2012-03-17

Diverse Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of a University's Special Education Preparation Program

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Special Education Preparation Program

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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April 2012

ABSTRACT

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Special Education Preparation Program

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As part of a four year professional development program centered on increasing cultural responsiveness at Brigham Young University, special education faculty members conducted interviews with teacher candidates who had completed the special education program. The interviews primarily focused on the candidates' experiences during their time in the program. The interviews were audio and/or videotaped and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were then analyzed using the inductive analysis design for qualitative research (Hatch, 2002). The candidates expressed what types of learning activities as well as what professors did or did not do that helped them to be successful. Also emerging from the interviews were suggestions that would benefit future culturally and linguistically diverse candidates. The suggestions were directed toward what professors can do as well as changes that can be made in the overall program. The professors' ability to accommodate for language needs, the relationships between teacher candidates and professors, and the learning environment were most common areas of improvement for professors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for Dr. Mary Anne Prater. She has been patient and helpful throughout this whole process and has made completing this degree from out of state possible for me. Her dedication to the field of special education is exemplary and I hope to follow her example of continuously learning and growing.

Next, I would like to thank Dr. Gordon Gibb for his continual support and for making my undergraduate as well as my graduate experience a positive and enjoyable journey. His enthusiasm toward special education is contagious.

I would also like to thank Dr. Aaron Jackson who was a great help and support in better understanding qualitative studies and providing excellent feedback to improve this study.

Dr. Nari Carter was an amazing support throughout this entire process. She was helpful in guiding me in the analysis process and was constantly offering support and feedback throughout the entire process. Her guidance as well as her knowledge and skills were invaluable to me.

My husband was my number one support. He helped me in so many ways, but most importantly he believed in me and knew that I could do whatever I set my mind to. His support and help throughout my graduate studies was unfaltering. I appreciate all of the cooking and cleaning he did around the house as well as the hours he spent helping edit my papers and helping me see the study from another perspective.

My parents and siblings have been a wonderful support group and I appreciate all the love and kindness they have shown me throughout this process.

Lastly, I would like to thank my Heavenly Father. He has helped me to see the entire picture, but with only taking one step at a time. I know that He believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

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DESCRIPTION OF THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis, *Culturally and/or Linguistically Diverse Teachers' Perceptions of a University's Special Education/English as a Second Language Preparation Program*, is written in a hybrid format. The hybrid format brings together traditional thesis requirements and journal publication formats. The preliminary pages of the thesis reflect requirements for submission to the university. The thesis report is presented as a journal article, and conforms to length and style requirements for submitting research reports to education journals. The literature review is included in Appendix A. Appendix B includes the consent form. The interview questions are located in Appendix C.

This thesis format contains two reference lists. The first reference list contains references included in the journal-ready article. The second list includes all citations used in both the journal-ready article and the section entitled "Review of the Literature."

Introduction

Across the nation there is disproportionality between the demographic of students being served in special education and the teachers working in special education. According to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, in 2008, 45.1% of students receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) were from non-White ethnic groups. In contrast, the percentage of non-White special educators providing services for special education students was 14.5%.

Research has shown benefits of a diverse teacher population in general. Diverse teachers are able to act as authority figures with similar cultural values and serve as role models for diverse students (Campbell-Whatley, 2003). Diverse teachers are able to instill positive images and an array of perspectives in their students (Torres, Santos, Peck, Cortes, & Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Lab, 2004). According to Smith et al. (2000), diverse teachers are able to increase the comfort levels of diverse students. When students connect with their teacher they are more motivated and committed to their schoolwork and they have a lower probability to receive or continue services within special education (Campbell-Whatley, 2003).

In order to increase the percentage of culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CLD) teachers within schools, various methods of recruitment should be established in teacher preparation programs to ensure their academic success within the programs. Futrell (1999) recommends specific strategies for recruiting a diverse field of educators. The strategies she suggests include providing students interested in teacher education programs with financial aid and developing strong mentor programs within the education program as well as in their first year of teaching. Other recruitment efforts could include using CLD students in current programs

as recruiters, producing media campaigns, and publishing success stories of graduates (Tyler, Ysquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Flippin, 2004).

Once CLD students are accepted into teacher education programs, program completion is not guaranteed. Some barriers to program completion include perceived racism among peers (Torres et al., 2004), increase in tuition rates (Futrell, 1999), a nonsupportive educational climate (Campbell-Whatley, 2003), and wider career options for CLD students (Torres et al., 2004).

University professors and staff within teacher education need to be aware of potential academic barriers for CLD students and plan courses accordingly. To do so requires educators to possess the knowledge and skills to effectively teach CLD learners (Ambe, 2006). Devereaux, Prater, Jackson, Heath, and Carter (2010) stated three reasons why teacher educators need to be culturally competent. First, many teacher educators lack personal experience working with a diverse student population (Smolen, Colville-Hall, Liang, & MacDonald, 2006). Second, teacher educators need to be prepared to instruct future teachers on how to incorporate specific knowledge and skills to work with a diverse student body (Gay, 2002). Third, teacher educators need to be able to respond to changing demographics within the university setting (Prater, Wilder, & Dyches, 2008).

In order to increase multicultural awareness in university faculty, professional development activities should be put in place that focus on the needs of a diverse student body. Professional development activities can help inform professors and staff about the most effective methods to support and retain CLD students. One such method is to ask faculty to study individuals different than themselves (Ambe, 2006).

One method to study individuals different from themselves is to conduct home visits with the students. Home visits have been studied extensively in elementary and secondary education

(Korfmacher et al., 2008; Lin & Bates, 2010; Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008; Meyer & Mann, 2006; Peralta-Nash, 2003). Home visits are a necessary component of a cross-cultural learning experience that will increase the teacher's understanding of students and their families (Peralta-Nash, 2003). Home visits create more empathy from teacher to student and help teachers develop better perspectives of what the students' challenges and successes might be in an academic setting. By conducting home visits, teachers are more likely to create collaborative relationships with the students' families (Korfmacher et al., 2008).

In 2004, Brigham Young University's special education program received a U.S. Department of Education grant to support university students majoring in special education and minoring in English as a Second Language (Prater et al., 2008; Prater & Dyches, 2011). Priority was given to students who represented ethnically diverse populations and those who were bilingual or had a disability. With the financial incentive of paid tuition, many additional ethnically diverse students were admitted into the program. In fact, in 2005, the number of ethnically diverse students increased by 700% (i.e., from three to 22 non-White teacher candidates) (Prater & Dyches, 2011).

In order to assist these students in a positive educational experience, professors and faculty members within the special education department participated in a series of professional development activities that focused on culturally responsive practices. One activity in particular consisted of university professors and faculty members entering the homes of diverse teacher candidates and interviewing them. The purpose of the interviews and other professional development activities was to help the faculty understand how they could modify their courses to increase the success of CLD students. By modifying their courses, faculty would be able to teach

through example how future special education teachers can be more culturally responsive (Devereaux, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Little research has been conducted focusing on CLD students preparing to be special educators. The proportion of CLD individuals entering the education field does not match the proportion of CLD students being served in the education system. As the nation's school demographics continue to diversify, it is important to recruit and retain quality CLD teachers who will maintain professions in the education field. It is critical to identify the most effective ways to accommodate and modify instruction to ensure success for CLD teacher candidates.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of CLD candidates in the special education teacher preparation program at Brigham Young University. Becoming familiar with CLD candidates' experiences can assist faculty members in modifying their courses to improve diverse teacher candidate success.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions:

1   What are the personal cross-cultural experiences of culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CLD) teacher candidates completing a special education and ESL teacher preparation program?

2   Based on personal experiences within the program, what suggestions do (CLD) teacher candidates have to improve the program for future CLD teacher candidates?

Importance of the Study

No research was located that consisted of university faculty members interviewing

special education teacher candidates in their homes for the purpose of becoming more acquainted

with the students and their cultural backgrounds. This practice is done, however, in pre-K as well

as K–12 schools. Although there is a significant age gap between pre-K and university programs,

it is important to note that one pre-K study found that when teachers learn to appreciate students

and their backgrounds, they will be more likely to create a loving and caring environment (Lin &

Bates, 2010). Home visits can provide teachers with a better understanding of students' needs,

both academically and socially (Lin et al., 2008).

When faculty members are more aware of the successes and challenges that CLD

candidates face in a higher education setting, they will be more likely to adapt their programs

accordingly. With an increase in positive experiences, diverse candidates in the field of special

education will be more likely to succeed in completing teacher education programs. With more

CLD teachers in special education, diverse students with disabilities will benefit.

Method

Faculty members in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education at

Brigham Young University voluntarily participated in professional development activities

focused on cultural responsiveness. As part of the professional development, faculty members

interviewed CLD teacher candidates enrolled in BYU's special education/ESL program about

their experiences in the program. The purpose of this study was to determine CLD candidates'

perceptions of the program. Faculty members will use this information to better understand CLD

candidates' experiences while in the program and modify their courses to more effectively meet the candidates' needs.

Participants

Participants for this study were 13 teacher candidates enrolled in the special education/ESL program at BYU who volunteered to be interviewed, including ten females and three males. Of the 13 students, nine reported being of Hispanic ethnicity, one Asian, two Pacific Islanders, and one Caucasian. They were between the ages of 25 and 60. The interviews took place in the homes of the participants. In some cases, other members of the participants' families were present and added comments.

Procedures

Teacher candidates who were (a) currently enrolled in the special education/ESL undergraduate or post-baccalaureate program and (b) culturally and/or linguistically diverse were asked to volunteer to participate. Those who volunteered were matched with special education faculty members. All of the 13 faculty members who participated in the professional development series also participated in this particular activity. The faculty members contacted the candidates and arranged a day and time for them to meet at the candidate's home for the interview. The interviews were conducted in the homes in order to decrease the power structure of a faculty member interviewing a teacher candidate within the program. Each faculty member was accompanied by a second person (e.g., staff member, another candidate), who assisted with the recording devices. The second person was asked not to participate during the interviews, but sometimes they did participate by making comments during the interviews. Interviews were conducted between participating faculty and teacher candidates.

Interviews typically lasted one hour. Each interview was audio-taped and/or videotaped and was guided by the following questions:

- Tell me about your family and home prior to living in Provo, Utah.

- Tell me about your parents and what they mean to you.

- Tell me about some of your childhood memories.

- Tell me some of the things you and your family have given up or sacrificed in order to be in the special education/ESL program.

- What are some of the activities/assignments you have had in your special education/ESL classes that you enjoyed and that helped you learn?

- How do you like to show what you have learned in a course? Essay tests? Multiple choice tests? Classroom activities? Cooperative, group activities? Presentations? Other?

- Describe your greatest academic challenges or difficulties in the special education/ESL program at BYU.

- Describe the best thing a professor ever did to help you succeed academically.

- If I could explain to teachers how to help me/my children succeed in school, I would say . . .

- What would you like me to know about your culture or language, and how may language or culture affect your ability to be academically successful at BYU?

The questions provided an outline for conducting the interviews. Faculty used follow-up questions to qualify or expand initial responses. Verbatim transcriptions were completed after the interviews were conducted. Data analyses of interviews were based on procedures described by Hatch (2002).

Research Design

Qualitative research is a method used to describe and interpret the research participants' experiences and interpret those experiences in a specific setting (Ponterotto, 2005). This study employed a post-positivist paradigm. Ponterotto describes post-positivism as accepting an objective reality, while acknowledging that it is not perfectly attainable (2005). According to Hatch (2002), reality does exist, but it can never be fully understood due to human limitations. Yet, through disciplined research, approximations of reality can be obtained (Hatch). Therefore, we can accept an objective reality.

The primary investigator was a white female graduate student in the special education program at Brigham Young University. The primary investigator follows the post-positivist paradigm. It is important to understand how an individual's beliefs compare to universal truth. One's worldview is based on individual life experiences as opposed to understanding universal experiences.

Data Analysis

An analysis was taken of the interview transcriptions according to the nine steps in inductive analysis adapted from Hatch (2002). Hatch describes inductive analysis as using specific elements to find connections within the data:

1. The analysts read the transcriptions, and segments of text with one idea, or piece of information, were identified.
2. Domains were created based on relationships within the data.
3. Domains specific to the research were given a code.
4. The analysts read the interviews again to determine relevancy and relationships within the data that were recorded.

5. The researcher decided if the domains were supported by the data and looked at examples to determine if the data did or did not fit with the relationships in the domains.

6. An analysis was completed within the domains.

7. The researcher looked for themes in the data that brought the ideas together.

8. The researcher created a master outline to show relationships within domains.

9. The research selected excerpts from the data that support the elements within the outline.

In order to achieve consistency, two individuals read and coded the data. Both of the individuals read the interviews, first separately and then together. The first time they read interviews, they wrote important themes (frames of analyses) in the margins of the interview. Codes were assigned to the frames of analyses, and an outline was developed according to themes and subthemes found in the data.

Next, the researchers read each interview together and discussed the themes. The themes were retained if both researchers agreed that they were pertinent to the study. If the researchers did not agree to the themes, they discussed how the themes aligned with the study and came to a consensus as to which ones would be appropriate. Once the themes were established, subthemes were identified to organize the data. Both researchers agreed on the themes and subthemes within the data to ensure relevancy to the study.

Results

Teacher candidates discussed their experiences within the program and offered suggestions for further program improvement for multicultural teacher candidates. The results are discussed in terms of the teacher candidates' experiences and their suggestions for improvement of the program. The candidates' self-reflections of the program are divided between personal learning style and professors, which are then divided into three subthemes each. The

theme of suggestions for the program is divided between suggestions for professors and

suggestions for the overall program. Each of those is also divided into three subthemes. Figure 1

summarizes the themes and subthemes described.

```
                          Program Interviews
          Self                              Suggestions
        Reflection
   Learning                    Professors   Professors          Program
    Style

Group Activities    Accommodations          Accommodations      Programs
                                                                Taught

  Hands-On           Relationships           Relationships      Classroom
                                                                Helps

 Assessments          Learning                Learning          Hands On
                     Environment             Environment        Experience
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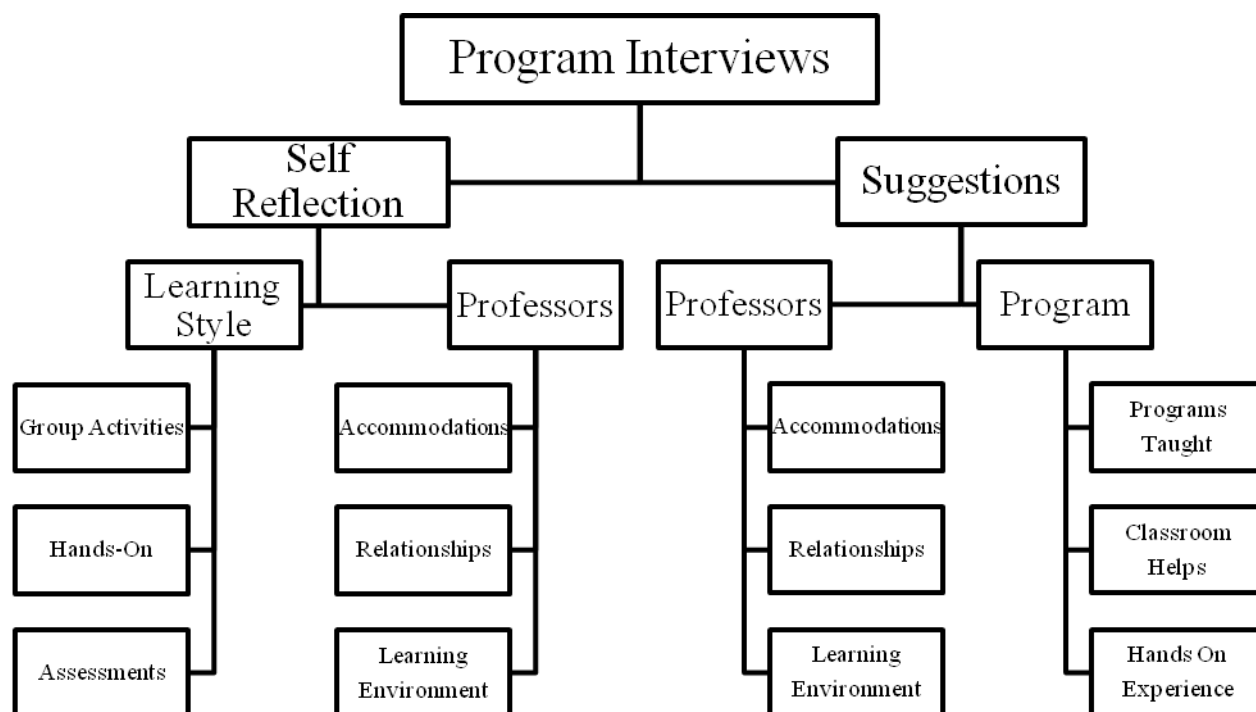
Figure 1. Coding scheme used for the interview analysis

Self-Reflections within the Teacher Preparation Program

Teacher candidates were asked to describe the types of activities and assignments that

helped them learn the required curriculum. Group activities, hands-on learning opportunities, and

various methods of assessments were commonly discussed. Similarly, participants were asked

what professors did to help them succeed academically. Common themes included

accommodations, relationships, and the classroom learning environment.

Learning style of teacher candidates. Teacher candidates reported that working together to complete group projects and assessments was beneficial to learning outcomes. One teacher candidate commented, "In verbalizing back and forth and amongst each other, it helps me remember a lot more, instead of me sitting at home trying to memorize a list." Another candidate stated, "I love working in groups. I feel that's where I can actually express my ideas and maybe whoever's with me can help clarify those ideas."

Although many of the candidates expressed positive outcomes of group activities, there were strong opinions against group activities. One candidate felt that there was a lot of wasted time when groups would try to get together. Another stated that she liked to keep to herself and do assignments on her own without the hassle of doing things as a group.

Hands-on activities were another method to learning new material. Teacher candidates enjoyed hands-on activities where they were able to apply new concepts. One teacher candidate stated, "I learn by doing, by being with students, by being with children and figuring out what is the best way that they learn." Another stated, "I like to do, and by doing I learn." Teacher candidates reported only positive experiences when working on assignments that they were able to apply directly. For example, when the candidates were given assignments to work on directly with students, they felt that gave them more confidence to continue working with students in the school setting.

Three forms of assessments were discussed in the interviews: presentations, tests, and writing papers. Presentations were expressed as positive experiences. According to one teacher candidate, "I liked the presentation because it helps you to synthesize all that information that you've gone over and apply it." Tests—essay tests in particular—were generally viewed as a negative form of assessing for content. Multiple teacher candidates reported negativity toward

essay tests because they were not comfortable expressing their knowledge in written English. However, one student reported that essay tests were his favorite form of assessment as long as he wasn't graded on grammar and spelling. Writing papers was reported as challenging. The teacher candidates who discussed writing mentioned that they understood the need for high expectations for college-level papers, but that they struggled finding ways to convey what they wanted to say. One candidate reported, "Writing is a big struggle for me. That is the hardest part; and from all the people that I talk to that are Hispanic, the hardest part they say."

Reflections of interactions with professors. Professors and faculty played an important role in the experiences of CLD teacher candidates. When professors provided accommodations within the context of the courses, CLD teacher candidates felt that they were given opportunities to be successful. Multiple candidates stated that it was very helpful when they were given the opportunity to redo written assignments for a higher grade, knowing what they needed to improve. The teacher candidates also reported it as helpful when their teachers took the time to re-explain assignments and rubrics. One candidate noted, "She would model the assignment. . . . We'd go through it step by step by step, then she'd explain the rubric."

The teacher candidates stated that they felt more comfortable in classes where they could identify that their teachers were happy to work with them. The candidates could tell when a teacher was going through the motions of the class but was unapproachable if it wasn't class time or specified office hours. When the teachers took extra time to get to know the teacher candidates and find ways to support them, the teacher candidates' confidence levels increased, and they felt more successful. When discussing a certain teacher, one candidate stated, "She's always very passionate in what she does. She values all of us. She cares. She knows our name and she doesn't forget. . . . It's like you can tell that she loves teaching."

A common theme discussed in the interviews was whether the learning environment created by professors was negative or positive. One candidate reported that while some professors embraced the diversity the CLD students brought into the classes, other professors had a more difficult time accepting it. The candidate reported that although negative comments were not made, the perception was that different professors treated them differently. Below is an example:

> There's a different feeling with different professors, different feeling when you go into the room where you feel like okay, you're the boss, I'm the students and that's just going to be our relationship. And you go into other rooms where it's like, okay, you're the teacher and you're going to help me succeed and you're going to do everything you can to make me succeed in this program. You just know you have different feelings.

In addition to recognizing the difference between professors who treated students fairly or not, one candidate reported the he felt as though he was negatively targeted as one of the ESL candidates. He reported that with a couple of professors, he felt he needed to defend his assignments and what he did on them, when at the same time another candidate who was not part of the ESL cohort could turn in an assignment of similar quality and not be asked questions about it.

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Although the teacher candidates were not asked direct questions about suggestions for improving the program, many suggestions surfaced. These recommendations can be categorized as directed toward the program and directed more specifically to the professors.

Recommendations for professors. Suggestions for professors included allowing extra time on tests, giving teacher candidates different options for assessing their knowledge of learned

skills, and simplifying directions given on assignments to ensure everyone is at the same level of understanding of tasks. One person stated, "I think a lot of our assignments can be explained well, but when they're written it's hard to follow. So just making really easy instructions that anyone can follow."

In addition to accommodations, improving relationships between professors and teacher candidates was another common idea. Teacher candidates repeatedly stated that professors should get to know their students on a personal level. One teacher candidate specifically mentioned that professors should feel empathy for the candidates' situations. By relating with teacher candidates, professors will better understand the candidates' situations and provide necessary accommodations according to their needs.

Another suggested concept was to improve the learning environment of the courses. To create such an environment, candidates suggested that professors teach by example. One teacher candidate mentioned that a class was learning about accommodations, but the professor was not accommodating in the class. One way to make such accommodations would be to allow the teacher candidates to do more performance-based assessments in lieu of written exams. The same candidate mentioned that although not all students like to do group work as a form of assessment, it does help the candidates show how they apply new knowledge and skills.

Program recommendations. Program improvement suggested changes included adding content to the curriculum, providing assistance to students through the courses, and requiring more hands-on teaching experiences of concepts learned.

First, adding content to the curriculum included adding more information on collaboration , including collaboration with paraeducators, teachers, and/or parents. One teacher candidate stated:

I think it would be nice to learn a little bit about collaboration with other people. I've
been doing a lot in the school that I'm at right now, but I've been talking to other people
in our program and some of them aren't collaborating with teachers and parents and
others, like administrators.

Another teacher candidate stated that he hopes there will be more specific information on
paraeducators in the future. Other program recommendations included providing multiple
strategies for teaching reading, additional information on individualized education plan (IEP)
computer programs, and classroom management strategies.

Next, opinions were expressed about what can be done to provide assistance to CLD
students with their course work. Many of the suggested changes were in the form of
accommodations and modifications due to teacher candidates' language abilities. Such ideas for
improvement included having fewer assignments with more time to work on them, assigning
peer mentors within the program who do not have language needs, simplifying directions and
rubrics on assignments, and being able to choose their own groups. Additional course corrections
had to do with test taking, such as allowing teacher candidates to take tests orally and being able
to use notes on tests.

A third expressed idea throughout the interviews for course improvement was to have
more hands-on experience with students in the schools. One teacher candidate stated the
following:

I wish the education program would expose students early on to the classroom setting . . .
I wish that they would do that earlier on so that I think that people would be more ready
and more prepared when the student teaching comes, to be more comfortable with it. So I

wish from the beginning that they would give us time in the classroom to show what we can do, what we have been learning in class.

In addition to spending more time in schools, teacher candidates expressed opinions that more connections be made between teachers in the teaching field and teacher candidates in the program. One teacher candidate commented, "As you are going through the classes in the program, if you could just have a mentor that could make it more real life, hands-on. The research that we study in the classroom would become so much more pertinent."

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the cross-cultural experiences of CLD teacher candidates completing a special education and ESL teacher preparation program as well as to identify areas for program improvement. Results indicated that the candidates' personal learning styles and the professors' attitudes and teaching styles had the greatest impact on their overall experiences. Although not asked for them directly, candidates provided suggestions for increasing positive experiences for future candidates.

Interpretations and Implications

Cross-cultural experiences of CLD teacher candidates. Research shows that a supportive climate, flexible academic schedules, and additional resources are keys to successful retention (Campbell-Whatley, 2003). Teacher candidates expressed similar ideas of what helped them be successful within the program. For example, in terms of support, almost all of the candidates preferred group activities. These activities allowed the candidates opportunities to discuss what they were learning, make the content more meaningful, and provide support to one another.

In addition, candidates enjoyed the hands-on assignments. When working with students in schools and implementing strategies they'd learned, the candidates felt more confident in their abilities as potential teachers. Applying new concepts gave the candidates the opportunity to understand how to apply what they were learning.

Writing papers and completing written tests were two of the most difficult forms of assessment that CLD candidates faced during the program. The language barrier that existed made it more difficult to express ideas, which made it more time-consuming as well. When the candidates had opportunities to verbally show their knowledge through presentations, they were more confident in themselves and the content they were presenting.

Teacher candidates reported positive experiences when working with professors who accommodated their needs, made an effort to connect with the candidates, and provided a positive learning environment. Although referring to K–12 education, Campbell-Whatley (2003) emphasized that when students connect with their teachers, they become more motivated and committed to their schoolwork. Similarly, candidates reported that they connected more with specific professors. These faculty members were willing to work with the teacher candidates to help them succeed. This was accomplished by having open communication about assignments and expectations. Candidates felt more confident in performing to high expectations when there was open communication with the professors.

Suggestions for professors and the program. When professors provided support for the teacher candidates, the teacher candidates perceived that they were more successful in their classes. Although not asked for suggestions directly, several of the participants offered suggestions directed toward professors. Candidates indicated that by implementing accommodations through example, professors could enhance the learning outcomes of CLD

teacher candidates. This seems particularly important for special education professors who are teaching candidates how to effectively accommodate students in schools.

Teacher candidates also recommended that the professors should maintain high expectations for all candidates. Professors should work to create a learning environment where CLD teacher candidates are expected to have high performance, yet are comfortable enough to ask for help when it is needed. Written directions are more difficult for CLD candidates to understand, and therefore they suggested that professors take the time to explain assignments and how they will be graded in detail so that everyone understands equally what is expected.

Suggestions were made for the special education program, but are of note for other education programs as well. One example of this was the candidates' desire to learn a variety of teaching methods, particularly in the area of reading. The special education program taught direct-instruction reading, and candidates felt it would be beneficial to have additional teaching methods when working in the schools.

A second suggestion pertains to assisting CLD candidates' with their course work while in the program. Language barriers were a main concern. If CLD students with language barriers can be provided with additional support and accommodations according to their language needs, it will be beneficial to their overall performance.

A third suggestion is for candidates to make connections with working teachers. Having a mentor in the schools to work with the candidates would provide opportunities to apply the concepts they are learning.

Effects on the professors of the overall study. In addition to the information the candidates provided, this study had other effects as well. The interviews were part of a professional development series on becoming more culturally responsive (Devereaux et al.,

2010). Ambe (2006) stated that educators must possess the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach CLD learners. According to Peralta-Nash (2003), home visits are a necessary component of a cross-cultural learning experience that will increase the teacher's understanding. Interviews with the teacher candidates, in their homes, were reported as being the most powerful activity of the professional development series (Devereaux et al., 2010).

Changes professors made as a result of the study include a shift in personal attitudes and/or perceptions about the candidates as well as about themselves, an increased understanding and desire to build relationships with the candidates, changes in their professional approaches toward CLD teacher candidates, and challenges to their expectations or assumptions about CLD candidates (Devereaux et al., 2010). In addition, it was reported that "the interview experience helped [the professors] recognize they had previously been judgmental or had misunderstood the candidates' perspectives." This caused some faculty to modify their behavior (Devereaux et al., 2010).

Accommodations. Interestingly, the candidates used the term accommodations in their interviews to describe instructional adjustments that would help them succeed. Typically, the word accommodation is associated with what we provide individuals with disabilities. Disabilities are usually chronic and some accommodations may be needed throughout an individual's lifetime. Yet CLD teacher candidates do not have chronic difficulties. Their situation may be best described as a cultural mismatch between the candidates and the instructors. It is possible that teacher candidates most likely used the word accommodations because that was the language used in their course work and practicum when in fact they were referring to modifications within the course work.

Limitations

Although this study showed the experiences of diverse teacher candidates within the program, there are limitations to the external validity.

First, data were collected from only 13 participants in one university program. Because of the small population interviewed, the results of this study may not be generalized to other populations or university programs.

Second, only teacher candidate interviews were conducted. Additional data, such as the participants' success within the program or follow-up interviews, would add to the results by providing additional information as to how the candidates' experiences impacted their overall success within the program.

Third, the interviews were conducted by faculty members with whom most of the participants already had a relationship. The participants may have viewed the faculty members in an authoritative position and therefore may not have been comfortable sharing all of their opinions openly about the program. However, the fact that each of the participants volunteered to participate in the interviews suggests that they may have been comfortable expressing their own opinions. Conducting the interviews in the participant's homes was one attempt at making them feel more comfortable.

Issues for Further Consideration

Replicating this study in other programs would be beneficial to other programs and the field in general. No other study was located that reported university professors and faculty interviewing CLD special education teacher candidates regarding their teacher preparation program.

This study will benefit future CLD teacher candidates within this particular special education/ESL program. Faculty within the program can use the data gathered to enhance the program. The results of this study will benefit all professors and university faculty who have CLD students in their classes.

Implications for Professors

Professors face difficulties when teacher candidates represent cultures other than their own. Awareness of CLD teacher candidates' unique needs signifies the first step in improving the learning outcomes of all teacher candidates. When designing their courses, professors should consider the needs of all teacher candidates and allow for accommodations, when appropriate, to enhance the overall learning experience. By understanding who the candidates are and recognizing their strengths, professors can provide a learning environment that results in a positive experience for all teacher candidates.

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Conclusion

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This study outlined the experiences of CLD teacher candidates within the special education/ESL program at Brigham Young University. Faculty members interviewed CLD teacher candidates about their experiences within the program. The interviews were either audio-taped and/or videotaped and transcribed verbatim. Results indicated that professors and personal learning styles were the two factors that impacted the experiences of CLD teacher candidates the most. The data also identified suggestions that could be made within the program as well as suggestions for the professors. Additional research in this area would allow for increased generalization to other populations.

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APPENDIX A: Review of Literature

This section describes the implications for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in the education field. First, I explain the current status of diversity in education, including what the nation's demographics tell us about the current state of diversity in the classroom. Then I discuss the role CLD teachers play in a CLD student's education. With such diversity in demographics and a need for CLD teachers, it is important to look at who are preparing to be educators and what their needs are during their preparation. Teacher educators need to be aware of students within their classrooms and how they can effectively assist their CLD students in entering the teaching profession. By looking more closely at the research that has been conducted, one can see why it is important to be aware of CLD students' needs, how those needs can best be met, and what meeting those needs means for educators throughout the country.

Status of Diversity in Education

According to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, in 2008, 45.1% of students receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA) represent non-White ethnic groups. The percentage of non-White special educators serving those students is 14.5%. The diversity of special educators does not reflect the diverse population of students receiving special education services (Cook & Boe, 1995).

In July 2002, Carlson, Chen, Schroll, Klein, and Westat conducted a study of personnel needs in special education. Of the special educators who participated in the study, 51% indicated that accommodating CLD students' needs was not addressed in their preservice programs. The study also reported that teachers who interacted with CLD students during their field experiences reported being more skilled later on when working with similar students' educational needs.

Special education teachers who are trained to work with CLD students and given opportunities to do so are better able to meet the diverse needs of CLD students within the classroom.

Research has shown that students do better academically when they have a mentor that is their same gender and race. Yet, the majority of the teaching force is White, female, and monolingual (Milner, 2006). And, over time, the number of CLD students in the schools is increasing, while the number of diverse teachers in special education is decreasing. Diverse teachers have the ability to make an impact on CLD students. They can provide important role models, alter negative cycles of lower expectations, and increase comfort levels (Smith, Smith-Davis, Clarke, & Mims, 2000). Research shows that the best educator to teach bilingual students is an educator who is bilingual in English as well as the student's native language. CLD teachers are able to instill positive images and an array of perspectives to CLD students (Torres et al., 2004).

Literature within the field of special education points to many reasons why diverse teachers are beneficial to diverse students. When a student can relate to a teacher culturally, a connection can be made between the teacher and student. When students connect with their teachers they are more motivated and committed to their schoolwork. In addition, they have a lower probability to receive or continue services within special education (Campbell-Whatley, 2003). Diverse teachers are able to act as authority figures with similar cultural values as well as serve as role models for diverse students (Campbell-Whatley, 2003). Being able to communicate with students within the context of their cultures and/or native languages requires prepared teachers (Talbert-Johnson, 2001). The teaching field needs educators who are able to research, design, and implement learning activities that are appropriate for CLD students. These educators need to be aware of students' needs and select activities and materials that will allow students to

master content, develop English language proficiency, and enhance their self-esteem (Gallegos & McCarty, 2000).

One reason for a lack of diverse teachers in the education field is that diverse students are not entering and completing degrees/certificates in education from higher institutions of learning. Haselkorn (2000) emphasized a great need for special education teachers, bilingual and ESL teachers, and math and science teachers in schools with diverse enrollments.

Diversity in Colleges and/or Universities

As the need for CLD teachers increases in schools, professionals need to examine the number of CLD students in colleges and universities. "Although college enrollment among all students of color has risen, students of color remain underrepresented at every academic degree level" (Wilds, 2000, p. 6). In the 2010 United States census, the population of Black persons was 12.6%, that of persons of Hispanic or Latino origin was 16.3%, and the population of American Indian and Alaskan Native persons was 0.9% (data extrapolated from U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred to these groups during the 2008–2009 academic year was 9.8%, 8.1%, and 0.8% respectively (data extrapolated from NCES, 2010). This is far below the average percentage of diverse people in the nation. To better understand today's stance on diverse students in postsecondary education, it is important to look at the nation's history up to this point.

History. Diverse students have a unique history that is important to consider when understanding the perspective of non-White students in an education setting. In 1954, the case of Brown v. Board of Education made it illegal to segregate White and Black students in public school (Brown v. Bd. of Educ., 1954). Since that time there have been cases filed and bills passed that have ensured inclusion of all students in academic settings. The effects of Brown v.

Board of Education extend beyond students in the classrooms. While provisions were made to integrate minority students into predominantly White schools, teachers were not provided the same types of provisions. Instead of transferring minority teachers to make up for the increase in school populations, more White teachers and administrators were hired (Abney, 1974).

Following the decision of Brown v. Board of Education, many states began to implement teacher certification exams. Ben Woods was a developer of such exams. When asked how African Americans and Caucasian teachers would do on the exam, he stated that most African American teachers would score below the Caucasian teachers (Baker, 1995). Because the exams could be used to eliminate minority teachers, they were contested in court. Although the exams were never proven to show teacher competency, they were declared legal (Baker).

Arnez (1978) identified 12 negative consequences that followed the policies that came after Brown v. Board of Education. Included was the loss of teaching and administrative jobs by African Americans through dismissals, demotions, and displacement as well as the loss of racial models, heroes, and authority figures for African American children.

Civil Rights Act. In 1963, John F. Kennedy introduced a bill that offered equal rights of public facilities to all Americans regardless of race or gender. Such facilities included hotels, stores, theaters, and so forth. The bill was not all-inclusive to end discrimination, but it did include opportunities to end segregation in schools. The bill was then sent to the U.S. Congress and eventually was passed by Congress and signed by the President on July 2, 1964. Title III of Public Law 88-352 encouraged the desegregation of public schools. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 marked the legal end of segregation in public schools.

Affirmative action. Affirmative action has had a positive impact on the percentage of minority students enrolled in colleges and universities over the past forty years. According to the

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, affirmative action is defined as steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in different situations, such as education, where previously they had been excluded. The implementation of affirmative action policies resulted in various colleges and universities changing the criteria of admissions for students of minority backgrounds, making it easier for them to be accepted into the schools, and thus increasing the number of diverse students enrolled.

Wilds (2000) discussed misconceptions against affirmative action and how they are portrayed. One such misconception is that past inequalities regarding opportunities for diverse students have already been addressed and do not require further attention. Another misconception is that merit can be defined by test scores alone. Both of these misconceptions create unfair disadvantages for CLD students. CLD students require unique support for their needs and they cannot be defined by test scores alone.

There are noted benefits to having a campus with a diverse student body. Jordan (2007) stated that there is an academic advantage within an institution that has a diverse population. This advantage comes when students "believe and feel that they fit in, where they are welcomed like family, and where there are no biases against their ability to achieve academic excellence."

Wilds (2000) addresses the benefits of diverse college campuses as well. Individual students of all racial backgrounds have an enhanced educational experience when there is a diverse student body. Students learn critical democratic principles that will help them to be more successful in life after college. The institutions themselves benefit when they are able to achieve their missions by providing an appropriate educational experience. Finally, society as a whole benefits from diverse campuses. Lives, policies, and issues outside of the institution benefit when there is a diverse student population. Students with more exposure to "greater diversity are more

likely to demonstrate increases in racial understanding, cultural awareness and appreciation, engagement with social and political issues, and openness to diversity and challenge" (Wilds, 2000, p. 68).

  Recruitment. Throughout the United States various colleges and/or universities have increased their efforts in recruiting CLD students. Salend et al. (2003) described one such program, the Migrant Special Education Training Program (MSETP), which was funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. Staff expanded their recruitment efforts with various methods. For example, a video was developed with four diverse graduates of the program discussing their interests in the program, their course work, recommendations for future students, and the impact of the program on their futures. The graduates also talked to individuals and groups interested in the program. A more concise website was developed that contained information to attract future students and assist them in applying for the program. The program produced a newsletter that was available on the website to highlight the accomplishments of students as well as faculty within the program. The newsletter shared information about the program with other programs that serve CLD students. Recruitment efforts focused on potential trainees from migrant families as well as trainees with disabilities.

  Futrell (1999) recommended specific strategies for recruiting a diverse field of educators that involves university departments of education, school districts, as well as policymakers. She suggests that schools work to ensure that there is a qualified teacher available in every classroom and that students are given the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of specific content. Starting at an early age all students should be taught how to study effectively with good study habits and test-taking skills. Recruitment efforts should be targeted to school districts, colleges,

and universities with a high percentage of minority students. Outreach programs in middle school and high school should be designed and implemented with an emphasis on the importance of teaching and allow students opportunities to work with experienced teachers. Providing students interested in teacher education programs with financial aid would help alleviate the burdens on students and/or their families. Developing strong mentor programs within the program as well as into their first year in the profession will increase the retention. State and local education leaders should work together to increase the working conditions as well as salaries to make the teaching profession more competitive to other professions.

Recruitment efforts for prospective teachers into special education include methods such as word of mouth, using CLD students in current programs as recruiters, producing media campaigns, publishing success stories of graduates, and using professional recruitment materials such as posters, brochures, and videos (Tyler et al., 2004). However, little research was found on the most effective recruitment strategies for increasing the number of diverse candidates in special education and/or teaching English Language Learners (ELL).

College and Teacher Preparation Program Difficulties

Once CLD students are accepted into teacher education programs, program completion is not guaranteed. Flores, Clark, Claeys, and Villarreal (2007) gave several reasons for poor graduation and teacher certification rates among first generation/ethnic minority students. Such reasons include: college enrollment rates, increased tuition costs, academic preparation and attrition, and wider career options.

College enrollment rates. The proportion of CLD students in the general population is greater than the proportion of CLD students receiving degrees in education. CLD students struggle to enter institutions of higher learning. High-stakes testing, advanced-placement classes,

and essay portions on applications make the process of entering higher education more difficult for this population.

In addition, CLD students are not always aware of the application process and do not know how or where to attain the help that they need. Without support from school personnel, CLD students are not aware of scholarships and/or grants that will enable them to attend postsecondary school due to financial reasons.

Increased tuition costs. For many culturally diverse students, the cost of receiving a higher education has a negative impact on the family's finances. Teaching does not offer cost-effective benefits. Because tuition rates are high, CLD students are not able to attend four-year universities right after high school, but instead are attending community and junior colleges. As tuition rates increase, CLD students will be less and less likely to afford the education (Futrell, 1999).

Academic preparation. CLD students are not taking college prep courses at the rates of their White peers. There is a bias toward White students in advanced placement classes, which increase chances of entering four-year institutions. CLD students are not taught the skills that they need to survive in a university setting. They do not have the support of their parents or members in the community with experience in postsecondary education who can lead them along. Without the extra support (i.e., academically, financially, socially), CLD students have higher drop-out rates than their peers.

Attrition. A supportive climate, teacher candidates' awareness to financial assistance, flexibility of academic schedules, and additional resources are keys to successful retention (Campbell-Whatley, 2003). The aforementioned MSTEP program instigated cohort groups and

cooperative learning arrangements to promote group cohesiveness and support student learning and diversity (Newby, Swift, & Newby, 2000).

Wider career options. Historically, when limited job opportunities were available for CLD individuals, teaching was a way in which diverse individuals were able to give back to their communities. They were able to enter the teaching profession knowing they were making a difference and were able to make enough money to support their families. With the implementation of affirmative action, more jobs have become available to diverse individuals. CLD students entering college are more attracted to professions in business or science, which offer better financial gains (Torres et al., 2004). With more career opportunities available to CLD students, the proportion of diverse individuals entering into the education field is decreasing over time.

Perceived racism. Gordon (1994) discovered another reason few CLD students are entering the teaching profession. He found that diverse students had a fear of being looked down on by their peers. Racism within education settings was determined to be a factor in CLD students choosing other professions (Torres et al., 2004). Once in the classroom or practicum setting, CLD students are not always comfortable sharing their thoughts on issues such as racism, equity, and social justice. They often remain silent and feel excluded or invisible (Torres et al., 2004).

Need for Multicultural Faculty Development

When entering colleges and universities, it is imperative that professors and faculty address the needs of multicultural students. Many institutions of higher learning are majority-culture dominated, and therefore faculty within teacher education programs are not

knowledgeable about diverse cultures or are not aware of how to appropriately meet the needs of diverse students (Torres et al., 2004).

Devereaux et al. (2010) gave three reasons why teacher educators need to be culturally competent. First, teachers from predominantly White backgrounds lack the ability to work with CLD students, due to their monocultural backgrounds (Smolen et al., 2006). Teacher educators need to be prepared to instruct preservice teachers in their courses. By learning the skills in the college setting, preservice teachers are better equipped to work with multicultural students in the school environment.

The second reason Devereaux et al. (2010) gave for why teacher educators need to be culturally competent is that in order to address the needs of a diverse demographic, teacher educators need to be aware of, and implement, culturally responsive practices to meet their own students' diverse needs. Faculty members need to be aware of the different perspectives, beliefs, and experiences that are present among CLD groups (Wunsch & Chattergy, 1991). Without a basic understanding of cultural differences, it is more difficult for teacher educators to communicate effectively and assist CLD students in their career endeavors.

Third, Devereaux et al. (2010) discuss the need for teacher educators to be prepared to respond to a change in demographics in the university setting (Prater et al., 2008). Teacher educators need to recognize how to "maximize learning and how to reduce barriers that hinder success in higher education" (Devereaux et al.).

Working with faculty to increase multicultural awareness requires an array of professional development activities. One component of such professional development activities is to ask faculty to study individuals different than themselves (Ambe, 2006). By doing so, they

will attain the intended outcomes for the faculty to better understand the cultural backgrounds of their students and find ways to create a positive learning atmosphere.

One method to study different individuals is to visit the students in their homes and conduct interviews with them. Although I found no research of university faculty conducting home visit interviews, there is extensive research on conducting home visits in pre-K as well as K–12 schools (Korfmacher et al., 2008; Lin & Bates, 2010; Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008; Meyer & Mann, 2006; Peralta-Nash, 2003). Home visits are a necessary component of a cross-cultural learning experience that will increase the teacher's understanding of a student and their family (Peralta-Nash, 2003). It is imperative that teachers create collaborative relationships with students' families and by providing home visits they are more likely to create and maintain those relationships (Korfmacher et al., 2008).

Meyer and Mann (2009) found that home visits create more empathy from teachers toward the students they work with, thus influencing their attitudes toward helping the students. Teachers were able to see their students in their homes and develop a better perspective of where the student is coming from and what their strengths and challenges might be in the classroom.

Devereaux (2009) mentions intended outcomes of culturally responsive professional development activities. Faculty must be able to build bridges between students' homes and school (Rodriquez & Sjostrom, 1995). They also need to incorporate multicultural perspectives into their courses through a variety of means (Ambe, 2006). While many professional development activities are available, no research has found the most effective activity for infusing multicultural awareness among faculty in higher education.

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APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Diverse Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of a University's Special Education Preparation Program
Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Dr. Lynn Wilder, Dr. Mary Anne Prater, and graduate students. The aim of this study is to identify culturally responsive teaching practices in higher education that improve the academic success of ethnically diverse/bilingual students. You have been invited to participate because of your involvement in the Culturally Responsive and Special Education/ESL (Sped/ESL) program.

Procedures
You will be asked to complete an interview with a professor from the Special Education Program at Brigham Young University in your home. The interview will be either videotaped or audiotaped and will last approximately 2 hours. You will be asked questions pertaining to your academic experience here at BYU and your experiences as an ethnically diverse/bilingual student.

Risks/Discomforts
There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may feel emotional discomfort at having a professor in your home and in answering some of the questions. The interview will not affect your grades or program standing in any way. An interpreter may be provided in order to help your family feel more at ease with the visit, and the professors and other interviewers will be aware and sensitive to the possible discomfort.

Benefits
It is hoped that throughout the study your professors will become more aware of your culture and language and how they affect your performance in the classroom. It is anticipated that the study will lead professors to modify their classes in order to assist students with diverse backgrounds to succeed academically.

Confidentiality
All data will be kept confidential. Results will be reported as group findings. All data, videotapes, and audiotapes will be kept locked in Dr. Lynn Wilder's office and only those directly associated with the research will have access to them. At the completion of the research and after a short waiting period the data, videotapes, and audiotapes will be destroyed. The professors will receive a report of the group findings, but no individual information will be given to them.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your grades or standing within the program or university.

Permission for Audiotaping

In order to obtain and analyze the data from the interviews it is necessary to audio tape your interview. By being a participant and signing this document you give permission for the researchers to audiotape the interview. These tapes will only be heard and used by the researchers to obtain data and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Lynn Wilder at 422-1237, lynn_wilder@byu.edu or Effie Thacker at 885-5237, thackerina@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3837, 422 SWKT, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____   Date:_____

Permission for Videotaping

A few students will be invited to allow the interview to be videotaped. If you should be invited and desire to give your permission for videotaping, sign here.

Signature: _____   Date:_____

APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your family and home prior to living in Provo, Utah.

2. Tell me about your parents and what they mean to you.

3. Tell me about some of your childhood memories.

4. Tell me some of the things you and your family have given up or sacrificed in order to be in the special education/ESL program.

5. What are some of the activities/assignments you have had in your special education/ESL classes that you enjoyed and that helped you learn?

6. How do you like to show what you have learned in a course? Essay tests? Multiple choice tests? Classroom activities? Cooperative, group activities? Presentations? Other?

7. Describe your greatest academic challenges or difficulties in the special education/ESL program at BYU.

8. Describe the best thing a professor ever did to help you succeed academically.

9. If I could explain to teachers how to help me/my children succeed in school, I would say…

10. What would you like me to know about your culture or language and how may language or culture affect your ability to be successful at academics at BYU?