in order to preserve their heritage and culture (Tyack, 1974). Since many of these areas were under the control of wealthy immigrant business ownership, Germans community activists eventually won the right to have their culture promoted in schools in terms of language and social support (Ingrassia, 2012; Tyack, 1974). German nationalists argued since their tax dollars were designed to support the local school; they had the right to expect German children received support based on ethnic and cultural values.

The right to expect an education for African Americans took a divergent path. While the *Committee of Ten* argued for psychologically testing for African Americans and the Ohio Valley German community fought for their students' cultural values in the school curriculum, African American scholars argued for equal rights to education.
In his influential book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Woodson (1990/1933) argued the benevolent workers who went into the Southern states to educate freedmen and women, misunderstood the brevity of their tasks. The educator workers, barely educated themselves, developed curriculum that either condemned or pitied the former slaves. The curriculum followed vile and propagandized images of people of color.
For example, Woodson (1990/1933) argued that, in all subject areas, Black portrayal engendered more race hate for Blacks, and even promoted a self-hate among Black citizens. Curriculum books eliminated any discussion about the scientific and historical

contributions. Even Black teachers who traveled into densely rural areas of the south were powerless to make curricular changes, and such changes remained in the control of segregationists and former slave-holders (Woodson, 1990/1933).

Additionally, African American female educators such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Anna Julia Cooper addressed the bleak educational outlooks for former slaves and their children, many of whom faced constant hostile opposition to receiving an education. Two educators risked life to advance education among Black men, women, and children in the South. Mary McLeod Bethune, courageous pioneer for social justice, founded Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls in Daytona Beach Florida (Hanson, 2003). Anna J. Cooper wrote, *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, which many consider the forerunner to black feminist discourse (Guy-Sheftall, 2009). As Bethune, Cooper and other courageous Black educators worked to ensure education equality, the US worked to handled education in growing metropolises as a result of two major demographical shifts.

First major US demographic shift. During the 1870s, fewer than 25,000 students attended high school to 1900s; 600 high schools with 500,000 students enrolled (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). Moving forward, in the 1920-30s, African American students enrolled in high schools at an accelerated pace (Butchart, 2010; Tyack, 1974). The 1915-1950s Great Migration shifted demographically the number of African Americans from rural education settings to concentrated city dwellings (Ananat, 2011). Several reasons accounted for the shift—steady growth in job opportunities in the car, steel, coal industries, and other businesses—that brought millions of people migrating into city areas. African Americans migrated from the poorest counties in the south;

Puerto Ricans migrated from the islands; Hispanics traveled to Texas and California (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). From 1955 to 1960, over a million citizens migrated into growing metropolises in America bring with them the urgency of poverty and social assistance issues such as fair housing. However, educating the new urban citizens became a burdensome endeavor (Pulliam & Van Patten; 2007; Tyack, 1974). After the Great Migration, many citizens began a discourse about the legal rights of equal education.

During this same time of demographic change in urban areas, the civil rights movement took shape with such events as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and Voter Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a central figure in fighting against unequal rights, poverty and indifference toward people of color in America (Schulke & McPhee, 1986). Aside from the bus boycott and voter registration drives, King fought for equitable education practices. The result of Dr. King's influence on the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and Voter's Rights Act of 1965 reverberate decades after his 1968 death by assassination.

Second major US demographic shifts. During the 1980s, the second largest wave of immigrants, over 8.6 million, came from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The influx of immigrants coming into the United States highlighted the need for more equitable education for immigrants similar to the early 1900s (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). Since the early 1990s, major US cities started experiencing population growths among various ethnic groups. Within these large metropolitan areas were schools, or urban schools districts that necessitate research about the status of education in America (Frankenberg, 2009). Frankenberg (2009) argued schools are the first

indication of a shift in racial demographics and a significant increase in non-White citizens. Frankenberg examined the characteristics of urban education using the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core Data (CCD) data set to identify school district patterns in education. For example, the percentage of both White-Americans and Latino-Americans had declining enrollment patterns, with White-American students leaving urban school districts during the 1986 by as much as 40 percent (Frankenberg 2009).

Conversely, researchers (Litschwartz, 2012) cautioned examining the larger versus smaller metropolitan areas for other trends. Litschwartz and other researchers at the Urban Institute (2012) collected data to show that the White American and African American segregation patterns decreased from 1970 to 2010. The data raised questions about the trends seen in desegregation, integration and the correlation to urban school finance and instructional practices. The data also showed that the desegregation trends from the 1970s are related to the 2010 trends (Litschwartz, 2012). Schooling trends after the civil rights era have been affected by other laws and federal reports.

Impact of law. In the 1800s, federal and state officials enacted laws that impact many different communities. For example, The *Separate but Equal Doctrine of Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) legalized racial segregation (Imber & Van Geel, 2004; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). A summary of significant federal reports, laws and court cases is given in Table 2. In 1858, Kalamazoo, Michigan city leaders and residents fought a legal battle over school finance (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). In *The Civil Rights Project,* Orfield and Chungmei (2008) addressed current segregation trends in American schools.

Table 2. Education reports, laws, and court cases 1800s-2000s

Year	Report, Law and Court Case	Category
1852	*People v. Kalamazoo*	School Finance and Taxes
1954	*Brown v. Board of Education* (Brown I)	Racial Segregation
1955	*Brown v. Board of Education* (Brown II)	Remedying De Jure Segregation
	Hawkins v. Coleman	Other Forms of Racial Discrimination
1965	*Elementary and Secondary Education Act*	Low SES Family Educational Support
	Head Start	Education Services for At-Risk
1966	*The Coleman Report*	School Integration Support
1967	*Bilingual Education Act*	Bilingual Instruction Support
1983	*A Nation at Risk Report*	Report of Mediocre Education
2004	*No Child Left Behind*	Accountability and Assessment

Adapted from Pulliam, J.D., & Van Patten, J.J. (2007). *History of education in America*. (9thEd). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education; Imber, M., & Van Geel, T. (2004).*Education law*. (3rd Ed.). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

The authors systematically examined implications of the United States Supreme Court's reversal of previous desegregation rulings such as in the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and the *Meredith v. Jefferson* cases. The rulings in both cases decided in "favor of declaring the use of race as a means to end school segregation" (Orfield & Chungmei, 2008, p.6). Orfield and Chungmei produced data on race, school demographics, and geographical locations indicating school segregation contributed to high school dropout among African American teens. Additionally, they proposed changes to collect data regarding racial makeup in schools to track data regarding segregation practices. Lastly, Orfield and Chungmei (2008) cited the need of a congressional call to action to examine desegregation and integration in schools.

In 1954, civil rights attorney, Thurgood Marshall, who would later become the first African American on the United States Supreme Court, filed a federal law suit to go beyond the separate but equal school systems to full integration of schools. In 1947,

Clarendon County, South Carolina Black students attended sixty-one schools in vastly segregated schools as opposed to the twelve high schools solely for White American students. The Clarendon County schools became a part of a larger federal school suit, the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (Martin, 1998). Marshall and his NAACP legal team argued public school segregation was in direct violation of the Fourteenth Amendment equal protection clause. The amendment protected all citizens as equals under the law. Therefore, the unequal "Jim Crow" school system was in effect, unconstitutional (Martin, 1998). Unequal schooling arguments are central to constructed ideals about urban education. African Americans were, and some argue still are at risk of unfavorable educational outcomes directly traced to segregation racism and indifference (Butchart, 2010).

Saatcioglu and Carl (2011) argued the segregation arguments of the 1970s, desegregation in the early 1980s, and now the 2000s school re-segregation are symptoms of the current Cleveland Municipal School Districts failure to address the inequalities because of racial separation, socioeconomic status. The federal government refusal to engage fully in this debate perpetuated the inability to bring these conversations from the margins of the discussion. The lack of discussion seemed to be a conduit to achievement gaps and the urban schooling inequalities.

Buendía (2011) argued a similar point connecting equitable education and federal reports and programs. During the 1980 Presidential Campaign when California Governor and Presidential Candidate Ronald Reagan campaigned on deregulation of the federal government, including questions on the necessity of a government department for education and while favoring tuition tax credits (see Guthrie, 1983). The era of federal

protection, laws, and acts to move the country socially and educationally swiftly came to close as result contentious arguments and reports.

Federal reports. A histo-sociological understanding is critical for examining educational problems in urban schools (Sadovnik & Semel, 2010). Themes associated with sociology and education took a more salient root during the 1960s with US Legislature such as the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) and research like the *Equality of Educational Opportunity Report*. Both documents sparked national debates and were symbolic of larger implications for cross-examination of education in America (Buendía, 2011). Buendía (2011) argued further that these two reports helped to "construct a population deemed as urban that has been reduced to racial, economic, social and spatial attributes that are seen as corresponding to the totality of their aspirations, experiences, and intellectual proclivities" (Buendía, 2011, p.2). In other words, decades of politically rooted ideas about urban areas form some the basis for modern disparately constructed knowledge about urban areas. Illustratively, Sociologist James Coleman concluded in the *1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity Report*, commonly known as *The Coleman Report*, African American students educationally fared better in integrated classrooms (Coleman, 1966; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007; Sadovnik & Semel, 2010). Racial disparity in schools continues to be a motivating factor in inequitable educational practices.

Rumberger and Palardy (2002) examined whether socioeconomics and racial segregation contributed to US academic achievement gaps. Their research compared educational performance to *The Coleman Report*. Rumberger and Palardy confirmed that the socioeconomic status of schools with increased resources and improved teaching

methods would diminish the achievement gap between black and white students. Moreover, Rumberger and Palardy (2002) re-analyzed *The Coleman Report* and concluded that in addition to a segregated school producing lower academic performance for African American students, the school's socioeconomic status was more of a factor in performance.

The Nation at Risk Report (Gardner, 1983) commissioned by the Reagan administration argued the lack of education achievement created a less than powerful, global image of the United States. Thus, it initiated a downward spiral of public schools support (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007) and proposed more corporate support for students "at- risk" of educational failure. Consequently, this single report resulted in government bureaucracy, education corporations, and gave a reason for school vouchers.
It rationalized after school programs and learning centers designed for special education, English language learners, and other at-risk subgroups. The emergence of an "at-risk" student crisis agenda included improving standardized test results of these same subgroups, but the gap seemed unaffected as schools continued to evaluate students with inequitable measures. Moreover, the report attracted a more neo-liberal education agenda and steered the educational discussion into areas of economic and global competition (Berliner & Biddle, 1997; Lipman, 2011). The social nature of education, based on the report, continues in the current analysis with regards to the socioeconomic conditions, politico-economic circumstances, and other issues such as gender, sexual orientation and poverty.

Urban education and poverty. Dr. King was an ardent opponent to the devastating effects of poverty. For years, he organized and fought for economic rights

with the Poor People's Campaign (Schulke & McPhee, 1986). Decades of studies about poverty and educational outcomes examined a correlation between the two constructs (Berliner, 2006). Currently, more than 15% of the population or 42.3 million American are living below the poverty line (US Census, 2010). Students who live below the poverty line are least likely to graduate from high school (Beegle, 2012). In Educating Student Who Live in Poverty, Beegle also argued the internalization of poverty is both seen and unseen among students in urban area schools in terms of academic success, health, and relationships. The report suggested many students carry the stress of living in poverty, that when undiagnosed it shows in other areas such as behavioral issues on campus (Beegle, 2012). Even more, it is less likely that children today will graduate from high school than students who attended high school in the 1940s (Beegle, 2012; Berlinger, 2006). School reform and policy discussions on poverty on behalf of students attending urban schools will require considerable attention to help break the generational cycle of poverty.

Contemporary sociological trends in urban education suggest creating the sense of community is a viable area of research and examination. The next section of literature discusses the social perspective of urban education through various lens—urban education and social justice, poverty policy and the social positions of Latino American, African American, and Asian American cultural groups. While other student ethnic groups are important to discuss, these three student demographical groupings provide a mere snapshot of urban education.

Social Perspective of Urban Education

Social justice and urban education. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) defined social justice as both "a process and goal of ensuring full and equity participation, resources, so that all members of the society live physically and psychologically safe" (p.1). The process considers social, economic and education goals. Since the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Law, social justice issues continue to plague urban schools. Lipman (2011) argued that the law facilitated neo-liberalized corporate and state managerial-style education systems, particularly in urban school systems. Accountability and assessments for closing the so-called achievement gap became catchphrase for effective versus ineffective teaching practices with an obscuration of the underlying sociological and ideological-rooted conditions in which teachers were challenged to teach in, such high crime poverty-laden urban communities.

Additionally, education scholars (Jennings; 1994; Noguera, 2009) have begun to call for changes in the academic achievement policy discourse on urban education. For example, Noguera (2009) argued a clearer understanding of the effects of education reform policies coupled with the housing, health and other policies can provide a "social safety net" for children through several dimensional understandings such as funding, segregation, unmet needs. The government will need to take leadership on providing resources for urban schools, curriculum development that matches jobs for the future, and direct policy to address communities with continued race and class segregation and failing schools. In addition to academic needs, increased policy making discussion on health, housing, poverty and other issues beyond academics.

Next, Lipman (2011) examined the political economy of urban image education toward an understanding neo-liberalism, or the group of economic and social policies and ideologies that are created to advance the interests of those who created the collection and race in urban communities. This argument extended to the notion that education is "shaped by a deeply implicated in globalized political, economic and ideological processes that have been redefining cities for over 20 years" (p.3). Moreover, African, Latino, and Asian American cultural groups are set to increase demographically across the US, but still face more social, economic, and academic challenges (Jennings, 1994; Noguera, 2009; Tatum, 2010). Demographical changes, Jennings (1994) argued, have political implications for many American cities since communities with higher concentrated levels of African, Latino, and Asian Americans continue to experience poverty and have lower social capital than White Americans.

Policy and urban education. Growth in diverse communities of students such as African American, Asian, and Latino students is blocked by reverse resegregation (Tatum, 2007) and poverty (Beegle, 2012). In the seminal book, *The Shame of the Nation*, Kozol (2005) argued that well after the *Brown v. Board* decision, schools stagnation of segregated school systems still lacked any viable effort to address the educational outlook for diverse student populations. Kozol (2005) recommended the policies meant to reform education simply targeted poor and under-resourced urban community school. Kozol traversed the US to visit schools to assess the education outlook in urban American schools, and pronounced a scathing assessment of the American education system to which the author likened it similar to the apartheid system of education.

Ginwright, Cammarota and Noguera (2005) argued the stagnant growth in urban communities has effected youths of color in terms of jobs, social inequality and marginalization. Findings suggested policies directed at improving the conditions of urban community youths have had a negative effect. Instead, Ginwright et al. (2005) contended public policy on youth development should include promoting opportunities and programs for young people to work on addressing social justice issues in their communities; a more comprehensive understanding of community layers that students will highlight areas of youth resistance or transformation.

In a related study, Stovall (2005) examined the learning outcomes of group of Chicago area African American high school students enrolled in a ten-week course entitled, *Education and Inequality,* a course designed to instruct students to deconstruct dominantly, social views impacting their lives. The study revealed a range of feelings from among the students. The participants in the program discussed three issues. First, feeling rejection from both school and the larger community. Then, the realities of not having a high school diploma or equivalent document or limited social options led to criminal activities. Additionally, limited family income made surviving on the minimum wage scale much more difficult. Teaching students about social justice, inequality and a relationship to policy discourse draw emphasis to ways that will assist youths to examine, deconstruct, and then reconstruct how education and social policy effect community and personal living outcomes.

In *Can We Talk About Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation*, Tatum (2007) argued the lack of educational opportunity among urban school students is not particular to African American students. It involved other

marginalized groups such as Latino American, Asian Americans, and others ethnic groups. Progress is slow in overcoming the dismal education outcome among students of color in urban schools locations.

Issues of poverty in urban school. Urban educators continue to struggle with issues of poverty in relation to educating children in the classroom. Historically, poverty has been shown to have an effect on children learning in the classroom (Beegle, 2012; Coleman, 1966). Noguera (2011) argued that while research has shown and continues to show a correlation between poverty and learning, policymakers and education reformers continue to shift blame from systemic, social arena to the "ineffective classroom teachers" (p.9). In the same report, Noguera further explained poverty and other social conditions affect learning in other ways such as limited social and academic outside of school. He argued also that adverse environmental conditions that affect students' health and well-being, and negative social capital such as violence in the community and lack of positive social institutions such service agencies and after-school programs.

Hispanic and Latino Americans in urban schools. Irizarry and Raible (2011) examined students in large metropolitan areas and argued Latinos remain a largely underrepresented school groups in schools. A study of pre-service teachers coming into the profession revealed already built up stereotypes of Latino students, urban school, and little knowledge about the racial and socioeconomic barriers students and their families contend with daily basis (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). Whether students belong to a particular ethnic group, the research suggests several factors to help students make positive academic and social progress in urban schools.

In 2002, for example, Padrón, Waxman, and Rivera emphasized several factors associated with Hispanic students are necessary areas of concern and support in order to assist students with favorable academic outcomes. Factors such as teachers with low self-efficacy skills for teaching in urban schools and troubled school environments are associated with underperformance. Conversely, Padrón et al (2002) suggested a more successful educational experience includes better teaching methods, culturally-responsiveness in the classroom, and instructional conversations. They further implied that a synthesized view of Hispanic and other English language development students and advocate for policy changes in instructional approaches to improve academic outcomes. Some segments of urban school student populations have dire academic concerns that call for a comprehensive approach to a "knowledge base on effective teaching, learning, leadership, and policy that focuses on alterable methods that may increase the academic performance of these students" (Padrón et al., 2002, p.18). Such policy advocacy will support other marginalized students in urban school settings.

Interestingly, however, Fairlie (2002) argued Latinos are aware of the issues associated with troubled urban school and are moving to other school districts in search of better educational outcomes. Fairlie studied the Latino-flight from urban schools with a high African American student population. Findings suggested Latino families are enrolled children into private schools, favored school voucher programs, and this enrollment pattern may grow with the spread of vouchers initiatives (Fairlie, 2002).

Krysan's (2002) study about the declining White American student enrollment patterns seemed to confirm the neighborhood context of why particular racial groups leave urban metropolitan areas. The findings of this research based on metropolitan

Detroit, Michigan neighborhoods suggest similar reasons for the flight, whether Latino or White American-racial, race-associated, neutral ethnographic, or multiethnic. Krysan (2002) and others (Zubrinsky & Bobo, 1996) argued the increased immigrant communities from Pacific Rim Asia and Latin American countries signal a trend of preferential neighbors with African Africans preferred in the least and Latino Americans somewhere in the middle. Other groups of students in urban schools experience similar educational outcomes and perceptions.

Asian Americans in urban schools. Stereotypical images of Asian American students "plays an important ideological role in the experiences" of this cultural group (Lew, 2006, p. 336). It is important to also note, many scholars labeled the term Asian American as problematic since it tends to aggregate over 30 ethnic groups within the Asian American culture to one group (Chao, Chiu & Lee, 2010; Chhuon, Hudley, Brenner, & Macias, 2010; Kim, 1973; Lew, 2006). Unless specifically referring to a particular Asian American group in this study, the 2010 United States Census definition seemed appropriate as a descriptor that defined "Asian" in reference to:

> a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. It includes people who indicated their race(s) as "Asian" or reported entries such as "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," and "Other Asian" or provided other detailed Asian responses (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011).

The experiences of many Asian American students continue to be invisible mostly due to the ideological constructs (Lew, 2007). The model minority construct began during the 1960s civil rights era (Chao et al., 2010; Kim, 1973) and has been described as the over generalization of Asian Americans as high-achievers, self, sufficient individuals with little social or physical problems (Kim, 1973).

Still, significant research (Chao et al., 2010; Chhuon, et al., 2010; Lew, 2006, 2007) about Asian American educational experiences illuminated issues among Asian students in an effort to deconstruct the model minority image. For example, Chhuon, Hudley, Brenner, and Macias (2010) studied Cambodian American college students and argued family structure as a motivating factor for education attainment. Participants in the study revealed that a post-secondary degree was important to influence younger siblings in the family. The study suggested that students regularly negotiate various views of education attainment that are contradictory to model minority image.

Lew (2006) examined Korean American students attending New York urban schools, and findings showed contradictions in terms of support and education attainment among Koreans students that differed between higher and lower socioeconomic status (SES) groups. In this study, Lew found students from a lower SES, urban students were more likely to assimilate to cultural norms of other ethnic student groups; were more likely to become oppositional to education attainment; and identified with racial experiences related to Latino and African Americans. In a related study, Lew (2007) also noted that comparison and contrast of “success and failure” to Latino and African American student is commonplace without considering other social factors including school resources.

In 2008, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund argued that the achievement gap among marginalized students groups continues to be the result of the model minority misconceptions about Asian American students. Redondo (2008) argued in the report that minority groups of students in urban schools must have the educational support in face of the high-staking testing environment. The report further concluded that

many Asian American students are failing because of a lack of bilingual support, interpretation, and translation support. Studies on Asian Americans in urban school settings suggested a tendency to drop out or are pushed out of schools thus signaling an absent voice of the behalf students and families vocalizing an awareness of the hidden academic struggles (Chao et al., 2010; Chhuon et al., 2010; Lew, 2007; Redondo, 2008). Many ethnic student groups share the same outlook in urban education and struggle with connecting their roles as students within the community.

African Americans in urban schools. Educating African American students since the early 1900s has been a difficult process. Ravitch's (2001) description of a century of failed attempts to educate African American students in a system full of racist views that permeated schools was academically inferior is a starting point to understanding the magnitude of the education crisis in the African American community. As African Americans migrated north during the 1940s-1960s, most the families settled in urban areas that were substandard and overcrowded (Ravitch, 2001). Since these children had parents with little to no formalized education, many students needed intense instruction for skills and knowledge for everyday living. As the nation's attention focused on the social issues of the 1960s—Vietnam War, Civil Rights, and other social turmoil, the achievement gap began to widen among Black and White students.

African American students who struggled in school are often aware of school problem, yet they may lack to the ability to make connections to their own academic outcomes (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011; Taines, 2011). Recent studies have focused on promoting an awareness of school reform by including student voices' in the discussion about various pedagogical methods (Mitra, 2004; Taines, 2011). Taines (2011) examined

the student behavior in a community-based initiative, the School Accountability Project. The curriculum associated with the program included an assignment for students to investigate and discuss the local school environment. Programs that include student voice in discussing and uncovering educational problems with the local school environment could have impactful results on students' ability to challenge and transform problematic school environments.

Other similar projects (Mitra, 2004) included African American expression in the Hip-Hop culture that provides a platform to expression ideals through an urban youth culture that helps to make sense of the world around them. Student Forums contribute to youth development in agency including leadership skills, increased sense of self-worth and belonging (Mitra, 2004). Additionally, student voice and social participation in their own understanding of academic outcome are new, relevant pedagogical trends in urban schools.

Similarly, Delpit (2008) argued children remain vulnerable to cultural representations in the media. In an article on the experiences of teaching early career teachers, Delpit offered precepts for schooling, in particular, for urban teacher. Urban students need more, not less rigorous instruction, which reduces students' the opportunities to critically explore, create, and think. African American students, in this case, need teachers to demand excellence and push through media portrayals that might suggest otherwise. Next, twenty-first century technological advances have made media available 24 hours a day. Delpit (2008) furthered contended students risk an internalization of beliefs about lack of intelligence, academic motivation, and troublesome behavioral issues. To address hegemonic views and control mechanisms to

incapacitate African American intellectualism, Delpit advised urban teachers to regularly promote academic ability and reject negative media representations, especially about urban schools and students. The perceptions of urban school setting can vary from person to person (Hampton et al., 2008). Areas with an MLK Street are locations where the perceptions of complex living, including school environments call into question what kinds of neighborhood would honor his legacy (Tilove, 2003). The next section presents the literature on place, place-perceptions, and street-named to honor Dr. King's civil rights legacy.

Place, Place Perception and Street-Naming

Johnson (2012) defined a place as "the ecological units that populations are organized in accordance with economic and social forces and therefore, distinguished by social, cultural, and economic characteristics" (p. 29). The concept of place in the context of education is a relatively new study that seeks to explain how location influences inequalities associated with "social outcomes and intergenerational transmissions of social status" (Johnson, 2011, p. 29). Research on place analyzed the social values and cultural behaviors of location as a strategy to develop an interdisciplinary knowledge of the student, community and the impacts on lived experiences influencing student attitudes about schooling; place is a part in building impactful relationships with students and the community, and place incorporates local community history toward considering pedagogy in a particular educational setting (Galster, 2012). Starks (2014) argued that in order to understand the perceptions of place, it means to "view issues through the eyes of a diverse student population" (Starks, 2014, p.39).

Perception influences actions (Beale Spencer, Tinsley, Dupree, & Fegley, 2012). Apathy in schools among some at-risk, urban area students continues to be problematic for urban teachers who attempt to provide both academic and social education to students living in lower socioeconomic, urban communities (Maye & Day, 2012). Place perception as a meaningful, interdisciplinary analysis and understanding (Starks, 2014), may increase pedagogy and facilitate further consideration of students' lived experiences and the effect of place in the classroom. Following Galster (2012), social structures intersect in an urban space and characterize the community with a lackluster potential for success. Schools are critical community structures needed for improving the lived experiences among its students (Galster, 2012).

Streets named for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Every third week of January, teachers across the United States engage students to at least one lesson to talk about "the dream" of the iconic civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and for good reason. During a highpoint of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. King focused the fight for social equality that eventually led to the signing of the *Civil Rights Act of 1957* and *Voting Rights Act of 1965* into law. Though the importance of these two acts are once again in the courts at the time of this writing (Ehrlich, 2013), the impact of his legacy also seemed washed and compacted into a single day of classroom instruction. Students should understand the significance of the *Civil Rights Act* and *Voting Rights Act* and how they may impact their community now, and in years to come (Cosby, 2013).

Shortly after Dr. King's assassination in 1968, the earliest record of a street name change to honor him occurred in Chicago, Illinois where civic officials renamed South Park Way (Tilove, 2003). Over 900 streets around the world have been named or

renamed to commemorate the Dr. King's thus making him the most honored African American person in the world (Huffington Post, 2013; Tretter, 2011). Commemorative action such as re-naming streets honoring his life and legacy differ among community activists with socially and politically driven ideals and the controversy associated with this sort of community activism is equally noticeable (Alderman, 2003, 2006, 2008). The intense emotion that accompanies the re-naming of a street after the slain civil rights leader is symbolic of how many communities continue to grapple with the issues of race, class and social justice (Alderman, 2002, 2006).

In the present study, the re-naming of Main Street, a pseudonym, to that of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street illustrated the activism involved to revitalizing the corridor. City historians (Foster, 2010) described the transition of the MLK Street locality that began as a neighborhood park community. In the early 1900s, Main Street was the primary road leading into the city's newest subdivision that attracted citizens with affordable housing and attractive economic base for businesses. At the time, White Americans made up the majority population, yet African and Latino Americans also resided in the community.

Shortly after WWII, the demographics of the Main Street corridor began to shift with the increase in African American military based families and others looking for middle-class housing. Black families moved into the Main Street community because a racially restricted practices in other areas in the surrounding valley communities. Additionally, urban renewal and sprawl resulted in gentrification of African Americans from the downtown areas which pushed them into the Main Street corridor. Eventually the economic health of the Main Street corridor began to suffer as streetcars no longer

serviced the neighborhoods. New freeways and highways isolated the growing African American community and simultaneously supported industrialized businesses in other parts of the city. Between the 1950s and 1960s, the Main Street community economically declined in terms of jobs and transportation. While the overall economic based suffered, many established African American business owners thrived and provided services to the community. In 1988, community activists petitioned the city government to change the Main Street name to Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard. Proponents of the renamed street argued it would bear witness to Dr. King's service to society. Despite opposition, community leaders' commitment and activism were successfully in their efforts to rename the corridor to illustrate the diverse community (Appeal of Planning Commission Approval, 1988)

Alderman (2006) argued dramatizations of Black activism were a common approach "for African Americans to elevate public recognition of Dr. King as well as a host of other figures identified with the struggle for equal rights" (p. 220). Even as Chicago and other cities such as Montgomery, Alabama, the site of the infamous 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, honored Dr. King in such a public manner, many community leaders, including church pastors contested the name change (Alderman, 2006). However, his legacy of non-violent demonstration for equality transcended contestations to memorialize him in a public, lasting manner. For many, MLK Streets are streets symbolic of inclusion in the American dream, a victory over despair (Tilove, 2003). Numerous communities are multiethnic with concentrated populations of Latino, Asian and European descent lower and middle income families (Tilove, 2003). Urban schools located near a MLK Street are a part of both the dream and the despair for the ethnic

groups of students and their families living communities with a MLK Street with various interpretations of the community.

MLK Street communities teeter between polarized interpretations. On one hand, Alderman (2006) asserted communities with a MLK Street are places of renewed commitments to urban revitalization, racial harmony and are symbolic representations of African American identity, action, and community. In consequence, urban area schools located near a MLK Street can be confusing and complex environments for teachers to develop a curriculum while contending with broader community issues such as economic development and lack of educational resources (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Griffith (1998) argued the social environment of a school impacts residents' perceptions of the school particularly in lower socioeconomic residential areas. Taken together, these ideas form the impetus for urban teachers to reflect on the constructed view of an urban school environment in relation to student academic achievement.

The history of urban education illuminated historical ideologies, forerunners associated with contemporary ideas about schooling in these urban areas. Nieto (2005) asserted teachers should honor Dr. King in teaching students beyond a presentation of his life through one famous speech by 1) protecting and extending the civil rights Dr. King led the fight for, and 2) live fully in a democratic society. The construct of an urban school location is what a cultural geographer would see a place not as a "container for human activity, but something that is produced and practice" (Buendía, 2011, p. 4). In addition to commemorating Dr. King's legacy of non-violent demonstrations for social justice and equal rights, teachers and teacher educators should commemorate Dr. King's involvements in promoting education equality (Haggerty, 1978).

Urban Education and Teachers

While Dr. King did not write traditional school curriculum or formally taught in the K-12 classroom, his legacy included advocating for the power of education (Haggerty, 1978). Haggerty (1978) argued that Dr. King knew the value of the educational environment as a platform to transform attitudes in order to change educational outcomes. Similarly, Boggs (2008) posited Dr. King also knew altering young children's mindset would also change their living environments. Boggs and other founded the Detroit Summer program as a way to critically engage Detroit students in re-imaging the city after decades of despair. Program organizers modeled the classroom instruction through community-based activities rather than in traditional classroom setting. Boggs further argued an educational paradigm shift to include outside, community-based learning and indoor, operationalized educational spaces to maximize students' opportunities toward becoming responsible and caring citizens.

In *The Purpose of Education*, an article published for the Morehouse College campus newsletter *Maroon Tiger*, Dr. King (1947) argued education had a two-pronged purpose in society. It should facilitate learners toward achieving appropriate life goals. King wondered whether education was, at the time, effectively enabling people to sift through propaganda on the way to accomplishing suitable ambitions. In this final part, literature supported questions about what teachers understand and perceive about the ability to teach in an urban area school.

Self-efficacy issues. In 1977, Bandura introduced the social construct theory, and within it, his seminal work on self-efficacy or belief in self-control over the ability to design and manage efforts to attain a goal (Bandura, 1977). The significant proposition

argued self-efficacy influences how “people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave” (Bandura, 1993, p.118). These effects are best understood through four different processes that correlate to the ability to “exercise control over actions and events that affect experiences”—cognition, motivation, affective, and selection (Bandura, 1992; Tschannen & McMaster, 2009). While all four of these were important to discuss, cognition processes suggest that higher self-efficacy showed a relationship to more positive experiences and confidence to complete a task (Bandura, 1992). Conversely, the lower the self-efficacy level equally correlated to more negative experiences (Bandura, 1993). Earlier works on self-efficacy positioned the ground work for other studies on self-efficacy and teacher education.

Pre-Service teachers and self-efficacy. Since the introduction of self-efficacy as a framework for research on teacher preparation and self-efficacy, the framework has been applied in various ways (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). For example, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine self-efficacy developmental process among primary-grade teachers’ ability to implement new reading strategies. Although the results were inconclusive, findings showed self-efficacy development remains a critical area for further research. Moreover, self-efficacy development when examined under controlled environments differs from daily the classroom experiences (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). This study had implications for teaching pre-service teachers strategies with ongoing support and development during field placements. Additionally, other studies (Barnyak & McNelly 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 2008) on pre-service teacher efficacy addressed perceptions of pedagogical and

behavioral strategies influencing student educational outcomes. Accordingly, preparing pre-service teachers to reflect on their own effectiveness openly and honestly is part of the solution to the dilemma of how to provide efficient, equitable pedagogy in urban area schools.

A broader teacher preparation phase will include experiences and discussions within graduate coursework to increase novice teachers' self-efficacy to teach students in urban school locations (Nuby, 2010). First, Foote and Cook-Cottone (2004) argued attracting and retaining competent teachers from teacher education programs compounds the issue of pre-service teacher self-efficacy. Changing the experiences of pre-service teacher should include a reflective look at their self-efficacy towards teaching in an urban area school. Next, Nuby (2010) further illustrated this in an eight-year longitudinal study on pre-service teachers immersed in an urban education program to examine whether "observation and participation would clarify their misconceptions of working with urban area students" (Nuby, 2010, p.43). Although the study emphasized after-school programs, pre-service teachers were more likely be exposed to the realities and a truer understanding of urban area lifestyles. Nuby (2010) argued pre-service teacher perceptions of urban area students and schools would change if they had the opportunity to work in an urban setting.

Parent-teacher relationships. The parent-teacher relationship is an integral part of the school community (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Hindin, 2010). Research has shown fostering relationships with the parents of the students attending urban schools is an important component to favorable academic and non-academic outcomes (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, Noguera, n.d; Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Epstein, 1986;

Frederiksen, Cooner, & Stevenson, 2012; Patel & Stevens, 2011; Warren, Noftle, Ganley, & Quintanar, 2011).

Parental involvement in students' academic activities is beneficial toward positive classroom behavior while reducing student discipline issues, and (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009) improved learning skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Epstein & Becker, 1982). As such, when teachers have a positive attitude towards parents, it correlates to the potential for teachers to be able to foster positive relationships without fearing parental contact (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Griffith, 1998). Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) concluded after surveying 66 schools in eight school districts that teacher efficacy is related to parental involvement practices including parent-teacher conferences and the degree to which teachers were able to communicate with parents. Further, Griffith (1998) also argued the social environment of a school impacted parent perceptions of the school particularly among lower socioeconomic status. The impetus for teachers to reflect on their ability to foster parent relationships while considering the school environment, specifically in urban school environments increases student academic achievement.

The limited coursework found in higher education is problematic toward supporting pre-service and in-service teachers with strategies to develop relationships with urban parents (Anyon, 1994; Warren et al., 2011). In recent years, researchers argued that adversarial relationships among teachers and parents in urban schools contribute to intergenerational academic and social failure (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Noel, 2010). Without strategic parent relationship developmental strategies, this cycle of failure is more likely to continue among students attending urban schools in complex

living environments (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Specifically, trusting relationships and parent involvement in decisions related to student outcomes are critical to the long-term relationships among teachers and parents in urban communities. Research should include ideas and strategies that impact teachers obtaining skills and strategies to foster relationships with parents of students attending an urban school.

Fostering parent relationship. Teacher-parent relationships take on different perspectives depending on whether the perspective is provided by the parent or the teacher. Both sides of this sometimes contentious relationship want the best for all children, but often struggle to forge meaningful relationships.

Parent involvement models. Traditionally, parental involvement meant to participate at schools, serving as copiers, suppliers of treats and art materials for the school and classroom without a significant link to student academic performance and support (Bennett, 2007; Paredes, 2011). While this school-centered involvement may serve specific needs on the part of both parent and teacher, parent engagement models are an integral part of building parent capacity to support student academic development.

Epstein (1995) outlined six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community in research more commonly referred to as The Epstein Model (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Voorhis, 2010). The Epstein Model for Parent Involvement provided the platform for current literature on the importance of building parent relationships, subsequently leading to greater parent involvement at schools.

The model suggests the involvement of parents in the decision and governance. However, considerations of a lower socioeconomic and concentrated diverse student

population are two of the limitations of The Epstein Model for Parent Involvement. Bower & Griffin (2011) argue that the model had merit in each of the six types when they examined the effectiveness of the parent involvement strategies in a high-poverty, highly diverse, poverty-stricken urban school community. From data analyzed from this case study, however, Bowers & Griffin (2011) asserted themes associated with effective strategies for parent engagement were inconclusive with low parent participation with the strategy implementations resulting in teacher frustration.

Paredes (2011) argued parent involvement models such as her action research based Academic Parent-Teacher Teams Models (APTT) shifts the paradigm of parent interactions at school from "unsystematic social, celebratory and informational events" to opportunities to become a member of their student's academic success team" (p.2). Such parent relationship model programs, however, are not embraced by all educators. Communication between parent and teacher in many cases seem to be a problematic, one-way relationship at best.

Parent communication. Barnyak and McNelly's (2009) studied communication practices among teachers and administrators and found that the majority of the respondents still preferred communicating with parents via handbooks, parent orientation meetings, and other non-relationship building techniques. Interactions with parents, in some cases, are based on assumptions that parents in urban school lack the passion and desire to require the best instructional and relational practices for their students (Ahram et al., n.d.).

Miretsky (2004), similarly argued both the parent and teacher seek the same for their relationship, a more democratic school community. In a study of three Chicago area

urban schools, Miretsky (2004) observed that teacher and parents mentioned time to develop a relationship as a major stumbling-block thus suggesting teachers and school administrators must consider creative ways to increase parent involvement and interactions. In this way, teachers, parents, and school administrators, even in densely populated urban schools, can begin to build more democratic, productive parent involvement opportunities.

Among other findings, Nuby (2010) concluded pre-service teachers' expectations of the school, home and community life to be incongruent with previous ideas about urban communities. Nuby's findings were consistent with similar studies (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Mattison & Aber, 2007). Other studies showed a relationship between coursework and teacher disposition within the context of school and the surrounding community (Frederiksen et al., 2012; Warren et al., 2011). For example, Warren et al. (2011) argued in their study a collective understanding involving pre-service teachers' coursework and the importance of roles and responsibilities to the community―family involvement in schools, teacher and family connection, and the community's involvement in schools.

Even more, the literature remains limitedly focused on the effectiveness aspects of teacher development especially in urban school locations (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). The effectiveness level of new teachers begins while they are still in their teacher education program and continues during their first year of teaching as their beliefs about the power of teaching begin to decrease (Housego, 1992). Studies have shown when teachers are well prepared for work with families, they were more likely to have a greater sense of confidence and affective beliefs when working with diverse groups of students

(Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Meaningful teacher preparation helps to build teacher confidence for work in urban schools. Warren et al. (2011) added that a superfluity of community resources available to teachers has been shown to provide teachers with the necessary resources to extend roles and responsibilities within the classroom to the roles and responsibilities in the community. In consequence, teachers viewed their own sense of confidence and efficacy beliefs as change agents for the very communities they held negative deficit views. The link between teachers' self-efficacy and the classroom is fundamental to effective teaching practices in urban schools.

Preparing teachers to work in schools located in urban areas has a significant emphasis on efficacy in teaching. Part of the dilemma is assessing if whether pre-service teachers are prepared to teach with cultural responsiveness to diverse socioeconomic and cultural groups of students, and what measurements are available to indicate classroom readiness or personal belief in ability to teach in different settings (Middleton, 2002; Siwatu & Starker, 2010). Perceptions associated with cultural responsiveness to urban area students include negative behavioral issues. The education indifference originated from perceptions of urban students and the familial structure and the geopolitical opinions, urban school issues, and a disquieting self-awareness (Galster, 2012; Gay, 2000; Hogrebe, 2012; Middleton, 2002).

Gay's (2010) studied culturally responsive teaching and a disconnection between schools, home and community argued for an analysis of critical factors that affect academic achievement. As such, effective teaching happens with the inclusion of ecological and social factors such as lived experiences (Gay, 2010), rather than solely subscribing to controlled pedagogical and curricular implementations that benefit the

dominant policy-making views of few people (Nelson, Cassell, & Arnold, 2014). Other studies addressed cultural responsiveness and effective teaching practices developing effectiveness in various ways, including academic achievement, behavioral problems, and special education (Gay, 2010; Groulx & Silva, 2010; Nuby, 2010; Siwatu & Starker, 2010). However, Gay also argued:

> A very different pedagogical model is needed to improve the performance of underachieving students from various ethnic groups — one that teaches to and through their personal and cultural strengths, the intellectual, capabilities, and their prior accomplishments. Culturally responsive teaching is this model.

Michie (2007) furthered this argument on a cultural responsive paradigm by suggesting teacher education discourse and examination of the experiences of teachers of color, whiteness of privilege, or unearned advantages based on skin color, and purposes for entering the teaching profession. The current climate of teacher pedagogical performance, accountability, and teaching preparation should also include cultural responsiveness training.

Pedagogical effectiveness. Pre-service teachers' level of pedagogical efficiency relates to unfamiliarity with culturally responsive teaching especially in an urban school location is attracting substantial notice in education research (Nuby, 2010). Groulx and Silva (2010) used the Multicultural Efficacy Scale (MES) Survey to measure participant responses in a pre- and post-test comparison of self-efficacy and teaching in an urban school. The study, based on pre-service teachers in a cultural responsive teaching program, track the teacher candidates' progress on developing a positive viewpoint on teaching in a culturally diverse classroom. Groulx and Silva (2010) found data was consistent with lower self-efficacy among pre-service for work in an urban school. Teachers need more relevant and real experiences in urban schools.

Other related studies concluded that pre-service teachers' perceptions of urban area students would indeed change if they had the opportunity to work in an urban school setting (Lee, Eckrich, Lackey, & Showalter, 2010; Nuby, 2010). In a study on authority, in predominately African American schools, Kelly (2010) argued replacing interests of teacher beliefs about student performance with concerns over how this may affect classroom behavior. Kelly analyzed teacher perception in correlation to instructional practices using data from 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey, the Chicago School Study, and the Partnership for Literacy Study. The findings from Kelly's study showed modest difference in instructional practices, in response to student performance.
The foremost concern of school officials related to academic achievement.

Teacher education programs will need reformation at the policy and clinical practice level as a requirement of effectiveness becomes motivation for hiring classroom professionals (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Moreover, the cocooned-like pre-service teacher experiences may promote a false sense of confidence. Lower self-efficacy coupled with accountability, pre-scripted curriculum, racially intolerant practices may be difficult for novice teachers to contend on a daily basis. Studies (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Warren et al., 2010) have shown that coursework examining personal beliefs and biases correlated to increased teacher efficacy in urban schools with a highly diverse student population.

Several studies conducted on study teacher dispositions (Frederiksen et al., 2012; Warren et al., 2010) and perspectives of working with urban parents and students have shown that pre-service teachers' dispositions are amiable to change. When those teachers are given the necessary coursework coupled with effective, relevant field experiences and

opportunities to engage with parents while assigned to classrooms in an urban setting (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Frederiksen et al. 2011; Warren et al., 2011).

In-Service Teacher Preparation. The demands of teaching related to high stakes assessments and classroom behavioral is challenging regardless of the school location. Milner (2011) confirmed teachers need to build cultural competence just as much as students. This case study explored the steps a White American male educator teaching science in an urban school used to develop trust relationships with students. The findings suggested ways to incorporate meaningful steps to build competence in developing relationships, leading to greater contact within a diverse student school population.

Similarly, Leonard, Barnes-Johnson, Dantley, and Kimber (2011) studied the personal efficacy beliefs among urban science teachers' ability to teach in diverse urban schools. The study confirmed previous assertions that teachers, whether pre-service or in-service, need meaningful professional development in effective teaching methods. For example, in-service teachers' level of pedagogical efficiency related to unfamiliarity with culturally responsive teaching especially in an urban school location continue to warrant education research (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Frederiksen et al, 2012; Hampton et al, 2008; Noel, 2011; Schaffer, 2012; Sleeter, 2008). Teacher education programs are gateways for more comprehensive research culturally responsive teaching in urban schools rather than for use as instructional purposes.

In recent years, education scholars have used constructivism frameworks in research on teacher education programs (Hausfather, 2001; Van Huizen et al., 2005; Waddell, 2011). Waddell (2011) examined the impact of coursework in a college teacher education program to address specifically urban schools settings. Using the social

constructivism framework, the study's finding suggested teacher candidates felt encouraged to consider the cultural context of the school as they began to transform efficacy and perceptions of teaching in an urban school setting. Other studies report similar findings on university-led immersion programs based in urban school settings. For example, Schaffer (2012) reported findings that corroborate teacher education programs grounded in social constructivism. In the Schaffer study, pre-service teacher perceptions of urban schools were based on experiences at the school rather than on media-driven knowledge and perceptions. Next, Reed (2009) argued that rather than operating as an isolated variable, urban teachers have to work as agents of the community understanding social, economic, cultural and spiritual aspects of the community. His argument that teachers are commodities in urban communities may help to bridge gaps in the education process in the urban areas they serve.

Teacher hope. In recent years, literature on teacher hope increased in this important area of scholarship. For example, Bullough and Hall-Kenyon (2012) studied a teacher's sense of call to teach in relation to their hopefulness and commitment to teaching. The findings suggested no statistical correlation between measures of hopefulness among group differences such as years of teaching, grade level taught, or family connections. Bullough and Hall-Kenyon's study was further suggestive of research on the lives of teachers. The constructed knowledge about teaching and schooling influences a sense of hopefulness in relation to urban schools.

In another study on hope and a call to teach, Birmingham (2009) argued teachers exhibit many kinds of hope ranging from anticipation of children arriving for the first day of school to the hope that faces adversity and keeps moving against all odds.

In this study, Birmingham analyzed hope in the lives of teachers. Findings included teacher interpretations of what hope is and is not, and how hope functions on a daily basis. The study also suggested discourse on ways to practice hope within oneself, school campuses, and in children.

In conclusion, a decade after Dr. King's death, Haggerty (1978) eloquently summed up Dr. King's legacy in education by stating:

> Martin Luther King Jr. was many things: philosopher, theologian, clergyman, human rights activist, orator [sic]. He was also an educator, a master teacher. His life speaks compellingly of so many of the qualities we project upon the ideal educator. He speaks to us of conviction, commitment, creativity [sic], of trust and courage and vision (Haggerty, 1978, p.68).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, was a master teacher of conviction and commitment, hope and courage. The literature reviewed supported this purpose of this study to examine how educators working in a school located on an MLK Street perceive and understand their calling in connection with Dr. King's legacy.

Summary

The literature reviewed presented a historical and modern interpretation of urban education. Political and social ideologies provided the foundation of many of the policies or lack of equitable policies in modern urban education. In the twentieth century, the US struggled with educating African-American and other ethnic student groups in urban school settings. MLK Street names are symbolic of struggle and despair and hope and promise in these neighborhoods. Collectively, urban teachers continue to struggle academically and socially to educate these students. In consequence, such struggles signal a different question to ask when preparing teachers for work in these areas, including questions about the history surrounding the legacy of Dr. King, the social

significance of his name, and what it means to teach in school on a street named in his honor.

The next chapter presents the study design employed for this study. It explains the interconnectedness of the study's theoretical framework to the philosophical and methodological approach to the research design. The research design will outline the specific research design chosen for the study, including respondent and site selection strategies, data collection method, and data analysis procedures. Lastly, chapter three will then pose my role as a researcher, biases, assumptions and the limitations associated with this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter three outlines the inquiry approach and research design for this study. The first three sections introduce the philosophical and methodological approach, a review of the guiding questions, and research design for the study. Following, it describes the respondent and site selection strategies, data collection and analysis procedures. The last section explains my role as a researcher, biases, assumptions, limitations, and concludes with a chapter summary.

Philosophical Approach

Constructivism was the philosophical approach to conducting this study. Crotty (1998) defined constructivism as the uniqueness of experience and how an individual makes sense of the world is valid and should be respected. He also provided a useful definition of social constructivism as an emphasis that is situated on the cultural holdings that shape the way an individual understands and expresses a different view of the world. Given my understanding of how to make meaning of experiences and events, I subscribed to the idea that all social realities are constructed through unique human experiences and "knowledge is constructed rather than developed" (Stake, 1995, p. 99).

Several assumptions were important to the epistemological underpinning of constructivism framework and contextualized the findings of this study. First, social and historical realities shape and give meaning to lived experiences, and people will construct different meanings of the same phenomena (Crotty, 1998). "Realities are co-constructed between the researcher and the researched" (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Lastly, a phenomena

can only be understood and contextualized in the unique setting with its own unique problems and solutions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Next, in addition to a constructivist framework, an interpretive/social constructivism framework suggests that a series of significant interactions shape and inform knowledge of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These meaningful interactions are many and complex, subjective and open to interpretation, and most likely understood socially and historically (Creswell, 2013). In consideration of interpretive and constructivism, the study emphasized an inquiry based on various perspectives; understood the social and cultural construct of language could distort and shape meaning; methods determined the findings, and considered the effects of the inequitable researcher/participant relationship on the study (Patton, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to describe teachers' interpretations of the work, school, and the community surrounding their school located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California. The participants in this study all come different backgrounds and interpret their work, relationships, and understandings of the community in different ways, yet they work in the same school community.

Central Research Study Question: What are educators' interpretations of the work, the school, and the community surrounding their school that is located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California?

Supportive Research Questions:

1. How do educators construct their knowledge of the MLK Street community?

2. What social issues, knowledge, and perceptions of the MLK Street community affect decisions to work or stay employed in an urban school location?

3. What are the characteristics of a teacher who teaches in a school near an MLK Street?

4. How do social issues, knowledge, and interpretations of the MLK Street community affect pedagogical decisions in the classroom or on campus?

5. How do educators working in an MLK Street school interpret and develop social connections in the community?

Methodological Approach

I chose a qualitative approach to research for several reasons and with the understanding that qualitative research "is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3). First, a qualitative inquiry was conducive for describing respondents' interpretation of teaching in a school near an MLK Street. Creswell (2012) posited a qualitative study is "best suited to address the research problem in that you do not know the variables and need to explore (p. 16). Secondly, qualitative inquiry allows for more in-depth interpretations of complex participant views, descriptive themes that emerge from the natural settings, and the opportunity for the researcher to comment reflexively throughout the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Following Stake, this qualitative inquiry into the lives of teachers who work in an MLK Street school community "capitalizes on ordinary ways of making sense" (Stake, 1995, p.72).

Thirdly, a qualitative process made possible my active role in the study as the principal instrument to collect data with an "acknowledgement that interpretations flow from my own personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (Creswell, 2013). This last

reason for choosing a qualitative research design resembled what a genealogist might consider important when researching family history.

In view of that, a qualitative process proved to be a suitable method for a researcher to use skills that mirrored a genealogical approach to research. The attributes of a genealogist are related to a case study researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam; 1988):

- Investigative skill set similar to assembling a quilt or puzzle
- Knowledgeable of the phenomenon and setting
- Sensitive to participant; good listening skills; empathetic
- Ask good questions, yet understanding of unstructured interviews
- Flexible; patient with unexpected paths of data collection

Case Study Research Design

There were a few details about a case study suggestive of an appropriate design for this research. This research design is a part of the ethnography branch of qualitative methods and has a long history of use in anthropology, sociology, and other fields of study. The case study method is a design allows for the study of a real-life event or setting, describes activities, and emerges during an in-depth exploration of an individual, multiple individuals, a program or a process (Creswell, 2012, 2013). Other basic tenets of a case study include a binding study according to system and time; extensive, multiple data collection techniques; rich descriptive data analysis based on emergent coded themes; and addresses How, What, or Why research questions (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002).

The case study research design was appropriate for a few important reasons. First, the case study approach is an appropriate research design for the constructivism paradigm that suggests "individuals seek to understand the world in that they live and work" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Merriam (1988) argued case studies are important for what they may reveal about a phenomenon and provide rich, descriptions of the phenomenon. Case studies help the reader discover new information about a phenomenon that allows for the "discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding" (Merriam, 1988, p. 13).

Next, the interpretive/constructive basis of the case study method further supported this study because of the complex nature of the social setting of an urban school. The design promoted the social and historical examination of the types of previous interactions and social norms influencing biases, attitudes, and actions among the participants and settings in this study (Creswell, 2013). Lastly, a collective case study helped to individually and collectively describe each case. Collective case studies are studies that involve more than one case in order to comparatively understand one issue. The advantage of this variation of a case study design led to gaining greater insight and understanding about the phenomenon in this study by developing a portrait of the participants, discussing interactions, and understanding beliefs and behaviors among study participants (Creswell, 2012, 2013; Stake, 1995).

The criticisms of the case study design were reasonable and worthy of consideration. Critiques included the absence of a uniform data collection and report system, and the study purpose generalized to a theoretical underpinning rather than the population (Yin, 1994). However, case studies were deemed beneficial for meaningful

interactions among the researcher and participant, thus helping the researcher obtain a greater understanding of the participants' views (Creswell, 2013).

Research Site Selection

In order to gain access to the data collection site, certain steps were necessary to complete the process (see Appendix E: Case Study Audit Trail). Briefly, a detailed description of the study—purpose and time of the study, participant and site selection criteria, Informed Consent Form, and data collection protocols— received the university IRB committee's approval. Next, two school district gatekeepers provided entry into the site selected for this study. First, I met with the school district's Director of Research and Assessments to discuss the details of the study. After completing the District's written IRB process, the study received approval to the site administrator to acquire about the possibility of using the school for data collection. Next, the site administrator granted approval to contact participant candidates for the study. The Case Study Audit Trail located in the appendix further outlines the study's timing and communication with university, district, and school administrators.

A purposeful sampling procedure identified a suitable site for data collection. The method of inquiry and interpretation situated and contextualized the place where participants worked, subjective and relied heavily upon the participants' experience and knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, the cases in this study were representative within a larger geographical, social and economic (Creswell, 2012) context—teaching in a school located on an MLK Street.

There were several schools in the Central California Valley to choose from for data collection. Prior to conducting this study, I previously visited several schools

located on MLK Streets, conducted a pilot study at one site, met the school administrators, and was familiar with the surrounding neighborhoods. However, Western Elementary School (pseudonym), a Pre-K through Six Grade school in a medium-sized metropolitan city, in the Central Valley of California, was a single site selected for two reasons--the socially and historically rich MLK Street location. Second, the physical and social characteristics of the neighborhood were similar to other MLK Street descriptions found in the literature. Choosing the one site for data collection helped to provide a more in-depth description of the complexities of teaching in a school on MLK Street. Consequentially, a purposive, collective case study design helped to bind the study to one site location and to select individuals to provide information about working in a school located on MLK Street.

Participant Selection Strategy

The sample size of the study was an important decision and not taken lightly. The small sample size was needed to gather in-depth, descriptively rich information (Patton, 2002) about working in an MLK Street community school. Although Creswell (2013) recommended units of analysis for a case study design should not include more than five participants for an ample amount of themes and reasonable instances of cross-case analysis, the six participants in this study provided an opportunity to identify multiple themes for analysis. A sample size of six participants helped to concentrate data analysis and findings to the Western Elementary School so as to not generalize findings beyond the school community.

Since the aim of this study was to explore the human experience and to make meaning of a place, the six participants were supposed to be selected based on a pre-

determined set of criteria— years of employment at the school, credential and cultural experience. However, after contacting the Western Elementary school administrator for a listing of candidates, the list contained only two potential candidates. Therefore, the sampling strategy changed from a criterion-based strategy to a snowball strategy, in which the initial two participants helped to identify the four additional participants for the study. The sequential details of respondent selection were documented on the audit trail protocol outlining when and how the respondents were selected for the study (see Appendix E: Study Audit Trail). As a result, participants for the study were

1. Full-time signed contract employees with the school district and educators at Western Elementary School. Two have been employed one year, yet they both have 10 years working experience in urban schools; four respondents have four or more years of experience working at Western Elementary School.
2. Demographically—one White American male and five female educators which included three White Americans (according to the 2010 census, this descriptor refers to anyone with origins in any of the original peoples of Europe), one African American, and one Latina American.

A diverse perspective and insight into the phenomenon from a range of teacher experience and demographic background revealed important themes associated with street-naming and the impact on teacher education and performance. A pre-collection interview determined interest level, outlined the timeframe for the study, data collection procedures, confidentiality measures during data analysis and presentation of findings. Each respondent reviewed and agreed to the project requirements and signed the Informed Consent Forms (see Appendix A: Participant Informed Consent Form)

signaling his or her participation in the study. Participants were also given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym for the data analysis, report of findings, and any subsequent writings after the completed study and were assigned names based on when they came into the study. Afterwards, subsequently arranged observations and interviews followed. To show an appreciation of their time and commitment to this study, each participant, the school principal, as well as the school districts' Director of Research and Assessments received a copy of the findings.

Data Collection Procedures

A collective case study design required specific steps and various data collections instruments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Fourteen weeks of data collection were bound to the MLK Street neighborhood community, Western Elementary School, and a collective group of six educators. Before transcribing any data, participant pseudonyms with code abbreviations assisted with data identification markings on collected documents. For example, the first observation of the first participant, John Newman received the label, 1JN1OB. This system of identification helped as data were collected from an array of methods—interviews, observations, researcher journal, video, pictures, and school and classroom documents.

Interviews. Interviews were an important components to this study. Prior to participant interviews, a trial run of the interview protocol questions with two educators tested the appropriateness and clarity of the questions. During the data collection phase, one semi-structured, open-ended 30-90 minute interview was conducted with each respondent in a classroom or an office room on campus. Two follow-up interviews of no more than thirty minutes were needed because of the quality of one audio recording

volume was low which seemed to distort participant answers and the other follow-up interview was needed because of a stopped audio-taping unbeknownst to the researcher. Before interviews, an opportunity to discuss study reason for the study and confidentiality measures provided each participant the opportunity to opt out of the research study. A digital recording device placed in the middle of the table allowed researcher and respondent to stop the tape should it became necessary.

Patton (2002) suggested a variety of questioning techniques facilitate descriptive participant responses. Since the thematic nature of these interviews involved candid discussions about race and social understandings, developing a rapport with the participants helped to extract meaningful dialog. The interview questions were designed to understand participants' experience and behavior, opinions and values (Patton, 2002), knowledge of the MLK Street community and about the aspect of working at Western Elementary School.

Interview sessions began with general, and personal knowledge questions that gradually became grounded to the study (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol). Each session started with the purpose of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and a check of audio recording equipment. Then, participants were asked questions about their room decorum, student work, the school campus, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and advice for new teachers coming into the neighborhood. During the interview, several unstructured questions and answers were recorded and subsequently transcribed for data analysis. After each interview, each participant was thanked for their time and asked whether they had questions or other areas of interest that they wished to discuss or elaborate.

Observations and field notes. Observations and field notes were useful collection strategies for gathering additional data to corroborate interviews. Observations led to recorded behavioral data in real time settings (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). Field note collection procedures included using a protocol template (see Appendix C: Observation Protocol) labeled with each participants' data code name. This data collection strategy covered actual involvement with the student population and daily activity. Any post-observation questions allowed additionally observed themes to emerge from discussions with participants.

Documents and other data source review. Documents, images, and video were obtained from various sources at the school site as well as within the community. This set of data provided important information about the site, community, and corroborated participants statement made in interviews. The following obtained and reviewed as additional data sources to add to rich and descriptive information gathered: 74 photos, eight short recorded videos of classroom set up (no children present), 22 school and classroom documents, four classroom observations, and 12 researcher audio-video recorded observations of the MLK Street neighborhood. Two of the six participants declined classroom observations as an added layer of confidentiality toward obscuring their identities.

Regardless of the research design, threats to the validity and reliability of the data collection required care and consideration. Several steps were necessary to attend to a rigorous inquiry and to enhance the accuracy of the study (Creswell, 2013). The interpretive underpinnings of the case study design called for a check into the trustworthiness, or reality of the findings that emerged from the study (Merriam, 1988).

Data Trustworthiness

In a case study, human behavior and interpretations of behavior place limitations on the reliability of a qualitative research study's findings (Merriam, 1988). However, there were several ways to focus the trustworthiness of data collected for this study. A standard of methodological inquiry and internal validation was consistent and monitored by employing three general techniques—triangulation, member-checking, and external audits. First, Triangulation (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 1988) corroborated data from the participants' interviews, observational field notes, and artifacts collected during the study (Creswell, 2012). An examination of each source of information determined the relationship of emergent themes for data analysis. Additionally, the detailed field notes, a preliminary codebook for major themes, and the digital recording devices helped to gain multiple understandings of the phenomenon under study. The *Dragon Naturally Speaks®* software program transcribed verbatim all participant and researcher verbal and other audio-observational data. Handwritten field-notes and typed, transcribed data organized according to data type, participant, and location were (and still) kept in locked storage closet. Finally, backed-up transcribed data file had a password protected computer program and external hard drive mechanism helped to ensure two copies of data for easy retrieval and to guard against any unforeseen circumstances.

Member-checking (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988), or submitting the data and findings to participants periodically throughout the study to determine the accuracy of descriptions, cited phrases, and whether "interpretations are fair and representative" (Creswell, 2013, p. 259). After data transcriptions, participants received their interview files allowing their opportunity for clarifications and elaborations

of words in the data reflective of their experiences. Only two responded to the opportunity and offered that no changes were needed. Another two participants clarified and offered further edits to the data analysis and conclusions. I noted all communication on the participants' files for data reference, cross-checking and audit trail. One final check on the trustworthiness consisted of a peer-reviewed, external audit of the study findings, interpretations, researcher bias, and coding of emergent themes. An educator familiar with the research protocol, reviewed and guarded against any inaccuracies in the report of data analysis and findings within the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

This section describes the approach to analyzing the data. The first section briefly describes socio-constructivism as a framework for data analysis by outlining some basic principles that connected the theoretical framework to analyzing the participants' interpretations working Western Elementary School on MLK Street in the Central Valley of California. Then I describe the coding process, data analysis and presentation used in Chapter four and five respectively.

Data analysis framework. An interpretive/social constructivism approach to data analysis underpinned the data interpretation. Following an interpretive approach, data analysis emphasized "socially constructed realities, local generalizations, interpretive resources, stock of knowledge, inter-subjectivity, practical reasoning, and ordinary talk" (Denzin, 1994, p. 502). Gergen (1985) argued that a social constructivism inquiry will emphasize the process of how participants "describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in they live" (p. 266) or work. The socio-constructivism theory had several distinguishable characteristics concerning how people construct

knowledge. Additionally, these features were congruent with my epistemological perspective that the participants' social and historical knowledge, language and actions were potent data for analysis. Piaget emphasized knowledge as a plot line of actions that the observer reflects and interacts with other based on previously constructed perceptions (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Fosnot, 1996; von Glaserfeld, 1995, 1996). Next, Dewey (1916, 1938) posited knowledge is constructed indirectly from societal, global, and individual interactions. Lastly, Vygotsky similarly understood knowledge as dependent on social interactions based on individual attitudes and emotions (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). The perspective informed the approach to data and paired with the philosophical assumption that teaching and learning are uniquely negotiated socially and historically throughout different phases of life.

Data analysis involved an inductive approach to an emergent-like "discovery of patterns, themes, and categories" and "the analyst's interaction with the data" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Interviews, observations, and other collected data contained descriptive statements, questions, and themes about the interpretations of working in a school on an MLK Street. An extensive, inductive study of emergent thematic identifiers also revealed perceptions and attitudes previously undetected during initial interviews and observations. Categorically aggregated data developed into patterns of instances for data interpretation. The collection of events emerged from aggregated data based on each participant's unique understandings of working in an MLK Street neighborhood school. Rich descriptions — quotes, and narrative stories among the participants of this study led to a "naturalistic generalization" (Creswell, 2013, p. 200). The data analysis and representation illustrated emergent or supported themes that helped to provide the reader

of this study with insights into perceptions and understandings of teaching at Western Elementary School on MLK Street. The next section is a description of how data were analyzed for identification of emergent themes.

Data codes. Prior to the analysis, a pre-set list of codes based on research questions and possible themes such as school and neighborhood setting, teacher identity formation, knowledge about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the street named in his honor initiated the data analysis process. In a qualitative study, codes are words, phrases, or sentences summative of the participants' voice or physical artifacts that signal a significant theme for study. Creswell (2012, 2013) is supportive of coding text according to portions of transcribed records such as context, emergent language, and participant perspectives. So in the analysis phase of the study, data were read through in entirety to assist re-familiarization with the research gathered and to notate possible codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the data. During the first reading of data, I wrote notes in the margins to highlight possible emergent themes and interesting quotes which allowed for a renewed familiarity with data collection for this case study prior to the inductive, two cycle coding process (Creswell, 2013).

First cycle coding. The first cycle of coding included in vivo and descriptive codes. In vivo codes, the actual words used by the participant, helped a novice qualitative approach to research to gather as much data from the participants' experiences. Creswell (2013) also suggests in vivo codes represented expected, emergent and unusual or interesting information. Next, the descriptive codes were for field notes, artifacts, interviews, and social setting data collection. The purpose for using descriptive coding was to gather an inventory of topics for data categories. The first round of coding

put data into chunks of information using descriptive and in vivo codes and summarized the chunks of data in preparation of the second cycle of coding.

Second cycle coding. The second cycle of coding focused on data patterns related to the setting, participant perspectives and views, and social structures. In this second cycle, grouped the data from the first cycle into smaller, patterned codes to check for additional emergent codes. Then each code received an abbreviated code (see Figure 1) as either a provisional code, emergent code, or both according to detected data patterns.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PRE-SET CODE	EMERGENT CODE
NUTE	No urban teaching experience	Yes	
IULMLK	Implied understanding of King's legacy		Yes
GCI	Generational community Issue	Yes	Yes

Figure 1. Example of code description chart

There were two reasons to conduct a cross-case analysis of data after the second-cycle of coding. First, a cross-case analysis of the coded themes ensured identification and analysis of themes detected in the data set (Creswell, 2012, 2013) from multiple individuals to increase the generalization of findings to this unique setting. The validity of generalization is arguably inappropriate, however, the cases in this study facilitated

understanding personal experiences and to collectively realize the phenomenon of teaching near an MLK Street, thus adding to the literature on urban education.

Second, a cross-case analysis allowed for a concentrated explanation of the events in the study. The 85 codes identified from the data collected in the study were then reviewed for duplicative, overlapping and similar codes. Accordingly, codes were re-analyzed for concentrated patterns of understanding further to identify emergent themes emergent themes. Like a puzzle on a blank canvas or as a genealogist looking for family patterns and connections, I arranged the cut, labeled code strips on a flat board to detect patterns of emergent themes. As a result of this bird's eye view of the data, six themes emerged from the data that will be discussed in Chapter four and five of the study.

Each case in this collective study was considered an individual case, and then comprehensively checked in a cross-case analysis to provide a more compelling view (Merriam, 1988) of the interpretations of performance at Western Elementary School on MLK Street. Therefore, consideration of each case with an equal amount of analysis reduced the possibility that any one case was analyzed more than the other five cases. In the end, data transcriptions and other artifacts were assigned codes until theme exhaustion that became evident in duplicate and overlapping codes in the cross-check analysis. In view of that, data saturation had been reached when no other additional and reasonable analyzed data emerged contributory to data interpretation and findings.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher studying participants required several reflecting on several ideas about the research process (Creswell, 2012). First, the researcher is to conduct a study respectful of the participant position on campus, school site, and others

on campus and in the community. The sequential steps of this study showed the negotiated entry into the site by following the university and school district research protocol (see Appendix E: Case Study Audit Trail). Observations were kept to an hour and interviews were conducted before or after school hours. Once the study had been completed, the site was as undisturbed as possible.

In qualitative research, the researcher's experiences and background will at some point be revealed through normal human interactions. My prior teaching experience and honest reflection on the study helped ease the unequal positionality of researcher-participant relationship and led to a trusting relationship with the participants during the study. Prior to this study, I have written articles on urban teacher perceptions of working with parents, history of urban education, multiculturalism on an MLK Street, and race and gender issues in early childhood education. These experiences led to critical analysis and promotion of these issues within a teacher education program. The interpretations and findings of this study were not reflective of any authority over the participants, MLK Street school community, or other researchers.

Researcher Bias

Biases can affect the approach to research (Patton, 2002). The approached this topic consisted of a rigorous research design given researcher biases associated with historical and cultural experiences. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument to collect and analyzes the data. A researcher could indeed exhibit biases in this study which will place limitations on the entire process—research design, data collection and analysis, and the interpretation and presentations of findings. First, it would be prudent to not assume all urban educators share the same values and beliefs

about urban schools, students and the surrounding area. Next, memories of experiences involving racism and prejudicial treatment while growing up in an urban city are lived experiences that are part of constructing social knowledge about life in an urban community.

I grew up in Detroit, Michigan during times of civil unrest, school integration, and social and cultural imbalance. Citizens dramatized through rioting the discontent and anger about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King as well as economic and political concerns. The neighborhood was a melting pot of different cultures and ethnic groups. There were streets such as the nearby Twelfth Street became synonymous with crime and abandonment. Even as a resident of California for over twenty years, I have kept a watchful eye on the economic and social progress of my former neighborhood.
Biases about teaching and urban environments, particularly environments with higher diverse student enrollment patterns could reveal my empathy for the challenges of teaching in an urban school with limited resources along with the social and cultural issues teachers encountered on a daily basis. So I wrote regularly in my journal during this research process which added an indispensable amount of reflexivity toward transparency from data collection to reporting.

Assumptions

In addition to the philosophical assumptions discussed in the chapter introduction, there were other assumptive causes and predictors of behavior among participants that could have skew perspectives about the community and distorted data analysis and findings. For example, it would have been presumptuous to believe all participants in the study had similar culturally lived experiences or the same social ideologies. Further,

associating all participants' behavior based on historical events such as interactions with diverse groups of students would have imprudently disregarded the integrity of the study as well the academe. Next, I assumed that respondents were truthful and accurate in providing data about their perceptions and understandings of teaching in a school located on an MLK Street. Finally, it would have been disingenuous to assume that all American MLK Street communities suffer the same injustices. It would have been equally negligent to presuppose all members of the Western Elementary School community on and around the MLK Streets suffered the same economic, social, or educational experiences or outcomes.

Limitations

Potential limitations were important to recognize as well as minimizing from the initial study preparation to interpretation and findings. Two demographical identity data were kept confidential at two of participants' request. Obscuring position identities and ages of the participants as an added layer of confidentiality in the study as well as subsequent findings, but prevented a complete background of the participants. Lastly, the length of time conducting the study, a total of 14 weeks, may have prevented more themes from emerging from data collections as participants may not have revealed all perspectives related to MLK Street schools.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the philosophical approach and methodology for the proposed study. The research design section outlined the justification for the methodology through a review of the literature on qualitative inquiry and case study designs. Qualitatively, the purpose of this collective case study was to describe

educators' interpretations of teachers working in an MLK Street neighborhood school. Theoretically, participants' constructed meaning based on lived experiences, both socially and historically, and in many ways, it informs professional and personal identity. This study was significantly important for several reasons. Urban teachers work in complex school environments that have multiple interpretations about the school students and community. This study provided insight into whether (re) naming streets after historically-known individuals had any bearing on the interpretations of the surrounding neighborhood. Next, this study described what teachers knew about

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and the significance of his civil rights legacy to the neighborhood. Finally, this study on teachers' perceptions and understandings of working in a school on an MLK Street could perhaps influence future efforts on how teacher educators prepare teacher candidates for work in urban schools by contextualizing the street location.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of the study was to describe teachers' interpretations of the work, school, and the community surrounding their school located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California. The central question for this was, what are educators' interpretations of the work, the school, and the community surrounding their school that is located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California? The supporting research questions were a) How do educators construct their knowledge of the MLK Street community? b) What social issues, knowledge, or perceptions of MLK Street community influence teachers' decision to work and stay employed in the current work location? And c) What are the characteristics of a teacher who works in an MLK Street school community? Also, d) How do social issues, knowledge, and interpretations of the MLK Street community affect pedagogical decisions in the classroom or on campus? Last, e) How do educators working in an MLK Street school interpret and develop social connections in the community?

Background of Participants

Like most other communities, this street was renamed for the slain civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr to honor his life and legacy of social justice and equality. The aim of a street renamed to commemorate the life work of Martin Luther King is counter to the images and understandings of urban education and what has been reported in the literature. Dr. King's legacy includes social justice and equality in education, and many teachers in urban schools balance pedagogical and behavioral

aspects of the classroom while balancing a standardized curriculum and a "democratic vision of education" (Darder, 2010, p. Xviii). Perhaps these conditions warrant new questions about urban education specifically in schools on or near an MLK Street.

The participants in this study agreed to provide their interpretations of working in a school located on a Martin Luther King Street. Their voices and experiences added to the literature on ways to prepare teachers for work in urban located schools. Two of the participants requested obscuration of their positions in this study as well as other subsequent reports. Demographical data on gender representation, ethnicity, and the number of years teaching have been maintained, but names and positions have been assigned pseudonyms to further obscure identities and ages have been excluded from the study (see Table 3).

Table 3. Participant demographics and characteristics

Name*	Gender	Ethnicity	Teaching at Western Elementary	Other Teaching Experience	Total Years	Grade* level
Cynthia Brown	Female	White	8 years	N/A	8	3rd
John Newman	Male	White	1 year	9 years	10	6th
Sara Woods	Female	White	4 years	8 years	12	3rd
Kate Appleman	Female	African Am.	3-4	4 years	8	2nd
Stacey Peters	Female	White	1 year	11 years	12-13	5th
Marisa Garcia	Female	Latina	4 years	3 years	7	4th

*Pseudonyms

The participant backgrounds represented the demographical questions asked in the interviews conducted for this study, first, 1) how long have you been teaching?

2) What or who influenced you to become a teacher? And, 3) will you describe your room to me? Also, 4) choose one item in the room that would best represent who you are as a teacher? Why did you choose that item? The following section provides a background description of each participant and what influenced them to become an educator. Some of the participants provided more detailed information than others when discussing their experience and interpretations of the school community. However, each case received equal amounts of analysis. The responses to demographic and self-identity questions were relevant to maintain impressions of participants' character.

John Newman. John is a White male with a total of 10 years teaching experience. At the time of this study, he is completing his first year as an educator at the Western Elementary school. While he had only a year of experience at this school, John worked in schools similar to Western Elementary School. John's his grandfather, a long-time school district superintendent of a large Southern California school district, influenced him to enter education. He fondly remembered his time with his older grandfather, who was also the founder of a major academic competition still in practice in California school districts. At age 15, John moved to Southern California to finish high school while the rest of his family moved to Alabama for his father's military assignment. John, in pursuit of a basketball scholarship, remained in California since Alabama was "more of a football kind of town…city…state."

He regarded his PE teaching cart a significant part of his classroom and identified with his mobile classroom that he took with him for PE instruction the school playground with his students. John modified his teaching cart by attaching a whiteboard, a tray for markers, and a desktop for his CD player for his outdoor classroom.

Cynthia Brown. Cynthia is a White female with eight years of teaching experience at Western elementary school. After spending about 22 years as a special education teacher's aide, she decided to pursue a career as an educator. Since receiving her credential, she has been teaching her entire eight years in the current school location. Her previous experience with teachers fueled Cynthia's desire to pursue a degree in teaching. She readily expressed that there are bad teachers as well very good teachers. The bad teachers in her mind were the ones that would sit at computer desks with little interaction with students. Aside from that, Cynthia always knew that she wanted to be an educator.

Cynthia described her classroom as eclectic. On the walls, she had her ABC cards, which she has to put up (Cynthia's emphasis). Beneath the ABC cards, students pinned their plastic baggies of sound cards for easy retrieval. She attached her SIPPS to the opposite wall, which seemed to be a little slanted to the left. She stated that the crooked cards were an attempt to put the cards on the wall while standing at an angle.
In the middle of the classroom, she arranged two tables pushed together to create a community-like learning table for teaching.

She considered her classroom space a bit small for her items that were important to her. First, Cynthia had paper oak trees with autumn leaves still hanging, and her busy schedule prevented her from changing the fall leaves to a more wintery appearance. Next to her desk were pictures her family pictures, which was a necessity since students kept asking about her family. During one observation in her classroom, several students came over to her family picture wall to find Cynthia in any other the photos.

Next, on the wall nearest her assistant's desk, were two of the most important documents to the teaching community at the school. One of the documents Cynthia had up was her "Letter to our Students" (see Appendix E: Letter to Students). The letter represented her promise as a teacher to her students that also served as a constant reminder for the reason she teaches.

Additionally, one of the items that Cynthia considered best represented her as a teacher were the prayer flags that she loves and will always have a place in her classroom. The flags were different colors-white, red, yellow blue and green. The flags should be draped from trees, from one structure to another, and then she added:

> And every time the wind blows, the flags say a prayer. And the prayer is to bless the children, the crops, and animals that all will be safe and prosperous and all life will be giving and peaceful. So it's where the flags are from, the wind is always blowing because it's always an open mountain. So it's just one continuous prayer being said.

The flags, gifts from her husband who obtained them when he traveled abroad, seem to be also further symbolic of a promise to provide a safe learning environment for her students.

Sara Woods. Sara is a White female in her 12th year as an educator. She previously taught at a suburban elementary school but has been teaching at Western Elementary School for four years. The item that best represented who she is a person or teacher is the wall that showcased classroom activities. She specifically pointed out the students' work on a half full/half empty glass graphic sheet that correlated to the school's character theme for the month—grit.

Her students' social and academic development is critical. Sara was mindful of one her students behavior in the classroom and has to re-direct his behavior when his

actions indicate that he was having difficulties with self-management or refocusing his behavior to learning. Rather than the see students through a deficit-model lens, Sara chose words to describe his behavior as "high energy" or a "little bundle of nerves." In her view, it is important to emotionally connect with children and regularly read about teacher development issues such as student performance in the classroom.

Sara has worked with pre-service teachers in the past and offered relevant advice for new teachers. She believes strongly in new teachers not focusing so much on classroom management or "taking on too much during the first year of teaching." Instead, she suggested that new teachers should commit to reading and study about the classroom. Sara stated that she resisted the idea to push her classroom agenda onto student teachers. To her, everything about teaching has to be an intrinsic motivation through constant reflection on what works best for the individual teacher.

Sara's print-rich room had lots of student work and bulletin boards with positive messages. In the front of the classroom, I noticed a bulletin board had a quote by 19th century abolitionist Frederick Douglass, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." She had an oversized flat-screen television in her room that she used for a variety of reasons such as showing videos, PowerPoint slides, or connecting to I-Tunes songs or YouTube videos during a lesson. During one observation, she used popular culture music such as Michael Jackson's Man in the Mirror as her stopwatch for a language arts activity.

Stacey Peters. Stacey is a White female and has been an educator for over 12 years, but has recently finished her first at Western Elementary School. She credited her hours working with people in need of social services "as a really powerful thing for me,

and I was 15 or 16 when I decided I wanted to become an educator." As a high school student, Stacey made several trips with her church to work in a soup kitchen or to volunteer for an international food service non-profit organization. She marveled at the idea that the animals and food that the volunteers sent around the world had some impact on the lives of others around the world.

After completing her master's degree at a mid-western state university, Stacey worked in a mid-western urban school district for 12 years. Her experiences in a challenging school district helped to ease the transfer to her current school. She acknowledged some cultural differences between the two school districts but considered the differences related to the contexts of the neighborhoods, school programs, and families in the community. In her current school location, she considered the newness of her work with Hmong student population as interesting and beneficial to her growing knowledge about the school community.

When asked to describe her room, Stacey remarked that the nice artful tokens of appreciation from students were important to her. That student connection helped to bridge the importance of the family nucleus in the school community. The student art pictures caused her to think of her family photos as the item that best represented her as an educator. Stacey said:

> Family… is something that guides how I work with families and reflecting on my own experiences as a wife and mother, just being a part and knowing that family stress, and difficulties that families go through…having my family surround me.

Her family photos surround her in this space have added meaning to her work in the school community. Like Cynthia, the hanging family photos in the work space signaled a

connection to the community through ordinary objects that resonated students coming into the learning environments.

Kathryn "Kate" Appleman. Kate, an African American female, has been in education for seven years and was in her fourth year at Western Elementary School. Kate's mother and grandmother's legacy in education influenced her to enter education, especially since, "I kind of grew up in this field." She started her career in education by becoming a substitute teacher and adjunct professor and thought this field just came naturally for her. After several years as an adjunct professor, she discovered a smaller classroom and campus setting to be more suitable for her as she enjoyed working in the classroom and individually with students.

A self-described minimalist, she brought a limited number of items in her room. The pictures of her former and present student council members, best represented who she is as educator and person. Kate is the Campus Student Council Advisor, and it has been a learning experience for her as well as her students. In her council meetings, she intentionally took to allowing students opportunity to build confidence and make decisions. For example, the council was to select a design for a tee shirt. Even though Kate had one she felt was the better design, and nearly ordered shirts with the design she had selected, Kate realized:

> I should let them make their decision because I want them to make it together. So some of our shier kids do really well when they are in student council, and they don't just stand in the background, this council really pushes them to the front. So it's been interesting and a challenge for me to step back and let them have control of a lot of things, and they always do well.

Kate saw herself as a facilitator of social learning, especially when she remembered the times she taught students to how to interact with people using appropriate and acceptable skills.

Marisa Garcia. Marisa, a Latina American, had 7 years of experience teaching in an urban school with four of those years as an educator at Western Elementary School. She grew up and attended schools in a nearby neighborhood. She was the only person in her family to pursue education and considered teaching as a natural part of her. Her enthusiasm for education was contagious. She stated:

> Ever since I was growing up, I really liked school, but I didn't realize that I wanted to be a teacher until junior high school. I really liked tutoring in junior school…I did ROP in high school and I was getting paid for it. I was like, here I am doing tutoring and I was getting paid for it…and I kind of like it!

Marisa eventually pursued her love of teaching. In her senior high school year, she inquired about college at the career center, met with the local university enrollment counselors, and was immediately accepted to college. She exclaimed:

> I was like…very fortunate that day because they took my transcript, and they were like, 'yeah, you're accepted! You're going to college!' I was like, 'great!' So I chose child development as my major and I've been teaching ever since. I hope I don't get burned out because, even though I have moments where I'm like, oh no…but I have enjoyed it!

In her room, the *Meet the Star* bulletin board best represented her. She considered her character as an important part of identity, both personal and professional. Marisa said:

> This represents me because my character is so important. And, showing my students that character is important and that I am responsible, I have optimism and that I am honest and cooperative with them, is so important because it feels like I'm helping them to build their character. They may not see it at home, but at least I can do that here in my classroom. So I feel like this best represents me.

In this case, the participant showed a willingness to accept her role as a teacher in the community and modeling personal character traits contributed to the findings. The next sections discusses the five emergent themes of the study.

Findings

The central research question for this study was: What are educators' interpretations of the work, the school, and the community surrounding their school that is located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California? The five emergent themes for this study signify participants' responses to questions posed in semi-structured interviews that also included some emergent questions during the process. Additionally, data collected through observations, photos, videos, school documents and classroom artifacts corroborated these five themes: 1) Urban Teacher Identity Formation, 2) Teaching Beyond Academics, 3) Making Connections, 4) Understandings Community Layers, and 5) Knowledge Construction of MLK Streets.

Theme One: Urban Teacher Identity Formation

Research question: What are the characteristics of a teacher who works in an MLK Street school community?

Early desire to teach. The findings presented in the section included to whether one's socio-historical family background had any significant bearing on the participants' urban teacher identity. However, in many ways, the participants' urban teacher identity developed and early in life, influenced by family structure, experiences in the educational system and with children, and in some cases, was a natural progression. Several of the participants expressed an early life desire to become an educator. Five of the six

discussed an involvement in the lives of children in some meaningful way. Cynthia was a special education aide for about 22 years and always knew she wanted to become a teacher. She commented:

> I knew I could do it better that the teachers I was working with. There's some really bad teachers out there, especially…I was a moderate to severe aide…you know, the ones in wheelchairs and you would have to feed them and take them on jobs and stuff like that. There was one teacher, who just sat at her computer all day, and I don't know what she did, but she never left the desk. And there are some really good teachers that inspire you…you know to try to make the kids in wheelchairs more comfortable. I just knew…I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I didn't know to go about, and I had bad migraines...found some really good meds for migraines. So I found out how to do it, and it was just my time.

In this case, prior experiences effected Cynthia's decision to embrace the teaching profession as a classroom teacher. She further resisted the temptation to place blame on former teachers or medical conditions. Instead, Cynthia found her encouragement and pursued her career.

Pre-MLK Street urban teaching experiences. Participants spoke with ease about their experiences with urban education. First, Marisa grew up in the same general neighborhood as the school she now teaches. She matriculated through K-12 urban schools and earned her teaching credential from the local state university. Marisa's experiences of matriculating through urban school settings contrasted with that of her colleagues. John grew up in a rural setting, but had urban school teaching experience at two schools in proximity of Western Elementary School. Next, Cynthia's teaching experience as a credentialed teacher has been entirely in one urban school. After receiving her credential, she knew she wanted to teach in an urban school, as did John, Kate, and Stacey.

In addition, Sara taught school in a suburban school district roughly about 22 miles from her current location. Perceptions of her role as an educator after teaching a few years at a suburban school began dramatically to shift her perspective on teaching. Sara reflected on her socially-driven dismay about parents being more concerned about what kind of car their students were driving to school.

Lastly, Stacey started forming her identity as an urban teacher early in life. Community service projects were a huge part of her church outreach. As a young high school student, Sara's experiences of working in an east coast city soup kitchen left an indelible impression upon her career path. Sara recalled, "Getting to work in a soup kitchen, and really working directly with people who are really in need, was a powerful thing for me, especially at that age and in that time, in my life." After completing her education, Stacey went to work in a challenging urban mid-western school district. Using conversant tone, she described a routine experience:

> The gang violence Briar Public Schools was one of the biggest challenges that we had to face, and it was significant. Kids would come to school and they'd have to go through metal detectors. I'd have to wand them to make sure…Every single morning, that's how I greeted students. That was one of my jobs at the school.

Previous experience helped to add context to Western Elementary School community. Though urban education experiences are vastly different among urban teachers, in this case it actually helped Stacey to understand the realities of the community and to contextualize this understanding to a different school setting.

Discussion about race in family structure. Four of the six participants recalled experiences of having race discussions in their families. Marisa and Sara did not remember talking specifically about race and their families while growing up. However, Stacey's parents promoted knowing, to some degree, about diverse cultures, especially

since Stacey's small mid-western community had less than 10% of other ethnic groups living in the area.

Kate, who grew up in a midsize west coast community, remembered her mother's insistence that Kate and her siblings knew that there were other cultural groups in the world. She recalled her mother saying that since there were not a lot of African Americans living in the coastal part of California, she wanted them to have more experience interacting African Americans in other parts of the US. As a child, Kate's mother drove her and her siblings cross country to visit the King Memorial in Atlanta, Georgia.

Both John and Cynthia had markedly different experiences with discussions about race while growing up. Cynthia remembered as a young girl living in Arkansas the sense fear when her mother and father had discussions, "The atmosphere growing up at that time was pretty heightened then; you can just sense something was happening." Cynthia did not recall talking about race, but she knew something was the matter.

In stark contrast to his colleagues on campus, John's family discussions about race were biased and negative. In this part of the interview, John's voice softened as he spoke. He remembered conversations with his mother, father and eventually his grandfather, which were biased and negative. John recalled:

> My environment with my parents, it wasn't a lot of talk about civil rights. To be honest with you, my grandfather is a big racist. So it was always words and phrases that he used that weren't appropriate. He just doesn't get it. He's old…he is like 89 years old. There's a part of my family that is very racist… So coming from a background like my family being racist, like they always just give me a hard time about listening to rap music, R and B, jazz and they'd want to know, why you listening to that shit? And it was pretty much my mom, father and grandfather saying this to me. And I understand them.

In this case, John had the ability to make sense of the biased attitudes among family members. This marked a critical point to make when discussing sensitive subjects among the participants. Generationally speaking, John could have espoused similar sentiments within his professional, thus altering how he interacted with the school community. He could have chosen to hide this part of his background, but showed a willingness to reveal previous prejudicial information in the family structure.

Teacher support and development. All of the participants at some point during interviews showed the books that he or she were reading for professional development on campus. Jensen's, *Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind: Practical Strategies for Raising Achievement* and Tough's, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* were on each participants' book shelf. All spoke about putting some of authors' strategies into practice their classrooms. John indicated that he plans to utilize the restorative justice and the character education professional development ideas when he becomes a school administrator. He stated:

> I am definitely taking the restorative justice and the character education. This is my reading list for the Christmas break. These are huge at the school. These two books right here, were given to every single teaching adult on this campus by the Principal. We do our common planning all off the Jensen book, and then our character education came from the Paul Tough's book.

Staff professional development on topics relevant to the school community helped to contextualize the relationship between poverty, resiliency and learning. Moreover, the readings facilitated a deeper awareness of student background, ways to build family relationships, and eliminate stereotypical myths about learning and poverty (Gorski, 2008).

Each month Western Elementary school community promoted a different value which was also listed in the school employee newsletter and discussed at monthly

neighborhood meetings. The importance of the program was on full display outside of each classroom. Participants displayed student work and narrative examples of grit, curiosity, and other character-building messages based on classroom discussions.
The school principal was an integral part of the support and encouragement participants received in order to facilitate developing their teacher identity in the neighborhood.
For example, in October 2013, the principal encouraged participants as well the other educators on campus to display in a significant classroom area, students' work related to the character theme—grit. Campus-wide messages about the significance of character building curriculum illustrated through teachable moments and school-wide messages that character was a critical instructional component to the Western Elementary School community.

Theme Two: Teaching Beyond Academics

Research question: Have you adjusted your pedagogy for this community? This question generated several responses about the importance of teaching beyond academics.

Teachers often used the school-wide character building curriculum to assist with facilitating discussions and actions beyond academics. When asked if whether as a result of teaching in the MLK Street area, had they adjusted their classroom pedagogy, participants agreed that they needed to adjust what they did in the classroom to teach in the context of the neighborhood. Marisa adjusted her teaching pedagogy based on the academic and social needs of her students. She stated:

> Yeah… I have… I've had to change quite a bit. I love the group that I have right now but they are very challenging and they are aggressive. They are just not very friendly towards one another. I'm very soft spoken and I try not to raise my voice, and I tried my best to be very call. That's how I've always taught until I got this

> position, this class…this group. And I was like whoa I really have to change… I have to speak louder than I usually would. So I had to change the way I approach them with things. The school is different because of the curriculum that we use here. We actually develop our own curriculum. I'm picking books and writing my own curriculum. I feel like it's made me a better educator for my kids.

Participants tailored their curriculum to match the needs of the classroom and community. In this case, Marisa illustrated the need to understand students in the classroom and ways in which the outside influences have an effect on the pedagogical skills. Additionally, Sara, since transferring to Western from her previous suburban community school, also adjusted her expectations of students in her classroom. Sara recalled:

> I changed my perceptions and expectations. I think that the first time I started teaching in this community it was very different from the last. I kind of had this thing where it was that if they were just below grade level, I just wanted to do that. Just do this and you'll be fine which really what I was doing was setting them up for continued lower expectations. And I think my understanding about, while, on a test, the numbers show that they are below average, it doesn't mean that we treat them like they're below average. Or they will continue to stay below average, so my expectations for my students have risen exponentially.

Along with higher expectations, participants also suggested the manner in which they communicated with students also had to change. Illustratively, John spoke about adjusting his communication style by using a positive and corrective feedback approach with his students. He said, "I kinda got rid of the whole negative feedback…ah…just because I think it's just too much negative in the neighborhood, and they don't want to come to school and hear that…" The participants recognized the importance of providing an alternate style of communicating with students, one that was counter to negative feedback and talk within other social places.

Programs that fit the community. In the analysis of the participants' curriculum and instructional methods, all of the participants consistently used some form

of character building strategy in the classroom. In addition to the using the strategies outlined from the Jensen and Tough book, John stated as a future school administrator he planned to use the other teaching and social development strategies that he and his colleagues learned and included on a daily basis.

Participants included social development programs—*Restorative Justice* and *Character Education* into their daily lessons. The *Restorative Justice* program emphasizes the restoration of a person's esteem, dignity, or worth after being harmed by a crime or offense. The participants have been teaching students how to resolve issues without becoming physically or verbally combative. Social and emotional instruction was an important component to the instructional practices at Western Elementary. The *Social and Emotional Learning* (SEL) program empowers students to take ownership of their feelings when they do something wrong by through processes that teach them skills to manage emotions and other social and cognitive behavior. Several of the participants remarked that the programs have helped them to shape their non-academic instructional practices with their children. Marisa commented:

> It is just so important for me, for them to learn to communicate because a lot of kids, once someone does something wrong to them, they really just want to hit them or retaliate. And no, I just told him that's not how we solve our problems. You need to learn that this is what you did and how are you going to come up with a solution because you need to.

Campus-wide programs such as the *Restorative Justice* program, facilitated the participants desire to teach students ways to process their own behavior. Marisa appeared to grasp the connection between a lack of problem-solving skills and classroom conduct.

Participants and school colleagues talked about program practices during neighborhood meetings. For example, at a recent after school meetings, they talked to

parents about self-control and expressed to the parents that these words are not just words, but they actually have meaning and have some research to support instruction. Kate expressed it this way:

> So the district is rolling out Social Emotional Learning. So we try to incorporate that into the Common Core. It's [sic] part of we have strengthened and because we pretty much use character counts qualities. We looked as a team as to what other schools were doing and what was working for them, and what are they choosing, so we borrowed some from them that we made it Western-style. In the past, we've also used Second Step which was a school-wide program last year. And we also use curriculum that was anti-drugs and anti-bullying. So now that our students are in their second year of the Second Step program we just kind of took it to the next step and then the other thing instead of making our posters such as making our posters. In other words, we just did re-invent the wheel.

Participants realized the importance of collaboration to find the right mix of programs for the school community. Tailoring the curriculum and community discussions seemed to help build trusting relationships.

In other cases, the participants knew that there were referral services available for students and families such as health and nutritional service referrals. Other areas that the participants assisted in finding resources for neighborhood families included counseling services and help with behavioral problems. Stacy remarked:

> We have a lot of kids that need referrals because we know that the families are experiencing such needs such as homelessness, no food in the house, or maybe there is a mom or dad not around. There's just so many things that we do here and that we can provide, food and that kind of thing where we can also refer to community agencies to provide those kinds of services.

The awareness of social programs helped the participants to build their family relationships. Such knowledge helped them to break habits of judging families based on social needs.

Whole child well-being. In addition to providing referral services for students and families in need, the participants expressed a desire to provide other measures of

continuity in students' lives. John made sure that he provided lessons curriculum for his students to address health concerns that may not be included in other areas of student academics. For example, John separated his classroom lessons into two parts. The first part addressed the physical activities and the second part included health and nutrition. A the time of this study, his students are doing a health-conscious project, and to that he added, "Basically I tried to do a little bit of awareness on conditions and diseases that people can get throughout their lives by being inactive."

Marisa addressed her students' health by suggesting a type of code-switching on campus. Teachers at Western Elementary School have visited students' homes on nearly 900 occasions. As a result of going on home visits, Marisa knew of her students' exposure to violent behavior in the community. For that reason, she suggested and explained to them about code switching in the classroom. She skillfully expressed in student terms that code-switching as:

> When you are here… and what you see out there… It's different. It's a completely different world out there. And when you come here, we code switch and we leave that out there, it's different here. It's a safer place. And that's what I tell my kids time and time again… I just want them to know that here, they can be okay…They don't have to act like adults.

Typically, code-switching involved the linguistically addressing communication in the classroom. However, Marisa related the concept to conduct in the classroom. Though this type of instruction addressed classroom behavior, it also helped to facilitate academic learning.

Routine and orderly classrooms. In each of the classrooms I visited, the participants adhered to routine and order in the classroom. One of the routines that I observed involved some sense of creating a community on campus. Several of the participants engaged their students in a cooperative seating arrangement. Each of the

rooms had warm, inviting environments with print rich walls full of student work and inspirational sayings.

Kate documented everything that she did with students. She realized that being transparent was really important to other educators and administrators on campus. Kate admitted that although she kept a calendar and had every intention of completing the items on her daily agenda, the school environment was such that interruptions and the day-to-day climate of the school of sometimes dictated otherwise.

In her mind…it just came with the territory.

Student background awareness. Lastly, knowing the students backgrounds seemed to be an important component to the participants' classroom management and style of caring for students. Cynthia described her students this way:

> You know some of the kids don't go past this area and books can take them pass this area. They watch TV and I kinda keep asking them what did you think of going there, and they would just say it would be nice.

In some cases, participants had poignant reminders of their students lived experiences that required additional care and concern. Marisa remarked:

> I only have a handful of students that have a mom and dad at home, or working, but they are there for them… They come to their events. The rest of my students are in single – parent homes, or raised by a grandparent, and I have a lot of students being raised by a grandparent and that's how the community is here. I mean they are living day by day, and they are trying to make ends meet.

Making connections within the community was critical for understanding how social influences, such as family structure, income level could manifest in significant ways in the classroom.

Theme Three: Making Connections

Research Question: What kinds of connections are you making with the MLK Street community? Tell me about this community.

Home-family connections. Making connections between the home and school was an important component to the Western Elementary School. Participants in the study echoed each other by stressing that family connections were important for teaching in this MLK Street community. Again, participants and their school colleagues went on over 900 visits to students' homes. John stated, "I have always said that there is a disconnect [sic] between what schools are doing and what's going on at home. And, I think it is especially true in this neighborhood because of the situations that the families around here are in."

The school community looked for ways to communicate and connect with parents. Participants knew that knowledge of family structures meant unraveling and understanding several layers of students' lived experiences. During monthly neighborhood meetings, participants and other Western staff members involved the families as well as other community groups in talks about restorative justice and character education. John suggested that any time the Western staff had parents in front of them, they saw it as a prime opportunity to promote restorative justice and character education ideas. Moreover, home visits were an extremely essential part to connecting classroom behavior and academics to life outside of the school. Stacey remarked:

> I just feel so strongly about… you know… that our kids come to school with, in a lot of cases, with so many issues that they are struggling with at home. So many problems and things that you can't deny that even for an educator to expect that they come into a classroom and that that kid will be focused in class. I don't think that's realistic. One of things I love about this school is that they [teachers] get it.

Participants understood the importance of making parental connections build those relationships and resist judgments about the family structure or living arrangements. Marisa shared a similar understanding of the home family contact. She stated:

> It's a rough community. And you see it especially when you go on home visits. You really do see it. I love home visits. They are my favorite because I get to the families on a much more deeper level. Some families think, 'Oh, I know, she's coming to judge me…and no judgments [emphasis added]. I always tell my parents we are here to build a relationship and get to know you and get to know your child. And sometimes you find out the neatest things. I found out this year that one of my kids likes to cook and I was like… that's awesome! I love home visits… You can see where they live, and you just can't pretend that it's not there. You have to see it all so you can help them in any way that you can guide them.

Cynthia added another layer of understanding about the home family connection. Similar to Marisa, she stressed the idea to avoid assumptions or to prejudge her students or the home environment. In her mind, everyone comes into the community with a certain mindset.

Cynthia expressed:

> It's not at all what the hardest, scariest person looks like. He is the biggest supporter, the biggest teddy bear, the biggest person, the first person to break down and cry and the most gentlest [sic] person. So you can't come in with preconceived notions because it's not what it is. It's their parents, there's someone's husband, someone's wife, and you can't judge anything.

Generational connections. Interestingly, a few of the educators made connections to generational issues in the MLK Street community. John talked about mindsets and the community and indicated that he related to changing mindsets to how he raises his daughter. John further likened it to a generational constant and suggested programs like restorative justice and character education were building blocks of a lifestyle change. In this sense, generational constant refers to social behaviors passed from one generation to the next and is seen as usual behavior. Marisa added to this view of generational constant but in a much more instructional-behavioral context. She noted she raised her voice in an uncomfortable and unusual manner, but she understood why she had to do it. She remarked:

> I think that's how they respond to it. I've heard mothers and grandmothers speak to them and, I'm like…that's it! That's why it's like that! This is what they are used to, and you have to give them that and adjust it when the time calls for it.

Stacey agreed that working in a community as MLK Street is arduous in terms of social justice. The programs and other activities the school promoted in the community were mere tips of the social icebergs in the community. She commented:

> We are really working with families to break cycles of poverty and other challenges that they're [the families] facing, and I really think that's what Dr. King stood for and why he really worked to have all those rights and those equal rights…to be treated with respect and dignity, and that's important.

Theme Four: Understanding Community Layers

Research question: What are your perceptions of working in this MLK Street neighborhood? Describe the community.

Neighborhood perceptions. While I waited to conduct interviews after school, I sat in my car to observe parents and the flow of cars and pedestrians in the neighborhood. The private high school located about a block away from Western Elementary School had a dismissal time just prior to Western Elementary School. At three o'clock, the streets began to fill with cars heading or leaving the high school simultaneously as parents or other adults parked their cars to await children being dismissed from Western. Parents—young adults, grandparents, and siblings either crossed at the stop light or jay-walked across the street to wait in front of the school; the scenario played out routinely each time I visited the campus.

The perceptions of the neighborhood among the participants in the study were at times contradictory. When asked to describe the MLK Street community, the participants described it with fondness, yet were willing to acknowledge the violence in the area. Acknowledging the violence was part of knowing the area surrounding MLK Street.

Perceptions of the MLK Street included a loving neighborhood, a community with a lot of pride.

Cynthia conveyed a sense of community pride for the school, "the violence that happens here, it can happen anywhere. If you come in [the community] thinking something as horrible, it's going to be horrible. If you think spinach is bad, then it's going to be bad." Although the school had 8 foot tall black wrought-iron gates that closed the school off to entry after administrators and night staff left for the evening, Cynthia's perception of the school was a heart-felt expression:

> I love this neighborhood…they are so supportive and protective of this school. We never had any violence, never been tagged, never had a window broken, never had a parked car broken into, never had anything ever since I've been here.

While not a common occurrence, school lock-downs have taken place as a result of illicit activities in the surrounding neighborhood. In my first conversation with Cynthia, she remembered her first school lockdown occurred on her first day on the job Her first priority to keep students in the classroom as calm as possible by talking and reading a narrative selection. For a brief moment, she second guessed her decision to work in the neighborhood.

Like her colleagues in this study, the occasional lock-down caused some concern. Sara shared a similar school lock-down narrative. She stated:

> Rarely do we have lock-downs. I think in the four years I've been here, we've maybe have had one legitimate lock-down and I think it was because right after school… you know the Corner Mart market that's right there on the corner there? Kids were walking home and there was a guy brandishing a gun and randomly pointing it at cars driving by. So our school locked down at that time. We've done tons of drill, but we've never had a lock-down like that…that I can think of, maybe one.

The occasional school-lock downs concerned the participants, but this did not sway perceptions of the neighborhood. Kate added a more generational perception of the MLK Street neighborhood in terms of the people and the amount of crime. She suggested:

> I think it's bad…but I think a lot of it is generational. I feel like a lot of families and individual have been here for generations. I think for multiple reasons that they're rooted here and that the older generations… the grandparents bought houses here and so they are kind of rooted here. They don't move very far from here. Or, a lot of times when they move, they move still in neighborhood, but just over to a different street. I think it gets a bad rap. Some of it is valid in terms of crime and violence. A lot of it is validated, and so I think it takes a certain kind of person to feel safe in this neighborhood. I think there's a lot of pride that goes with (this community).

The participants in this study were models of low teacher attrition at a school that might otherwise have had a higher rate of teaching leaving because of the crime in the surrounding neighborhood. In part, as Kate suggested, it takes a certain kind of person to work in this neighborhood, but it also seemed to take a person willing to understand the neighborhood. Marisa and Stacey's perception of the neighborhood further illustrated this idea. In particular, Marisa stated:

> I've only taught in schools like this, so I know that there are other areas that are more affluent than this area…I know that, but I feel like here, I can do the best service. Students don't get the best services at times, at home.

Stacey shared a similar understanding that it took a certain kind of person to work in these neighborhoods. Even with the possibility of moving to a more affluent neighborhood, her passion for the MLK Street community was greater. She added:

> In my work, in my opinion, I can best serve as an educator in a community where there is a higher instance of poverty and certainly there are areas where that is certainly not the case, but that's not where my passion is. It's not where I want to be…*this is where I want to be* [emphasized words in the transcribed audio]. I feel like I've hit the jackpot with this job…I just feel so lucky to be here…and to work

> with a group of people that are really like-minded, really hoping to affect change in a positive way. They are forward thinkers that are open to new ideas.

Understands reality of neighborhood. Years of accumulated distress have taken a toll on the MLK Street neighborhood in the terms of housing, jobs, and even food sources in the community. Within a mile of either direction of the Western Elementary School community, places of employment are scarce for the community. For example, in the immediate vicinity on the school, there were several small business shops such as sign shops, lawnmower repair and a convenience liquor store. The closest food establishments in the immediate area was the convenience store that serviced the needs of the community or local high students walking to or from school. Yet there were other areas of concern in the neighborhood as illustrated by the social services listed in Table 4.

Table 4. MLK Street community events and services

Event or Service Title	Service Provided
Health Insurance for Children*	Health Insurance
Affordable Health Care Fair	Affordable Health Care Act Information
Free Pediatric Clinic	Immunizations,
School Lunch Menu*	Menu choices and options for daily meals
Family Resource Clinic*	Housing information
Parent Skills Tip Sheet**	Way to teach self-control at home
Community Meetings**	Community and school discussions

*Documents generated by school district for distribution **Documents generated by Western Elementary School

During my visits to the campus, I stopped by small table in the school lobby to help myself to several community and school district-sanctioned notices from a variety of agencies, community non-profit groups that were promoting a community event or services with targeted audiences referenced in the documents. These documents were indicative of concern for student, school, and the MLK Street community as a whole (see Table 4). In all of the interviews conducted for this study, the idea of understanding the real neighborhood resonated with participants. Each acknowledged that the area, the immediate MLK Street neighborhood, students and their families required help and assistance.

Understands community needs. Recent school closures have resulted in Western Elementary School receiving close to 150 students re-assigned to the school. Western had been identified as a district priority school, but still provided innovative, cutting edge education. As such, newly re-assigned students to the school presented another layer of understanding for the participants. John remarked, "You can almost tell the students who've been a while and the students here without even knowing their names." While the additional students to the school campus posed some management issues, addressing student and community needs were a priority on participants' daily agenda.

Even as something as small as a rainbow loop, which are bands tie together in a pattern, generated excitement and need. John showed one to his students that he made for his daughter. Soon afterwards, his desk drawers and baskets began to fill up with small pieces of paper with students' names and their desired band colors. Although he admitted he bit off more than he could chew, he related this to the students' neediness.

When asked what students are in need of, he suggested…attention. He estimated, roughly 80 % of the students at school just wanted attention. For example, earlier in the school year he noticed that students constantly needed a water break, so he decided rather than to take minutes from his instructional time, he did a little research on his students as to why they didn't bring water bottles to school. He finished:

> …and so I started asking them, "Why don't you bring water bottles?" And so they were like, well, we can't spend five bucks on the case of water when five bucks can go for food or rent or clothes. So I, with some help from my wife, started calling companies to see if they would donate water bottles. So every single student in the school got a water bottle from me.

Participants spoke about the importance of churches in the MLK Street neighborhood. In addition to making sure students had water during PE, John, like Cynthia, also knew churches could provide other social services. Knowledge about the community illustrated understanding areas of distress and how teachers disseminated information to alleviate distressing situations such as a lack of food. During the Thanksgiving holiday week, the church immediately next to Western Elementary passed out food for families. Another church, a few blocks away, also provided assistance and services to community members.

Theme Five: Constructing Knowledge of MLK Streets

Research questions: How do educators construct their knowledge of the MLK Street community? Thinking about your earliest remembrance of Dr. King, who was he? Describe the times when you were learning about Dr. King? Describe this MLK Street. The two emergent questions in this section of findings were: 1) how does this community reflect Dr. King's legacy of social justice, equality, and civil rights? 3) What is your dream for this community and your students?

Knowledge of Dr. Martin Luther King. All of the participants had some prior knowledge about Dr. Martin Luther King. Sarah and Stacey described learning about Martin Luther King through books and classroom discussions. The curriculum was rather routine in scope with readings and brief mentions about Dr. King and his legacy of fighting for civil rights and social justice.

The other four―Cynthia, John, Kate, and Marisa explained a more in-depth knowledge of either the Civil Rights Era or other profound ways of learning about Dr. King and how his words impacted them. Kate fondly recollected her mother taking Kate and her siblings to visit the King Memorial Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Cynthia recalled high school classroom discussions about Dr. King as well as her anger towards James Earl Ray, the man convicted of his assassination. In reference to James Earl Ray, she said, "He never said why and I wanted to know why. It was just so wrong and so unfair." Cynthia also remembered Dr. King in relation to the height of the Civil Rights Era. As she closed her eyes, Cynthia seemed to transform herself back in time when she was five year old girl. She felt the uncertainty of the times, questioned why things were so different, and then noted:

> Civil rights for me was… I grew up for five years in Arkansas in the early 60s. So I do remember a little bit of Arkansas…of Little Rock. I remember my Mom…my dad making sure she was off the streets. I remember drinking fountains and doorways. My dad…I remember her [mom] being uncomfortable after dark down there with three little babies and him [dad] not there. He was working…it was pretty heightened then; you can just sense something was happening.

Contrastingly, John remembered Dr. King's assassination as he compared his feelings about Dr. King with that of Malcolm X. His remembrance completely contrasted with his home environment. Growing up, John indicated his family did not

talk about the Civil Rights Era, at least in the fondest way. So, John embraced learning about Dr. King through books and classroom discussions. He remembered the famous, *I Have a Dream* speech, but the very charismatic speaking style of Malcolm X was a bit more interesting to John. He understood that "Malcolm X spoke somewhat against the White race." Nonetheless, Malcolm X's leadership style resonated and left an impression upon John. During times when the school celebrated his birthday, Marisa remembered seeing in her high school classroom videos of Dr. King's infamous Washington DC, *I Have a Dream* speech. These early life events and remembrances seemed to impact the participants' sense of social justice and equity in their current teaching experiences.

Knowledge of MLK Streets. Participants had limited knowledge of how the street that Western Elementary is located on was renamed to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Kate, for example, stated that since she has been in the city, the name had always been MLK Street. When asked for what reason would a community rename a street to honor the civil rights leader, she commented, "It was a high concentration of African Americans here at one point, and maybe it was to instill pride." Cynthia related the name change to King's legacy of equality. She indicated, "I think it was renamed because he brought people together and he was a figure for equality. He represents… I mean…peace and love and unity and equity and all that."

Advice for new teachers about the MLK Street neighborhood. Participants offered reflective answers, shown in Table 5, about an urban school when asked what advice they would give new teachers to the school.

Table 5. New teacher advice data summary chart

Participant
Sara Woods To put aside student behavior and in relationships, I guess the best thing for a new teacher is to constantly be reading; Never become stagnant or never become stale. Don't push own agenda on students; Read about everybody else's story; motivate students
Marisa Garcia Love every child; you're going to have moments so don't come in here thinking everything is going to be ah…mazing!; Set high expectations; maybe not at grade level, but at the level they are at, they can make progress; never think your child can't do it
John Newman This school is tough and it's a lot of work; be really open; Think about the situation you're in right now; think about the students and put yourself in their situation to find what they're doing or not doing; ask for help; get involved; don't isolate yourself.
Kate Appleman We have a lot of support, so utilize them; be confident in what you are doing; set strong boundaries; follow through on consequences; talk with kids and they will talk to you.
Cynthia Brown Give it a chance; the neighborhood will embrace you; just hang on and give the school a chance; it's right where you need to be, it just takes you in.
Stacey Peters Stay open-minded and willing to learn about students and their families; be willing to learn from your colleagues about the neighborhood, historically, how the neighborhood has evolved; be willing to absorb whatever you can from everybody else.

The curriculum and instructional methods were essential yet the social and community aspect of what they do as educators appeared important and worth mentioning. Additionally, developing relationships seemed to be the overarching theme. Advice to new urban MLK Street teachers included engaging in personal development, setting realistic and higher expectations, resist becoming isolated from peers. The advice given

illustrated the overall philosophy that I read in the weekly school newsletters—student-centered instruction, collaborative teams and positive school-home relationships. The participants in this study had a healthy view of their school located in this MLK Street neighborhood school.

King's legacy on MLK Street. Participants were more able to relate Dr. King's legacy of social justice, equality, and civil rights to the MLK Street neighborhood. I asked participants to talk about his legacy in the community in relation to working in the MLK Street community. This question caused several of the participants to pause and reflect on the neighborhood relationship to the legacy of Dr. King's work for civil rights. At least two participants felt that discussing MLK Streets as a part of the study helped them to reflect on his legacy.

While participants talked about the Dr. King's Dream speech and that learning extended beyond the factual information such as when and how Dr. King died. One participant thought the legacy of Dr. King should be applicable to the real world. Rote memorization of Dr. King facts was less of an issue, instead the implied legacy of Dr. King's dream was forefront. Sara added:

> Of course we're on Martin Luther King Boulevard, and I get that. And I know Martin Luther King boulevards are put in streets…are put in neighborhoods similar to (this one) and for obvious reasons. I guess my personal goal as a teacher is challenging and difficult. I just want to make their [students] learning in this classroom always applicable to the real world an assessable, and always those lessons to not be about when did he die, or when did he give that speech…those aren't meaningful to his legacy and the legacy of other influential people and make that as a learning experience in a character building way.

John's view of MLK Street differed from his colleagues in an interesting way. Knowledge of the community in relation to MLK Street involved understanding people had lacked a historical connection for the community. His thought-provoking analogy on

if street name changed to represent a pop cultural icon and whether would have more effect on the perceptions of the neighborhood was intriguing, and continued to suggest:

> I think it's related to (the community) more than it is to Martin Luther King Boulevard because of what I saw on MLK Street and that it is not so much about the street but it's more about the area. Nothing negative comes from my thinking, but I'm sure some of my friends, they will have more negative thoughts. First of all, when you say (this community), they say things like, oh…you're in the 'hood.

John again, "So what if it [MLK Street] was called LeBron James Street, would it be any different? You know? Because I think he's a great African American role model for his culture and other cultures." I asked John if whether he felt the perceptions of this neighborhood would be different. While he stated that Dr. King and LeBron James were not on the same level, but as far as being cultural figureheads, there were some similarities. John made another interesting comparison when he said:

> I think kids would relate more it, because everyone knows about Dr. Martin Luther King, but I don't think they understand the whole idea of Martin Luther King and what he's actually done. But people know LeBron James and that he plays basketball, you know…he's more of a pop culture icon than Martin Luther King is.

The historical-contemporary connection between the historical icon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and contemporary icon, LeBron James marked a point in the crossroads between cultures and generations. That said a connection between the King legacy and the street name is important, but not always apparent. This seemed to be an especially significant understanding for schools like Western Elementary School. Kate thought:

> I don't know that we don't always make that connection, and it matters some. I think that it is important, and not only about Martin Luther King, but about strong leaders, successful people or even for Latinos…the history of where you came from, the history of your school, and I don't know if we do that.

After reviewing the documents, interviews, and other data collected for this study, each data strand signaled an adherence to the schools mission and philosophy. In one of

the newsletters from November 2013, the weekly quote really conveyed the participants' sense of social justice. "We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope." —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Based on this quote, I decided to ask a different kind of question.

Dreams for the community. In my researcher journal, I had reflected on the dreams and hopes for my hometown, Detroit, Michigan. So, I decided to ask the participants what were their dreams for the school, students and the MLK Street community. While the participants reflected on their dreams for the neighborhood and student population. These visions for the community could have been for any school community, except these were grounded in their experiences, understandings, and perceptions of this MLK Street community.

Marisa Garcia: I just have this big dream that they [her students] would become super successful in whatever they do. We [her and the students] were talking about their optimism, and what they wanted to be for their future and how they wanted to get there. I told them you can be what you want be, a mechanic, plumber, doctor, or lawyer…whatever it is you aspire to be. Once you've accomplished what you want, always come back and never forget your community.

Sara Woods: I just want my kids to find their path. I want them to know that while their path may not look like someone else's path, they still have a future. I want them to know their options.

Cynthia Brown: That they don't give up; that they reach for more than what they are settling for. And I don't know how that changes; I just want them to have more than what they are settling for. And maybe that's why we're teachers.

Kate Appleman: It was kinda my goal for Student Council this year—a lot more giving back because I feel like a lot of people know where the school comes from and that we're in an impoverished neighborhood and our families may be struggling here and there.

Stacey Peters: That the students and their families not only feel respected, but to have that knowledge and to feel empowered, or if they're not feeling empowered, that they have the power to break the cycle of poverty, and that their lives can be better.

Summary

Findings in this chapter were based on the analysis of data collected from interview transcripts and substantiated through observations videos, pictures, and documents such as classroom instruction materials, school newsletters, neighborhood event and services advertisements. I presented analyzed data was in a five-part thematic presentation that corresponded to the themes that emerged from the data. Data in the first theme represented teacher identity formation. In the data, participants shared their influential pathway to become an educator, a description of their professional path to becoming an educator at Western Elementary School, and ways in which the MLK Street community contributed to their identity as an urban school educator.

Theme two focused on ideals beyond academic teaching in the MLK Street community. An analysis of transcribed interviews observations, artifacts revealed a variety of professional development readings and school programs that helped to develop the unique Western-Style of teaching students in the MLK Street community.

Theme three focused on the connections the participants made in the community.

An analysis of documents such as school and community service announcements supported the participants' knowledge and willingness to assist students and their families with social service resources. The participants and the rest of the Western Elementary staff regularly met with the community to discuss curriculum and instructional support materials in order to facilitate more meaningful connections with parents.

The fourth and fifth themes represented the findings on what the participants in the study understood about the community. An analysis of transcribed interviews showed that the participants understood the community as layers that are connected yet must be equally understood as individual matters. Layers of the community such as a tendency toward violence, poverty, and social needs were understood separately which reduced sense of being overwhelmed by the academic and social needs of students and the neighborhood. Lastly, the fifth theme to emerge from the findings answered the subsequent question of how the participants described historical and contemporary knowledge about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. including desires for the MLK Street neighborhood.

The participants' interpretations of working at Western Elementary School and the MLK Street community illustrated that teacher development and preparation for work in these areas require much more than an academic understandings; it also requires understanding the layers of community social perceptions. Chapter five will discuss the emergent themes and implications from this study and make recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to describe educators' interpretations of the work, school and the community surrounding a school located on an MLK Street in the Central Valley of California. An interpretation of working on the MLK Street is necessary to examine urban schools and issues that may be relevant to preparing teachers for work on other similar urban street locations. The qualitative methods, namely a case study research design gathered rich and descriptive data from the participants interview transcripts, classroom and neighborhood observations, photos, and documents such as newsletters, videos, and community service announcements.

The intent of chapter five is to discuss the thematic findings that emerged from data analysis: Teacher identity, teaching beyond academics, making connections, understanding community layers, and knowledge construction of MLK Streets. Then it provides the implications and recommendations for future research based on the findings before concluding this study.

Discussion

Teaching in urban schools is complex with multiple social and historical interpretations (Darder, 2010; Tyack, 1974). One of the perceptions about urban schools are that they are poorly resourced, and many of these schools exist in run-down neighborhoods with a mostly non-white student population (Steinberg, 2010). In an effort to inject symbolic pride, hope and achievement into the communities surrounding these schools, policymakers and community activists (re)named streets in honor of Dr.

Martin Luther King (Alderman, 2006; Tilove, 2003). Western Elementary School is located in a community typically known as a high crime and low income area within a medium-sized city in the Central Valley of California. It had the makings of a populated urban area—vacant residential and commercial buildings, an over-abundance of multi-family housing and a lack of business investment, including grocery stores, major retail outlets or places of employment.

Theme one: urban teacher identity formation. Participants in this study have accepted and used their socially constructed roles as educators in this MLK Street urban school. Researchers agree that teacher identity formation is largely predicated on the social construction and validation of identity and roles in the school community (Wilson & Deaney, 2010). The roles and identities of the participants centered on their passion for the classroom and community and informed and shaped by their socio-historical experiences. While each participant had a wide range of experiences, they recognized and accepted their roles and social identity which added to their ability to teach children under complex and difficult social circumstances within a distressed learning environment, persistent intergenerational poverty and other social conditions.

Teacher reflection on community role and identity was both specific and non-specific to the community. Stets and Burke (2000) suggested identity forms through reflexive, self-categorizing, classifying, or naming in a particular way in relation to other categories. Urban educators have specific categorical identities such as urban teacher, social justice advocate, and community worker. Non-specifically, urban teacher identity then includes how one embraces cultural differences, racial perceptions, and previous lived experiences with race within one's own family structure. In this case, educators

resided in communities outside of school locality yet embraced advocating for social justice and education equity within the community. Thus, urban teacher identity includes both an identity specific and non-specific to the MLK Street community.

Teacher education programs are vital to developing urban teacher identity. First, teacher development coursework is necessary to provide spaces for continued reflections about roles and responsibilities that exist within the school campus and in the urban community. Teacher development coursework on pedagogical influences and social behavior within school structures could assist teachers to deepening a social awareness of community issues. Then, educators, whether, first year or veteran, could better understand the role and responsibility to adjust curricula and instructional practices based on the needs of the community rather than policy prescribed standards.

Theme two: teaching beyond academics. The participants found ways to collectively approach social issues on campus and in the community. Indeed, the research suggests an indirect link between teacher efficacy and student achievement (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) among the school community and an ability to teach in an MLK Street school was consistent with previous studies on teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Programs and professional development discussions were invaluable in creating a school community with a general purpose—to educate students academically and socially. The result of engaging in meaningful and campus-wide professional development discussion and the implementation of programs expressed a commitment and desire to create a campus that conveyed to the student and parents a climate of high expectations. Classroom curriculum based on social programs such as *Restorative*

Justice and *Social and Emotional Learning* did not, per se, include a noticeable amount of education on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy of social justice and equality. However, these types of curriculum programs built upon the ability to provide relevant social instruction to assist students with the knowledge about intergenerational struggles of poverty and lower socio-economic status in the community. These kinds of campus-wide discussions helped to include all staff members in advancing the school's mission and encourage a shared responsiveness to students and the community.

Campus staff collectively read and discussed books related to poverty and character. The campus staff participation is needed to show that the all-inclusive staff cared about the students, families and community. The idea here is to replace the fractional burden on teachers to bear sole responsibility to teach academic learning and social behavior skills and place it within the entire school staff.

There were four main academic or curricular practices an urban community school needed for effective instructional practice and relationship building on campus and in the community. The staff read and reflected as a school community on books that spoke about the community, such as Jensen's book on poverty and Tough's book on character -building techniques. The school used a "Western-styled" approach to character building pedagogy in the classroom. In other words, they focused on building a social curriculum that considers the staff and community. The staff understood the importance of involving community partners on campus as well as knowing students' background by committing to making home visits. While the idea may seem simplistic, the staff committed to working work together.

First, participants, read books that discussed social conditions such as Jensen's *Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind* and Tough's*, How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. Through collaboration and teamwork, participants and their colleagues decided to make the results of discussions Western-styled to emphasize how the school would include the needs of the community within an academic and social framework. Next, they connected with the neighborhood by hosting an MLK Street community dialogue to discuss academics and socials issues.

Engaging with the community helped to bridge the gap between the teacher and parent which helped build trust relationships, including with ready-made support networks such as churches and social service agencies. An important part of building relationship was a commitment to making home visits. One participant stated, "By going on home visits, you get to see where children are coming from and it helps to make parents not feel judged by us."

Lastly, working together seemed simplistic yet it was powerfully important. Early in the data collection phase, participants spoke about the importance of team work with campus colleagues and other volunteer group members working in classrooms. Without a collaborative team working on campus with a shared visions and a common set of experiences (struggles and successes), teachers would be working in isolation. This isolation could result in teacher frustration, low morale, and higher attrition rates from the school or profession. It was indeed important for the participants in the study to express that could not do their jobs on campus and in this MLK Street school community without each other.

Theme three: making connections. The 900 home visits the Western Elementary School staff illustrated the importance of making connections within and beyond the school community. According to The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project mission statement, making visits to the students' home helps to eliminate placing the blame on persons involved in education process, whether parent or school staff. Rather it helps to facilitate trust and open communication, increased attendance and test scores, and lower suspension/expulsion rates and school site vandalism (see www.pthvp.org).

Other connections that were particular for this MLK Street community and school include connecting work to the generational issues or as one participant put it, "generational constants." Generational constants are those issues such as chronic poverty or lack of family structure is crucial for interpreting the generational issues of the community and the family. Social issues like the lack of economic structure, or businesses and jobs, generational poverty, and education attainment were significant issues to understand in relation to students. Knowledge of generational constants helped to build a complete picture of students in the classroom in terms of thought patterns, attitude toward education attainment, and social needs such as food, clothing, and even a lack of social or emotional learning support.

Urban schools need supportive, effective teachers who have the necessary tools and strategies to work for and with the community while building relationships with the parents of students attending the schools. The relationship between the community and the location of the school is predicated upon what types of relationships teachers can form with parents. Even in high-crime, poverty-stricken environments, involving and fostering relationships with parents in the school environment takes time; however, with

the right models to draw upon, teachers may actually build an understanding about the importance of parent relationships.

Next, awareness of the historic community connection to the area was vital to an understanding previously constructed perceptions of the MLK Street community. While it was not completely necessary to understand why the street was re-named to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., researching this information and being able to locate it in context to the neighborhood would show a willingness to learn about students' cultural backgrounds. This community data becomes necessary to understand the political, economic and social aspects of the community and how these could affect resources available to the community. When teachers understand the historical connection, it contributes greatly to the process of changing the perceptions of an MLK Street from despair to one built on hope and pride.

Lastly, connecting the image of the street with the image of Dr. King, or at least his legacy of equality and civil rights supports a stronger culture of civic pride even when the MLK Street location is situated in multiethnic communities. Schools such as Western Elementary are now symbolic of a multicultural public arena with a mixture of African, Latino, Asian and other ethnic American groups. While the impression may exist that African Americans were the sole beneficiaries Dr. King's fight for civil rights, social justice and equality, participants can collectively learn that the strength of the civil rights movement was its diversity.

Exploring the historical reasons behind an MLK street renaming can add in the understanding of a particular community's evolution and provide noteworthy pedagogical insights. Stacey, for example, suggest that new teachers to the campus would be better

prepared for student and family needs if they understood the generational hardships—breakdowns in the family nucleus, loss of economic base in the community because of either housing or jobs. These sorts of impediments were not instantaneous, rather they were the result of layers of accumulated ideological decisions left in communities without remedy.

Theme four: understands community layers. An urban area like the MLK Street school community is better understood as a community with layers. Two-dimensional interpretations of the neighborhood as crime-ridden with low-expectations may result in a lack of specific ways to educate children in the neighborhood. Each layer of reality in the MLK Street community is best understood separately toward understanding the issues facing students and their families face on a daily basis. Community layer awareness reduces the amount of pressure placed upon teachers to interact and understand the community. It is like learning about a forest without understanding the relationship between the water, trees, animals, and other living beings in the forest. Each layer of the forest has a separate way of being understood while simultaneously contributing to the existence of the other. Several layers of the community are important: 1) social knowledge and perception of the community, 2) cultural-historical awareness and 3) community services and options.

Awareness and perceptions of the community. The participants in the study were aware of the perceptions of the MLK Street community as an area in need of social resources and stressful living conditions and occasional violent activities. The violence acknowledgement put participants in a frame of working with an understanding of their role in the community, despite the violence. Stacey, for example, suggested that students

come with all sorts of issues that may hinder learning during the day. This awareness of the surroundings helped to reinforce and determine why a student was not performing socially or academically well in school.

Cultural-historical awareness. The demographics of the neighborhood have shifted. There were conflicting reasons why the student population at Western Elementary shifted from a mostly African American to a Hispanic and Asian ethnic student population. While demographic neighborhood shifts were not the focus of this study, it was noteworthy that two of the participants commented such shifts were a relevant indicator. Demographic shifts should signal a realignment of resources and cultural activities toward a more inclusive community, regardless of the imbalanced representation of cultural groups on school campus.

Community services and options. An awareness of the social services that churches and other service organizations supply was an applied understanding of Dr. King's legacy in the community. Families may rely upon this information, especially food or shelter provision services. It was a layer of the community that remained well after the school doors close for the weekend, holiday or for the summer months. Social services resource knowledge builds comprehensive school-neighborhood connections.

Theme five: Constructing knowledge of MLK Street. The constructed knowledge of an MLK Street community based on considerations related to Dr. King's legacy might provide insight and understanding. Mitchelson et al. (2007) suggested that streets named for historical figures over a period of time become less associated with the legacy and work of the person and more associated with a distinct location. Constructing a knowledge base of the MLK Street school community is much like a compendium of

knowledge, each with its own unique set of knowledge construction and ideals based on individual ideals and socio-historical interactions. Individual accumulations of knowledge coalesce about the community created a school climate in a neighborhood with all sorts of perceptions, struggles. Conversely, merging historical and social knowledge encourages a school setting full of pride, persistence, perseverance, grit, and character.

There were three identified parts of a compendium of knowledge: 1) understanding of the relevance of the place, 2) Prior knowledge of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and 3) Prior knowledge of MLK Street community and connection to current experiences. Researchers (Hogrebe, 2012; Holloway, 2000) suggest the geographic place, and location is important constructs to education and teaching in the area. Social justice issues such as poverty and affordable housing were new issues with the old theme for places similar to the community location in this study. Tilove (2003), on his journey to MLK Streets across the US, documented communities that had similar needs and distress to the MLK Street community described in this study. Still, similarities existed in the ideal of pride, grit and determination to make the neighborhood a thriving area of life. Participants and other Western Elementary School staff and surrounding community stood ready to assist changing the perceptions of the community, one teacher, student and parent at a time.

Knowledge of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy of confronting social justice and civil rights issues through wide range of experiences among the educators facilitates transferring a deeper awareness through campus and community-wide dialogs. Such discussion will encourage a deeper reflection on the reasons for re-naming a street

to honor King's legacy or the legacy of another historical person's actions and influence toward shaping social policy.

Lastly, the knowledge of Dr. King's involvement in voter and civil rights, the Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement, Anti-Viet Nam War Speech, or the Poor People's Campaign were issues that connect his legacy to the MLK Street school community. One of the participants in the study suggested that the factual data about Dr. King be important, but she also questioned whether it advanced his legacy. That was an interesting notion. Discussions about the factual data about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are indeed essential and relevant to American history, just as character, grit, and self-control are ways to apply his legacy in meaningful ways applicable in an MLK Street school community.

Implications

The implications of this study suggest an implied understanding of the significance of connecting work, the school and MLK Street community to the purpose of re-naming the street to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Participants in this study illustrated an internalization of the values and understandings of MLK Street school community through their actions and empathy for the community.

Teachers making connections between classroom and the needs of the community are less likely to internalize the perceptions as realities based on media influences and other judgmental views. Instead, they become willing to help students and their families with meeting social needs that may be impactful toward student learning. King demonstrated the need for more community discussions to help to put a face on the class and poverty issues, especially when the community as a whole, asks different kinds

of questions (Block, 2008) in and of itself. Further, teacher professional development should continue to connect teachers to greater understandings about poverty and the effects on classroom and social learning.

The implications of this study further suggest the necessity for layers of understanding about the MLK Street community that may assist with teacher development and preparation. Teacher educators face an additional challenge to prepare teachers for work in these areas with layers of understandings about the community—economics, historical images, current perceptions, and others. In preparing teachers for academic work in communities like MLK Street, teacher preparedness and development should also include a multi-layered approach for understanding the school community, namely social, historical, and economical in terms of intergenerational and current conditions. The lack of understanding about these layers of understandings renders many teachers who go into these areas ill equipped and unprepared address the needs of the students and to teach in the complex learning environment that make-up MLK Streets.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data collected and analyzed in this study yielded the findings inconclusively bound to the participants' perceptions and understandings of working in this particular MLK Street school community further suggestive of more questions and recommendations for future studies. As a result, I suggest four other studies to address gaps in the literature on teacher preparation for work in urban neighborhoods similar to MLK Streets. First, a study on the non-attrition rate among urban teachers and collective efficacy is necessary to examine. Next, a study could examine teacher professional

development and community workshops on Dr. King's social justice legacy and the effects on social and economic behavior in the neighborhood. Thirdly, research is needed on relationships in other school districts that have school located on MLK Streets. Lastly, a study could describe the implications of teachers' knowledge of community layers in urban, as well in suburban and rural areas.

First, participants expressed an ability to work together and now suggests a study on the collective efficacy (see Goddard & Goddard, 2008) and MLK Street urban teachers. How do teachers' shared interests or like-mindedness toward a social justice issues in the surrounding community affect teacher attrition rates? Additionally, how does a teacher's prior knowledge and experience with race perceptions and violence acknowledgement influence work in the community?

Next, participants in this study suggested that teaching beyond the academics helped with teaching academics in the classroom. How does professional development on Dr. Martin Luther King's civil rights legacy in an MLK Street school community affect instructional practices at the school?

Third, a comparative study of other schools located on an MLK Street is alimental to understand whether MLK Street names effect the interpretations of teaching in the area. What are teachers' perceptions and understandings in an MLK Street neighborhood, in the Southern area of California? Also, how do teachers interpret their work, the school, and the MLK Street neighborhood with a majority White American population? Lastly, more studies on urban teacher preparation might also involve insight into the layers of the community whether urban, suburban, or rural. What affect would professional development on the social, historical and economic layers of an MLK Street

neighborhood have on teacher social awareness and preparedness for work in the community?

Study Summary

Preparing teachers for work in an MLK Street school is necessary work because of the many layers to the community. Participants at Western Elementary School demonstrated that understanding the community needs and working together as a collective team is invaluable to what they do on a daily basis. While they agreed that the Martin Luther King name was significant in a historical sense, most participants didn't see how King had a direct bearing on teacher identity in the neighborhood. Additionally, not all agreed that the MLK name has any significance on classroom pedagogy or within the community.

Participants taught beyond the academics because the need to address the social complexities of the community was so great. Their valid concerns about the students moving, or at least dreaming beyond the generational constants of poverty, lack of jobs, and a stagnant perception of the neighborhood was suggestive of an implied understanding social justice. The whole child's well-being on campus was as imperative for the survival of the community. As such, making connections through parental meetings and social curriculum programs like *Restorative Justice*, and reading books on character building were necessary for sustaining community connections. While the negative images and perceptions of MLK Street as being violent persist, the participants find themselves committed to doing home visits for the purpose of building the trust between parental and teachers.

During the data collection phase of this project, participants discussed how they had constructed their knowledge of teaching in the MLK Street neighborhood school. The participants engaged in conversations about their school, students, parents and the neighborhood with a sense of pride and care. The results of this study are still inconclusive, but the results suggest that an implied understanding of the legacy of Dr. King encouraged a socio-historical knowledge of the community.

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APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project: Perceptions and Understandings of Educators Working in an MLK Street Community School in the Central Valley of California

The following information is necessary to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to describe teachers interpretations of work, school, and the community surrounding their school located on a MLK Street in the Central Valley of California.

Procedures: Data will be collected using several strategies. If you decide to participate, I will observe you classroom as well as your interactions on the school campus on at least one occasion. Then you will be asked to discuss your experiences and knowledge in an interview setting. Your participation in the interview will last at most 75 minutes. Additionally, I will obtain copies of other documents such as school newsletters, curriculum, and other school related artifacts.

Risk and/or discomfort: There are no risk or discomforts associated with this study.

Benefits: The findings from this study will help to prepare other teachers for work in urban schools.

Confidentiality: Your confidentiality is essential. During the interview, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to protect your identity. This same pseudonym will be used throughtout the data collection phase of this project. For example, demographics observation sheets and audio recordings will utilize your pseudonym. The audio recordings will only be used to to transcribe your interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, the recordings and transcriptions will be locked away in a secured location for 5 years and accessible only primary investigator. Once the five years have elapsed, data will be destroyed according to university Institutional Review Board guidelines. Lastly, your identity as will as that of your school location will be obscured during the report of findings, further academic research or publications.

Compensation: To show my appreciation for your time commitment and contributions to this study, you will receive a copy of the research findings.

Opportunity to ask questions: Feel free to ask questions or share concerns about the study before agreeing to participate and at any time during the study. I would be happy

to share the findings with you after the research is completed. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Charlane Starks, Principal Investigator, at 916/601-5037, or email cstarks@pacific.edu; Dr. Thomas G. Nelson, PhD, (209) 946 3253, email tnelson@pacific.edu; or the University of the Pacific-Institutional Review Board, telephone (209) 946-3903.

Free to Withdraw from Study: You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw your participation should you become uncomfortable with it at any time without affecting your relationship to the researcher, school, or school district.

Consent: Your signature below indicates your voluntary participation and full awareness of the study including the procedures and report of findings.

___________________________ ___________________________________

Signature of Participant Date

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

The participant has voluntarily agreed to participate in this study and possesses the legal capacity to give this informed consent to participate.

____________________________ ___________________________________

Principal Investigator Date

Charlane Starks, Doctoral Candidate
Gladys L. Benerd School of Education, University of the Pacific
916/601-5037
(Portions of the consent form adapted from Creswell, 2012, p. 149)

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Study Title: Perceptions and Understandings of Educators Working in an MLK Street Community School in the Central Valley of California

Date and Time of Interview____________________

Interview Location___________________________

School Location Pseudonym___________________

Respondent Pseudonym____________ Respondent Position on Campus______________

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to describe teachers interpretations of work, school, and the community surrounding their school located on a MLK Street in the Central Valley of California.

Introduction

- ☐ Introduce myself and briefly state purpose of study, confidentiality of respondent and data, length of interview
- ☐ Respondent signed the Informed Consent Form
- ☐ Suggest a preliminary test of audio recording equipment and place recording device between respondent and investigator
- ☐ Provide interview structure (audio recorded, note-taking, use of pseudonyms)
- ☐ Ask respondent if they have any questions

Demographic Questions

1. Describe your professional pathway to your current position
    a. How long have you been teaching?

b. What influenced you to become a teacher?
c. Could you describe your classroom for me?
d. Could you choose one item in the room that would best represent who you are as teacher? Why did you choose that item?

Questions about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1. Think of your earliest remembrance of Dr. King.
   a. Describe Dr. King.

Questions about MLK Street

1. Describe this community

Thoughts about teaching near MLK Street

1. How have you adjusted your pedagogy for teaching in this neighborhood area? Examples?

Questions about teacher identity

Now, let me ask you to think about any changes you see in yourself as a result of teaching in this school location.

1. How, if at all, have you been changed by your experiences in this school location? Examples?

Suggestions and Recommendations for teaching in a school near MLK Street

1. What advice would you give a new teacher about the school? About the neighborhood?

Concluding Questions and Statements

Concluding Interview Question

Are there any questions or comments that we haven't discussed that you feel are important to discuss?

Concluding Statement

- ☐ Thank the respondent for their time
- ☐ Assure them that their answers, questions, and comments are confidential and request the opportunity to follow up with them later during the study
- ☐ make available to respondent a summary of the results for member-checking purposes
- ☐ Record respondent thoughts and reaction to the interview
- ☐ Record my thoughts and reaction to the interview

(Portion of the Interview Protocol adapted from Creswell, 2012, p. 226)

APPENDIX C. OBSERVATIONAL FIELDNOTES PROTOCOL

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL AND FIELD NOTES

Study Title: Perceptions and Understandings of Educators Working in an MLK Street Community School in the Central Valley of California

Prior to Observation

- ☐ Arrange the time of the classroom observation
- ☐ Remember to sign in at the office

Activity/Event Setting	Date	Time
Observer	Role of Observer	Length of Observation
Site Name*	Respondent Name*	Place of Observation

*Pseudonym

Guidelines

1. Describe Setting
    - ☐ Physical Setting
    - ☐ Social Setting
    - ☐ The Respondent in the Setting

2. Describe Activity of Event in the Setting under Observation
    - ☐ Type of Learning Activity or Event
    - ☐ Teacher Interactions with Others
    - ☐ Teacher Responses to Others

3. Describe Other Social Interactions

Observation/ Fieldnotes Log

What is under observation? (Setting, Activity, Event)	Observation Notes	Researcher reflection notes (Repetitive event/activity/issue Emerging idea/issue/theme Unique event/ activity/issue)

Post Observation

- ☐ Thank the respondent for allowing me to observe activity
- ☐ Assure the confidentiality of events reported by obscuring names and location in study findings
- ☐ Make available to respondent a summary of the results for member-checking purposes

APPENDIX D: CLASSROOM LETTER TO STUDENTS

APPENDIX D: CLASSROOM LETTER TO STUDENTS

Dear Wonderful Westerners,

Welcome to you classroom! I want you to know that your education is very important. It is also in your control. You decide how you will use it! You're always learning new and exciting ideas. You deserve the best. As your teacher and advocate, I promise the following:

I promise to give you my best.

I promise to listen to you.

I promise to expect your best.

I promise to give you the things you need to become a successful student and person.

I promise to love you like my family.

I promise to take care of you.

I promise to keep my promises.

You are the reason I teach.

Thank you for teaching me!

Love,

Mrs. Brown

APPENDIX E: CASE STUDY AUDIT TRAIL

APPENDIX E: CASE STUDY AUDIT TRAIL

2013

June-July

Dissertation Proposal Submission; Committee Selection; Identified possible sites for data collection

August

Aug 23:

Contacted school district request for site to collect data

September

Sept 12:

Met with school district official to discuss study

Sept 19:

Proposal defense/approval

Sept 20:

University IRB Submission

October

Oct 29:
Received university IRB approval

District IRB application submission; began MLK Street and neighborhood observation and pictorial data, audio video; began researcher reflection study journal; created Preliminary Code Book for data analysis

November

Nov 20:

Received district IRB approval via email

Nov 22:

Contacted and received school site administrator final approval and requested an appointment to review study; requested list of possible candidates for study participation; School administrator sent email to staff for interests. Suggested that no staff had been on campus for five years or more. I considered a change to criteria from five years to at least one year of experience at school site

December

Dec 5:

Sent follow-up email to school administrator for any staff interests in study

Dec 6:

School administrator emailed to request more details about the study and sent names of two candidates. Additional information included data collection instruments (interviews, observation document collection, timeframe); School administrator forwarded my email to two candidates to allow them the opportunity to review commitment to study; consider implications of participation, and to ask for any clarifications about the study; Participant emailed to express desire to be a part of study; Emailed participants to set up initial interview for participant selection

Dec 9:

Met with CW and JN to discuss study, answer questions, review and Sign Informed Consent Forms. Scheduled first set of interviews; Audio recorded conversation with CB stopped, so will do a follow-up; Videotaped CB classroom for pictures and room set-up (no children in class)

Dec 16:

Class observation with CB; MLK Street observation

Dec 19:

Interview with JN at 7:00 AM in classroom; Asked JN for advice on another possible candidate for study and suggested Contact KA for participation; Classroom observation with CB

Dec 22:

Met with KA and SP to discuss study with both educators. Both agreed to participate in study. KA and I set up interview, but need to arrange one with SP. MLK Street observation

2014

January

Jan 6:

Contacted KA to set up interview

Jan 7:

Contacted CW to set up second interview

Jan 8:

Re-scheduled interview with KA at participant request; Contacted JN to arrange for classroom observation and sent interview; Transcriptions for member-check

Jan 9:

Contacted SP and SW to set up interviews

Jan 13:

Classroom observation with JN; MLK Street observation

Jan 16:

Met with SW to review and sign Informed Consent Form; Classroom observation with SW; MLK Street observation

Jan 17:

Transcribed SW and sent member-check

Jan 22:

Classroom observation with SW; Interviewed KA; MLK Street neighborhood observation

Jan 23:

Contacted SW to arrange interview; transcribed SW and JN observations and sent for member-check; SW recommended MG as addition to participants lists

Jan 24:

Interviewed with SP; Contacted MG to set up interview

Jan 28:

Interviewed SW after school for 20 minute follow-up interview; observation of MLK Street

Reviewed and signed Informed Consent Form, conducted observation and interview with MG

February

Feb 3:

Transcribed data completed and sent transcribed interviews and observations to KA, SW, MG, SP and CB for member checking

Feb 6:

Sent transcript of observation to JN for member checking

Feb 9:

Emailed CB for clarification of data on previous employment; received immediate response

Feb: 24:

Sent draft of findings to participants for final member-checking and received feedback from CB, MG, and SW. MG and SW requested addition edits which did not affect the findings