Transformational Teaching: A Multiple Case Study Examining Transformational Teaching as Pedagogy

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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

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Transformational Teaching: A Multiple Case Study Examining
Transformational Teaching as Pedagogy

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
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Doctor of Education in
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Abstract

The transformational teaching practice is designed to address individual student needs by creating and modeling teaching practices to help students change from their current learning experience to that of growth and a higher level of understanding. The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine and understand the actions and behaviors associated with transformational teaching theory. The purpose of the study was also to examine how transformational teachers understand, frame, and use specific pedagogic approaches to help transform students toward success. Two research questions guided this study: How do primary school teachers utilize transformational teaching as a teaching methodology for helping students? What new knowledge has been discovered by the teachers who use transformational teaching as a means of pedagogy? The data collection instruments used in this case study were semistructured interviews, a secondary interview question, and teacher observations. The inductive analysis was used to analyze the data collected from semistructured interviews. The value analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the observations. The key findings of this study revealed that teachers understood the changing society, and that teachers must be prepared to adjust their curriculum and pedagogic approaches to serve the student in a holistic framework.

Keywords: funds of knowledge, toxic stress, transformational teaching
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background, Context, and History of the Problem

Teaching in the U.S. has moved forward from the traditional practices of providing students with new knowledge, to that of helping students adjust to their environment. For example, many students, especially those living in socioeconomically distressed environments, suffer from adversity and high levels of chronic stress (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Moreover, even students who live without the restrictions of poverty suffer from adversity and high levels of chronic stress from their own diverse environments (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Approximately 70% of the U.S. student population suffers from some form of adversity; close to half of socioeconomically distressed students suffer from multiple forms of adversity, such as those associated with community, violence, child abuse, parent alcoholism, household mental illness, poverty, jailed parents, and general instability (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Sousa et al., 2018). Students who suffer from multiple forms of adversity experience toxic stress and are more likely to have poor health, learning challenges, and behavior problems (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Toxic stress is experienced by a student when they are subjected to prolonged adversity without means of continued support (Braun-Wanke, Risch, & Goldberg, 2015; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Shonkoff et al., 2012). Because these same students comprise the majority in the education community, teachers must comprehend each student’s background and funds of knowledge in order to provide the type of learning environment that helps students learn at high levels and achieve success (Braun-Wanke, Risch, & Goldberg, 2015; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Shonkoff et al., 2012).

Application of transformational teaching techniques may help students overcome the negative impact of their environment (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The transformational
teaching theory was designed to address individual student needs by creating and modeling teaching practices to help students change from their current learning experience to that of growth and a higher level of understanding (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Similarly, the transformational teacher provides inspiration for struggling students, an alternative role model for students without noneducational role models, and a transformation of students’ current understanding of the world around them (Boyd, 2009). Thus, transformational teaching practice works to help teachers understand how fear can impact student learning and performance (Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2014). With such understanding, the transformational teacher begins to know and understand individual students’ lives and backgrounds, for the purpose of gaining knowledge about students’ possible learning challenges and/or diverse behaviors that may impact their learning, achievement, and success. These practices are the transformational teacher’s method of building a positive relationship and trust with the students (Shatzer et al., 2014). Moreover, with this new knowledge, the teacher can create a classroom community, pedagogic approach, and curricula that assist students in high levels of learning and achievement (Day et al., 2016; Shatzer et al., 2014).

Students spend a great deal of time in the classroom and school community, and need a healthy environment that is beneficial to their overall health and success (Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017; Sousa, Mason, Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, & Russo, 2018). Given that about 70% of students suffer from some form of adversity, and almost all such students attend primary school, holistic approaches to a student’s education may prove beneficial (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The transformational teacher has the ability to provide an educational experience that helps students and can reduce, rather than add to, students’ toxic stress by incorporating transformational teaching techniques (Beauchamp & Morton, 2011; Slavich &
The educational experiences that support students that suffer from toxic stress include creating methods of communication between the student and school staff, individualized feedback, formulating trust between the student and teacher, and having the student understand the teacher cares for the student’s overall well-being (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Both quantitative and qualitative studies have demonstrated the effects of toxic stress on children and how this stress is directly related to economic disparity or inequality (Raver, Blair, Garrett-Peters, & Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2015). Likewise, there are detailed reports on how children of poverty often suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and how PTSD directly influences such students’ behavior and learning abilities (Raver, Roy, & Pressler, 2015; Zhai, Raver, & Jones, 2015).

Researchers who used qualitative methods to frame their investigations, defend and examine educational actions designed to help students adjust to the societal norms established by education institutions (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017; McLeod et al., 2017; Roffey, 2017). Consequently, these case studies have implemented behavioral programs such as social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning is a program designed to help students build short- and long-term success in adapting to society in a positive manner, and to help students acquire and use the skills needed to be successful in the workplace and society (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017).

Roffey (2017) qualitatively examined the personal stories of individual teachers as they applied and often struggled with implications and successes related to social and emotional learning. In these studies, the teachers and students’ indications of success were connected to the individual teachers’ attitudes about the social and emotional learning programs (Roffey, 2017). For example, the teachers’ attitude towards social and emotional learning required the teacher to
accept and believe that the program will help students in manner that achieved individualized success (McLeod et al., 2017; Roffey, 2017). Moreover, the teacher’s belief in the program also supported the students’ belief and acceptance of the educational processes that are used to help the student emotional well-being (McLeod et al., 2017; Roffey, 2017).

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this multiple case study is based on constructivist learning theory. Constructivist learning theory claims that students learning takes place when students develop new knowledge from current and past experiences (Fernando & Marikar, 2017; Ormrod, 2011; Resnick, 2017). For this study, it was important for the study participants to understand how students gain new knowledge from current and past classroom and personal experiences, consistent with the theory of constructivism (Ormrod, 2011). The framework of constructivist learning indicates that teachers gather information about the student’s background and funds of knowledge so that the teacher is able to use a constructivist approach to learning and teaching (Fernando & Marikar, 2017; Resnick, 2017).

However, constructivist theory is often at odds with teaching theoretical agendas employed by educational organizations because of the need for students memorize and repeat learned material (Dagar & Vadav, 2016). For example, traditional approaches to classroom learning focus on rote memorization, as opposed to focusing on students finding their own solutions to larger, more complex problems using critical thinking and teamwork (Dagar & Vadav, 2016). The implications of traditional approaches to learning imply that students will not construct meaning from their prior experiences and apply these experiences with new knowledge to solve more complex problems, and gain deep meaning of subjects (Dagar & Vadav, 2016; Ormrod, 2011).
Consequently, the transformational teacher understands that students gain more accurate knowledge by participating in new experiences, and by adding this knowledge to their past experiences in which the student questions and struggles, both academically and environmentally, with previous learned knowledge, to form a more genuine understanding of concepts, learning, and experiences learned both inside and outside the classroom (Alt, 2017; Illeris, 2018; Wilson, 2017). Additionally, student experiences that are formed from their environment have a significant impact on how they view and intersect with the world around them (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Constructivism served as the theoretical framework for this study, which guides how the transformational teaching theory adapts to students’ learning and environmental experiences, and is then used as a foundation to create new transformational teaching practices that serve students.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem addressed in this multiple case study is the teachers’ difficulty in knowing or understanding the effect of their teaching practices in today’s student population. Although teaching practices are created to help students gain new knowledge, such practices often overlook the importance of individual students’ backgrounds and environments. Ignoring the students’ backgrounds and environments often leads to learning and behavioral problems in the classroom (Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012). Although transformational teaching theorists advocate helping students achieve higher levels of learning and success (Beauchamp & Morton; 2011; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012), transformational teachers must continue to adjust their knowledge of their students, and adjust their teaching practices, to facilitate students’ ability to learn at higher levels and produce high levels of work (Pounder, 2014). The goal of teaching is not to produce students who can move to the next grade or graduate from high school. The goal
of teaching should be to help all students adjust and find the ability to advance (Beauchamp & Morton; 2011; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

The premise of transformational teaching is to provide teaching practices and a pedagogic approach that help students move through the process of education and achieve success (Shatzer et al., 2014). Another goal of transformational teaching is to provide a new framework for the individual student so that students can attempt to understand their respective environments and how the world around them influences their learning and means of success (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Shatzer et al., 2014).

Within this framework of transformative teaching, the teacher and student work together to develop a plan of action that will help provide the student with success. However, it is unknown how much the student will respond to the transformational teaching process. Responses from students may have limitations based on influences of age, learning disabilities, environments, home, and community support systems (Moustafa, Ben-Zvi-Assaraf, & Eshach, 2013; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine and understand the actions and behaviors associated with transformational teaching theory. The purpose of the study was also to examine how transformational teachers understand, frame, and use specific pedagogic approaches to help transform students toward success. In the transformational teaching framework, student success is an individualized goal. To help students achieve their individual goals, the transformational teacher applies a variety of leadership and teaching strategies that help the students achieve high levels of learning, production, and achievement (Hyett et al., 2014). Moreover, the goal of this case study was to examine current transformational teaching
practices to develop new teaching practices that will help students move toward the goal of high achievement. As such, this study was designed to document what current transformational teaching practices are being applied, and how these techniques work, to provide more clarity about the phenomenon of transformative teaching, so that educators can further development and application of transformational teaching theory in the classroom.

**Nature of the Study**

This qualitative case study allowed me to examine the teaching practices and experiences of 12 elementary school teachers located in an urban California environment. Although transformational teaching was the focus of the study, participation did not require that the teachers identify themselves as transformational teachers. The teachers selected for this study understood the environments in which their students lived, and approached their teaching practices as a means to help students become successful in such environments. Thus, the lives of the students are not ignored, but the students’ lives impact the practice of the teachers.

The case study design allowed me to collect data from 12 teachers by engaging in audio-recorded interviews and observing their teaching practices (Merriam, 1998). The design allowed me to discover themes, categories, and possible additions to transformational teaching theory. I did not work concurrently with any of the participants, nor did I hold a position of authority over any of the participants. All participants were made aware of the intentions of this case study, and that they would not receive any type of compensation to participate in the study.

Specifically, I used semistructured interview questions (see Appendix A) to learn about the teachers’ backgrounds, how the teachers felt about and approached their teaching practices, and transformational teaching theory. Additionally, I conducted individual, 1- to 2-hour long observations of each of the 12 teachers’ respective classroom teaching practices (see Appendix
B). The purpose of these observations was to view the phenomenon of transformational teaching, and to discover possible additional aspects to the phenomenon. I used field notes to provide detailed descriptions of the interviews, actions, behaviors in the observations, and my own opinions and understandings of how the phenomenon takes place (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1991).

**Research Questions**

1. How do primary school teachers utilize transformational teaching as a teaching methodology for helping students?
2. What new knowledge has been discovered by the teachers who use transformational teaching as a means of pedagogy?

The development of the research questions was supported by use of a traditional qualitative case study approach designed to provide discovery of events (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). This qualitative case study’s purpose was to discover how teachers use transformational teaching as a means to help students. For example, the use of transformational teaching in the classroom by the classroom teacher is the event taking place, and the research questions were designed to discover how the transformational teaching process was used and functioned as the 12 primary school teachers practiced teaching (Stake, 1995). Additionally, the purpose of the using the research questions was to help current and future teachers by providing detailed descriptions of teacher perceptions and experiences, which in turn may help current and future teachers help students.

Students’ needs change significantly as their environments change and evolve. Transformational teaching practices are needed to teach students who have been impacted by their environment. This case study addressed how transformational teaching theory provides both
current and evolving pedagogic approaches that help all students become high-level learners and achievers. It is the teacher’s mindset and transformational teaching framework that construct and guide the teachers’ teaching practices with students, with the goal of helping students transform into the future workforce and as leaders within this workforce (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). In today’s society, the students associated with this case study were experiencing higher levels of toxic stress due to increased poverty, violence, family problems, drug use, and social issues associated with social media (Petering, Wenzel, & Winetrobe, 2014). The implications of this high level of stress include an increase in learning difficulties because of the negative effects on the student’s brain (Patton et al., 2012; Petering et al., 2014).

Significant quantitative research supports the implications of toxic stress associated with student learning, and the student success in their actual assimilation and integration into general society (Greenberg et al., 2017). These existing research findings suggested that toxic stress is not an isolated problem for a small segment of society, and that the problem is expanding as students suffer and experiences multiple effects of the environment and cognitive disparities (Blair & Raver, 2015; Roffey, 2017). Accordingly, education systems and teachers have approached this growing problem with programs dedicated to helping students adjust to society and achieve success. Programs such as social and emotional learning provide schools and teachers with a framework for understanding and provided the actions and resources needed to help students (Schoner-Reichl, 2017; Zhai et al., 2015). However, these types of programs require training, funding, leadership, community support, and self-efficacy from teachers who use social and emotional learning programs in the classroom. Moreover, this study may provide additional information about gaps in understanding of the phenomenon of transformational teaching, and keys to addressing such gaps and related problems in the future.
Definition of Terms

The specific definitions of the following terms are paramount to understanding the transformational teaching theory. The following terms are defined and their intended meaning clarified as used herein.

*Environmental stress:* This term is defined as the negative emotional and physical outcomes derived from the student’s environment that often affect learning and production (Raver & Blair, 2016). Although the term *environmental stress* could be perceived as the stress caused by such forces as nature, or the stress caused by human pollution of the environment, this researcher viewed environmental stress from a different perspective. The term *environmental stress* is used herein as a means to examine the nature of stressors surrounding students that have influenced students’ behavior, learning, and personal viewpoints of the world around them. Moreover, environmental stress should be understood as a primary influence in how students interact and live their lives.

*Funds of knowledge:* This term is defined as the cultural systems and practices of students that develop from the lives of students (Clement et al., 2015). The student’s funds of knowledge are relative to the student’s environment. The student’s funds of knowledge comprise the student’s important knowledge gained from the student’s home environment, which knowledge is transferred into the student’s classroom practice. These funds of knowledge have both negative and positive effects on the student (Clement et al., 2015). Discovering and understanding the student’s funds of knowledge assists the transformational teacher in (a) empathizing with each individual student’s life, (b) understanding how students make connections with the world around them, and (c) potential gaining insight into why a student’s behaviors occur (Clement et al., 2015). Additionally, funds of knowledge give the teacher insight into the cultural practices of
the student, which include attitudes about education, gender roles, and religious practices; and primary and secondary language(s) at home and in the student’s environment (Clement et al., 2015; Dupéré et al., 2012).

*Socioeconomically distressed:* This term is defined as low socioeconomic status of the student that can interfere with educational achievement (Berkowitz et al., 2017). The term *socioeconomically distressed* was used in this study because the implications of being socioeconomically distressed relate directly to negative learning and social experiences for the student (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Being socioeconomically distressed is one of the generalized environmental stressors that students experience. Additionally, school districts and the federal government assign the label of *socioeconomically distressed* to a particular student population. This label is associated with understanding how poverty impacts student learning and success, as well as high levels of stress when other environmental influencers are associated with being labeled socioeconomically distressed (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Clement et al., 2015; Dupéré et al., 2012).

*Toxic stress:* This term is defined as the wide variety of negative stress and trauma that affects the student child, which is derived from the student’s living conditions and experiences (Sousa, Mason, Herrenkohl, Prince, Herrenkohl, & Russo, 2018). *Toxic stress* in this study related directly to the student, and how the student learns, performs, and views the world. Toxic stress is becoming more prevalent in U.S. society and has a real impact on student success (Sousa et al., 2018). However, toxic stress is also a generalized term, which has many different meanings and effects on a diverse range of students, regardless of socioeconomic levels, parental support, and/or worldview (Sousa et al., 2018). In this study, use of the term toxic stress indicates the teacher’s understanding and knowing how the student’s environmental stress
negatively effects the student’s learning and success. Moreover, toxic stress becomes the starting point at which the teacher understands the existence of a significant problem with the student, and that a plan of action should be made to help the student transform into a successful learner and healthy person (Sousa et al., 2018).

Transformational teaching: This term is defined as “creating dynamic relationships between teachers, students, and a shared body of knowledge to promote student learning and personal growth” (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 1). The term transformational teaching is referring to teaching using a transformational teaching framework based on the collective goal of the student’s growth (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). There are different approaches to transformational teaching, and the transformational teaching practice is as diverse as the student in the classroom. Nevertheless, in this study, transformational teaching was understood as a means of practice, personal outlook, and reflection for improvement based upon great care and empathy for the student. This care and empathy for the student constitutes a central motivator for the teacher as the teacher applies teaching and professional relationship practices that help the student transform to success (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Transformational teaching also provides a common framework for why the teacher provides a transformational teaching practice, and how such teaching practices are supported by an outlook centered on student growth—as opposed to the assimilation of a group of students, individual students, and/or labeled or stereotyped students (Hyett et al., 2014; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

This case study design encompassed the assumption that all teacher participants would provide relevant information about and knowledge of their own teaching practices. For example, the study was conducted with the assumption that each participant had the type of teacher behavior and actions that are associated with transformational teaching practice used to help students achieve high-level and deep learning (Slavic & Zimbardo, 2012). Moreover, I also assumed that each participant would also supply data suggesting that the participant took premeditated action to understand each student’s background and needs (Slavic & Zimbardo, 2012). These elements of teacher background would support the assumption that the teacher practices transformational teaching techniques. However, I also assumed that one or more of the participant teachers might not label themselves as transformational teachers, but rather as teachers using teaching strategies to help a diverse student population.

It was also assumed that the framework of this qualitative, case study would not seek to substantiate the transformational teaching practice. Equally, the case study was designed to gain a deep understanding of the meaning and practices of transformational teaching. Furthermore, as the case study took place, the researcher’s approach and methodology were expected to change or adapt to the research and the participants’ environments because of diversity of the students, teachers, and changing environments. The environments of the students are critical and have a high level of influence in the students’ own outlooks on the education process, material being learned, motivation for learning, and their own theoretical outlook on the society (Eisner, 2017).
Limitations

The limitations of this case study were subject to the participants’ willingness to provide feedback, answers, and dialogue that was neither rehearsed nor scripted. This possible limitation denotes the genuine aspect of the qualitative case study, because the study elicited the teachers’ real-life practices, behaviors, and dialogue as a means of illustrating and fleshing out the details of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1991).

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study relate to the time and location of the case study interviews and observations. For example, the goal of the case study was to provide a qualitative account of 12 elementary school teachers located within the same school district. This small sample was restricted to one geographic location, with a similar socioeconomic setting, which limited its scope. However, the study’s design may add to the further understanding of the transformational teaching theory by providing authentic and personal accounts of the teacher’s viewpoint, behavior, and practice while serving students in the classroom.

Chapter 1 Summary

This multiple case study examined the transformational teaching practices of 12 elementary school teachers in a highly diverse school district with evolving and rapidly changing student needs. The study explored the transformational teaching process as the participants revealed their own respective teaching practices, modeled to provide significant help to students in achieving higher levels of success. These teachers’ transformational teaching practices and personal experiences revealed the respective teachers’ outlooks, behaviors, attitudes, training, and environment, and the success of transformational teaching theory as applied in the classroom (McLeod et al., 2017). It is important to genuinely understand each teacher’s own environment.
and how the teacher is influenced and affected by the environment (McLeod et al., 2017; Roffey, 2017). This study also examined the teacher’s theoretical perceptions of education, and the demographics of the students that each teacher served. These detailed insights into the teachers’ own perspectives contribute to further development of transformational teaching theory, and its significance in facilitating student success.

This study also examined the impact of the students’ environments, and how these environments often delimit the students’ natural abilities to learn complex tasks, and high-level academics. Moreover, the students’ environments have a significant impact on how the students view the world around them (Dagar & Vadav, 2017; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

One of the main means of implementing transformational teaching theory is the teacher’s caring for the students and empathetic approach to the students’ lives and backgrounds. In this case study, understanding of the students’ respective funds of knowledge provided the teachers with an ability to provide differentiated instruction and curriculum that are meaningful to diverse students (Taylor, 2017; Wilson, 2017). The teachers’ practices were viewed, recorded, and transcribed to bring the greatest level of depth and meaning into real-life, real-time teaching and learning. This research was designed and conducted to bring new, deeper understanding of the phenomenon of transformational teaching, to help teachers help students find real success in society.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

Transformational teaching evidences teachers’ awareness of their actions for the purpose of supporting student success (Shatzer et al., 2014). Teachers undertake these teaching activities hoping to assist students in exceeding minimum standards and in the transformation of their own careers. The student’s transformational process includes all aspects of being a student and member of society. Such transformational goals may help students become socially competent, critical thinkers, and engaged in the classroom community, among many other qualities.

Moreover, the framework of transformational teaching brings to the classroom elements that move beyond rote memorization and lecture. Transformational teaching ideology serves the students’ needs, inclusive of providing an environment which supports higher levels of learning and production (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

All too often, the teacher’s tendency is to provide information to students and have the students demonstrate their proficiency on this shared knowledge. In contrast, the transformational teacher moves beyond the established, normative teacher-student relationship by providing a means for student growth and success that challenges the status quo of labeling students’ learning abilities and disabilities (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Importantly, student labeling fosters predetermined frameworks by the education system, teachers, students, and parents (Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014). Labeling students tends to provide teachers and other stakeholders with biases and assumptions for individual students and
particular groups of students, rather than individualizing one’s approach to each student’s needs. In contrast, the transformational teacher works to understand each student’s individual requirements in the realm that all students are vital to the contributions of the classroom community, regardless of preconceived methods or ideologies as to what student attributes count as successful or important to the teacher (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016). It is paramount for teachers to model appropriate actions to provide relevance in student learning, and pathways for growth. Because transformational teaching is meant to help the individual student and the whole organization, all students, spanning different physical and cognitive abilities, find that they are active participants in their own growth and the entire educational community (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012)

In the next section of this study, a comprehensive literature review provides an examination of what is known about the impact of teacher’s influence on students. Teacher influence is operationalized as how the classroom teacher uses transformational teaching techniques to help students improve in all aspects of being students and young people who move beyond meeting proficiency in standardized testing. Although standardized testing is an indicator of success in the qualities defining student success, the transformational teacher provides a means of supporting the whole student, which individualizes success.

Next, the literature review introduces the conceptual framework and discusses the elements of transformational teaching techniques used by transformational teachers. Then, the literature review explores how the student’s environment influences student learning, behavior, performance, and the possibilities of the student’s success. Lastly, the literature review concludes with a summation and recommendations to assist teachers in the implementation of
transformational teaching to improve students’ educational experiences and possible success in their respective environments.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is founded on the learning theory of constructivism. The students’ process of learning associated with transformational teaching techniques suggest that students will form new frameworks of knowledge by combining the students’ current understandings with new experiences (Ormrod, 2011). Here, it is important for transformational teachers to recognize students’ prior knowledge and funds of knowledge to design and apply transformational teaching practices and curriculum to help the student become an advanced learner (Doolittle, 2014). Funds of knowledge, as defined herein, are the cultural systems and practices of the student that develop from the student’s experiences (Clement et al., 2015). Such experiences include home life, and interactions with family, friends, and other people in the student’s community (Clement et al., 2015). Moreover, the student’s funds of knowledge are often shaped by the student’s socioeconomic status. In the framework of urban education, teachers’ familiarity with each student’s funds of knowledge becomes more relevant in the building of new knowledge because urban students are underserved in society (Clement et al., 2015).

Among multiple interpretations on learning, the constructivist viewpoint as understood herein is that the transformational teacher’s preliminary focus is to gather and begin to learn about each individual student’s prior experiences. The transformational teacher’s inquiry into each student’s background provides the teacher with information, which the teacher then applies in the development and application of pedagogy and curriculum to individualize student learning and development (Ormrod, 2011).
Constructivism is based on Piaget’s formulation of childhood cognitive development (Fosnot, 2013; Ormrod, 2011, Wadsworth, 1996). This construction of knowledge by the child is created by the unique meaning that the child has established already, combined with new experiences to create new knowledge (Fosnot, 2013; Ormrod, 2011; Wadsworth, 1996).

Moreover, the classroom teacher can use the basic principles of constructivism as the theoretical framework for providing pedagogy and curriculum. When using the constructivist theoretical framework, the teacher acknowledges that each student’s learning develops uniquely, and that the student does not take in new knowledge without influence from other prior knowledge (Fosnot, 2013).

In the framework of constructivism, the teacher provides challenges that incorporate the student’s current knowledge and exploration of new knowledge to help students achieve better results. The use of problem-based curricula helps the student retain understanding and develop complex reasoning strategies (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The purpose of providing students with challenging, problem-solving curricula is to facilitate students’ development of higher levels of learning, social skills, and practice in the techniques of problem-solving (Ormrod, 2011).

Additionally, the transformational teacher uses similar techniques to include all students in problem-solving in the classroom. These transformational teaching practices based on constructivist theory help build new knowledge and behaviors for students (Ormrod, 2011; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Teachers’ use of constructivist theory as the theoretical framework helps foster students who are relevant actors in society and the global work environment (Fosnot, 2013). In contrast, constructivism as defined by Piaget (Wadsworth, 1996) was limited to the treatment group in Piaget’s research (Ormrod, 2011). For example, in large part, Piaget’s
findings and development of constructivist theory stemmed from the observations of a small group of children, and not a random sampling of children representing different cultures and ethnicities (Ormrod, 2011; Wadsworth, 1996).

Constructivist theory is highly relevant to transformational teaching practice due to the teacher’s approach to understanding the student as a whole person. The teacher’s attempt to understand the student as a whole person allows the teacher to develop curricula that are relevant to the student. Moreover, relevant curricula may help students become more motivated to learn as they experience learning activities introduced by the teacher (Ormrod, 2011). The next section of the literature review discusses key components of transformational teaching.

**Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

Research literature about transformation teaching in primary education is extremely limited (Beauchamp, Barling, & Morton, 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012); researchers have not necessarily approached transformational teaching as distinct set of approaches for different age groups of students. Further, researchers have indicated that transformation teaching is grounded in transformational leadership theory (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). However, the contents of this literature review comprise solely the behavior of the teacher in the framework of transformational teaching for children attending school. Additionally, this literature review includes the teaching practices associated with transformational teaching, the impact of teacher behavior, and the influence of the student’s environment. A review and analysis of the student’s environment provides the connection to the teacher’s attempt to understanding the student as a whole person, and how the teacher’s understanding of one’s own behavior is vital to the ultimate
success of the student (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

**Transformational Teaching Techniques**

Many of the teaching techniques associated with transformational teaching that are discussed by researchers relate to instructing older or college-level students (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). However, the key elements of transformational teaching include active learning techniques, collaboration, personalizing student attention and feedback, the teacher’s behavior, and the teacher’s understanding of the student’s funds of knowledge. These core transformational teaching techniques are also associated with primary school education practices (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Similarly, teachers using transformational teaching techniques incorporate student reflection into a variety of pedagogic approaches associated with real-world problem-solving relevant to the individual student, and student reflection that encourages and engages the student to gain deeper meaning and develop viewpoints about curricula. These transformational teaching techniques are discussed in detail in the next section of the review to further describe how each technique relates to the others and is applied when using transformational teaching.

**Active learning.** The use of transformation teaching techniques designed to enhance a student’s ability to learn school curricula is associated with the active learning teaching technique (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Active learning emphasizes the teacher’s implementation of student tasks designed to help students deepen their knowledge of a particular subject by having the students engage in the learning process (Anthony, 1996; Beauchamp et al., 2011; Bromley, 2013; Goffin & Tull, 1985;
Edwards, 2015; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Active learning involves both collaborative and individual student activities. For instance, having individual students complete personal journals on their own respective thoughts on a subject is an individual active learning activity. Equally, having a paired or grouped discussion about each student’s journal is also an active learning activity (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012).

Another approach to active learning is using problem-based situations that involve the student in the process of exploring and understanding a given subject (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012). In this approach, a teacher provides the class with a problem associated with a historical moment in history, and students engages in discovery, research, and attempts to solve the problem. Often, the teacher frames such activities for the students to work in groups or pairs. Such group work helps students become aware of working with different people, and solving larger problems using different students’ abilities and efforts (Anthony, 1996; Beauchamp et al., 2011; Bromley, 2013; Goffin & Tull, 1985; Edwards, 2015). The teacher models these student activities, and facilitates these activities such that the students are at the center of the learning process (Anthony, 1996).

Importantly, teachers must also help and support their students during these active learning processes (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Students who engage in active learning activities often struggle with their approaches to new ways of thinking, development of problem-solving, and the actual challenges of engagement in the active learning process (Bromley, 2013). It is paramount that the teacher creates an environment where individual ideas, mistakes, and student challenges are accepted as the norm for the classroom environment (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Likewise, transformational teaching processes foster an atmosphere in which students should feel safe when attempting to understand and respond to the teacher and course
material. Feeling safe to explore and make mistakes allows students to become seekers of new knowledge and developers of how such knowledge is relevant to the students and society (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

Additionally, student challenges incorporate the struggles students experience as they practice the active learning processes (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012). Moreover, as students experience challenge, they are encouraged to think critically about their learning experiences and share ideas, problem-solving attempts, and personal understanding of what and how they learn (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012). These shared experiences allow and help students socialize in an academic setting, and possibly develop new understandings and approaches to the subject matter.

Relative to transformational teaching, active learning experiences in the classroom help promote student growth beyond the receipt and memorization of teacher-presented material. Such viewpoints and actions are intentionally collaborative, to help students increase their acceptance of other people’s ideas and experiences. Moreover, transformational teachers use active learning as a tool to help students develop internal motivation to work with others to solve complex problems (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

Thus, active learning is one technique that transformational teachers and many other teachers use in the classroom to help students develop as whole persons who move beyond rote memorization and traditional classroom teaching and learning practices. Active learning also incorporates the teacher’s commitment to and active participation in individual students’ learning and growth (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The next section presents review of personalized attention and student feedback as an attribute of
transformational teaching, another interconnected, essential element of transformational teaching practice.

**Personalized attention and feedback.** Providing personalizing attention and feedback for students is a difficult task for teachers because of the time associated with discovering and learning about individual students’ abilities and current understandings, and how their personal experiences impact each student (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Yet, personalizing attention and feedback for students provide students with genuine approaches to each student’s own learning (Beauchamp et al., 2011).

The importance of this transformational teaching technique is that it focuses on the individual student’s needs, as opposed to the needs of the teacher or the needs of the dominant society (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Personalizing attention and feedback also helps to close the achievement gap by helping a wide range of students with different learning abilities, goals, experiences, and beliefs by expanding each student’s experiences to ultimately grasp or master curricula (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Further, teachers providing personized attention and feedback help students become capable to understand how they think and learn from engagement in classroom activities such as discourse, reflection, and problem-based learning activities.

Individualized student attention from the teacher also encourages the student’s development of self-efficacy by showing each student that their own individual beliefs and experiences are valid in the general contexts of society, school culture, and the classroom community (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012). As well, feedback from the teacher, and possibly from other students, helps develop students ‘growth and understanding of their own learning processes, and their attempts at mastering the subject matter presented by the
teacher. Additionally, teacher feedback promotes a collaborative learning environment as the teacher and student engage in the student’s development of ideas and core academic content, thus supporting the transformation of the student’s framework of knowledge and understanding (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

Personalized attention and feedback require the teacher to gather information about each student’s experiences in and out the classroom so that the teacher can provide each student with meaningful guidance specifically suited for each individual student (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The process of personalized attention and feedback is a transformational process as teacher and student adapt to new experiences, learned knowledge of both the student and teacher, and new learning outcomes (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The next section presents review of the impact of teacher behavior related to helping students transform their learning, growth and development, and attempts at mastering the subject matter presented by the teacher.

**Teacher behavior.** One goal of teachers being aware of their practices is understanding the variables that impact student success. For example, when a teacher considers what environmental influences and obstacles affect student motivation, then the teacher can adapt, use, or design classroom management techniques, pedagogy, and curriculum to help the student overcome these obstacles (Noland & Richards, 2015; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). In this framework of understanding the effects of environmental variables, the teachers’ awareness of their teaching practices considers the students’ well-being and learning (Noland & Richards, 2015; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Transformational teaching’s main goal is to help students grow (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).
Relative to student motivation, the framework of transformational teaching embraces a number of teachers’ behavioral qualities. For example, researchers have explored the specific aspects of teaching practice that have a negative or positive impact on student success. One such aspect is the teacher’s classroom behavior as seen by the students. Here, Gershenson (2016), and Huang and Lin (2014), argued that the teacher behaviors of charisma, and the teacher’s belief in learning about the student, and the belief in the growth of the student as a whole person are relate to student success.

In the framework of transformational teaching and teacher awareness, it is essential that teachers have emotional awareness and be cognizant of how these behaviors influence student motivation and success. In contrast, the teacher’s impact on student motivation and success is arguably individualized in each student’s experiences, and outlook (Gershenson, 2016; Huang & Lin, 2014). In addition, one teacher’s behavior might be accepted in one classroom, and another teacher’s behavior might have negative effects on student success in another classroom environment (Gershenson, 2016; Huang & Lin, 2014; Jeffrey, Auger, & Pepperell, 2013; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

One example of a behavior applied in the framework of transformational teaching is how charisma is used and applied by the teacher in the classroom (Huang & Lin, 2014). Charisma is operationalized as a characteristic or behavior that the teacher employs in the classroom to promote a positive social climate and classroom community (Huang & Lin, 2014). Charisma is also seen as a behavioral tool that teachers may use to promote excitement about or interest in an organizational cause (Shanker & Sayeed, 2012). For example, a charismatic school principal might help energize the school teacher into accepting a new type of teaching model. The classroom teacher may use charismatic behavior in practice to bring excitement about learning,
interest in a particular subject, and/or development of a positive classroom community (Huang & Lin, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012). In the framework of the transformational teaching, these behaviors may also provide significance to the learning process for the student (Huang & Lin, 2014).

Additionally, teacher behavior when associated with transformational teaching theory suggests that teachers become aware of student needs, and the environmental influences that impact student learning (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Ketelaar, Beijaard, Den Brok, & Boshuizen, 2013; Shogren, Plotner, Palmer, Wehmeyer & Paek, 2014). When teachers used pedagogic strategies and curricula that helped students understand their needs and environmental influences, students can use this knowledge as scaffolding for learning (Moustafa et al., 2013). Here, the transformational teacher’s behavior indicates the desire to help students discover, grow, and learn in the framework of the transformational teaching theory (Day et al., 2016; Pounder, 2014).

The teacher’s experimentation with different teaching behaviors determines teaching style, and the teacher’s behavior becomes the model that is used in the classroom (Day et al., 2016). These behaviors form and define the individual teacher’s professional practice (Ketelaar et al., 2013). The teacher adapts transformational teaching into practice, as the teacher conceptualizes, defines, and uses transformational teaching practices to help students understand their processes for learning.

Teacher behavior is critical to transformational teaching practice and student success (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The teacher’s behavior is a key element in transformational teaching practice, modeling to provide examples for students learning, and promoting student motivation (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012;
Ketelaar et al., 2013; Shogren et al., 2014). The next section presents review of student environmental factors, indicating the importance of teachers’ and school communities’ acknowledgement and understanding how the student various environmental stressors impact students.

**Students’ Environmental Factors**

Researchers have concluded that the teacher’s understanding of the student’s environment and how the environment impacts learning further develops the teacher’s professional practice (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015). The student’s environment is operationalized as what each student experiences or perceives in their lives. Often, the environmental factors the student experiences have a negative impact on the student’s ability to learn and perform (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015). Transformational teachers should understand each student’s environmental factors to help individualize transformational teaching techniques to better serve each student. The following subsections provide review of literature on how the factors of fear, violence, immigration, socioeconomics, and toxic stress impact student learning and performance.

**Fear.** One environmental factor that impacts student learning is fear (Raver & Blair, 2016). For example, when a child experiences fear in the early stages of development, these experiences of fear reshape the child’s development and learning (Raver & Blair, 2016). Fear decreases the student’s ability to learn and to perform the complex tasks necessary for constructivist learning to take place (Dupéré et al., 2012; Fosnot, 2013).

Similarly, the student’s community might be a valid source of fear. For example, socioeconomically distressed students might experience fear because of neighborhood violence; the influences of gang culture, school culture, and bullying; and/or parental and sibling-enacted violence (Dupéré et al., 2012; Fram & Dickmann, 2012). These environmental experiences
associated with fear comprise just one outside influence that impacts student learning and production. To help students within the model of transformational teaching, the teacher seeks better understanding of the student’s environment and thus each individual’s learning needs and stages of child development.

As compared with younger students, older students experience fear at a much higher rate because of their environmental experiences (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). As with fear experienced in early childhood, older students’ daily interactions with fear lead to lower levels of memorization and substandard performance levels, as compared with students experiencing fewer instances of fear (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). Researchers have also reported that nondiagnosed fear has a significant impact on student behavior and academic success (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). In another study, Barrett, Jennings, and Lynch (2012) reported that the connection between students’ experiences of daily and environmental fears have a significant impact on their individual performance. These findings are important to the development and application of a teacher’s practice because over half of all students report daily experiences of fear (Barrett et al., 2012; Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). The connection between transformational teaching and student fear is that the transformational teacher seeks understanding of how each student experiences fear, and how these experiences impact learning and performance. Moreover, understanding of the effects of students’ fear further assists teachers in designing differentiated instruction for individuals and groups of students to provide meaningful learning experiences.

The impact of fear differs between male and female students. Female students have reported a higher level of fear associated with daily life than male students (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). Often, as girls grow older and experience the environment, fear can have larger negative
effects than the average effects on boys (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). Such research did not include clinically diagnosed mental illnesses associated with symptoms of fear, nor social disorders. In this review of literature, fear is related to community crime, sexual crime, and overall victimization, which includes oppression as well as abuse by a family member or partner (Barrett et al., 2012).

**Violence.** An additional factor that negatively impacts learning and memory function and causes behavior changes is the violence youth experience from an intimate partner. Although reported largely by female students, this type of victimization takes place with across gender, in research of the at-risk student community (Patton, Hong, Williams, & Allen-Meares, 2013). This type of violence can take place across a wide range of student age groups and is not associated only with high-school-aged students (Petering et al., 2014). Furthermore, this type of violence, along with other violence such as bullying, also produces PTSD, anxiety, depression, drug use, negative efficacy, and other negative mental conditions that affect student performance (Patton et al., 2013; Petering et al., 2014).

Patton et al. (2013) examined the impact of violence on female African American students and reported that bullying was a problem within the students’ environment as opposed to a localized school-relating problem. The study revealed that the students’ environment could also negatively influence the students’ funds of knowledge. Moreover, female African American students reported higher levels of victimization than students of other ethnicities (Patton et al., 2013).

**Immigration.** Another experience of fear associated with student performance relates to the environmental experience of the newcomer, and immigrant student (Patel, Barrera, Strambler, Muñoz, & Macciomei, 2016; Patton et al., 2012). For example, many immigrant and
newcomer students experience a vast range of environmental fears that lead to an achievement gap when compared to students in the dominant society (Patel et al., 2016). The fear that the immigrant and other newcomer students experience is often associated with economic status, community circumstances, crime, general victimization, and cultural and language barriers (Dupéré et al., 2012; Patel et al., 2016). In general, Latino immigrant students have been shown to have a lower level of self-efficacy and lower achievement scores than other students, because of fear related to the Latino immigrant environment (Dupéré et al., 2012; Patel et al., 2016). Thus, understanding about each student’s background further helps the transformational teacher understand how such experiences affect immigrant students, and how to design and use pedagogy and curricula to help students meet standards.

**Socioeconomics.** Also related to the effects of student fear on student performance levels, socioeconomics affects a diverse population of students in a negative manner. For example, African American students who were socioeconomically distressed reported lower levels of self-efficacy, academic achievement, and success because of environmental stressors (Patton et al., 2012). Moreover, community violence often associated with socioeconomically distressed urban and rural areas negatively impacted students’ self-esteem and school performance levels, which in turn affected their mental and behavioral health (Ahn & Rodkin, 2014; Patton et al., 2012). The behavioral changes for such students have included higher levels of depression, PTSD, and anxiety than other students who had not experienced higher levels of environmental violence (Jeffrey et al., 2013; Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010; Patton et al., 2012; Petering et al., 2014). The impacts of these conditions related directly to lower levels of school achievement, memory function, and learning (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010; Raver & Blair, 2016). Raver and Blair (2016) studied rural, rather than urban, youth and found similar experiences; the rural students who
experienced adverse conditions also showed that academic performance was impeded by fear associated with community or home violence, regardless of community population levels and location of students.

**Toxic stress.** Researchers have also addressed the increasing need for teachers to adjust their practices to the changing conditions of more students experiencing toxic stress (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Sousa et al., 2018). For example, the majority of the student population has experienced some form of toxic stress, and because of this phenomenon, teachers must adjust traditional teaching practices to meet the needs of current students (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

Students living in socioeconomically distressed environments are negatively affected by prolonged stress (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Sousa et al., 2018). Researchers have also concluded that students who do not experience poverty may also suffer from high levels of toxic stress due their own unique experiences, such as those related to violence, drug use, verbal abuse, bullying, parent alcohol abuse, divorce, and all forms of sexual violence (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Sousa et al., 2018).

Notably, 70% of the U.S. student population suffers from some form of toxic stress (Sousa et al., 2018). Further, socioeconomically distressed students suffer toxic stress from multiple experiences such as those associated with violence, child abuse, household alcohol abuse, household mental illness, poverty, incarcerated parents, and foster placement experiences (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Sousa et al., 2018). Students who experience toxic stress are more likely to have poor health, impaired memory function, impaired learning ability, and behavioral problems that impair quality of life and future success (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010; Jeffrey et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Petering et al., 2014; Shonkoff et al., 2012).
Summary on Environmental Factors

Environmental factors have significant impact on the student’s ability to learn and perform, although, each student experiences these environmental factors individually, and exclusively within their own respective experiences (Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010; Jeffrey et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2012; Petering et al., 2014; Shonkoff et al., 2012). Understanding how the environment influences each student’s abilities to learn and perform requires the transformational teacher to take interest in students’ lives, and to take the time to learn about each student’s own environment and its intersection with the environment of the school and classroom. Likewise, the teacher’s efforts to seek to understand students’ environmental factors are efforts to serve the student and to help each student transform their understanding of the world around them and become successful (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). In the framework of transformational teaching, these efforts and student successes are also individualized.

Review of Methodological Issues

The majority of research reviewed in this chapter employed quantitative representations of data analysis from large study samples (e.g., new data providing generalized representations of an accessible population). These studies did not provide a deep understanding of the individual teacher or student experience. However, the researchers’ premises for use of quantitative research also supported their recommendations and motivation for further research using qualitative methodology to gain further understanding of the phenomenon (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016).

For this dissertation research, accessing and reviewing a substantial body of quantitative literature provided a foundational understanding of the problem and phenomenon of adapting
and using transformational teaching techniques for children, because of these quantitative researchers’ ability to provide broad generalizations. Nonetheless, transformational teaching theory and the problem of student success are difficult to quantify if the goal is deep understanding of students’ individual circumstances and the how their teachers interact within the context of the students’ individual and collective experiences. Moreover, it is the teachers’ own perceptions and experiences that best define transformational teaching practices (Boyd, 2009).

The goal of reviewing the quantitative literature informing this case study was to provide meaning and insight to the significance associated with the multiple variables that impact student learning and success. The extant literature provided specific identifiers as to how particular variables influence student learning and success, but did not provide the richer context of the independent experiences of teachers using transformational teaching techniques that a case study would provide.

In conducting this review of literature, I found that very few researchers provided a deep interpretation of both the teachers’ and students’ experiences associated with the transformational teaching practice. For example, quantitative studies provided a correlation between how professional teacher relationships and teacher behavior provided for student success (Ahn & Rodkin, 2014; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2014). In contrast, qualitative studies provided the motivation to learn more about the phenomenon of transformational teaching by revealing the practitioners’ stories of successful teaching practices, whether the teachers labeled themselves as transformational or simply teacher (Boyd, 2009; Clement et al., 2015).

Additionally, transformational teaching theory, in this case study, related directly to improving a student problem. The student problem is often associated with the effects of toxic
stress, the student’s environment, and how the student experiences the environment. However, quantitative studies reviewed did not significantly associate toxic stress as a problem that transformational teachers knew how to identify and incorporate into their transformational teaching practice. Likewise, specific studies identified individual student problems such as poverty, gang violence, partner abuse in the student’s home, racism, bilingualism, immigration, and exposure to violence as a contributing factor in determining student failure (Barrett et al., 2012; Dupéré et al., 2012; Fosnot, 2013; Fram & Dickmann, 2012; Sadeh, 2009; Raver & Blair, 2016). The transformational teaching process should include deep, rich understanding of the teacher-student relationship, and development of perceptions of how the individual student can and will succeed (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Clement et al., 2015; Dagar & Yadav, 2016; Dupéré et al., 2012; Fernando & Marikar, 2017; Patton et al., 2012; Raver & Blair, 2016; Sousa et al., 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

**Synthesis of Research Findings**

Transformational teaching is a framework of pedagogic and andragogic approaches dedicated to helping develop and include students in the process of becoming successful inside and outside the classroom (Boyd, 2009; Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). The main goal of transformational teaching theory is to represent how the teacher and student work together to establish educational and life goals, and achieve success (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Additionally, the transformational teacher establishes and uses different actions and behaviors that promote a type of transformation for the student, which transformation is based on
improving the student’s overall situation (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). Researchers have concluded that each student’s situation is based predominantly on the student’s established perceptions about the world around them, and how the student’s perceptions often lead to limitations in how the student views his or her own ability to achieve success (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Accordingly, the transformational teacher attempts to establish a professional relationship with the student to gain a deeper understanding of the student’s prior knowledge, funds of knowledge, and overall background (Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). The transformational teacher then gathers this information from the student and begins to examine the student’s perceptions about the world, and how the ways in which the student interacts within this world may have placed limitations on the student’s success. The student’s limitations are often based on the student’s environment and experiences within that environment (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Clement et al., 2015; Dagar & Yadav, 2016; Dupéré et al., 2012; Fernando & Marikar, 2017; Ormrod, 2011; Patton et al., 2012; Raver & Blair, 2016; Sousa et al., 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Equally, the students’ respective perceptions of their world and their own particular success are highly influenced by their individual environments. Such environments are the established and changing sociological actions that take place as each student interacts within his or her respective setting (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Clement et al., 2015; Dagar & Yadav, 2016; Dupéré et al., 2012; Fernando & Marikar,
Both qualitative and quantitative researchers have reported that the implications of the negative student environments are strongly linked to students’ experiencing toxic stress (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Clement et al., 2015; Dagar & Yadav, 2016; Dupéré et al., 2012; Fernando & Marikar, 2017; Patton et al., 2012; Raver & Blair, 2016; Sousa et al., 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). The toxic stress that students experience result in generalized impairment of high level performance, low self-efficacy, negative outlook, negative student behaviors, and an overall inability to learn complex and deep learning tasks, as compared to students who have not experienced toxic stress (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Clement et al., 2015; Dagar & Yadav, 2016; Dupéré et al., 2012; Fernando & Marikar, 2017; Patton et al., 2012; Raver & Blair, 2016; Sousa et al., 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

Conclusively, the transformational teacher must genuinely care for the individual student, and dedicate and create teaching practices tailored to the individual student’s needs, and framed by the philosophy that the student is in a transformational process that moves toward the student’s overall success (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

**Critique of Previous Research**

This review of the research literature evidences supports transformational teaching theory as a teaching methodology that serves a diverse student population (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). When practiced, transformational teaching’s purpose is to support students in a way that provides students with a collective means of
achieving success (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Additionally, students take part in the process of their success as they experience education (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). However, there is a limitation in the literature as to how students might gain understanding of their own environment, and how such environments will impact their individual learning and achievement of goals for success (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Sousa et al., 2018).

The literature explains why transformational teaching practice is important to students and teachers (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). For example, the transformational teacher is a teacher who considers and designs pedagogy specifically to help each student move from surface learning to practicing learning that is designed for deeper understanding of core subjects, and how these subjects relate to the world around them (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). In contrast, the literature is limited in representing the students’ viewpoints on and experiences with the transformational teaching process, and the goals of transformational teaching. For example, the teacher might create a specific pedagogic approach for a specific student, but research has yet to examine how the student intersects with this approach or how the student understands the specific experience that the teacher designed for the student (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

Moreover, researchers have examined the transformational teacher and student as a team that is both motivated and aware of the student’s need to succeed (Noland & Richards, 2015; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The teacher and student work together to create a plan of practice to help the student achieve success or improvement in the student’s current academic, and possibly environmental, situation (Day et al., 2016; Gershenson, 2016; Huang &
Lin, 2014). Although the behavior of the teacher has been examined to show impacts in student achievement student behavior does not appear as an influencer of how the transformational teaching practice is seen as being successful (Day et al., 2016; Gershenson, 2016; Huang & Lin, 2014). For example, the connection of student behavior, the student environment, and the framework in which the transformational teacher applies teaching practices is separated by the category of transformational teaching and how toxic stress influences student learning, even though it seems that transformational teaching and the suffering student are match for what transformational teaching represents (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Raver & Blair, 2016).

**Chapter 2 Summary**

The first section of this literature review introduced transformational teaching theory and its empathetic outlook on students’ academic success and experience within society. Moreover, the literature review established the transformational teacher’s practice and general framework for providing transformation of the student. This literature review further established the need for teacher and student to recognize how the world around the students influences students’ attempts at and outlook on academic and societal success. The transformational teacher then creates a teaching practice based on individual and classroom community needs. Transformational teaching practice also focuses on the student’s environment, background, funds of knowledge, and how the understanding of the whole student construct immediate and long-term meaning for the student (Beauchamp et al., 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012).

In the conceptual framework section of this literature review, I established how the theory of constructivism informs understanding of students’ learning and perceptions of the world around them, and that the teacher must understand constructivist learning theory to begin to know the individual student. I further established that in knowing each student, the teacher learns
and gains a realistic understanding of students’ lives, and how students view their own ability to achieve success.

This review revealed a deeper understanding of and connection to how students’ experiences of environmental stress relate directly to student outcomes, success, and cognition of the student’s place in life, but the process of review did not directly associate environmental influences of the student to transformational teaching. Furthermore, review of transformational teaching literature indicated this teaching theory is a theoretical perspective that is modified and transformed as the teacher gains more experience with successful practices, and is able to more readily identify the changing individual problems that exist in the student population. Finally, at the time of the review of literature, there was little research that supported a direct relationship of transformational teaching practices for primary school students.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this study, I utilized a multiple case study to provide an in-depth examination of transformational teaching as a pedagogic practice for the primary school teacher. In this multiple case study, transformational teaching theory was examined to develop further revelation of the problems associated with teaching in a high-needs environment. These problems were directly associated with transformational teaching theory, and how this theory applies to teaching and leading a classroom. Furthermore, in this multiple case study, the phenomenon of the student’s funds of knowledge was known as the blueprint that the classroom teacher uses in the transformational teaching process to help students develop, meet standards, and become viable assets in a global workplace (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

The qualitative case study for this research proposal was used as a means to gain a deeper understanding of transformational teaching for the purpose of serving students. This case study further examined and related the social constructivism theoretical framework, which values the experiences and environment of the student (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Moreover, I designed the research to provide comprehensibility to the importance of using the tools of transformational teaching as means to serve and help students succeed. Two research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do primary school teachers utilize transformational teaching as a teaching methodology for helping students?

2. What new knowledge has been discovered by the teachers who use transformational teaching as a means of pedagogy?
Purpose and Design of the Study

This multiple case study was applied to understand the unique personal experiences of transformational teachers, to further explore the phenomenon, and/or answer questions of how the related theory is relevant for society (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). For example, a qualitative case study’s goal is to provide a detailed description of actual events as they took place; this detailed account of the phenomenon provides the basis of understanding the actual case (Eisner, 2017). This is important because the cases in this study provided data for analysis through the development of themes or categories of topics for further exploration (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the discovery of themes from the cases provided connections to the phenomenon and informed the research problem and possible solutions to the problem as related to development of the practice of education (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, & Walker, 2018).

The case study methodology used in this study provided insight into the process and discovery of how the phenomenon helped students become advanced learners, and how teachers are leaders when practicing education. Likewise, I used this case study to examine the problems associated both with teaching and learning as both impact the student and teacher. Because it is imperative to discover improvement in education, the qualitative research approach gives descriptive meaning to the phenomenon as it occurs without applying specific variables that might determine an outcome (Merriam, 1998).

This multiple case study focuses on the problems of students who live in socioeconomically distressed communities, and how transformational teaching addresses these problems. Further, this multiple case study addresses the study’s assumptions—the assumptions of the research population—and provide possible new approaches for pedagogic practice as a transformational teacher. This multiple case study also helped develop new approaches to
pedagogic practices and teacher frameworks by examining the study’s results in comparison to the limitations of extant literature, and by specifying implications of the study and recommendations for theory, practice, and future research.

Data collected for this case study were from teacher interviews, teacher observations, and field notes. The interview data were used to help define and describe the participants’ transformational teaching experiences related to each research subject. Additionally, classroom observations were collected to analyze teacher behavior and actions, and field notes were used to track the process. This study may help to inform the importance of the teacher’s and students’ experiences and provide meaning to transformational teaching theory when used in the classroom.

**Research Population and Sampling Method**

The research population for this multiple case study is defined as teachers who work in a socioeconomically distressed urban elementary school district in California. The majority of teachers worked in the urban school district lived outside the community. The prospective research participants were 10 veteran teachers and two teachers who were in their second year of teaching practice. All teachers passed the required testing for teaching in the state of California. Teachers in this school district were all aware of the student demographics and the implications of the students’ environment on learning and success. Each teacher was also trained to provide additional and individualized teaching instruction to students who speak a primary language other than English. Additionally, teachers in this school district were trained regarding the diversity of the student population’s learning needs, sexual orientation or identity, and differences in family structure. For example, students in this school district lived in foster homes, and have parents who were incarcerated.
For this multiple case study, I used a purposive method of sampling that supported the process of gaining greater insight into transformational teaching theory (Merriam, 1991). Purposive method is defined as providing criteria for studying a particular phenomenon and establishing what sample will provide the best information (Merriam, 1991). For example, the goal of the qualitative case study was the discovery and deeper knowledge of the phenomena, which helps develop the theory (Merriam, 1991). Moreover, the criteria for organizing the sampling method established what was analyzed and how these attributes related to the case study. This study’s sample comprised 12 teachers located at the school. I studied 10 veteran teachers and two second-year teachers that provided the best possible examination of personal insight into the transformational teaching theory. The goal of analyzing the perspectives of 12 teachers helped establish what attributes of transformational teaching the teachers have common—themes that are directly related to the pedagogic practice of the teacher. The rationale for the 12 teachers allowed for greater insight as of how veteran and new teachers experience the phenomenon. The purpose was to gain an advanced understanding of transformational teaching theory (Merriam, 1991).

**Instrumentation**

The purpose of using multiple instruments was to support emerging themes and the creation of themes. This triangulation of evidence helped bring validation to the recorded events and theory building of the transformational teaching process. The next section discusses how semistructured interviews, observations and field notes were used as the means to support emerging and the creation of themes for this study.
Semistructured Interview

The semistructured interview instrument’s purpose was to elicit a deep and divergent explanation of each teacher interviewed, and each teacher’s interpretation of the environment, as opposed to a structured interview to obtain particular information about a specific cause and effect (Merriam, 1991). Furthermore, the semistructured interview provided the information that is necessary to discover possible themes, and relationships of teacher experiences while participating in the transformational teaching process (Merriam, 1991). The semistructured interview process also allowed for further understanding of how the events took place, and how transformational teaching is used as a means to help students. Additionally, the interview instrument was designed to reveal the teachers’ knowledge about transformational teaching, and their own recommendations to possibly improve teaching practices (see Appendix A).

Observations

Observations of the school site classroom took place to determine how the phenomenon is taking place, and interactions within the classroom environment (Creswell, 2013). Formal observation also took place to gather further information from the participating teachers. For example, I conducted unstructured observations of the teachers at different predetermine times. During all observation periods, field notes described critically the actions taking place from the sample. Moreover, the observations of the actions and behaviors of the sample determined as these events are understood as being connected with transformational teaching.

The observations were conducted to show the setting of the classroom, and how the participants interacted within the setting of the classroom. Additionally, the observations were conducted to reveal the participants’ behaviors, actions, and verbal, and nonverbal communications (see Appendix B). Equally, the observations were conducted to further
understand the teaching techniques to possibly reveal similarities or difference in teaching practices from the participants (see Appendix C).

**Field Notes**

I utilized field notes to provide the description from the different observations and semistructured interviews that occur with the multiple case study participants (Creswell, 2013). The field notes provided descriptions of the setting, participant actions and behaviors, and comments from the participants. Moreover, the field notes provided the data that were analyzed and associated with the experiences of transformational teaching (Merriam, 1991; Creswell, 2013).

**Data Collection**

Data collection took place with the approval of the Concordia University–Portland Institutional Review Board, and approval from the participant school district. Additionally, the data were collected with written approval from all participants. I provided each participant with an explanation of the purpose of the study, and the benefits and possible damage that might occur from the study.

**Semistructured Interviews**

I conducted interviews with each of the 12 elementary school teachers at the school site and in the teacher’s classrooms. I interviewed the teachers near the middle of the second semester of the school year to establish a foundation for their individual teaching experiences. One additional interview question was asked after the initial 12 questions were asked. The goal of this interview structure was to allow for development of new information and an exchange of knowledge (Mertler, 2014). Specifically, interviews took place at a time when the teacher had
experienced teaching in the school year (second semester) for the purpose of learning any changes in teacher experience or beliefs.

Initially, I asked each teacher a set of structured questions that identified years of service, education background, cultural and racial background, and prior experiences, and knowledge of the student’s funds of knowledge. Next, open-ended interview questions focused on the respondent’s beliefs, feeling, understanding of the phenomenon, and present teaching experiences that are related to teaching and transformational leadership. The goal of this interview structure allowed the participants the freedom to explain how they viewed and interacted within the phenomenon (Merriam, 1991; Mertler, 2014). I completed the interviews at a California elementary school district that served approximately 13,000 students; approximately 10,500 students in the district received free and reduced-priced meals. I recorded the interview sessions with an electronic voice recorder, taking field notes, and each interview lasted between 45 and 120 minutes.

**Observations**

I observed each of the teachers one time during the first 2018–2019 school year. Unstructured observations took place in the participating teachers’ classroom during the beginning of class until the lunch break for no more than two hours. The reason for this time frame is that special needs students attend the first portion of the school day in the general classroom, and because the homeroom students moved to different classrooms after lunch. The observations took place during the following month after the initial interviews were conducted. I utilized an observation check to guide each observation to record the time, location, teacher, and classroom environment (see Appendix B).
To help organize the collection of data collected for this multiple case study, Merriam (1991) recommends the use of critical elements when conducting observations. For example, Merriam (1991) suggested, the first critical element when conducting observations is to describe the setting and how the setting affects behavior. Next, the observer should describe the participants that are in the setting, and the participant’s position and role. Then the observers will describe the activities and interactions of the participants. Next, the observer describes the frequency and duration the observations and look for themes of occurrences. Finally, the observer will describe the subtle factors that are symbolic, nonverbal, and nonoccurrence’s of implied actions.

Field Notes

Field notes were taken to record the experiences and actions that was provided from the teacher interviews and from the observations of teachers. During the observation period, I structured the field notes to allow for recoding of observation number, time period and date. Next, the field notes were divided into two side-by-side sections, which I recorded the observation in one section and my notes in the next section. The advantage of using this format allowed me to record my thoughts as events took place or directly after the observation took place (Merriam, 1991; Mertler, 2014). Moreover, the field notes provided me with the ability to record thoughts, ideas, and impressions of the teachers’ responses, behaviors and actions, which helped form a deeper understanding of the phenomena, the discovery of emerging patters, and created pathways to collect more information that will helped build the transformational teaching theory (Merriam, 1991; Mertler, 2014). Additionally, I used field notes as a means to triangulate the evidence that is presented in this study.

Identification of Attributes
Attributes help frame a study and help provide a guide as to how data were being understood in relation to the research (Merriam, 1991). The attributes that helped shape this study were related to the research questions. Moreover, the teacher experiences, teacher actions, use of pedagogy, and the teachers understanding of the students’ funds of knowledge, socioeconomic status, and environment, framed how the study was to focus on contributing to transformation teaching practices. The teachers’ practice and the influence of the student’s environment on the students’ ability to learn created the guide for the study. The intention of analyzing these attributes was to gain further understanding of the teacher’s ability to help students progress and learn in challenging environments by using the transformational teaching theory (Fullan, 2011).

The teachers in the socioeconomically distressed urban school district were the focus of the study. The teachers shared their experiences of their classroom teaching practices and how this is connected to the theory. Each of the teachers in this multiple case study intention was to elevate their students’ ability to learn and find success and challenge the status quo of their environment. However, the teachers did not label their teaching experiences within the transformational teaching theory framework. The purpose of exploring the teachers’ experiences and the attributes was to build on transformational teaching theory.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis is the methodical approach to discover meaning from the educational experiences while they are taking place (Hatch, 2002). Further analysis was provided of data collected through individual semistructured interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. To gain new insights and build upon the existing phenomenon of transformational teaching, the analysis of this study’s qualitative data was framed as a process of discovery, learning, and
theory building in the context of inductive analysis (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Thomas, 2003). Inductive analysis coding methodology suggests that the researcher will examine collected information multiple times to help reveal emerging themes, and development of possible theories during or after data analysis (Creswell, 2013).

I utilized the inductive analysis coding methodology that helped develop theories from large amounts of the data that were examined and analyzed multiple times. Moreover, I utilized the inductive analysis to develop categories and central themes as the analysis took place. A theme is a label describing the data after it has been analyzed (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). For example, data collected through observations may reveal similar outcomes in teacher behavior; following critical analysis. I organized such similar data into a theme with a label descriptive of the events that have took place. The data analysis also explored the possible development of ideas and discoveries for future consideration (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002). Data analysis and organization of possible themes enabled discovery of key findings, and presentation of these discoveries in a manner that identified and reported important findings from this multiple case study methodology (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015).

**Analysis of Interviews**

I used semistructured, open-ended questions as means of capturing and understanding the phenomenon as experienced by the teacher. The analysis of the teachers’ data presented the phenomenon as it was experienced by other people. The intention of analysis of the collected data was to gain better understanding of this multiple case study’s research questions (Creswell, 2013).

The semistructured interviews gathered information from 12 different teachers, and from the settings in which each teacher worked. The initial interview gathered background
information about each teacher, and their descriptions of their interpretations of the setting. These semistructured interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. In the data analysis, each teacher’s experience was examined initially as a singular instance and coded for organization of the teachers’ information (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015).

The frameworks of initial and value coding were used as the method of coding data from the interviews, observations, and field notes. Initial coding is a means of interpretation, and as a beginning method of data reduction for categorization, much of which is determined by researcher reflection on the data collected (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). In using initial coding, I used descriptive word codes that categorized the data into meaning units. For example, data were organized from the 12 participant teachers into a coding matrix of separate sections, and then place coding words to the right of section (see Appendices D & E). The coding words allowed me to manually highlight any data that were related to the code word, which then helped discover patterns, and categorize, define and label the themes. The actual code list was developed as data were examined. For example, the initial codes included practice, empathy, teaching, patience, care, and pedagogy.

Value coding is a coding approach that reduces the data collected into what people state they believe and feel, although the participants’ actions might not mimic what is stated during interviews and observations (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). I used value coding by separating the teachers’ responses into a matrix and chunking information so that it was possible to understand the participants’ beliefs, values, and perspectives of the world around them. The value codes I used were values, beliefs, worldview, background, understanding, outlook, and motivation (see Appendix E.). I also applied different codes to the data were collected, using reading, reflection,
and the use of cross-analysis to assist in finding similarities and uniqueness in each of the teachers’ experiences (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015; see Appendix D).

**Analysis of Observations**

The data gathered from the 12 teachers’ classroom observations were reduced using the initial and value coding frameworks. The observations focused on teachers’ behavior and actions related to classroom instruction techniques. I used initial coding to reduce the large sets of data to allow for organizations of important aspects of the phenomenon (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). Moreover, the initial coding method created a reflective approach to data analysis as beginning method of data identification (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015). Next, I read, reflected upon, and conducted data analysis to create meaning and organize the process of understanding the value of, the data collected. For example, the initial coding framework revealed that more data were needed to support this multiple case study, or that a different coding approach was needed to organize the data. Similarly, initial and value coding was used as beginning approaches to organizing the observation data, and the data were cross-examined with data collected from teacher interviews (see Appendices D and E). For example, I used coding of the observation data to reveal values or beliefs, and this coded data were examined with the interview data that were also coded using the value coding framework. This organizational approach revealed how the phenomenon is actually practiced, and that there are similarities, differences among and/or discrepancies in the practice of the phenomenon by different teachers.

**Analysis of Field Notes**

Field notes provided the data collected from teacher interviews and from the teacher observations. I used field notes as a tool to document ideas, further observations, and personal reflections from the experiences of the teachers during their interviews and observations.
Additionally, data were separated into sections to code the data as I had with the semistructured interviews, and observations (see Appendix E). These memos and comments were reduced and organized using an initial and value coding methodology (see Appendix E). Then after using the initial and value methodology of coding, I added an additional analytical memo for each code that represented the data collected from observations. Analytical memo writing is defined as a procedure of providing a rich description for observed behavior and environments that is connected to the stages of coding (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2015).

**Limitations and Delimitations**

External environmental factors and the researcher’s design of the multiple case study provided limitations and delimitations to this research design. The limitations for this case study were influenced from external environmental factors such as the size of the study population, time of observations, and the case study’s setting. The delimitations of this case study were constrained by my own theoretical viewpoint, the use of research methods, and selection of the case study’s participants. In the next section, I discuss the limitation of this case study.

**Limitations**

**Generalization.** This multiple case study focused on a small population size as compared to a larger population size of quantitative research designs. For example, the findings of this case study cannot be applied as a generalization to a population, and the case study phenomenon might have unique applications to one group of people and setting because of the uniqueness of the circumstances influencing the observed population. However, these limitations also provided the in-depth, personal elements, the tacit knowledge of people, and how the phenomenon is relevant to teaching, and how this ultimately impacts a group of students, which can attribute to changes in practice for other teachers and administrators (Creswell, 2014).
**Time limitations.** The time spent at an observable location denotes a source of validity for a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1991; Creswell, 2014). However, time is limited to that of the researcher and to that of the participants in the case study. In this instance, it was not possible to account for long term discoveries that support or contradict the phenomenon. The goal of the time used as an observer in this multiple case study was to allow the teacher and student to feel comfortable in their natural setting, and to provide a typical response to the practices of teaching and learning that is based on their current environment (Merriam, 1991).

**Setting.** Likewise, the setting of the multiple case study does not represent every population and school environment. Each school has its own unique situation and own environmental factors that can influence teaching practices and student outcomes (Merriam, 1991). However, this multiple case study took place at a highly diverse and socioeconomically distressed school in Southern California. The aim of the study was to provide a better understanding of how teachers can provide equal education to high needs students. And, the intention was to develop and further understand how transformational teaching impacts high needs students.

**Delimitations**

In comparison to outside sources creating limitations for a case study; delimitations refer to the boundaries chosen by the researcher in development of the research plan. For example, the researcher sets these limits by the design and framework that is created for the case study (Creswell, 2014). In this multiple case study the delimitations were connected to the limitations, and this includes the cases study theoretical Framework, instruments used to gather information, and the type of methodology used to analyze the case study.
**Theoretical framework.** The theoretical framework of this multiple case study was a delimitation because of the specific theoretical outlook base on constructivism. Here, this position on education and learning provided a specific framework founded on the learning theories concept of building knowledge as the experiences or knowledge takes place, build, and takes shape. However, the reason for this learning theory framework was to allow for a sense of understanding of how learning takes place and how this learning is experienced by students and teachers. Without a framework the structure of how learning takes shape with transformation teaching would have little validity and organization for gaining deeper insight into the transformational teaching theory. For example, it was necessary for the case study audience to understand how I viewed the world, and this framework is connected to teaching and learning, and this information provided one point of validity for the audience (Merriam, 1991).

**Method of analysis.** The methodology of data analysis also provided limitation to this multiple case study. For example, the coding method that was used in this case study provided a specific framework for data identification and organization. Likewise, the use of a specific coding framework was also recognized as limitation that was supported by my biases. Here, these limitations were established to provide a method of analysis that is organized in a format that provides relevance and validity to this case study. Because there a multitude of coding methods, the case study analysis was based on current literature, and methodology of prior case study research. For example, certain coding methods provides specific reasons for use in a case study, and the researcher decides how these methods will help organize and finally reveal possible themes and findings (Saldaña, 2015).
Validation

One of the concerns for this case study and other qualitative research methodologies is that of validity. The argument for this concern is that case study research is based on the observers and participants viewpoint and actions as the phenomenon takes place (Merriam, 1991). However, the qualities and importance of qualitative research methods is that this type of research design examines and bring improvement to current phenomenon. Likewise, it is also necessary to provide validity and reliability to the case study to communicate how the phenomenon occurs in the environment (Creswell, 2013). For this multiple case study, I provided validation by incorporating the triangulation of evidence that supported findings, the use of member checking, and my application of rich, thick description.

Triangulation

I used triangulation to provided multi-evidential approach to providing validity to this case study. For example, triangulation is the process of using different forms of evidence to support an emerging theme or finding (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1991). Moreover, triangulation provided both validity and weakness in the qualitative methodology case study design by allowing me to apply different approaches to data gathering for the understanding and growth of the phenomenon. I used triangulation as means to develop and support emerging themes from the interviews and observations. For example, the individual teacher provided information from the interview, and the teachers’ responses were supported from the data collected from multiple classroom observations. Moreover, after interviewing the 12 teachers, and by observing the 12 classrooms over multiple time periods, helped me gain a detailed and multi-perspective understanding of the phenomenon (Hatch, 2002).
**Member Checking**

I utilized member checking to further provide validity from the participants to help validate the study’s methods and findings. For example, the peers or an expert analyzes the researcher’s approach in revealing the case study. Likewise, the teachers conducted an analysis of the cases study’s methodology and findings, and the teachers provided validity to this case study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1991). For this case study, member checking took place when I asked for assistance from the case study participants. Here, I shared the individual transcripts with the participant via email. The participants then verified the accuracy of their responses.

**Thick, Rich Description**

I also utilized the process of thick, rich description to provide the case study validation by affording the reader with highly detailed descriptions of the observations. For example, the case study revealed to the reader an insider account that was deep in descriptive language that supported the finding of the case study. Thick, rich description took place when I provided a portrait of the case study accounts as they took place or how they were revealed by the participants (Creswell, 2013). Here, the reader was able to better understand and validate the findings because of the detailed description that were connected to the phenomenon that was provided to the reader and was relevant to the readers own knowledge and education practice (Creswell, 2013; Merriam 1991).

**Expected Findings**

The goal of this case study was to provide a deeper understanding of how the transformational teaching theory may provide student improvement. Likewise, the expected findings of this case study sought to add detailed personal accounts of how the transformational teaching was applied in the teaching community, regardless if the teacher labels themselves as a
transformational teacher. The case study intentions were to reveal how the elements of transformational leadership may help student learning and success while experiencing environmental stress and fear. Moreover, the expected findings may reveal that the practice of teaching has transformed from the traditional model of providing subject matter education to that of life coach, mediator, interventionist, and identifier of student toxic stress. After completion of the literature review, I have learned that the desired results from this case study were revealed from the data analysis of the teacher interviews, observations, and field notes.

**Interviews**

The idea of the teacher interviews is to provide a path of communication that allows the classroom teacher to add to the theory of transformational teacher (Merriam, 1991; Creswell, 2013). In this case, the teachers were aware of the students’ experiences of living in a socioeconomicly distressed environment. And, the responses I expected from the interview included how the teacher used their practice to help students learn and perform while being influenced by their own environment. Moreover, the teacher interviews revealed that teachers provided transformational teaching methodologies because it was necessary for student success due to the changing circumstance of the urban socioeconomicly distressed student. For example, the respondent teacher in this case study, applied transformational teaching practices because it was necessary for teaching and learning environment. Likewise, the interviews also divulged new thought processes and approaches to transformational teaching, as teachers continued with their practice, and discovered problem solving teaching applications.

**Observations**

The observations allowed me to view and further discover the teachers’ transformational practice in the classroom environment. Moreover, the observations revealed how the teacher
applied the phenomenon, and how the teacher created adjustments as different circumstances and diverse environments took shape in the classroom. In this cases study, the observations provided the tacit knowledge of the teacher in a viewable setting (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, as I conducted the observations, the actual processes were revealed when the teacher provided transformational teaching and participated in the process of making changes and adjustments as the students’ situations dictate.

**Field Notes**

Field notes provided the case study with the detailed descriptions of the interview conversation, and observation actions and settings (Merriam, 1991; Creswell; 2013). Furthermore, my taking of field notes provided detailed personal reflections on the data collection process. For example, I took field notes after each data collection and this action provided a deeper insight, revelation, and connections to the phenomenon. Moreover, the field notes provided descriptions and personal understandings of how teachers used actions and communication to help students become able to learn and succeed in adverse environments (Merriam, 1991). As I documented field notes, the notes served as the platform for discovery and theory building for this case study.

**Ethical Issues in the Study**

This multiple case study provided ethical issues as the respondents and participants engaged in practice and became aware of their position about their environment (Merriam, 1991). This respondent awareness exposed possible negative feeling, biases, and practiced inadequacies, and weaknesses as the interviews and observations took place (Merriam, 1991). For example, the teachers discovered their own biases towards the community and environment they were participant in (Merriam, 1991). Additionally, new problems of a teaching practice
challenged the respondent to adjust their practice so that they were not perceived as adequate or not negligent in their practices (Merriam, 1991). In this case, it was important to understand how the process and participation of the research may alter and expose actions, procedures, perceptions, and practices of the entire school community. Because of the probable issues associated qualitative case studies, it was necessary to provide methods of protection.

**Confidentiality**

I established safety measures to protect the respondents and the community. These safety measures insured participant identities, and the school site community remained confidential, by using pseudonyms and geographic generalization. Moreover, I provided ethical protocols and protection that caused the least amount of harm to the respondents and school community. Each respondent was provided a complete description of the case study purpose and acknowledged understanding that all elements of the case study were motivated to building and serving the community (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008). These elements included my own ethical beliefs and those beliefs established from the research community (Merriam, 1991; Booth et al., 2008).

Additionally, the school site agreed with the case study research process and its purpose. Each respondent agreed in writing and verbally of their participation and methods of protection used in the case study. Each datum was authenticated by the participant after the interview was recorded and transcribed. Likewise, I protected all data collected that could identify participants and did not share the data collected for this case study on any public domain, either electronic, or written text (Creswell, 2013). All data were stored in a locked office, and in a locked cabinet within the office. The data collected for this case study will be destroyed after 3 years from completion of the study.
**Researcher’s Position**

All data were collected and presented to the audience by myself. I accommodated the respondents time both professionally and personally. The participants understood that I had extensive knowledge of communication security that was related to my military service, and that I used this knowledge to safeguard the participants. Moreover, each participant understood my position as a transitional leader, and my personal motivation to transition from military service to that of education. Additionally, I had no political interest in the school site or teaching community that was participating in the case study. Because of my researcher position, the respondents felt less pressure to provide scripted responses, and practices during the data collection process.

**Chapter 3 Summary**

This chapter in the multiple case study provided the framework and methodology for this study. Furthermore, this chapter provided the reader with a description of the intent, purpose, and design of the case study, and how this study was to be guided by the research questions. The chapter then described the research setting of a California school district and the community the school district serves. Chapter 3 also discussed the use of semistructured interviews, observations, and field notes instruments used for data collection. Additionally, chapter 3 discussed the use of inductive methodology for this study, and why this method is key to reveal emerging themes and for development of themes. The chapter describes my approach to ensuring validity by confirming triangulation of evidence, and the use deep and rich description of the data collected. Also, the chapter discusses the verification process of the participants. Lastly, ethics, and safety procedures were described to confirm the protection of the participants and the data collected for this multiple case study.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Chapter 4 includes a description of the participating teachers that are the focus of this multiple case study, a description of how the data were collected, a detailed description of how the data were analyzed, and finally a summary of Chapter 4. There is a total of 12 participants included in this study. Each teacher’s reasoning for becoming an educator is included in the data analysis to provide an understanding of the background and worldview of each participant as related to teaching. One participant was not observed, due to schedule issues. Several semistructured interviews took place paralleling the 13-question interview instrument that I used for this case study. All other participants were able to engage in the semistructured interview and observations.

Description of the Sample

One California elementary school principal, one elementary vice principal, and one instructional coordinator helped secure volunteers for this case study. The school principal and instructional coordinator sent out emails to their perspective school’s teachers and other teachers within the same school district that they thought would be interested in participating in this study. A total of 13 teachers volunteered for the study. Although one participant teacher resigned from the study due to a loss of position for the next school year. The total years of teaching experience ranged from two to 32 years.

Description of the Participants

This section provides an explanation of the participant for this multiple case study. Table 1 presents an overview of the 12 participants, their educational level, the number of years they have been teaching, the current grade level they are teaching, and their assigned pseudonyms. All participants hold a multiple subject teaching credential issued from the state of California.
Rose

Rose, describes her motivation for teaching as divine intervention that is focused on helping and serving the children of her community. Rose, sees her students’ successes in increments that are measured as individual successes. For example, if a student is behind in reading four years, she translates her student’s success by achieving an approach of improvement that is directly focused on the individual capabilities of the student, and not directly related to standardized test scores. Rose does not discredit standardized testing, but she suggests that the student’s entire success is as important, as opposed to just focusing on academics. Additionally, Rose, credits her outlook on teaching from her mentor teachers and school principal when she was a new teacher. Her leadership and mentors allowed her to experiment and fail, without micromanaging her teaching practice. This type of guidance allowed her to reflect and develop her current abilities as a successful teacher. One profound aspect of Roses’ teaching is her love for her students, and she believes that all of her student most understand that their teachers care for them deeply.

Table 1

*Overview of Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Grade currently teaching</th>
<th>Teacher education</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yomira</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>4th, 5th, 6th</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
David

David originally did not consider teaching as a long-term profession, and when David originally became a teacher, he did not have a strong passion for the teaching profession, but he had a passion for biology and working with animals, and specifically wanted to work with birds. However, during the economic downturn of 2008–2009, David turned to teaching as a means to support himself. Likewise, he thought that his interest in biology and helping animals would be a great connection with the student he would be teaching. David has been teaching for 6 years now, and has fallen in love with helping students succeed. As a teacher in a growing urban community, he has become exposed to highly diverse student populations that are often subjected to negative environments. David’s passion for teaching has grown considerably as he learns about his student lives, and how he can provide support for his students’ challenges. David believes that students should be supported and evaluated on daily goals, as opposed to signal evaluations. Maria

Maria wanted to be a teacher as long as she could remember. She always had a passion for children, even when she was a child herself. For example, she naturally helped other children if they did not know or understand how to do something. For, Maria, teaching others
and being there when the person gained understanding, motivating her to naturally become a teacher. Maria’s passion for teaching is also seen in her ability to take chances and by being an innovator in the teaching community. For example, Maria has embraced an alternative style classroom with her sixth-grade class by using a nontraditional setting where the classroom is set up to resemble casual living area without traditional desks and seating arrangements. In this classroom setting, the students sit in groups or as individuals in what appears to be random areas with the classroom. Additionally, the students are placed in a natural collaborative setting, as opposed to the structure of the traditional classroom structure of desk in a row or grouped together. Maria, embraces the framework that is associated with the tech company Google, where each student is a decision maker, and contributor to their own learning.

**Yomira**

Yomira grew up in a nontraditional household, and sees this experience as one of the major reasons for her being a teacher. Yomira feels that understanding her student’s life helps her become a better teacher, and that is important for her to teach because of her own nontraditional experiences. Additionally, Yomira was highly influenced by a series of her own teachers while she was growing up. These teachers motivated her to go to college, when she thought that she would never attend college. Her goal is to be that inspirational teacher to all of her students. Yomira’s outlook on being an experienced 26-year teacher is that she has the ability to take the initiative and build relationships as soon as possible. Yomira has been back to her current school for only one year, and she has taken on the roles of coach for the fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade girls basketball team, and that of team facilitator with the other teachers at her school. Additionally, coaching is one of the leadership styles she naturally uses in her second-grade classroom.
Oscar

Oscar has been teaching total of 5 years, and has taught only at the case study school district. Prior to teaching, Oscar was a custodian at a different school district, that is located within the same region of California. His passion for teaching is based on a foundation of helping students make the best decision possible. Oscar found similarities from his life as student to that of the students of the school that he worked at as a custodian. And, this is why he changed his profession to teaching, so that he would have the ability to better serve students that were at risk. Oscar believes that good teaching is dynamic and that it his responsibility to help keep students entertained during the learning process. Currently, Oscar is teaching fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade band, and behavior intervention classes at his school site.

Judy

Judy has always wanted to be a teacher. Although, her mother, a high school math teacher, discouraged her from the teaching profession. Judy’s mother informed her that teachers were underpaid, and did not receive enough recognition for the amount of work the teacher did. However, Judy explained that her high school aptitude test revealed that she was suited to be teacher or nurse. Originally, Judy thought she might have wanted to teach Spanish in the high school setting, but changed her major to History, but eventually settled on a Liberal Arts degree, and when it teaching younger students because she really enjoys helping and caring for younger children. Judy realized this passion as she worked as a camp counselor, and as an after-school assistant. She naturally felt at ease with younger children, and also enjoyed the challenge of helping this age group of students.
Mary Ellen

Mary Ellen has been teaching for a total of nine years. She currently has a total of two years of teaching practice at the case study school district, and teaches kindergarten. Mary Ellen’s prior occupation was a human resources specialist, but she was not happy at this position doing this type of work. She next moved on to being a guidance counselor, and started teaching at the same time. Mary Ellen stated she was actually is happy and eager to go to work, and has found fulfillment in teaching. Additionally, she related that teaching did not feel like work as compared to being a human resource specialist. Mary Ellen started teaching at her current school site during the last 6 weeks of school, and she explained that this was a challenging time, but used reflection, and the she is not afraid to change as new challenges arise during the school day or any period of time.

Joseph

A former Army Reservist and substitute teacher, Joseph became a fulltime teacher because he has a passion for helping young people improve their lives. Joseph tended to be a micromanager during his time an Army Reservist, and substitute teacher, but understood that this type of leadership is not relevant in a school setting. Joseph transitioned his framework for teaching and classroom management into a student-centered teaching environment in the relative short time he has been teaching. Joseph has not abandoned what he learned in the military, he has just adjusted his approached to classroom leading to help students develop into thinkers and examiners of problems. Joseph also believes that student should have a voice in the classroom, and should be able to share their experiences. According to Joseph, these student experiences help shape the learning process in the classroom.
Clara

The first time Clara thought about becoming a teacher was when she was in the sixth grade. Clara’s sixth-grade teacher was a major inspiration for her decision to go into the teaching profession. Clara stated that her teacher was amazing, and had influenced her for the rest of her continued life, and that she directly moved through the path of education knowing that she wanted to become a teacher. Even as a second-grade teacher, Clara believes she is a facilitator of her students learning process. Her framework for teaching is help the student find pathways to learning, and solutions to solve problems, even if her second grade students are attempting to figure out with color to use for a project. Additionally, Clara stated that her first years of teaching were very difficult, she was not prepared for the students’ behavior, and that she cried many tears during her year of teaching.

Grace

Grace has been teaching fulltime for 2 years. She previously taught as a substitute teacher for three years. Originally, Grace studied Political Science at college while on a track and field, and cross county scholarship. During this time of her college career, Grace wanted to be a professional track and field athlete. Grace’s main inspiration for becoming a teacher are her own child, even though she states that she is naturally biased on how her children are doing in school. Grace naturally felt comfortable in the classroom, and wanted to help other children do well in life. Additionally, Grace wanted share her own children’s’ positive experience with the young students in her community. Her framework for helping others is the reason why she treats her students as young adults. Grace’s reasoning for this approach is because she wanted her students feel empowered in the class, where as they might not feel this way in their own environment.
Carmen

Carmen was initially inspired to teach during her second, third, and fourth grade of elementary school. It was during this time, that these teachers inspired her and gave her the lasting impression of wanting to continue this experience for other people. Carmen, casually refers her ability to work with children as something similar to a gift, but does not denote that she has a gift for working with children. Carmen also feels more comfortable working with children than she does with adults. She further expresses that this natural comfortableness has not changed during the 28 years she has been teaching. Although, Carmen has become more of a facilitator her students learning experience as opposed to be a director of instruction. She states that this approach enables her student to become deeply interested in subjects that are necessary for the modern world and workplace.

Angie

Originally, Angie was a businesswoman. However, she felt there was a better way to serve her community, and she went back to college and earned her teaching credential. Angie has a strong desire to help her community, a passion for working with children, and to be a positive role model for students that do not necessarily have positivity in their lives. She sees her motivation for teaching and a means for helping children become the best person that they can become. One key framework teaching is for Angie is to measure a student’s success by developing the student academically, but also as a person. In this framework, the students are encouraged to have discussions about the world around them, and about their own lives. Angie states that her students have made incredible progress from the beginning of school year to the end of school year by being able to have a voice in the classroom, and by encouraging her student to make mistakes while solving problems.
Research Methodology and Analysis

The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand and gain deeper insight to the phenomenon of how different teachers transform students’ and the further understand the participating teachers’ viewpoint of the teaching practice in relation to helping students improve. Likewise, transformational teaching in a high needs socioeconomically distressed did not require the labeling of the teacher as a transformational teacher, however there are key attributes of each participant teacher that are common to help these students, in this demographic improve. After deliberation, two questions directed this case study in a structure to help pinpoint the main points of study:

1. How do primary school teachers utilize transformational teaching as a teaching methodology for helping students?

2. What new knowledge has been discovered by the teachers who use transformational teaching as a means of pedagogy?

Semistructured interviews of each participant and classroom observations of teacher in practice are the two sources of data collected for this case study. I analyzed the data using an inductive approach to help organize the data into three components of organization. The inductive methodology of analysis helped clarify initial data collection, establish common relationships with this study and the data collected, and formed frameworks and commonalities of the teachers’ approaches and practices in the classroom (Creswell, 2002). Moreover, each participant was given the opportunity to read their own case study background, review the themes from data analysis, and given an opportunity to provide further suggestions for improving the transformational teacher practice.
Data Collection

Three approaches of data collection were used in this case study. First, each participant was asked a series of 12 questions from the semistructured interview instrument. Second, each participant was asked the final question on the interview instrument, but asked to think about the question for several days before replying to the added question. The final interview question was intentionally separated from the other interview questions to give the participant the ability to reflect on the question before providing a response. Responses were given in person, by electronic mail, and by telephone conversation. Third, I observed each participant in their classrooms, and I collected and documented the observation with field notes describing the teachers practice.

Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviews were used in this case study as mean to allow the participant to fully and comfortably provide a descriptive and personalized account of their own experiences and beliefs concerning the transformational teaching practice (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the interview questions were developed to help the participant freely express their knowledge and understanding of their own teaching practice, often without personal knowledge of a defined meaning of transformational teaching and transformational teaching as a theoretical outlook and framework for the teaching practice. Although, each participant shared similar worldviews and practices in teaching that centered on the development of children in learning and performance challenged environments.

I met with participants during a time and place of their convenience and began each interview with a review and participant agreement of the Concordia consent form. I informed the participants that I would be recoding the interview conversations using a digital recorder, the
computer application AudioNote 2, and paper notes. The participant interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. After the interviewees answered the first 12 questions, I asked the participants to reflect on interview question 13 and answer at a later date. I purposely did not provide the participants with the first 12 questions because I wanted to the participants to provide a response that was not tainted or guided by possible personal conversations, and by possible peer or supervisory intervention. After the collection of interview questions, I listened to each interview, and read the interview notes associated with the participant. At this point, listened for similar responses from the participants, and also listened for key differences in responses to the questions. I then uploaded the recorded data interviews from the program AudioNote 2 into the online Scibie Audio Transcription service. Once transcribed, and checked by individual participant for accuracy, I then began the precoding the data transcription by highlighting, circling, and documenting placement of the precode on the transcript.

**Follow up Interview of Question 13**

I contacted the participants at their convenience to answer interview question 13. I provided the interview question to the participant via electronic mail for the purpose of giving the participant time to reflect on the question so the participant could add their insight and expertise to the answer. There was no prior conversation about the meaning of the question, or leading type questions related to the question to help allow the participant the best possible answer that reflected their own interpretation and input to transformational teaching practice. The participants answered the question during personal conversation, telephone conversation, and the use of electronic mail correspondence. The final follow-up interview question was recorded using the same method as the first set of 12 interview questions, and if needed, audio recordings were transcribed using the identical method as the previous set of interview questions.
Observations

I contacted each participant by electronic mail and scheduled a time to observe the participant in their classroom. This observation time was made at the convenience of the participant. The observations lasted between 50 to 90 minutes, and were documented using field notes, using the margin of the paper as a space for additional observation notes. I also documented the layout of the classroom with a drawing of student and teacher desk placements, whiteboard placement, library or reading area, and any additional specific characteristics associated with the individual classroom. Additionally, I clearly indicated that I was only documenting the participant and would not document any students in the observations, except for the number of students normally assigned to the classroom. I also indicated to the teacher that I wanted to document any actions, practices, or occurrences taking place during an hour time frame, and asked that no special lesson take place for the just because an observation was taking place. During the classroom, I usually sat at a side of the classroom, to observe and document actions, speech, and mannerisms of the participant.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the main body of the interview questions, the one follow-up question, and observation data using inductive content analysis as the method to organize the large amount of data collected, and to gain insight of arising phenomena in its natural setting for the purpose of discovering the themes associated with the information collected (Hatch, 2002; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Additionally, the inductive content analysis used in this case study helped me discover a deeper understanding the possible codes, or clearer definition of the codes associated with the phenomena, as compared to my original thoughts and understanding of my
initial data analysis. For example, 19 codes emerged from using inductive analysis method, which provided key frameworks for data organizing and interpretation (Hatch, 2002).

**Semistructured Interview and Follow Question Data**

The preliminary analysis of the collected interview data began with reviewing the transcribed recording of the participants, and listening to recorded voice of the participants. I used this method of initial analysis to check for accuracy of the transcription against the recorded voice. Additionally, I used the recorded voice as means to reflect back upon the interview, and how the interviewee reacted to the process of answering each of the questions. During this review, I reanalyzed my interview notes for the purpose of organizing initial themes, or biases in my initial note taking in comparison to participants answers to the interview questions.

The interview transcriptions were sent by electronic mail to all participants for review of accuracy. No participant responded with corrections. I then began data analysis by converting each participants transcribed data into a Microsoft Word document. This allowed me to use the word processing program as a means of organizing and precode the data by using the programs built in features. First, I read the individual participants transcribed text, and labeled the participants comments using “P” in the left margin of the document. Next, I labeled my verbal transcriptions with “IR” in the same left margin position of the document. The labels allowed me to easily differentiate transcribed conversations from myself and the participant. Then, I read each participants responses using an in-depth reading method adjusted for the purpose of gaining further understanding. The in-depth method of reading the text included a preliminary scan, and then precoding analysis of the transcription (Saldaña, 2015).

The previous precoding method allowed me to organize teacher responses, and use initial descriptive code words to label individual teacher communication (Saldaña, 2015). For this step
of the coding process, I used a descriptive word and number to identify portions of the text associated with the initial descriptive category. For example, Caring\(^1\) is a coding label that I used as an initial descriptive category, and after assigning the category, I placed the superscript 1 at the beginning of the analyzed datum (Saldaña, 2015). Using this analysis method, I was able to discover three categories that helped frame the data for further analysis. The three frames are: (a) the teachers’ reason and motivation for teaching, (b) caring for the students’ welfare and success, and (c) the teacher being aware and understanding the backgrounds of the student population. Likewise, I continued further data analysis for the respective category, and color-coded potential data associated with each category. Next, I organized the frames and associated data by using a three-column matrix based on the initial and value coding methods. I then placed the raw data in column 1, initial codes in column 2, and I left column 3 for the final established codes (Saldaña, 2015).

Using memo writing and analytical journaling as the data were analyzed, I was able to establish codes and subcodes associated with the frames. From this process of discovering patterns, relationships, and differentiations I was able to develop 19 codes that are associated with this studies research questions. Likewise, during my second cycle of coding I was able to associate and reanalyze the categories into three different themes: (a) the teacher has a deep passion for serving students; (b) the teacher builds positive relationships with students to help them succeed; and (c) there is not one distinct teaching method, title, or label teachers use to help transform students.

**Observation Data**

I recorded the teacher observations using field notes. I also drew a detailed map of the teacher’s classroom. Additionally, I used the left portion of the paper to make additional notes.
about the observations as they took place, and I used analytical note taking as I read each of the observation field notes. To analyze the observation information, I used an inductive analysis methodology (Hatch, 2002). To better organize the field notes, I used an observation check list and observation matrix (see Appendices B and C).

I read over the field notes, and made initial notes of the data collected. Then, I precoded the data by circling, underlining, and recording the location of the notes with the context the data. After precoding and data analysis, using an in-depth reading method, I discovered two initial frameworks to help data organization: (a) teachers’ behaviors and (b) the teacher’s pedagogics. The two frameworks helped me organize the field notes into codes that were associated with the research questions, using the frameworks as guide, I placed each teacher’s specific collected data into the observation matrix documenting the observed practice, the potential evidence, and possible significance of the field notes. I then implemented the three-column method to organize the data into categories, initial codes, and then into final established codes (Saldaña, 2015). After secondary and further analysis of potential patterns, and relationships, both similar and different, I developed 15 codes associated with the data collected from the observations. From the creation of the codes, I was able to create two main themes associated with the data collected from the observations: (a) the teachers create an environment for teaching and learning, and (b) teachers use evolving approaches to teaching to help students succeed.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings from this study revealed that primary school teachers practiced transformational teaching while not fully understanding the definition of transformation teaching. In this case study teachers revealed that they had a deep passion for their students’
success, and that the teacher also has a worldview of the importance of their teaching career, and how this mindset impacts students’ lives. Consequently, the teachers shared a common commitment to help their students improve their live circumstances, as opposed to focusing their teaching practice on academics.

Likewise, the data related that the majority of teachers improved their practice as they became more experienced. One of the main components of improvement comes from the teachers’ growth mindset, and their willingness to adjust, reflect, and improve for the sake of the student success. Additionally, the teacher’s growth mindset was a natural framework for thinking, as the teachers viewed their students and the teaching practice.

Presentation of the Results

The data collected for this study came from one a group of semistructured interview questions that allowed for the last question to be answered at a later date (see Appendix A). Likewise, the last interview question allowed the participant to use a reflective approach to answer the question so that the participant has the opportunity directly add to the improvement of educating. Additionally, observations and the documentation of field notes was also used as a means of data collecting for this study. The participant observations support the teachers’ interview questions, and provide a means of understanding of the teachers approaches to practice. In the next section, the analysis and results of the data collected is presented and explained.

Semistructured Interviews

In total, 19 codes emerged from extensive data analysis. Precoding the data revealed frameworks to help organize establish meaning. Finally, during data analysis, prominent patterns developed and revealed the meaning of the data collected for this case study (see Table 2).
Code 1: Teachers experience positive mentorship. Participants revealed a positive interaction with a former master teacher, mentor, or school administrator. This interaction was either considered direct mentorship from a master teacher, teacher coach, or positive guidance from a school principal. Additionally, participants related that although they experienced positive guidance and mentorship at the beginning of their teaching careers, participants noted that they struggled with various aspects of teaching in their first years of teaching. Equally, the participants also communicated that their mentorship, guidance, and being allowed to struggle were key aspects of learning how to become teachers. Mary Ellen said, “I started teaching in the second half of the school year and it was terrible, but I found a large amount of support and resources from the school.” Additionally, Mary Ellen stated, “She was inspired to reflect on her experiences and encourage to always make changes to improve her teaching.” Comparably, Rose noted that she struggled as new teacher, but fortunately received the support of a school principal to help become a better teacher. Rose related, “My very first principal gave me a shot at teaching at barely 20 years old, but she was a fantastic leader because she encouraged me to experiment and learn from my mistakes, and we are still friends to this day.” Additionally, teachers related that being a new teacher and growing into a more capable or successful teacher requires learning from mistakes and trying to improve from the first years of the teaching experience.
### Table 2

**Overview of Themes and Subthemes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Number and developed themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1—The teacher has deep passion for serving students</strong></td>
<td>Teachers experience positive mentorship Teachers support other teachers Teachers evolve and adjust Teachers believe improvements must be made Teachers have type of love or deep caring for students Love of job and deep belief in mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2—The Teacher builds positive relationships with students to help them succeed.</strong></td>
<td>Teachers strive to interact beyond traditional roles Provides motivation for students Supports student’s personal success Understanding and knowing student’s lives Teacher understand the effects of student’s environment Teacher provides a safe place Embraces growth mindset Supports student communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3—There is not one distinct teaching method, title, or label teachers use to help transform students.</strong></td>
<td>Differentiated leadership for individual students Dedicated to grade level student Vision of student being a lifelong learner Not satisfied with time with student No common understanding of Transformational Teaching definition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code 2: Teachers support other teachers.** Participants divulged they helped and supported other teachers with transformational type teaching frameworks. Although the participants did not directly identify with the transformational transformation label, the teachers did support other teachers by helping them develop and apply teaching techniques with other teachers, which the teaching techniques are associated with transformation teaching. Additionally, the teacher to teacher support, took place among all ranges of teacher experiences. For example, it was common for veteran teacher to dedicate time to help other teachers improve,
but it was also common for newer teachers with less than 10 years of experience to dedicate a significant amount of time helping other teachers develop teaching techniques directly related to serving and developing students in a holistic frame of understanding, as opposed to dedicating classroom instruction solely towards improvement of grades, and test scores. Angie related,

Yes, I’m on the leadership team at school at my school site, and then I’m actually going to a training this summer to help be a coach for an area of focus that the school thinking for next year. I’m going to a training in Massachusetts over the summer, so I can be prepared for that. My current grade level team is very experienced. But the sixth-grade team is all pretty brand new, and so I try to help them out as much as possible.

Additionally, Angie said, “I wish I would have had more support when I was a new teacher, and that is one of the reasons why I dedicate my time to help other teacher, because I learned from my experience as a young teacher. Rose also said,

I do. Just in this grade level, I think we all work together and are always sharing ideas and willing to hear ideas. And then I, this year, became a reflective coach for a new teacher. And so that’s allowed me. . . . I have to guide them in different areas that they want to focus on in the classroom. And then they. . . . I observe them, we meet together once a week. And I think that’s been helpful. And then sharing ideas and making them aware, it’s not like it is in the books. But, also to just teach them as a whole individual. I think with the constant sharing of ideas and maybe getting together with one another and stuff like that.

Joseph also related his experience as a newer teacher:

Actually, I had somebody come in last week to watch, to observe me, so I’m hoping I gave her a sense of something and that’s for the students really anything we do mostly is
for the students, so helping each other it does help the teachers deal with this job, but we do this job for the students. If it wasn’t for the students I think I probably wouldn’t give that much advice or. . . . Because we all want to build them up and that’s the why then.

Another new teacher, Grace, also said,

Well, I’m fairly new, so I feel like my street cred is not there yet. But I am really good with the children’s age group in 4th grade, connecting with these kids, so I try to help others by just expanding their approach. I know a lot of teachers want to teach specific things, but the kids don’t connect with that. And so, I try to recommend a project or a presentation, or just various types of ways to learn.

Grace also related that she learned to include the students’ ideas in the structure and processes of the projects and presentations presented for her students.

**Code 3: Teachers evolve and adjust.** Participants noted that they have learned from their experiences, and use this learning as means to help students in the transformational process. Additionally, participants related the need to consistently evaluate their experiences to for the purpose of developing a better teaching practice. Oscar learned that his initial style of instruction did not allow his students to evolve, and learn from their own decisions. Oscar now believes that students should practice making adult type of decisions, and should have a say in their learning processes. Oscar said,

I include them in a lot of the decision process. You know, I can talk forever to them and I know that drives them crazy but, right when a class starts, “Hey guys, this is happening. What do you guys feel we should do? Couple things we need to think about. If we go this way, this might happen, whereas if we don’t, this could happen, but this could also happen.” And I’m asking, “What do you guys think? Raise your hand and tell me some
ideas of how you think we should handle this.” It’s . . . I see them as . . . I tell them all the time, “We’re a family. We look out for each other. Also, I’m going to include you in the decision-making process. I could . . . I am your teacher, I could say, ‘We’re doing this.’ But I’m not the one who’s going to be out there, for example, marching in a parade. This is your guys’ show, what do you guys want to do?”

Carmen also learned from her experience and adjusted her practice to fit needs of her students. Carmen said,

So that was really a combination of everything over the years, and then sometimes it’s trial and error. You try something and it works well with one group, and you try it the next year and you will have a group of kids and it doesn’t always work. So, I guess you have to be flexible and able to use the tools in your toolbox.

Rose noted that she too evolves and learns from her experiences. Rose said,

But, also my students teach me. And I don’t think I’m ever really done figuring it out [chuckle] because every year I find that I need to tweak something or teach something, or this group of kids needs me in a little bit different of a way than that group of kids did.

And so, I don’t know, I think it’s an ever-evolving process.

David also learned from his experiences, and evolved his teaching practice from completing research. David related,

Some things I’ve been reading that evaluations work better because motivation-wise, I wanna motivate the kids to learn, not to earn grades. And so, I’ve found over the last few months that I’ve been trying some new things in the classroom that, if I stop focusing on grades, that they stop focusing on grades. If I just give all of them a good grade, they do the work. And then I evaluate them and I ask them, “What was so good about this? What
was bad about this? What could you do to improve?” And so, I’ve shut down the complaints about grades and the constant nagging about grades, “What’s my grade? When are you going to do my grade?” And it’s leaning more towards, “When are we gonna get the projects back? When are we gonna see what we did?” Instead of, “When are you gonna put the grade in the grade book?”

**Code 4: Teachers believe improvements must be made.** Participants related their recommendations for improving teaching in the realm of transforming the student, and meeting the needs of students. Mary Ellen suggested,

I recommend growth mindset to educators and teaching their students to have the same mindset. Looking at the big picture of education, being open-minded about both old and new instructional strategies, having the students know the significance of activities done or concepts learned and how it is connected to real life situations, setting clear realistic goals and checking if the goals are met or not, and training the students to be effective members of the society will allow transformational teaching to take place and grow.

Likewise, Oscar related,

Get to know your students. I believe that all teachers need to have a relationship built for each student before learning can occur. Aside from just making a lesson interesting, there needs to be that trust and respect between themselves and the teacher. If a teacher can read a book about discipline in the classroom, why can’t they google something that they heard their students talking about? It’s be best way to get to know the child behind the student. When students see you are interested in them, they will become interested in you.
Maria provide a detailed response to improve teaching in the transformational framework. Maria said,

1) Teachers have to care about students. If teachers do not invest in their students and truly care about them, they will not be able to succeed. When teachers care for their students, students do better. When students actually see that teacher has invested time in them, and learn to trust them, that is when true transformational teaching can occur. Some teachers are afraid to “let go” in their own classrooms because they thrive on that control. Once I learned to let it go, I saw students flourish even more than they did before.

2) Once you have established #1, students trust teachers to take them on the educational learning journey. By creating an environment built on trust and relationships, so much can happen. Teachers need to be willing to let go and really listen to their students. Many times, teachers are just the “boss” in the classroom. in my classroom, we are all equals and learn from each other. I am just the facilitator and guide students when necessary. When the learning is in their own hands, they take more responsibility for it. Productive struggle is something that is good for students and that should be occurring on a daily basis. When students simply are given an answer, or one way to do something, they are not authentically learning.

3) Higher level thinking is such a critical part of transformational teaching as well. By students collaborating, and analyzing real world problems together and the teacher merely facilitating, this helps the educational process as well. We all learn together and also from one another. Teachers need to get out of the mindset that they tell students what
to learn everyday all day. They need to be more open and willing to learn together. By incorporating these things, transformational teaching can occur.

Yomira also provided a detailed response to improvement that is based on the current climate and culture of society. Yomira said,

One of the suggestions I have made to the district is that we implement trainings where teachers learn about cultural sensitivity. There is so much negativity in schools these days. I don’t think being part of a union helps. I believe we need training on how to build community with one another and how to respond with a growth mindset. It does not come naturally these days for children, let alone adults. I believe it is important that we choose to listen than to respond and be prepared to ask questions to help us to understand. It has been my experience that we are completely ready to respond and that is because it comes naturally. This has been influenced by the social media phenomena. Facebook, Instagram, Snap chat, you name it, have enabled people to respond without taking into consideration a person’s situation, feelings, emotions, or credibility. It takes a lot of work, but we need to work together on establishing a shared vision. In conclusion, I believe that the only way we are going to get transformational teaching from teachers is to remove the tenure component. I believe that we need to be open to feedback and constantly learning. If we aren’t doing that then we should not be in this role. We all should feel a sense of subtle insecurity because that is a motivating factor. I compare giving someone tenure to giving society welfare. We have created a group of comfortable, entitled, outspoken, critical individuals. We really have done them a disservice.

**Code 5: Teachers have a type of love or deep caring for students.** Participants stated they have a type of professional caring for their students. This deep caring was described also as
a type of love expressed towards the student for the purpose of having the students understand someone cares for them. However, this type of caring was not something that occurred artificially, but transpired natural from the teacher. Rose said,

I have seven children this year that need to hear me tell them I love them verbally, they need that reassurance every single day, which is what I give to my own children. And the first couple times I did this for a child it was a little bit awkward, to say, “I love you,” because it felt like an emotion that I have reserved for my family. But I realized I do love them. It’s not exactly the same as I love my own children at home, ‘cause that relationship is different, but nevertheless, I do love them, so why am I struggling maybe to verbalize it like I need to? And so that’s what these particular kids need. I have others that need my humor. They need me to joke with them, they need me to tease them, and they need to know that we can joke, and that there’s still faith. And I have others that need structure.

Carmen talked about the implications of caring and how caring effects the students. Carmen said, “If you build relationships and they know you care about them then it makes a difference in their learning.” Maria communicated that love should be the foundation of the school’s environment. Maria said, “Not all students have a safe environment at home and so a lot of students school is an escape for them, it shouldn’t be a place they have to be afraid, they should know that there are people that love them and care about them there, and they should feel comfortable enough to be able to talk to someone there.” Angie related how her caring is important to the student’s wellbeing. Angie said, “And they know that I care, so I try to just foster an environment where they, if they need to talk to me, they can.” Judy also said, “We’re team-oriented, and we have to rely on that. But for those little guys, confidence and love is what they need.” David also
explained the need for caring and love as means to help students understand his role in understanding the truth and what is considered real. Davide related,

I tell the kids, right from the beginning, “I’m the most honest person, if you ever have a question, I will honestly answer you.” And they know it, because I do all the time, and I’ll tell them right to their face anything they wanna hear, that they’re doing something dumb, or they’re doing something good, they know I’m gonna tell them the truth. So as the year goes on, they figure that out, and then they’ll come out with stuff and they’ll talk to me, because they know I’ll tell them the answer, I’m not gonna hide anything bad from them.

**Code 6: Love of job and deep belief in mission.** Participants related a passion for the teaching occupation that is seen as calling, as opposed to a job choice. The participants also related the love of the job directly correlated to helping and serving students. Oscar stated after being a custodian for 8 years he wanted to help students in a more direct manner. Oscar said, “I felt I could make a difference, and give students a head-start in life, and I am passionate about providing this possibility to students.” Judy discussed how she shares her belief in the mission with her students. Judy said,

There’s a lovely lady here at Oasis, it’s a hair salon, I taught all her children, they went here. And she does a big fundraiser at her hair salon, and then all that money, we go shopping for the kids. And Vicki gives me a list of the kids that are most needy, and we go and buy a gift, and a . . . useful gift. So, pencils or socks, and that, and then a Santa gift.
Angie explained,

I went back to school and got my credentials, because I think it’s important to me to not only contribute to the community, but also just be a positive role model and just working with kids is my passion and helping them become the best people that they can become is gonna contribute to, hopefully, a better future for them.

Angie also described,

I think it’s a lot of self-reflecting and trial and error and knowing when to stop doing something because it’s not worth it. Doing a lot of research, just to try new things. I’m always willing to take, borrow and steal ideas to be better and every year at this time I’m always self-reflecting on, “Okay, what do I never wanna do again? Because it was terrible” and keep what was working. So, a lot of self-reflection. A lot of being okay with “Oh, I made a mistake there, and not do it again.”

Mary Ellen said,

I graduated Bachelor of Science in Psychology and I tried working in a human resources department, which is what I’m supposed to, I think, and then it didn’t work for me. [chuckle] I wasn’t happy, it was just a day to day. . . . It’s a work kind of thing, and then when I started being a guidance counselor and teaching at the same time, I found fulfillment in what I’m doing and I was actually happy and eager going to work. It was almost like not working at all because I like what I was doing, so then I continued and taught for seven years, in the Philippines and then I went to Dubai to teach too.

David communicated,

So, I originally had a degree in biology and I wanted to work with animals, a zoo or an aquarium, I like Marine Biology, I like birds, stuff like that, so I wanted to work with
animals. When I graduated it was 2011, and the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009, there just weren’t high paying jobs, there weren’t jobs paying enough to support my family. And so, I went back to school and got my teaching credential and I felt like, this is what I wanted to do anyways, was teach people about animals and fish or whatever at aquariums and zoos and talk to people about it. So, I figure this is probably the next best thing. I still get to talk about it, I’m just not at the physical location. Actually, really, I’ve come to really love what I do. I like interacting with the kids. I like that I do get a platform to teach. I thought that platform was gonna be a zoo or an aquarium, but I have the platform now. It’s a little different environment, but I have the platform to do it. I like to learn stuff so it’s a way for me to still keep up and learn new things. And I like to, obviously, see people learn stuff that I like [chuckle] so it’s a platform for me to do that, too, so. And I like kids. For the most part, I have pretty good relationships with them, so.

Maria said,

I wanted to be a teacher since as long as I can remember. I’ve always loved kids. When I was a kid, I would go play with kids at the parties, at birthday parties, I loved helping others, if they didn’t understand how to do something. So just the combination of having a passion for kids and teaching them something they didn’t know and seeing that light bulb goes off.

Yomira explained,

For me, I don’t have my own children, so I can dedicate my life to this job and I’m grateful for that. I always wanted children, but it just never happened for my husband and I. So, and now I think, for me, I feel like God is the one who said, “No, because these kids are gonna be your life,” and they have been.
**Code 7: Teachers strive to interact beyond traditional roles.** Participants reported that building positive relationships with students was crucial to helping the teachers’ students become more successful. Likewise, participants related these relationships often took time, were purposeful, and required a range of in class activities initiated by the teacher. Maria said,

I’m not a strict teacher, I’m a loose . . . I don’t want to say loose either, but I’m much more easygoing and it’s okay to make mistakes. And I think that once that wall is broken down, that’s when we can form relationships the best, when they see that it’s okay to be wrong. The school I work at now is a high-pressure school, where the parents put a lot of pressure. There’s a lot of parental involvement, and so when they come to me, I try to teach them how to wind down, whereas before in my old districts I had to be someone to care for them because they had nobody. Here they have a lot of people that care but they need somebody to tell them it’s okay to be wrong.

Additionally, Maria discussed the importance of the classroom as community, and where that community becomes a safe place for student to discover, learn, and communicate what their experiences, as opposed to being directed to think and act in a restrictive environment. Maria also said

Every single day we talk about growth mindset and I feel like in my classroom not only do I promote academic learning, but I just. . . . With promoting student learning, I feel like I’m building more of a community and real-life skills also. Because when they see someone cares they start to talk to me about other issues and I’m giving them life advice and just that relationship that I take so much time to build. Not only is it successful in their academics because they’ll do what I ask them to do, also they are comfortable
enough to talk to me about personal issues. I really don’t know if I answered that in the
right way.

Judy also said,

It’s phenomenal. I talk to each one of them every day. It may not be a whole long
classroom conversation, but it’s phenomenal. And this year, and I didn’t do this, I didn’t think it
made a difference, but I greet each child at the door. So, if you go into the rooms, you’ll
see some of us have a little sign, you can choose a hug, you can choose a fist bump, you
can choose a high five, you can choose a hello.

Judy also related, “that is also a big deal for her to do this, and it’s me that has been
transformed.” Angie used similar techniques to help build positive relationships with her
students. Angie said

I try at least once a week to sit and spend like a minute or two with every student, just
one-on one, even if it’s just talking to them about friends or the book they’re reading or
something they’re struggling with. And I think I’m firm but fair. So, they always know
I’m pretty black and white with them to where I’m not mean but I’m firm. Every morning
I greet the students at the door with a handshake, a high five or a hug. I really try to just
pay attention to changes in behavior, because usually that’s a big sign to me that
something’s going on.

Likewise, Oscar said

I get to know them a little bit, they get to know me. Sometimes before school . . . I’m one
of those teachers that keeps my door open about 90% of the time, they’ll come up and
talk to me and like I said, the relationship will start building and they’ll start to want to do
better or they’ll try to do better. Or even if they don’t come and talk to me, I’ll see them
around campus and I’ll acknowledge them, say hi to them, high five, whatever. “How you doing today? What’s going on?”

**Code 8: Provides motivation for students.** Participants revealed a sense of duty to inspire students both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Maria inspires her students to become self-motivated by letting them discover and struggle with answers. Maria said,

If they ask me something, I don’t ever give them an answer. I want them to go and find out because the world we’re in now, we’ve got the internet, we can have an answer in the touch of a second. When they first come to my class, they’re like, “Wait, is it the answer, why, why not?” or “Do I have to do this? What do I have to do here?” They’re so used to being told what to do, so I give them a very different view and let them explore things on their own.

Grace discussed how she adjust motivation for different students. Grace stated, “If they don’t have parent support, it can be tricky. They’re not necessarily motivated in the classroom either. So again, just using my words to motivate them, is the best that I can do. Or get them excited about learning, would be the alternative.” Yomira also discusses how she motivates and inspires her students by letting them manage the classroom. She does this because many of her students are not allowed to make decisions in their own environments. Yomira said,

Delegated jobs allow kids to take responsibility and step up to the plate. I also watch for what the kid is. Strengths and weaknesses are, and I put them in charge of things that I feel they would be really good at, and then sometimes if I change it up and put those at that are weak in those areas in those roles just to see if they’ll learn anything or if it grows them up a little bit or growth. And I let the kids run my classroom they know the routines, they know the time table. I had to cover my clock, ‘cause they watched the time
in it, right in time and these through the same thing, right? So, I’ve covered my clock, so that I can kinda have my pace through the day at times. But they could run that classroom by themselves.

Yomira also discusses how she motivates her students to take ownership of their behavior. Grace related,

So, we have a high accountability process in my classroom, so we use a reward system of behavior system. They’re in charge of that. I just basically say that wasn’t a good choice. What should you do level up or down? They decided. . . . Then they do it. And then also we do class meetings every day, where we sit and talk about the choices that are being made, and why if it’s getting to be a problem, why what’s causing these problems? And we kinda do some problem solving together and I ask for their input on a lot of things we do a lot of collaboration. And then, I guess, from that collaboration, we move forward with some goals and then we come back and revisit it, and say, “Is this working for this class? It doesn’t seem like this time is working for this, when should be a better time that kind of stuff. Snacking, story is a big deal.

Rose talked about how she motivates students for the purpose of helping them live with the toxic stress the student has experienced. Rose related,

Right. Well, I try to help them understand that they are integral in their own happiness, and that’s challenging because so many of my kids, especially with the school. . . . The clientele I work with, they’re coming out of really broken situations, everything from. . . . Well, I won’t repeat specific examples, but I’ve had kids witness murders, I’ve had kids abused, all of those sorts of things, or currently living in really chaotic situations, and to have them try to see above and beyond that and realize that there is some level of
blessing, there is some level of satisfaction that they can find within themselves, that’s tough.

Oscar discussed how he helps students transition from being scared to try a task to that of attempting to be the best at a task. Oscar said,

Compared to the first day that I got to know these kids. They have more to work for, more to fight for. You can definitely see them transforming into young adults and teenagers. They get sassier, that’s always fun, but it’s more of an increased focus. You see this kid that struggled reading in fourth grade and now in the sixth grade, they’re reading at grade level, where they started at a first-grade reading level in fourth grade. “Yeah, good job. Proud of you, I knew you could do it.” Or just that motivation to being able to, “Okay, I don’t wanna do this, but I’m gonna do it anyways.” It creates a drive, a love for learning. Some students, they’ll come into my classroom, look for the easy way out, discover that it’s not easy, but it’s something that they do like so they’re willing to put the hard work in it to become the greatest in the school.

**Code 9: Supports student’s personal success.** Participants communicated how success was viewed and individualized for each student, but not necessarily related to standardized evaluations of success. Judy related how individual improvement is how she views success. Judy said,

Improvement. Improvement’s the name of the game. Improvement in everything. That’s what we go for. Granted, I want them to care about their grades but they don’t. They’re seven, they do not care, they wanna play, they wanna play, they wanna play and they wanna make me happy and they wanna make their family happy and they wanna make themselves happy. They don’t care whether they get a four, a three or a two, until it
happens and, “You got to get a trophy and I didn’t, and how come?” They don’t care, they’re 7. Now of course there’s always an exception, but we, we do reading goals in my class. And the first year, all but two kids met their goal. Or the first trimester. And last year all of them met their goal, and we made a huge thing about it and even my . . . I got a brand-new kid. Three weeks he was with us. And they’re not easy goals. So, I gave him a small goal, to give two points a week on the testing program and he did it. I didn’t anticipate him doing it, but once I met him and I saw what a great reader he was, I’m like, “Oh, you could do this.”

Angie explains how she views success as focused on the whole student, as opposed to focusing on testing and grades. Angie said,

I think there’s student success from a parent perspective, from a student perspective and a teacher perspective. We focus a lot on are they getting A’s or are they passing, which is important but it’s not everything. So, student success is making a well-rounded student that is not only academically thriving but also social and emotionally stable and happy and kind. I have the same one student, he even tells me, he’s like, “Oh Ms. Angie if I was the same student I was last year at this time, this would have played out much differently.” [laughter] He was a hit person and ask questions later and now he’s able to tell me, “I would’ve handled that much differently before.”

Angie further explained, “It’s huge. It’s in me. A successful student is someone that it doesn’t always have to be academic but you’ll see academically successful in growth but also socially and emotionally being successful.”
Mary Ellen related how she views success academically. Mary Ellen said,

Student success is when they meet their goals, individual goals. And if they improved from where they started, I think that’s success. Even if, say, they started not knowing any letters, if after first trimester they know two letters, that’s success, so we celebrate. So just getting better from where they started.

Mary Ellen also discussed how success is measured in other nonacademic ways. Mary Ellen stated,

Behavior. Definitely. Every week we celebrate that. What we call it, the behavior chart. If they went over the rainbow, or like super stupendous behavior. If the clips went up, they get a prize for that. But that’s how we started, and now I’m slowly taking it off just because it’s something material. It’s not very intrinsic. And I try to explain to them now that we do things right, even if nobody’s watching, type of thing. Yes, ethics.

Mary Ellen also revealed that she follows through with her students, and that when she follows through her students can see how actions are important, and how they lead to success. Mary Ellen said, “Yeah. And I make it a point that I follow through like when I come back the day after I was absent or I had a training, then I follow through on that and they know that I follow through.”

**Code 10: Understanding and knowing student’s lives.** Participants stated understanding and knowing about their student’s lives is one of the main factors in being able to help transform students. Maria explained the harshness and responsibility that goes along with understanding the lives of her students. Maria said,

Letting them know that there are people that care about them, and I don’t tell them I care, I show them I care by all my actions that I do with them. So, the one that I just told you
about, I had to call CPS on them, but they will feel comfortable enough to come and tell me something. Like one that I had to call CPS on, there were drugs in the home and she saw her mother do inappropriate acts all of the time, but she felt comfortable enough to tell me that, and she’s comfortable enough to tell me that where she’ll work well for me.

Carmen related how she supports her students when she knows about their home life. Carmen stated,

Okay, well how do I adjust their environment? I try to make this as neutral a place as possible where, no matter what their background is, when they come into the classroom. We’re all on the equal playing field. When they do bring things in, I try to be someone they can talk to or if they write to me, I write them back. I try to . . . I don’t wanna judge their parents for their past. I tell them, I’m trying to make them the best person that they can be. So, I don’t ever criticize or speaking about what’s happening at home ever. I just try to tell them that my job is to make them smart and successful and just be the best person that they can be. I just try to be a listener as far as what’s happening at home. Unless of course it’s abusive or something and then I have to report it. I’m mandated to report it.

Joseph explains the environment can be seen as culture and as what happens with the student.

Joseph said,

This has a couple sides to it because we have the . . . It sounds like culturally what they may be bringing in and then any other issues they may be bringing in or anything else from home. I guess the biggest way I can say I address it is by the read-alouds we do. I try to pick read-alouds that reflects the lives of the students in here ‘cause a lot of them do have family members in jail, a lot of them are fostered, a lot of them are kinda all over
the place. So, I try to bring that in, and then we carefully discuss what’s going on in the read-aloud ‘cause it’s a little safer with the read-aloud than just having a student point out that this so-and-so’s a foster, so-and-so’s this or so-and-so’s that. But it’s. . . . Probably the biggest way we address it in here is by looking at a read-aloud and being able to target the character, and talk about it, and resolve it, and talk about how we’re dealing with anything we’re dealing with. That’s a. . . . Yeah, that’s what comes to mind when you say that.

**Code 11: Teacher understands the effect of student’s environment.** Participants related the implications of understanding the student’s environment, and how understanding the environment was critical to achieving student success. Carmen talked about how she approaches the students home environment. Carmen said,

I don’t ever criticize or speaking about what’s happening at home ever. I just try to tell them that my job is to make them smart and successful and just be the best person that they can be. I just try to be a listener as far as what’s happening at home. Unless of course it’s abusive or something and then I have to report it. I’m mandated to report it.

Also, I have a couple of foster kids, they tend to be a little more challenging. Because of their background, the boy had trauma, he was living with his mom and there were issues going on and now he’s with his dad. The more traumatic or crazy the environment I’ve found that they tend to act out here at school.

Yomira described her role in helping with the student’s environment. Yomira said,

Well, so then what happens from that is I build really strong relationships with the parents, no matter what happens, even if it’s good reporting home or not so good. . . . Or good reporting home or not good, I wanna know how can I help them. So that’s my role
for them. How can we support you? “The child’s not in uniform.” They’ll say, “Well, my washer broke down and we haven’t been able to wash clothes.” “Okay, can I help you with that? Could I come by and get your clothes and wash ‘em at my house and bring them for you or do you wanna come to. . . . Can I give you money to go to the laundromat? How can I help you in that way?” So, I start to get details of their lives like that. I’ll call ‘em and just check in and be like, “Is everything okay?” I have a student right now who’s not on meds for 5 days. Actually, almost 10 now. I’ve called Mom, she’s like, “We can’t get meds because he needs to go to his next appointment.” “You can’t get meds at all?” “No.” Well then, I’ve asked around, I found out ways where she could get some meds till they get to their appointment. And I’ve sent her messages to say, “Hey, I’ve learned this. You may wanna try this.” And just kind of be there for them and support them in those hard times.

Rose also described how she approaches the student’s environment and background. Rose stated,

I try really hard to give each child value, importance for who they are and what they bring to the table. We’ve done little things, like. . . . In don’t know, we’ve done word of the day in different languages. We’re all learning a little bit of Farsi, or a little bit of Arabic to give the child that’s learning English some. . . . To help that person be understood. We’ve researched things that kids have gone through. We spent some time talking through the war in Syria when we had two kids that came from Syria that were refugees to help understand what does a refugee camp look like, and what would it be like, what would the experience be like to be there? So just, I think, encouraging them to share and helping them understand that their story has worth, and has value, and is a piece of who they are as a human being. Helping them to feel the worth even if their
situation has made them feel worthless, that sharing their story can empower not only
them but empower somebody that’s going through something similar.

Joseph approached the student’s environment with reading. Joseph said,

We carefully discuss what’s going on in the read-aloud ‘cause it’s a little safer with the
read-aloud than just having a student point out that this so-and-so’s a foster, so-and-so’s
this or so-and-so’s that. But it’s. . . . Probably the biggest way we address it in here is by
looking at a read-aloud and being able to target the character, and talk about it, and
resolve it, and talk about how we’re dealing with anything we’re dealing with.

Judy said,

Their home environment, we can’t control. We can’t control shoes. If there’s kids that are
coming with shoes, we try to find a pair of shoes. I had a little boy bring a jacket for
another kid today. “I brought this for Liam.” I said, “Is it okay with your mom?” “Yup.” I
said, “Okay.”

**Code 12: Teacher provides safe place.** Participants related the importance of the school
and classroom as place where students always felt safe. Participants reported that often the
student’s classroom is the only safe place in their environment. Clara reported that safety can
also include the ability to have a conversation without fear of negative repercussions. Clara said,

I think that because I think when they’re worried about safety and stuff that takes them
away from learning. And I truly don’t think we can teach the full potential and get them
to learn their full potential if they’re not feeling safe and secure. And then we start off
every class morning with a morning meeting and we talk about good things. I always give
them a 1-minute share good things. And they know they’re safe. And sometimes when
they’re sharing things, things come up and they’re like, “Oh, I didn’t wanna go there,”
but then. . . . One time a little girl was sharing a good thing that she got to see her dad. Another girl said, “Oh, are your parents divorced?” and she looked at me and I said “You don’t have to answer.” She goes “No, my dad’s in jail.” And I’m like, “Okay, I wasn’t expecting that.” But there’s another little boy “My mom’s in jail” and another little boy “My mom’s in jail.” So, even though it was a conversation I didn’t want to hear, it’s like they knew they were in. . . . They weren’t the only one going through what they were going through. And it was weird because at the end of the day I was like, “I did not want that conversation at all.” But the way my kids responded to each other was almost encouraging. Like “It’s okay” and “I’m right there with you.”

Mary Ellen talked about how her approach to teaching kindergarten struggled when students did not feel safe. Mary Ellen reported,

I personally observed that in my first year of teaching and my teaching in the second year. Like what I said, the 6 weeks that I was teaching that class, it was hard and the students did not feel safe. And there was no learning taking place at all because my priority back then was safety and it wasn’t happening. So, I don’t think that I was successful teaching my kids back then. And then the year after, I think it got better, definitely not perfect, but it got better. So, because the students feel safe, they feel like they’re comfortable being in the classroom, so they learn and they do feel safe.

Oscar said,

As far as safe learning environment, a lot of the students, whether I know them or not. . . . As I had mentioned that I work with the younger kids too, they’ll still feel safe to come up to my classroom and talk to me, just because they have that. . . . It’s relaxed in my room. They know that they can come up and hang out with their friends and talk to their
friends or talk to me if they need to or come up and practice. I took it from a TV show, but when I tell them, “When you come up to my room, it’s Switzerland. Whether there’s somebody in my classroom that you like or not, everyone is welcome. If you wanna come talk, come practice, just hang out and talk with your friends, that’s fine.” Also, we built a recording studio in my classroom. They can come in and record, they can come in and do podcasts. They wanna get extra work done or just be experimental with their musicianship, it’s Switzerland, come up and do what you want. If I’m not up there, the door will be closed, got to do something else, if not, everyone is welcome. If I have a problem, if they break the rules, they have to leave. But it’s Switzerland, it’s a relaxed place to go. They can just come and sit and not talk if they just that’s how they wanna be. If they’re having a bad day and they wanna come and cry their eyes out to me, I will offer advice, whatever I need to do. I just I keep that safe option for them. If someone’s gonna come talk my ear off, if it’s something dangerous I tell them like every other teacher, “Whatever you tell me will stay between us, however, if it’s gonna endanger you, I have to tell somebody.”

Oscar also explained how feel student’s feel safe by way of music,

Sometimes the toughest kid will come in the room, break down and cry because of their life at home and they just need an outlet or they need some advice or how to handle the situation or they just wanna let it out. You know what I mean? That’s just the kids that I work with. Could be the biggest, toughest kid will just break down like a baby just because life is hard for ‘em at home. And obviously, if that’s their life at home, they need an outlet. A lot of ‘em, it’s in their music. A lot of ‘em will pick drums, because anger issues, they need something to hit, and it’s a safer way to release it than releasing it on
another student. For a lot of ‘em, music is their outlet, not for voicing their opinion vocally, through their instruments.

Angie talked about the implications of the student not being safe. Angie said,

Because they are physically incapable of learning if they don’t feel safe. Their brain will not allow them to. . . . The last thing they’re worried about is. . . . They’re not working from the right part of their brain to be successful so if they don’t feel safe then they’re gonna do everything in their power to feel safe and that’s counter-productive to the learning environment, for sure. That’s number one that has to happen.

Angie also discussed how she approaches safety every morning. Angie said, “But I also try to touch, every morning I greet the students at the door with a handshake, a high five or a hug. I really try to just pay attention to changes in behavior, because usually that’s a big sign to me that something’s going on.”

**Code 13: Embraces growth mindset.** Participants related the importance of embracing and sharing how learning is continuous and evolving process for the student and the teacher.

Maria explained,

Here, they have a lot of people that care but they need somebody to tell them it’s okay to be wrong. So, I think once they realize it’s okay to be wrong and that having a growth mindset, that’s something huge that we do in my class. Every single day we talk about growth mindset and I feel like in my classroom not only do I promote academic learning, but I just feel like building a community with real-life skills also.

Grace said,

They’re even afraid of making mistakes. They wanna be told what to do, and I’m like. . . It’s like, “You gotta think.” Yeah, no, exactly. And I actually start off the school year
with the growth mindset activities, and I’ll continue those throughout the year just to reinforce that they’re gonna make mistakes and let’s learn from them.

Yomira stated the importance of modeling a growth mindset for her students. Yomira stated,

A growth mindset is where myself and my kids are all being changed through the teaching process. So, I would have to model being changed myself, at the same time, as I’m training them to make changes towards good choices and a better lifestyle. I have a really strong philosophy that relationships with these kids are just so important because if kids don’t like their teacher, they’re not going to work for them.

Oscar stated that growth mindset involves personal growth. Oscar said,

I mean, I hate to say it, even if that hard-headed student never learns one thing they’re supposed to do, they never master a standard, I mean, we have to teach them how to be people. Yeah, so it’s more than just standards. Yeah. If they don’t learn how to be people first, they’re not gonna wanna learn other things. Everybody has things that they’re interested in. Some people just aren’t good at school and some people will never go to college.

Angie relates how she prepares the student for a growth mindset. Angie stated,

I think especially when you’re getting in the upper elementary, in order to prepare them for middle school or junior high, they do have to be somewhat autonomous. And so, I think that I create a very structured environment in which they, within that environment, they have freedom. They don’t have to ask permission to do everything. There’re things that they can do without being asked or without asking or without necessarily guidance from me.
Carmen related her growth mindset in the classroom, “I want them to be movers of the society, and I want them to be successful and independent and be proud of what they know; So, I let them.”

Clara said,

Yeah, growth mindset, and the district this year has been real big on growth mindset. And so, in the first few weeks we spent a lot of time and watched some videos and talking about what it means to have a growth mindset, that we’re just not stuck, I can’t do it but. . . . Instead of, “I can’t do it, yet.” So, we even applied it. I . . . . Personal experience, what I think I can’t do but how I could add that word “yet” at the end of it and it changes it a little bit. And hey, we can try and it doesn’t stifle us. You’re right, I can’t do it yet, but we can practice and what can we do to get better?

**Code 14: Supports student communication.** Participants related the importance of the classroom community and the impact of communication, which moves beyond the traditional framework of academics and teacher centered education. Maria related that having students being able to communicate and be a participant in problem solving is key to the student’s transformation. Maria said,

Yeah, actually we’ve had a lot of issues going on this year with a lot of students cutting themselves and stuff like that, and so many things going on. One of the girls took it upon herself, she asked me if she could do this, she said, “Can I make a shoe box and put it in the class, and if kids need someone else to talk to, if you’re not available, can they talk to me?” I was like, “Of course.” and so she put this little box and every Friday there’s at least three or four Post-it’s in there, she pulls them off in the corner and they talk to her, because she’s a very good listener, and they appreciate it.
Maria also described the importance of teacher-initiated conversations with students. Maria stated,

I’ve pulled every single student twice this year to talk to them on one-on-ones, and some of them wanna talk 20 minutes and some don’t wanna talk at all. I’ve found that once I know more information though it changes my approach with them. For example, I just found out a week ago, one of my students was born addicted to meth, and it changes your view and your outlook on that student, instead of getting so frustrated, you have to think to yourself, their brain doesn’t know any different or they can’t control that on their own just by telling them to stop.

Carmen said, “I try to be someone they can talk to or if they write to me, I write them back.”

Joseph said, “Just to advocate that teachers talk more with their students instead of at and take a little extra time to talk to them, like 2-5 minutes during recess; get to know them.” Grace interconnected the importance of helping the students communicate as a means of peer problem solving. Grace stated,

Actually, I do have them do some Kagan strategies in the classroom. So, any time we can collaborate, they’re sitting in groups, heterogeneous groups. And so, I will have them communicate with their peers often so they can learn from one another. There’s more of them and less of me too.

Yomira related that student collaboration and decision making are communications points that help transform students. Yomira said,

And then also we do class meetings every day where we sit and talk about the choices that are being made, and why. . . . If it’s getting to be a problem, why? What’s causing these problems? And we kinda do some problem solving together, and I ask for their
input on a lot of things. We do a lot of collaboration. And then, I guess, from that collaboration, we move forward with some goals. And then we come back and revisit it, and say, “Is this working for our class? It doesn’t seem like this time is working for this, when should be a better time?” That kinda stuff.

Rose reported that communication is essential to understanding classmates, for establishing empathy for fellow students, and to help parents understand the processes of the classroom. Rose said,

So, Tuesday is talk day, so we read an inspirational story, and then I give the kids opportunity and time just to share whatever’s on their heart and on their mind that they’re comfortable with. That has given me a lot of insight into what they’re going through. I check in with those kids that are willing to share frequently to make sure that they’re continuing to feel safe and valued as part of the class environment. It builds empathy with the other kids. I, of course, encourage parents to be open and transparent with me so that I can understand what their students are going through, and then I, in turn, am professionally transparent with my kids because I think in my being a little bit transparent, they are then able to feel safe.

**Code 15: Differentiated leadership for individual students.** Participants related that leadership in the classroom was presented to the whole class, but leadership techniques needed to be individualized for various students. For example, participants noted that some students needed coaching to perform at their best, while other students required different leadership approaches to best serve the individual needs of the student. Joseph said,

Besides the leading by example. I think maybe being in charge of the structure of the day might be considered some type of leadership technique by leading them to. . . . Hour by
hour, minute by minute leading to whatever is coming next. Communicating what I expect from them or my goals for teaching them. Just recently, not recently, but we’ve been trying all year to communicate how they can set their own goals. Joseph further explained,

I think that would also go back to goal setting as far as providing them with something to help them succeed. For example, if they take a test, we look at a specific student’s answers and talk about, we kind of reflect and talk about what to do next with it. And what’s gonna happen next? As far as their success goes, that’s about the way I do it.

Clara talked about how her approach to teaching second grade as the initial attempt to have the students become problem solvers. Clara said, “But I really, as a leader, try to lead them and encourage them that they can do it in the classroom. And, one of my biggest phrases this year was, ‘Be a problem solver’.”

Another factor that influenced positive leadership in the classroom is how the participants viewed their students, and how this viewpoint is successful in the classroom. Rose related, “You’ll be amazed at how much of your management will come from just liking every child.”

Maria explained how she uses leadership to inspire individual student’s interest. Maria said,

Back in the, I don’t know when, I wanna say maybe 40s or 50s, the 3M Company that, as we know, has Post-it and tape and stuff like that, they implemented a portion of the workers’ day where they could focus on something they were passionate about and out of that project came Post-its. Well, Google took hold of that and they implemented what they call 20% time for their employees, where they could focus on something they’re passionate about and out of that came Gmail, came the Google Teacher Academy, stuff like that. So, they found by letting workers and employees focus on something that they
care about, they’d get better quality work and stuff like that. So, I implemented that in my classroom, where we do Genius Hour the first trimester. So, we do an hour a week on Fridays and it’s where students can come up with projects they’re passionate about.

Maria further explained how the students become decision makers on the classroom. Maria stated,

They are the ones coming up with their own guided questions. They start with an idea. And then that idea builds into a project that they’ve taken the lead on. So, I’m not sitting there telling them what to do. For example, last year one of the girls in my class loved animals, and so that turned into studying the school-wide fundraiser where they made handmade dog toys, sold them, raised $385, donated it all to the shelter. They called the shelter company on their own. I sat there on speaker, they came up with the questions, they spoke with the adults on the phone. Putting those kids in that role that . . . People don’t trust kids, so me giving them the ability to, and the confidence that I feel like that helps them develop more of a leadership role.

**Code 16: Dedicated to grade level of students.** Participants related they enjoyed and dedicated their teaching practice to their current grade level. They also related to have an improved success with their grade level over other grade levels. The success is described as being able to build positive relationships, development of two-way communication, by understanding the student, and by being a more effective classroom leader. Maria explained,

I’ve taught second, fourth, fifth and sixth, I feel like I finally got the most comfortable, probably when I got to sixth grade, because I felt like I didn’t have to be a lot softer. I think that once I got to sixth grade, discovering the type of relationship that I could have with those sixth graders that kinda helped me be more of a leader, because I was more
real with them instead of telling them what to do all the time, and once they respected me I felt like I could lead them, maybe more than they had been led before because of that relationship. So always it comes back to the relationships.

Yomira explains that even though she is successful at her current grade level, her years of working with different grade levels helped improve her ability to teach and transform herself and her students. Yomira said,

I think what’s helped me is being in all the different grade levels and really seeing high expectations for kids and what it was doing. It was really. . . . I felt like I was underestimating kids in the beginning, and I was putting so much on my shoulders when it wasn’t really up to me all the time. I mean, it is up to me in the final say, but overall, it’s a team effort. So, I had to learn to release some control over my class and let them be kids and strut their stuff really. So, I’m grateful that I never stayed in one grade level for a lot of years.

Rose explains how she is dedicated to her sixth-grade class. Rose stated,

So, it manifests into self-reflection and relationship-building, so that it’s instrumental in their development, not just another book that we read. So, each of my units is. . . . Tends to be a little bit deep, I think, for sixth grade. We do a whole unit on racism and what does racism look like, and we dig deeper into not just racism but prejudice. Does prejudice still exist? If so, what does it look like? What prejudices do you hold? Let’s be honest, let’s not sugarcoat it, we all have them. And I try to be very transparent with them about my own. This is how I feel when someone’s approaching me dressed a certain way on a dark street, and is that appropriate? And when does fear become prejudice? Those sorts of things, we. . . . I don’t know, we get kind of a deep sometimes.
Mary Ellen related how she is dedicated to developing her kindergarten students. Mary Ellen said,

So, I try to model what is expected from them, I tell them what we are learning, I tell them what’s going on and how they can work to achieve their goals like that. And as we go on through the year, it’s basically just managing how. . . . Like telling them what to do in a way that they already know, so they know the routines already, they know what’s expected from them, although we have different goals set for each time. Basically, they know what’s expected from them. And at that point, I’m leading just by observing how things are going on, because now they’re doing their centers, and if there’s an adult in there, I know that they can tell the adult what to do.

**Code 17: Vision of student being a lifelong learner.** Participants revealed they are passionate instill lifelong learning into their student’s educational outlook. Clara said, “But then not just that they’re learning it, but that they’re consciously realizing they are learners.” Oscar is more direct with his outlook learning, and he said,

I am the music teacher for all of fourth, fifth, and sixth. Kids come up to my room for music, there’s a lot of opportunity. The younger kids see that and they all want to have that too. So that’s probably why, but I would hope it’s a little more beyond that. I would hope that they see something different in me instead of just being the cool teacher. Because they’re not gonna know until they become my student that, “No, there’s nothing but hard work in my classroom. I don’t give away stuff, stuff is earned.” And that’s something they need to learn before they become adults too. Life isn’t an app you can download and get what you want instantly.

Angie believes practicing problem solving helps students become lifelong learners. Angie said,
And they keep coming to me, wanting me to fix it. This person is not being fair, this person is not listening to me or whatever. I just would kind of give them some guiding questions and then direct them back to their group. I think allowing them to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes are a big part of what we do. Getting them rigorous things to do that, through the problem-solving process, I feel like they learn more that way.

Maria said, “We do a lot of project-based learning where they go learn what they want to learn in that particular project instead of me spitting out things for them.” Carmen also related,

I set structure. I set parameters, so that the classroom can function properly. It’s different with every group of kids, but for the most part. And then my job is to inspire them to learn, to get them excited about learning, to get them curious and want to explore ideas.

But going into 21st century learning, it’s more. . . . You become more of a facilitator for learning. I guess, try to pique their curiosity and get them excited about different topics.

Joseph’s viewpoint of inspiring students to be lifelong learner comes from his support for individual student’s needs. Joseph said,

I think what I’d do is probably advocate for. . . . I hate to use the word student-centered ‘because I don’t entirely know what that means, but have a more student-centered curriculum, or a structured day that’s more student-centered. So, it’s the classrooms, and the curriculum, and pretty much everything we do in the classroom is about them and for them versus this. . . . Just a textbook with worksheets in it. Just advocate for. . . . There’s another word I thought of and it just went away.

David approaches developing student to be lifelong learners by helping them focus on subject matter, as opposed to only focusing on grades. David stated,
So, when you open a unit with your kids, you don’t tell them to make a goal, and the goal is, “I wanna get an A out of this unit or on the test,” the goal is, I wanna learn whatever, evolution, or the laws of motion, or whatever. And then you do assess periodically, but it’s like I said, you’re assessing based on what they can do, or what they can show you. And you evaluate and you say, “Well have you mastered this? You think you’ve gotten all the way? Based on this, you have or you have not, so what can you do more, what can you change, what can you do more to make it a little better?” It’s not perfect yet, what I’m trying to implement, but it’s kind of experimenting and getting there, step by step.

**Code 18: Not satisfied with time with student.** Participants related that they were not satisfied with the time spent with students, and that the time needed to develop students was too short. Rose said,

> Yes, but my prayer is that after 180 days of us being together, that not only will I have helped instill some of those things in them, but that they will have taught me a lesson as well. And each child I view as a gift, and I tell my kids all the time, “You weren’t put here by accident, this was a divine appointment 12 years ago. We were just waiting to meet each other.” So, my hope is that we’ll both instill in each other some level of success.

Maria talked about the length of time it takes to develop relationships with students. Maria said, “It takes a good couple of months for the class, my class, to get where we are now; usually by Christmas.”

Oscar related how differences students and environments makes it challenging to help students transform. Oscar said, “Yeah, every year’s been different, every kid is different. I think
the hardest part is just letting them go; graduation time and that’s it.” David communicated difficulties with understanding student’s needs. Davide stated,

Oh man, that takes some time, cause it’s going through their records first of all, and seeing who’s foster, who’s homeless, who’s this or that, who’s not. It’s records, data mining, and then conversations with the kids.”

For the participants, time with students is an individual concern that is related to understanding the student, building a relationship with the student, or having enough time to help transform a student.

**Code 19: No common understanding of Transformational Teaching definition.**

Participants related not having prior knowledge of the Transformational Teaching theory and how this theory is specifically used as means of practice. However, participants related understanding of the definition, and used many teaching methods associated with transformational teaching. Maria said,

I wanna make sure I understand it right, from what I understand, is it more like how education has kinda transformed from where we were before to Common Core in 21st century, is that kind of what it means? So, did I say the right thing? If that’s what it is, I can go explain that more it.

Carmen related, “If I’m honest, I don’t really know a whole lot about what the exact definition is. I’m not really familiar with the concept.” Joseph said,

This is the first I’ve actually heard a definition of it. I haven’t used it. . . . I wouldn’t say used it, but I haven’t purposely followed the definition of it or followed that phrase transformational teaching, specifically. So right now, it sounds like something worth looking into, but I don’t have much other than that.
Grace related,

I guess the key word would be environment here. And for me, having an environment that is conducive to learning is number one. So, I like to treat children as they would wanna be treated. I noticed that my tone with them is not so aggressive or looking down upon them. I try to raise them up as much as possible. Yeah and sometimes I do need to check them. And ask them what should they be doing?

Yomira said,

Transformational teaching would be, to me, a growth mindset where myself and my kids are all being changed through the teaching process. So, I would have to model being changed myself, at the same time, as I’m training them to make changes towards good choices and a better lifestyle. I have a really strong philosophy that relationships with these kids are just so important because if kids don’t like their teacher, they’re not going to work for them.

Rose communicated, “You know, I have to admit, I had not heard of it, that is a new term for me.” Oscar said,

Well, just for answering the question, I think that it would be changing lives. I don’t know, I don’t see myself as a transformational teacher, maybe. . . . And that could be a whole bunch of different factors, maybe because I don’t see my former students anymore and I don’t know what they’re up to or if they’re doing that well, except for a few. Or I don’t know. I guess it’s something I probably will not know, I can just hope that in some way I was a transformational teacher in the eyes of my students and I helped them to grow, to transform and become something better.
Judy explained,

I think what employers want is different and now we’re trying to meet those needs. So, I think that’s transformational. And the curriculum is trying to meet that. I have a college level kid that had a great job for a year. He worked in politics, his candidate didn’t win, so now he’s looking for a job again. Very strong people skills. And all application is done online, no one ever meets him. So, it’s hard, and I don’t know how to help. You know? You’re just stuck. So, I think that’s interesting. That’s transformational. How do we do that? I don’t think I’m answering your question though. So, for students, we’re transforming kids into a world we don’t know what’s coming, and I think when I was a kid, that wasn’t true.

**Observations**

In total, seven codes emerged from data analysis. Once again, I used the precoding method to help organize the data into meaningful interpretations of the participants in the observed classrooms (Saldaña, 2015). As well, during data analysis prominent patterns developed and revealed the meaning of the data collected (see Table 3).

**Code 1: Teacher preparedness.** Participants demonstrated preparedness in classroom by displaying knowledge of subject matter, having lessons ready for use, and having alternative methods of instruction available for varying circumstances. Likewise, the preparedness of the teacher depended on the circumstances taking place in the classroom. For example, participants showed responsiveness to divergent situations that prompted an appropriate response that would have impact on the possible transformation of the student. Such responses from the participant supported the students’ feeling of being safe, being able to learn, and develop in a holistic manner.
Maria demonstrated, her preparedness by explaining to her sixth-grade class what events will take place in the classroom during that day. However, during her explanation of class events to take place, a Lock Down drill alarm sounded. Maria further demonstrated her preparedness by calmly ushering her students to hiding place throughout her classroom, using a calm demeanor and voice to guide her students. After 10 minutes, the exercise concluded, and Maria explained to her students the reasoning for the Lock Down exercise. Maria explained, how her students in Louisiana experienced hurricane drills, and this experience was similar.

Yomira demonstrate preparedness by transitioning her students from Physical Education class to mathematics in calm and directive manner that immediately had the students moving from one type of lesson to the next. Yomira further demonstrated her preparedness by having her students stand up and place their hands on their hips when they were done answering the algebra question. During the lesson, a student opened the door and walked in the class. Yomira, calmly greeted the student from the Special Day Class, and the student went to his seat, and joined the class in the algebra lesson.

Judy demonstrated preparedness by having students work in journals at the beginning of the class. Judy walks around the room as student write, and complements students as they write, and calmly corrects one student who is looking through his backpack. After 10 minutes of journal writing, Judy calmly has the students put their journals away in their desks, and prepare for math instruction. However, a student reaches for a laptop computer, and Judy calmly corrects the student, and moves forward with the math lesson without bringing attention to the student or interruption to the upcoming lesson.

Rose showed preparedness by moving from one lesson to another in a calm and confident manner. Rose introduced a lesson about the use of the colon and semi-colon. Rose initially had
the students complete a grammar worksheet about colons, and walks the classroom checking on students. Rose, then counts down from 10 to one, and then communicates to the students there will be a test next week on the use of colons. Next, Rose has the students move into groups of three or four, and asks the students’ questions and provides sentences that establish what type of colon is used, according to the type of communication intended by the author. Rose calls on random students to answer questions. Rose then concludes the lesson and communicates to the students that they have 30 seconds to prepare for the next lesson. Next, Rose counts down from 10 to one, and instructs the student to go to zero voice. She then turns down the lights, and communicates to the student that they may place their heads on the table for this lesson. Rose, then read a book about a 15-year-old boy who was depressed during the winter holidays.

Formal observations took place in the participants’ classrooms. The observations recorded the actions and behaviors of only the teacher participants. Table 3 provides an overview of the themes and subthemes established from the participant observation data analysis.

Table 3

Overview of Themes and Subthemes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Number and Developed Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 1—The teachers create an environment for teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Teacher preparedness</td>
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<td>Theme 2—Teachers use evolving approaches to teaching to help students succeed.</td>
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<td>Use of space</td>
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**Code 2: Teacher attentiveness.** Participants displayed attentiveness by being alert, focused, kind, helpful, responsive, and devoted to their students and the teaching practice.
Oscar demonstrated attentiveness during his music class while he started class and began band practice. Oscar’s music room includes three recording students, a large practice space, instruments organized on shelves, and posters of rock legends such as Carlos Santana, Pete Townshend, and B.B. King. Oscar sits cross-legged in front of his students as his students sit on the carpet and chairs with their practice drum pads. Oscar responds to student questions, and explains what is going to happen during the next performance. Oscar then has students prepare for outside practice. Some students are struggling to find equipment, and Oscar helps the students find the correct snare drum. While outside, Oscar challenges the students and has them close their eyes, face their heads up, and asks the students to see if they can drum. He continues, and challenges to students to only look at the sky while they practice.

Judy showed attentiveness in her classroom. Judy high fives her students as they enter the classroom. Judy’s classroom is filled with stuffed animals and the desks are set up in bench style. The walls of the classroom are decorated with student work, books, and maps. Judy begins to work a math problem with students and ask students to think of why the problems are set up the way they are. Judy calmly corrects students and provides praise as they attempt the math problems. Judy continues to challenge the students to think about how the process of math takes place. Moreover, Judy helps a student contact her grandmother by using the classroom telephone. Judy ask student if she contacted her grandmother. Judy then redials phone and helps student leave a message for her grandmother.

Mary Ellen showed attentiveness in her classroom. Mary Ellen instructs her kindergarten students to work in teams on a project, and claps three times and instructs her students refocus on their team reading project. Judy is also sitting on the carpet with a student and engaging in one on one instruction. Judy is sounding out letters with the student. Judy now has “her friends”
freeze, and get prepared for working in the different centers. The students move to different centers and work together or individually. Judy continues to work with another student on the carpeted sitting area. Judy then moves to centers and checks on her students.

**Code 3: Professionalism.** Participants displayed professionalism in the classroom during learning and classroom business time periods. For example, participants did not yell at students, did not use negative language with students, did not intentionally humiliate or shame students. Furthermore, the participants displayed professionalism as they corrected student behavior in a method that was peaceful, quick, and reengaged the student back into the lesson.

Maria demonstrated professionalism in her classroom by use of her calming voice, use of positive language, hand claps, and demeanor during various interruptions. For example, when Maria is ready to get the attention of the students, Judy claps her hands three times in succession. Additionally, Maria demonstrates active listening as students discuss their reading assignment, The Martian. Maria is interrupted three four times during instruction by phone calls. During these interruptions, Maria maintains her calm demeanor, level tone of voice, and promptly moves to instruction after the phone calls. Additionally, Maria thanks her students for being on task.

Joseph showed professionalism in his classroom by being prepared with his lesson on shapes and angles. Joseph sat in a lowered chair so that he could be seated at near eye level of the students. Joseph’s students were seated on a carpet near the front of the classroom, near the whiteboard. Joseph incorporated chart paper, and an iPad during his lesson, and had the students work with partners. Josephs further demonstrated professionalism by helping struggling students discover how to solve problem, providing more examples, and by demonstrating active listening techniques as the students explained and discussed solving the problem.
**Code 4: Eye contact and Facial expressions.** Participants demonstrated meaningful eye contact as they engaged with students. The eye contact from the participants helped form a bond with the students during lessons, and during times of distress. The uniqueness the teacher’s eye contact, also included facial expressions that demonstrated empathy, concern, encouragement, and support as interactions took place between teachers and students.

Grace shown meaningful eye contact and facial expressions during a lesson where she made a mistake in her presentation of improper fractions. During her demonstration lesson, Grace decomposed the improper fraction 9/4 into a mixed fraction, and a student objected to Grace’s answer to the math problem. During this objection, Grace compassionately looked at the student, apologized, and thanked the student for her observation of the mistake. During this exchange between Grace and the student, Grace did not show unnecessary dominance or embarrassment during this exchange, which in-turn empowered all of the students.

Clara demonstrated meaningful eye contact and facial expressions during the morning meeting with her students. During the meeting, the students form two different types of circles. One circle is called the Sharing Circle, where students form a circle around another smaller circle. The other circle is named the Strength circle, where students form a large circle. Likewise, during the morning meeting, Clara modeled how students should respond by using meaningful eye contact and respectful facial expressions as the other students shared their experiences. Clara also related, “You are going to greet the person with a handshake and eye contact, while they share a great moment, or favorite moment.” Also, Clara smiled at each student as they share their personal moments.

**Code 5: Control of classroom.** Participants demonstrated natural control of their classrooms without threatening or aggressive actions. Teachers remained calm, used simple
control techniques, if needed, and acted as they were in control of the class, and the events taking place.

Rose showed control of her classroom as she moved from one lesson to the next lesson. Rose counted down from 10 to one as she prepared the students for the next lesson. She also reminded the student that they will be taking notes. As the new lesson about political parties and elections takes place, Rose calmly redirects a student to him stay on task, and smoothly moves onto the CNN program that is now part of the lesson. Rose turns off the video from CNN and engages the students in questions about lesson. Rose uses laughter and student comments to facilitate a question and answer session with the students. Rose then provides a high level of reinforcement to the students by stating she is proud and that they are making great improvements. Rose moves forward in the lesson, and reminds the students about how an audience should behave by listening and asking clarification type questions to the presenter. Rose sits as a student presents their presentation and models proper audience behavior. At the end of the presentation, Rose claps and high fives the students. Rose also corrected behavior by using a soft voice and reminders for further presentations.

Mary Ellen demonstrated control of her classroom by using a calm, simple, and compassionate approach. Mary claps three times has students focus their attention. Mary Ellen then asks her students, “Do you remember what to do here?” Mary Ellen then claps three times, and then three times more, and informs students of snack time. Mary Ellen then begins to hug students as they get ready for snack time.

Carmen demonstrated control of her classroom at 10:00 a.m. in the school day. While beginning a test, Carmen notices Group Six is talking, and marks on board. She then instructs, “when you get your paper, write on paper how much time you are going to need take the test,
and when I see the back of the test I will know you are ready.” Carmen continued to walk around the room. Carmen then said, “I want you to check the other persons paper, to check they have the name date and time on the test.” Bell rings, and she states, “Alright my silly’s, when I say go everyone will go. Carmen walks around, whispers to student, and checks on students taking test. She whispers again to a student, holding her timer, as she continues walking around checking on students, as they work quietly on test.

**Code 6: Method of instruction.** Participants demonstrated method of instruction that supported student participation, student opinion, and personal growth. The teachers used method of instruction that were conversation based as opposed to the teacher lecturing the students, and the students merely being recipients of the given information.

Oscar’s method of instruction for his music and marching band class is authoritative, but he also involves that students in the process of learning about music theory, playing style, and proper methods of marching band behavior. For example, Oscar asks the drummers about the potential of drum section to become the loudest in the band. Oscar asks, “And please tell me why.”

Maria’s method of instruction incorporates a high level of student participation, group work, and inquiry-based instruction. Maria moves over to the students sitting on the couch and engages in a conversation with them about the project they are completing based on them living on the planet Mars. Each student is part of a group that will help build and sustain humans living on Mars. Maria continually engages in conversations with the students and asks for explanations of the groups decisions that are based on their roles on planet Mars. Maria then claps her hands to get students attention. Maria then explains that the students are the leaders of the humans that
are moving to Mars, and that the groups must agree to create the packing list for supplies to colonize Mars.

Joseph’s method of instruction allows for his student to make and learn from their mistakes as he teaches mathematics. While demonstrated Quadrilaterals, Joseph asks his students to discuss the different shapes. He then asks for more details and has the students write down the attributes of each shape that he shows in the chart paper. Joseph then asks, “What makes it special?” Joseph walks around and continues to check on students.

**Code 7: Use of space.** Participants demonstrated positive uses of classroom space, even though many classrooms were small, modular, and aging. Although, one modern classroom was observed. The spaces the teachers created were clean, organized, provided for group work, specialized small group, or individual work, and places to read in a comfortable setting. All classes rooms also included a separate in-class library for students to read.

Maria’s modern classroom included coaches on the back wall, multiple seating areas, beanbags, separate work areas, high desks with stools, carpets, pillows, and ottomans for individual students to use as desks or seats. Maria’s classroom was well lighted, incorporated large windows looking outside, with electronic blinds. Maria’s is experimental and used as case study to investigate how the design supports students learning and success.

Carmen’s classroom uses a large television on the left side of classroom, a white board on the right side of the classroom, and a carpeted seating area in the back of the classroom. The desks are arranged so that there is space in the middle of classroom, and to allow for students to work in groups.

Joseph’s classroom incorporates a seating area near his desk, a large carpeted area for student to engage in instruction, a large television, and whiteboard. He also utilizes an iPad, chart
paper, and a lowered seat for himself for the carpeted seating area. Josephs’ classroom includes a library and carpeted reading near the rear left area of the modular classroom.

Mary Ellen’s classroom is part of the original school buildings. Her classroom is large, incorporates a large carpeted seating area that faces the whiteboard. Although the carpeted seating area also includes mini learning areas and a small library. The classroom is very neat and clean, and the classroom walls display student work. The students’ desks are arranged in manner to support group work.

Rose’s modular classroom incorporates a separate work area near her desk, and the students’ desks are arranged in two separate curves that face the whiteboard. There is a separate library in the back section of the classroom, and student work is displayed in the walls of the classroom. There is also a large television on the rear wall of the classroom. The classroom allows for students and the teacher to easily move around and work in teams.

Clara’s classroom is also modular. Her classroom is set up to accommodate 30 students. The students’ desks are arranged in rows. There is a large and separate library and a separate working area for students. The Library contains pillows, and beanbag chairs for students. There displays of student work, and various forms of art on the classroom walls. There is a separate carpeted sitting area near the front of the classroom, where there is room to conduct their morning meetings.

**Chapter 4 Summary**

The data analysis revealed that teachers use similar and unique techniques to help students learn and succeed. For example, teachers displayed leadership and taught leadership in the classroom by involving the students in decision-making processes, and by giving students responsibilities in the classroom beyond that of participating in a lesson. Additionally, some
teachers used various methods of understanding their students’ lives through journaling, group talk, morning meetings, letter writing, and providing a place to hang out.

Likewise, the data revealed the teacher’s awareness of their students’ lives and how their environments impacted learning and student success. Teachers also understood that success in student achievement are diverse as the students they were teaching. All teachers understood achieving set standards were important to student success, but the teachers also recognized that individual successes were just as important to many of their students, considering the environments, and amount of toxic stress many of the students’ experience.

In the end, the teachers did not approach transformational teaching as methodology for helping serve students, although they all incorporated a dedicated framework for helping students succeed beyond the established rigors of instruction and curriculum.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Transformational teaching implies teachers understand their students’ needs (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). With this knowledge of understanding, the teacher then prepares and creates a new teaching environment to help the student move towards success (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). Currently, transformational teaching researchers focus this understanding to develop a mutually agreed upon goal between the student and the teacher (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). The researchers concluded that the student had the ability to define their goals and create a means of achieving personal transformation with the assistance of their teachers (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017). However, this mutually agreed upon student-centered goal focuses on college age students with no indication of environmental influences or toxic experiences.

In contrast, this case study, focuses on teachers who teach primary age school children, mostly from ages 5 to 11 years old, although one middle school teacher was interviewed, and his students ages ranged from 12 to 13 years old. The case study teachers all served students that most likely have experienced environmental stress, and have various levels of learning abilities, and the student come from a wide variety of diverse backgrounds. Unfortunately, the students’ environment can be a main component in the students experiences of high levels of toxic stress,
and this in turn can lead to major challenges in academic and social successes (Dupéré et al., 2012; Fram & Dickmann, 2012). Toxic stress negatively impacts students in multitude of ways to include learning abilities, student performance, and behavior (Dupéré et al., 2012; Fram & Dickmann, 2012). In addition, teachers might need to examine how the student’s experiences have created stress for the student, and how these stressors impact the student’s ability to learn. To support student’s success, teachers might examine how the student’s environment impact the student’s ability to perform complex tasks, such as those associated with active learning, students centered learning, and projects where students are tasked with examining problems and developing solutions while working with other students.

Lastly, in support of the student’s success, teacher might examine how the student’s environment, and toxic stress impacts behavior in the classroom, in the school community, and the larger community associated with the student’s life. Equally, the students’ behavior might impact the student’s ability to become successful and perform at higher levels, and in turn the teacher creates an environment where the student can attempt to move towards goals that will eventually lead to the success.

In this multiple case study, teachers, using transformational type teaching techniques, and frameworks associated with transformational teaching, created approaches to help the student succeed in an individualized manner that served the needs of the student. Although traditional viewpoints of transformational teaching associate the student and teacher collaborating a shared goal for the student’s success, researchers viewed this type shared goal as transformation in cognitive expansion, and eventual success of an older student entering the workforce (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).
Likewise, the participants in this study revealed they are faced with a multitude of challenges when serving students’ needs. These challenges included students that experienced high levels of toxic stress, often associated with violence in the home, and violence associated within the student’s community. Additionally, the teachers in this case study served student students that experience homelessness, parents in prison, poverty, drug use in the student’s environment, bullying, and placement in the foster care system.

In the changing society, teachers must be prepared to adjust their curriculum and pedagogic approaches to serve the student in a holistic framework. With dedication, this holistic approach will help the student be more able to take on the rigors and challenges of demanding 21st century curriculum, skills, and preparedness to work in a global environment. Moreover, teachers must become masters of the effects of stress, and the effects of environments have on students, as the teacher must continue to become masters of the changing academic requirements needed to be successful in a challenging society.

In this chapter, I will present a summary and discussion of the study’s results and how these results are connected to prior studies and constructivist learning theory. Next, I present the implications associated with transformational teaching in the framework of teachers serving child students. Lastly, I provide a declaration of the limitations associated with this study, recommendations for further research, and a concluding summary of the study.

**Summary of Results**

The instruments used to gather information for this case study were semistructured interviews and observations of the same participants. From the semistructured interviews and observations the participants in this study revealed a wide variety of pedagogic approaches to teaching, student support, and learning. However, each teacher distinctly revealed the
environmental, and social challenges that influenced their students’ learning, behavior, and possible successes. For example, all of the participants focused their teaching expertise and design of curriculum to help the student in a well-rounded student-centered approach, as opposed to focusing exclusively on mastery of subject content, and test results. Likewise, traditional approaches to teaching and learning were also incorporated into the teacher’s pedagogic approaches, as were the teaching approaches that focused on the social health of the student. Social health of the student is understood as the means of the student’s ability to interact with the student’s community and environment in a positive manner (Umberson & Montez, 2010).

The participants further recognized their roles in teaching and classroom leadership by assisting students in complex decision-making processes, student leadership roles, and collaborative learning situations, which helped students achieve possible successes in the current and future work place. For example, the participants understood the challenging environments the students experienced, but continued to frame the curriculum in a manner that helped the student move toward achieving more complex task often associated the global work environment.

Equally, the teachers’ practice also incorporated the need for the students to develop processes to understand and transform their often, negative experiences, into more supportive and healthy frameworks to learning, and integration into society. Although each participant understood the necessity of transforming the student from their experiences, the teachers did not specifically characterize their teaching practice as transformational. Likewise, each teacher in this case study revealed a deep passion and a type of professional affection or love towards the students they served.
Discussion of Results

Results: Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked how teachers use transformational teaching as a teaching methodology in their teaching practice. In this case study, the teachers did not directly associate transformational teaching as an approach to teaching practice. In turn, the participants did not have knowledge of the meaning of transformational teaching as used in this case study, or the meaning of transformational teaching which is associated with a framework for student teaching and improvement (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

However, each participant believes in the transformation, and improvement of the students’ lives and learning as the framework for the teacher’s mission. For example, each participant is actively and fully dedicated to helping students improve their personal and educational lives, and each teacher makes attempts to better understand their students’ environments for the purpose of serving the student through multiple approaches of classroom instruction, communication, and the teacher’s availability to learn about the student by using school resources.

Moreover, the teachers in this case study created environments dedicated to helping the student having the ability to communicate with the teacher, and other students within the classroom community. These environments included morning discussion circles, in which the students gathered in a large circle and participated in a shared discussion. The teacher also incorporated student journaling where the student is given prompts that directed and allowed the student to communicate with the teacher. Other means of student communication including writing in class letters from the student to the teacher, and creating an environment where
students have the opportunity to communicate and share. The teacher created communication environments often took place at the students’ lunchtime, where students had the ability to eat and be a part of community often located in the teacher’s classroom.

Likewise, each participant related they were not trained during their teacher school to fully understand how the students’ environment will have an effect on educational and social success. In each case study, the participant indicated that they experienced a significant learning curve during their first years of teaching. The teachers also indicated they received significant support during their beginning years of teaching, and that the support helped provide the efficacy needed by the teacher to adapt to the current and changing teaching environment. In turn, each participant eventually adapted to the student’s environment and created a classroom culture that supports complete success of the individual student, as opposed to adapting generalized norms and support of the status quo that is often associated with highly at-risk students.

Notably, the participants reported support from their current school’s leadership, and the teachers reported implementation of teaching practices, directed from school leader and district leadership, to specifically help student adjust and improve from their negative environmental experiences. Lastly, the teachers in this multiple case study felt it was their duty and mission to help serve student beyond that of academia. The participants often stated their motivation for teaching practice was a calling from a higher, divine order, or the teachers reported they had a deep personal responsibility to help their specific students improve their lives. For example, some participants indicated they were specifically placed in the teaching profession by a higher power that is related to religious practice to specifically serve students. Additionally, several participants transformed their professional lives of business and other employment to that of teaching for the purpose of serving students in the classroom. The majority of teachers in this
case study also have years of experience working with the student population, and did not indicate that they were moving to other areas to serve a different population of students. This type of service from the teachers possibly indicates a viewpoint that is inherently dedicated to serving this student community, which is an expansion of the passion the transformational teacher possession for their dedication to help students succeed.

**Results: Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked what new information or knowledge was learned from teachers using transformational teaching as framework for teaching practice. Although the participants did not directly use the transformational teaching theory as means of teaching practice, the teachers revealed new knowledge that is associated with transformational teaching. The participants related, to serve highly at-risk students in an effective manner, they must design curriculum and use pedagogy that is based on the whole transformation of the student, as opposed to focusing on academics and current test results.

Moreover, the participants’ students needed holistic approaches to transformation if future assessment results were to be considered generally successful. For example, the case study teachers recommended a wide variety of approaches to help student achieve success. These approaches included the students be able to communicate their negative experiences in a manner that was not threatening. The students’ communications were applied in daily classroom activities, and with methods that allowed the students to communicate using a rage of approaches. These communication approaches included: morning communication circles, where students communicated with each other, letters to the teachers, journal entries made by the students, and one-on-one opportunities where students are able to communicate with the teacher. The teachers also revealed, additional support is need to help transform their students. These additional
methods of support included basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, love, community socialization, teacher-student relationship, safety and trust. All too often, the case study teachers reported that they supported students with clothing, and food. One teacher adopted her student because she understood the need for her student to feel safe and loved, like her own biological child had known. For example, participants related that having the students know that they are loved or cared for by someone in authority, such as the teacher, helped the students communicate more easily, and feel safe in the school environment. These teacher actions also created trust between the student, the teacher, and the school community, which deepened the relationship and understanding of the student lives, so that the teacher could develop different pedagogic approaches, and curriculum designs more suited for the student.

The participants also noted they understood the necessity of ensuring the students knew and understood that the school and classroom were safe areas for the student. Often, the teacher in this case study reported the students recounting that the school was one of the safe areas in their lives, as compared to the environment outside of the classroom and school. The teachers also indicated that it was necessary to help the child student understand the school was a place where the student had the freedom to express themselves, to act as child, and make mistakes, and to interact with a wide variety of other people with different backgrounds and beliefs.

Lastly, each participant directly related that a type of love or deep passion for helping other people is needed to help transform students of highly at-risk environments. For example, the teachers indicated their students suffered from rejection and neglect from their parents, families, and community, and it was necessary for the teacher to show care to the student to gain trust, and to establish a means to begin the process of transforming the student towards their success. However, each participant revealed they each had a natural care for children, and most
of the teachers revealed that they always had a natural tendency to help other people at during most stages of their lives.

The teacher experiences indicate there is substantial personal beliefs in helping students succeed and that teaching from these participants is type of calling as opposed to a profession. Moreover, the teachers also related they were supported and were able to take risk when their teaching practices were centered on development and adaption to their students changing environment. The next section of the dissertation transitions from the participants experiences as they relate to transformational teaching practices, to how the data results relate to the literature reviewed in this dissertation.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

Transformational teaching is an agreement made between the teacher and student for the purpose of the student obtaining knowledge and personal growth (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The case study teachers did not identify with a specific framework of ideology associated with transformational teaching. However, participants reported similar viewpoints related to literature based on transformational teaching for adult students, as opposed to child aged students (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). Current research on transformational teaching does not separate ages and student learning experiences that are typically associated with a child as opposed to adult students that typically have a more advanced understanding and awareness of how the world around them impacts their abilities to perform and succeed (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017).

The literature related to transformational teaching is limited in the depth of understanding the realm of the theory’s implications, and does not include a specific or inclusive process that is
dedicated to serving the whole students. Participants indicated that they apply a variety of teaching techniques designed to help the whole student in a holistic manner. Likewise, the transformational teaching framework implies that teachers practice so students move beyond the traditional academic successes and view transformation as an individualized goal based on the students’ needs (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Participants reported the need for teachers to understand the specific requirements and experiences of the student, so that the teacher can create a new educational environment to serve the specific student. Nonetheless, transformational teaching specific literature is limited in the requirements needed by a range of diverse students, but provides a generalized framework for serving all students, as opposed to understanding the needs of diverse student population (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Equally important, participants did indicate they practice similar teaching techniques that are directly associated with transformational teaching. Transformation teaching theorist reveal that there are teaching practices that teachers should use to help student achieve success. These practices include active learning, collaboration, personalized attention and feedback for students, the teacher’s actions and behavior in the class, and the teachers understanding of the student’s environment (Beauchamp, Barling, & Morton, 2011; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2012; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). In association with transformational teaching theory, the participants revealed they use all the teaching techniques associated with transformation teaching that is reviewed in this dissertation. Additionally, the participants did not have prior knowledge of the key elements of transformational teaching practices.
Additionally, participants noted strong understanding of how the students’ environment can negatively impact the students’ ability to learn, perform, and obtain success. Researchers make a claim in the correlation of the students’ environment, and ability to learn at high levels, perform at higher levels, and becoming successful (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). However, researchers of transformational teaching specific literature did not discuss in depth the intricacies of the student’s environment in relation to the student’s ability to obtain success in academics, and obtaining possible success in the greater society (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Participants also related knowledge of the different elements associated with the students’ environment. All participants were fully aware of the implications of students experiencing toxic stress due to fear, family problems, crime, poverty, homelessness, and social exclusionism that is related to hostility and discriminatory worldviews of society. In this case study, all participants noted the necessity to learn about the student, and adjust practices to help the student succeed (Barrett et al., 2012; Kushnir & Sadeh, 2010). Nonetheless, researchers of transformational teaching did not indicate particular student experiences that might impede student success (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). Each participant experiences with the student environment and the student stress directly related to the individual researcher of the particular problem impeding student success that is reviewed in this dissertation.

Researchers of transformational teaching specific literature are limited in their approach to understanding the students’ viewpoint of the transformational teaching theory, and there is no indication that researchers attempted to examine how child students understand transformational
teaching practices (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). Likewise, as the teacher attempts the understand the students’ experiences, the students themselves will struggle with understanding the implications of their environments, and how their environments impact new knowledge and possibilities of success (Nolan & Richards, 2014; Slavich et al., 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014). Although, teachers acknowledged having a key role in student support to transform their lives, teachers did not indicate the students acknowledging their roles in the transformational teaching processes as shared experience (Braun-Wanke et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pounder, 2014; Shanker & Sayeed, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2014; Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). This lack of acknowledgement by students is experience because the participants did not indicate their prior understanding of the transformational teaching practice, and otherwise would have not indicated to their students the main element of a shared outlook of how the student will grow and become successful (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017).

Also, the participants revealed that the individualized attention and feedback for their students provided a waypoint for the student to achieve individualized goals. Participants also discussed that each student’s success were diverse and were individualized for the purpose of helping the individual student as needed. For example, kindergarten students might have a goal of working with other students, while sixth-grade student might have a goal of moving up one reading level, regardless of the level at which they were currently assessed.

One of the key elements of transform teaching is a shared vision of how the student is going to success (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). In this case study, participants tailored their approach to student success as an individual need that spans various types of goals. The teachers revealed individual student goals ranged from academic improvements, behavior
changes, gaining trust of the school community, the ability to communicate, and the development of self-efficacy by the student to participate in problem solving and student-centered approaches to mastering subjects.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this multiple case study are restricted by the researcher’s abilities as an observer, interviewer, and by the biases formed from educational experiences (Hatch 2002; Merriam, 1998). Naturally, limitations occurred by amount of case study participants, the location of school sites, and the demographics associated with school sites. However, the participants ranged in experience, grade level taught, and demographic information. Furthermore, the study was limited to the amount of time spent interviewing participants, the length of time observing the participants teaching in the classroom.

**Sample**

This multiple case study was limited by the number of participants. An initial number of 20 participants was desired for this case study to provide for larger saturation. However, 12 participants from multiple schools, in one district, decided to take part in the study. The study is also limited to the data gathered from each participant, which is formed from their own beliefs and experiences (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Likewise, the participants were chosen using the purposeful sampling method. This method of selecting possible participants is ideal for providing an in depth understanding of the phenomenon, however the small number of participants provides limitations of providing generalizations to a larger community (Booth et al.; Creswell, 2013).
Study Design

This multiple case study is limited by my conception of the study’s interview questions. Further limitations occurred by observing the participants in the classroom due to time, natural and manmade events, and participants perceptions of the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Moreover, the study design is limited by my experience as a researcher.

Research Method

This multiple case study was designed and completed to reveal more understanding and additional practices of transformational teaching theory. The data collected in this study reflected the accounts of 12 participants experiences. Limitations also occur from the perceptions the participants own teaching practice, perceptions of the students they serve, the community the participants work in, and the effects of the participants own environment. Likewise, the data collected and analyzed from this case study revealed themes that are possible unique to this group of participants. The uniqueness of the developed case study themes does not provide a generalization for all teaching practices.

Data Collection

Limitations in data collection occurred from the actual processes of data collection from the semistructured interview questions, and from data collected from the observations. For example, the semistructured interview questions provided a foundation of understanding the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. However, the data collected revealed a minute amount of understanding from a small sample of participants, and further interviews would have added a more in depth understanding of the teacher’s experiences. Additionally, participants indicated that they were worried if they answered the question correctly, and this response from the participants indicates that they were possibly framing their answers to please the interviewer.
However, additional discussion with the participants allowed them to attempt to reveal their own experiences and understanding of the questions asked, as opposed to what is the correct answer to a question. Equally, the semistructured interview data provides a foundation for expansion and further data collection processes for future studies by revealing new experiences of teaching and personal vocation that is possibly associated with transformational teaching and the ability to achieve student success.

The data collected from observations are limited due to the small amount of data collected from the participants. For example, a broaden expansion of the phenomenon will possibly occur with a larger sample size (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, observations took place at an agreed upon time and day, and the teachers were prepared for the observation. It is possible the participant prepared lessons for the purpose of the observation. However, my intentions were to document the behavior and actions of the teacher as they took place, in a natural setting a possible (Creswell, 2013). Likewise, participants reacted to changing circumstances and behaviors of the student as they occurred. As such, the data collected from the observed participants provides a foundation for further research of the phenomenon.

**Implications of the Results for the Practice, Policy, and Theory**

The practices associated with the education of children when associated with transformation teaching reveal results and implications of possible improvements in students’ successes. The implications of the study’ results imply that policies must be aware of transformational teaching theories to better serve students. In this section of the study, I discuss the implications of the study’s results based on constructivist theory, and the practices and policies associated with transformational teaching.
Practice

Teaching practices have changed to accommodate urban school populations, as new understanding of students becomes acknowledged (White, Brown, Viator, Bryne, & Lorraine (2017). Transformational teaching supports the change for teaching practices by incorporating development of the student in both academics and personal achievements (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Participants reported they are in a constant state of adjustment and adaption to the changing school demographics and environment of the community. Each participant also related they are eager to find new practices and eager to learn about their changing community of students and stakeholders. The implications of this study provide additional insights to support that transformational teaching practices may have a significant impact on the success of the student in both academics and improvement in a student’s personal life. New and current teachers may use the findings of this study to help them implement transformational teaching practices to help serve their changing and highly diverse student population.

Teacher responsibility. Teacher are in the forefront of implementing and acceptance of new policy and practices. Teachers should model their teaching practice after transformational teaching to form a framework and community wide acceptance of being a transformational teaching school that is dedicated to serving the needs of the whole student. For example, implementation of transformational teaching and acceptance may first be completed by self-identifying as a transformational teacher. Teachers should model the transformational teaching practices with an emphasis on the transformation of the individual student. Teachers should also continue to use their expertise and experience as a main support for transformational teaching.
The reasoning of this support is to integrate teacher experiences, tacit knowledge, and guidance to create a framework for the transformational teaching practices used at the school district.

**Development of practice.** Next, teachers may cocreate a theoretical outlook and teaching philosophy that mirrors key elements of transformational teaching. Then teachers should create new curriculum and pedagogic practices, and integrate current practices to form a transformational teaching practice guideline that current and preservice teachers can use to help them practice transformational teaching. Teachers should have a significant role in development of the transformational teaching practices used in the school and district. The teacher in this case study have years of experience in the school district, and choose to serve their community. Subsequently, teachers should continue to support other teachers in holistic manner to help continue development and understanding of the environment and changing community they serve.

**Teacher support systems.** Likewise, teachers should create meeting times to analyze transformational teaching practices, and the current and future community that the teachers serve. Teachers should also develop support systems for struggling teachers that are designed to mentor, and guide teachers towards continued improvement. Although participants stated the current support practice in place, the participants also noted there are no current support systems that allow teachers support beyond professional development. The focus of these support systems is to provide stability of teachers in the school system, as the challenges of teaching evolve to support changing environments.

**Expand professional development.** Current teachers should be directly involved in the creation of professional development for transformational teaching practices. Participants shared experiences that have accumulated from years of experience. Additionally, participants noted
their interest in helping other teachers, and direct involvement in past and current teacher coaching, and professional development trainings for other teachers within their school district. Likewise, teacher involvement in the creation of transformational teaching professional development opportunities may help in the creation of realistic and current understanding of transformational teaching that serve current and future students.

Lastly, teachers should work with school administrators in the development and implantation of transformational teaching as the framework for serving the schools districts students. The teacher and administrative bond should be further developed as means of implementing the transformational teacher practice as the theoretical outlook of the entire school system. Teachers and administrators should use transformational teaching as means of possible self-improvement. Teachers and administrators may incorporate the transformational teaching techniques into their own learning experiences as a means of holistic development for teachers and administrators.

**Policy**

This study revealed and identified the individual experiences of teachers who use transformational type practices in their classrooms and recommendations to improve transformational teaching practices. This study identified the study’s participants did not identify with transformational teaching, but the teachers used elements of transformational teaching practices, expanded supporting practices, and theoretical viewpoints to help improve students in a holistic manner. Participants shared they were well supported in discovering methods of practice to help serve students in a holistic manner. Moreover, the participants’ shared their school district implemented holistic approaches to help better serve students that facilitate student and teacher communication, and personal growth of student. Additionally, participants
relayed the administration’s support in using practices that helped teachers become familiar with the students’ background, and environment. The implications of these finding may help school systems develop and implement transformational teaching practices to help current and future students. Moreover, the identification of these finding may help develop new teacher education curriculum by implementing the finding from this study to create future preservice teacher education, and current teaching professional development programs.

**Preservice teachers.** The teachers in this case study revealed having little knowledge preservice knowledge of how to serve students who have experienced toxic stress from experiences in their environment. Moreover, participants revealed high levels of struggle as they entered the teaching professions as new teachers. In response to these shared experiences, teacher education programs should focus on the challenges of serving students in high needs areas, and those students that specially have experienced trauma, and toxic stress due to environmental experiences.

Teacher preparation programs should incorporate the current needs of teachers to help students in a holistic manner that focuses on helping students examine current problems, and approaches to problems to help the student to eventually succeed. Teacher education programs should examine current teaching practices of high needs school districts and gather information from experienced, and newer teachers to form teacher education curriculum that focuses on helping teachers adapt to and understand the complexities of current student and stakeholder communities they may serve. Lastly, teacher preparation programs should adopt a theoretical framework based on transformational teaching so that teachers have a foundation of understanding and practices that are dedicated at complete development of students, which incorporates whole student improvements. Teacher education programs should also prepare
teachers to view teaching practices as a shared experience with the teacher and student, and other stakeholders. This shared experience helps provide the student with various forms of contribution into their own education, which aligns with transformational teaching practices, and the constructivist approach to learning.

Constructivist Theory

The theoretical framework work of this study is modeled after the constructivist theory of learning. The participants in this study created new understandings and teaching practices in the realm of transformational teaching by combining prior experiences with new experiences (Fernando et al., 2017; Fosnot, 2013; Miller-First et al., 2017). This study’s findings communicate that it is imperative teachers develop and improve their teaching practices to adapt to the changing student population, and environmental conditions that affect student performance and successes. The implication of developing new knowledge creates approaches to teaching that specifically help students suffering from toxic stress, poverty, biases, and other environmental conditions such as violence, and homelessness (Fernando et al., 2017; Fosnot, 2013; Miller-First et al., 2017). Although, transformational teaching is not a teaching practice exclusively dedicated to serving at risk students, the teacher’s experience of developing new understandings and practices provided positive impact in student lives (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017).

The teachers developed transformational teaching practices by acknowledging their own viewpoints of the student they serve (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). For example, the teachers that participated in this study revealed their passion for knowing their student lives, and learning from student’s experiences to create relevant teaching practices to serve individual students. Then, veteran teachers adapted to changes in school environment, and the changing community the teachers serve. Next, all teachers revealed they shared knowledge with other
teachers to create new knowledge to help students improve in a holistic manner. This knowledge was shared using specific grade level professional development sessions with other teachers, and by mentoring new and experienced teachers. Additionally, participants shared that teacher developed improved teaching practices based on support from their own mentors and previous administrators, often revealing a high-quality support during their first years of teaching practice. However, the first-year support systems were reported by the most experienced teachers that participated in this case study.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This multiple case study focused on 12 participants located in one school district. The 12 participants serve a socioeconomically distressed community of students, which often also suffer from various forms of toxic stress. Additionally, the 12 participants did not specifically identify as transformational teachers in this study. Recommendations for further research should be directed at larger sample size. For example, future researchers must recruit a larger number of teachers to help further develop understanding of the phenomenon, and to identify current and new practices that are possibly applicable to a larger student community. Likewise, other case studies should incorporate other school districts with similar challenges, and larger populations of students.

Furthermore, researchers must investigate the influence of the teachers own funds of knowledge, experiences, and training in school districts that have incorporated transformational teaching practices, if possible. The investigation of transformational teaching schools and their teachers will provide more detail and insight into the transformational teaching practices. By completing research at transformational teaching schools, researchers will be able to discover
successful current practices, and more importantly, researchers may uncover problems that are directly associated with the transformational teaching practice.

**Observations**

Participant observations should take place over a larger time period. More information should be collected from multiple observations for the purpose of better informing the researcher of how teachers interact, behave, and practice transformational teaching techniques. Key elements of transformational teaching include the teacher’s behavior, and ability to interact with their students (Slavich & Zimbardo; 2012; Taylor, 2017). These key elements of transformational teaching are difficult to analyze when one observation is conducted on a teacher. Additionally, multiple observations will allow researchers to possible observe various circumstance and situations that are common and uncommon in the classroom. Data collection from multiple observations also encourages and supports triangulation of evidence so that researchers can better communicate the experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Hatch 2002).

**Semistructured Interviews**

Additional interviews should take place to gather a more complete understanding of the participant, and how the participant interacts with context of transformational teaching. Multiple semistructured interviews would allow the researcher a chance of forming a type of relationship with the participant that is based on trust (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, building trust would assist the participant in communicating their experiences, and beliefs without the pressure of limited time frames, and preconceived expectation of the interviewee and interviewer (Creswell, 2013).
**Documents and Artifacts**

If possible, documents and artifacts should be collected for future case studies. Documents supporting the participants’ experiences, trainings, curriculum, and practices should be analyzed by researchers to develop a deeper understanding the participants’ experiences, and practices that are associated with teaching and transformational teaching practices (Creswell, 2013). For example, a participant’s journal entries may provide deeper insight and support of evidence if collected. Additionally, lesson plans may be analyzed to help better inform the researcher of the participants’ practices. Likewise, communications between teachers, teacher coaches, and teacher mentors may also add depth to understanding the participant as they experience the phenomenon, and other educational environments (Creswell, 2013).

**Additional Recommendations**

Researchers should recruit teachers and school districts that identify as transformational teaching educators to have a more in-depth approach and understanding of how transformational teaching takes place in the school environment. Likewise, researchers should study a diverse teacher population located in different areas, which serve other diverse populations of students. A wider variety of participants may assist researchers in discovery of potential problems in specific areas and common problems associate with a large area of study. Transformational teaching identified teachers may also have different perspectives about how to best serve students, and how the school community and stakeholders view the transformational teaching practices and framework promoted by the school or school district.

This study could also be used to support a larger quantitative study that explores transformation teaching practices and personal teacher educational philosophies to gain a greater understanding of the specific transformational teaching characteristics.
**Conclusion**

My intention of this multiple case study was to build on the previous knowledge related to transformational teaching. Additionally, I wanted future teachers and researchers to possibly apply this knowledge to further development and practice of transformational teaching with the ultimate goal of serving students in an improved capacity. Lastly, my goal was to gain personal insight and attempt to develop proficiency in transformational teaching so that I can improve my own teaching, and help other teachers improve their practice.

In Chapter 1, the first research question explored how teacher use transformational teaching as means of serving students. This study revealed that teachers use transformational teaching strategies and frameworks to serve high needs students with success. Although, success was revealed to be an individual student accomplishment, as opposed to that of achieving high grades, or passing a standardized test. Additionally, the study revealed that the participants embraced a deep professional passion for children, or type of love for the children they serve. The study also revealed that teachers cared deeply about their students’ personal experiences, and they care deeply about their experience in the school and classroom community.

The second research question investigated what additional practices teacher may add to transformational teaching. This study found that teachers should passionately attempt to understand their students by incorporating a means of communications between the student and the teacher, or other school staff members. Furthermore, teachers recommended and displayed that teachers develop a classroom of discovery, sharing, and safety for their students. Teachers also indicated their students often view their classrooms and schools as the only safe situation the student experiences, and that teacher should maintain this environment for the students.
The teachers’ experiences in this multiple case study represent the attempt to help highly in-need students become successful. Participants also shared that successes of students in a directly related to the individual student, and success for the individual student is highly diverse and evolving. These teacher experiences also add to the transformational teaching practice, and support the constructivist approach to learning. It is the intention of this dissertation to help develop teaching practices, and to ultimately help students improve their lives and academic experiences. The findings of this study add to current literature, and creates a foundation for larger future studies.
References


Moustafa, A., Ben-Zvi-Assaraf, O., & Eshach, H. (2013). Do junior high school students perceive their learning environment as constructivist? *Journal of Science Education and...*


Appendix A: Semistructured Interview Instrument

1. How many years have you been a teacher?
2. What motivated you to become a teacher?
3. In what ways do you see do you see yourself as a classroom leader or manager?
4. What does transformational teaching mean to you?
5. What type(s) of leadership techniques do you use in the classroom, and why?
6. Are there specific leadership techniques you use to help students succeed?
7. What do you consider to be student success?
8. How did you learn to lead in the classroom?
9. Do you help other teachers become transformational teachers? If so, why?
10. Why should students feel safe, and have less fear in the school environment?
11. What aspects of a student’s life do you know and understand?
12. How do you address the students’ environment, and funds of knowledge, to help with student success?
13. What recommendations would you make to help transformational teaching processes take place and grow?
Appendix B: Observation Checklist

1. Describe the setting and how the setting affects behavior.

2. Describe the participants who are in the setting, and their positions and roles.

3. Describe the participants’ activities and interactions.

4. Describe the frequency and duration of the observations and look for themes or patterns in the observations, events, and activities.

5. Describe the subtle factors that are symbolic, nonverbal, and non-occurrences of implied actions (Merriam, 1991).
## Appendix C: Observation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed practice</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher reads high-quality literature to students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher generates prior knowledge around topics, concepts, or content to be read to, with, or by students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clear purpose is set for reading (e.g., self-generated questions, predictions).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher stops at meaningful intervals to check for students’ comprehension of text. (Text structure and content dictate appropriate stopping points).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are provided small group, differentiated instruction with appropriate-level texts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher provides scaffolded instruction by first modeling a comprehension strategy, and then by providing guided and independent practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher helps students make extensive connections to other texts, the world, and/or self, through writing and talking about the text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher asks questions that help students to clarify and extend their thinking (analyze, synthesize, compare/contrast, evaluate, etc.); and provides extensive opportunities for them to generate higher order questions and refer to the text to support their responses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher provides extensive opportunities for sustained student-to-student interaction to help them construct meaning of key content area concepts in text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D: Stages of Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Description of Analysis Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview/reading of the data</td>
<td>Transcribe the data/re-read data and record initial thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop initial codes</td>
<td>Code initial data and organize data into codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop themes</td>
<td>Organize data into themes, and categorize into potential themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review themes</td>
<td>Examine themes as related to codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reexamine data for additional themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish themes</td>
<td>Define and name themes, establish connection between themes and research questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Consent Form

**Research Study Title:** Transformational Teaching: Helping Teachers Become Educators  
**Principal Investigator:** Sean G. Warman  
**Research Institution:** Concordia University–Portland  
**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Edward Kim

**Purpose and what you will be doing:**  
The purpose of this case study is to help expand the transformational teaching theory. We expect to need approximately 20 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on 15 August 2018, and end enrollment on 20 December 2018. To be in the study, you will participate in an interview and answer 13 questions. Additionally, you will be observed in your classroom as you practice teaching. The interviews will take about 1–2 hours of your time. The observation periods will last 1–2 hours for 1–5 days.

**Risks:**  
There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so that it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a home office safe. When I, the investigator, look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use a code when analyzing the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times, and all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after conclusion of this study. Additionally, all recordings will be deleted upon transcription and member checking.

**Benefits:**  
Information you provide will help current and future teachers adapt their practice to our diverse student community, which will help our students succeed.

**Confidentiality:**  
This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us of abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**  
Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with, or end your participation in, the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.
Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions, you can talk to or write the principal investigator, [email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

________________________________________________________________________
Participant Name                        Date

________________________________________________________________________
Participant Signature                   Date

__Sean G. Warman____________________  ___________
Investigator Name                      Date

________________________________________________________________________
Investigator Signature                 Date

Investigator: Sean Warman email: [redacted]
c/o: Professor Dr. Edward Kim
Concordia University–Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon 97221
Appendix F: Permission Letter

[Name of school contact]
[Name of school]
[Street address of school]
[City, State, Zip of school]

Re: Case Study on Transformational Teaching, by Sean Warman

Dear [name of school contact],

I am writing you to ask for permission to conduct a case study that examines transformational teaching. This case study will take place in the next school year. I am currently enrolled in a Doctor of Education program at Concordia University–Portland, Oregon. My research on the transformational teaching phenomenon focuses on how this teaching theory might help current and future teachers apply their practice for underserved students. Moreover, the goal of this qualitative case study is to gain further insight and discoveries that will help students succeed and participate in deep, high-level learning. As you know, students suffer from their environments and high levels of stress, and experience extraordinary fear. These aspects of the students’ environments can impede learning and performance. It is my intention to examine how teacher practices can add to the transformational teaching theory.

No students will be involved in the case study. However, my intention is to collect data by interviewing 20 teachers, and by observing the teachers in their classroom settings. All teachers and the school location will be kept confidential. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity. I have also included a sample permission letter that is addressed to the institutional review board. If you have any further questions, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Sean Warman
Investigator
Concordia University
[phone]
[email]
Appendix G: Recruitment Letter

May 28, 2018

[Prospective participant name]
[mailing address]

Dear Potential Participant,

I am writing to ask if you would volunteer to participate in a case study that examines transformational teaching. This case study will take place in the next school year. I am currently enrolled in a Doctor of Education program at Concordia University–Portland, Oregon. My research on the transformational teaching phenomenon focuses on how this teaching theory might help current and future teachers apply their practice for underserved students. Moreover, the goal of this qualitative case study is to gain further insight and discoveries that will help students succeed and participate in deep, high-level learning. It is my intention to examine how teacher practices will add to the transformational teaching theory.

No students will be involved in the case study. However, your participation is required to collect data. The data will be collected by interviewing 20 teachers, and by observing the teachers in their classroom settings. All teachers and the school location will be kept confidential. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Thank you for considering this important contribution to helping both students and teachers. If you have any further questions, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Sean Warman
Investigator
Concordia University–Portland
Appendix I: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.
Statement of Original Work (continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University- Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association.

[Signature]

Digital Signature

Sean G. Warman

Name (Typed)

March 26, 2020

Date