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Becoming Warm Demanders: Perspectives and Practices of First-Year Teachers

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## **BECOMING WARM DEMANDERS: PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS**

Research on the perspectives and practices of successful teachers has revealed principles to guide a culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) aimed at improving the school performance and life chances of underachieving students of color (Foster, 1993, 1997; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Irvine, 1998; King, 1992; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Ware, 2006). Increasing teachers' knowledge of CRP is essential if we are to develop and retain successful teachers for African American school children which is a critical component of any reform agenda designed to close achievement gaps (Banks et al., 2005; Murrell, 2002; Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003).

Embedded in the CRP literature is a portrait of teachers as "warm demanders" who embrace values and enact practices that are central to their students' success. Although some scholars have begun to delineate the approach of the teacher as warm demander (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2007; Brown, 2003, 2004; Ware, 2006), few have examined the experience of novice teachers who attempt to enact this stance. Given the urgency of ensuring educational equity and excellence for underachieving students of color, insights into the perspectives, practices, and challenges of beginning teachers are sorely needed (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2002). In this paper we report on a study of two first-year, female, European American teachers who attempted to be warm demanders for their predominantly African American elementary school students. We asked the question, "How do the teachers think about and enact warm demanding?"

## Review of Related Literature

The notion of warm demanding first appeared in Kleinfeld's (1975) study of effective teachers of Eskimo and Alaskan Indian children to describe the ways in which the teachers interacted with their students. Years later, the phrase began to appear in reference to effective teachers of African American students. Vasquez (1989) used the term to describe teachers who refused to lower expectations for success. Later, Irvine and Fraser (1998) explained that warm demanders use CRP practices along with a tough-minded, no-nonsense authoritative teaching style that provides a disciplined classroom environment while communicating personal warmth and insisting that students achieve to the best of their ability.

Ware's (2006) recent research elaborated the beliefs and practices of the warm demanding teacher. Her interviews and observations of two experienced African American teachers in urban, high poverty settings revealed that a warm demanding stance undergirded their approach. Ware described the teachers as caregivers, disciplinarians, and pedagogues who were committed to facilitating students' success. They were driven by their deep commitment to the African American community and acute awareness of the sociopolitical status of African Americans. That is, the central purpose and core foundation of their warm demanding was a social justice imperative to improve the lives of all members of the community, in school and out (King, 1994, 2005; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). The concept of warm demanding that has emerged is an ideological and practical construct for teaching African American students well. Ware's framework of warm demanding provides a useful way to conceptualize teachers' perspectives and enactments of this pedagogical stance (Ware, 2006). In the present study, thinking about warm demanders as caregivers, authority figures and

disciplinarians, and pedagogues provides a framework for examining participants' beliefs and enactments of warm demander pedagogy.

### **Warm Demanders As Caregivers**

The connection between teaching and caregiving has an established history as an essential component of the practice of exemplary teachers of students of color (Foster, 1997; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2001). Children must believe their teachers care about them, and they draw this conclusion based on the teacher's behavior (Case, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Noddings, 1984). That is, the teacher must enact care, not simply proclaim it (Gay, 2010). Warm demanding teachers enact care by working tirelessly to connect with students and families (Foster, 1993, 1997; Irvine, 2002; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2002; Ware, 2006). In doing so, they strive to understand their students' values, beliefs, and assets in order to interact and teach responsively (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Ware, 2006), placing the student at the center of all decision-making (Gay, 2010). In short, the warm demander's care is manifested as a teacher-student connectedness (Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright, 2011; Foster, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006), which communicates to students that the teacher is wholeheartedly committed to their success (Wilson & Corbett, 2001). A teacher's belief in students' ability to succeed, responsiveness to students, and refusal to give up on them communicate the warm demander's abiding care.

### **Warm Demanders As Disciplinarians**

Although developing caring relationships is a necessity for successful teachers of students of color, enacting an authoritative stance is equally significant (Brown, 2003; 2004;

Ross, Bondy, Galingane, & Hambacher, 2008; Ware, 2006; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Exemplary urban educators teach with authority, believing that the students' respect and trust must be earned and is not inherent in the teacher's position (Delpit, 1995; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ross et al., 2008). Such teachers employ a "no-nonsense" style of classroom management based on explicitness and insistence which is communicated in both subtle and straightforward ways (Bondy et al., 2007; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Although both may appear harsh to the outside observer, careful inspection of the interaction reveals a teacher who is deeply committed to student success, so much so that anything less than students' best effort is unacceptable. As a teacher in Adkins-Coleman's (2010) study explained, "This is business, and you've been told to do something because it's conducive to the growth of everybody in here, and, if you don't do it, things are going to be unpleasant for you....They realize that they're still cared about and they make that balance and then there's no more issue" (p. 47). In the case of warm demanding teachers, students interpret the authoritative stance as an expression of sincere concern for their well-being (Bondy et al., 2007; Corbett, Wilson, & Williams, 2002; Howard, 2001; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006).

Warm demanding teachers are not insistent in order to secure their students' compliance. Rather, their goal is to establish a student-focused climate of achievement and mutual respect (Bondy et al., 2007). Warm demanders believe an authoritative stance is essential in helping students develop the skills necessary for responsible citizenship and long-term accomplishment inside and outside the classroom (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). Their discipline strategies are effective because students believe that they are acting out of care (Dixson, 2003).



## **Warm Demanders As Pedagogues**

Warm demanding is grounded in the belief that instruction must be designed so that students of color can pursue academic achievement without abandoning their cultural identity (Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006). As such, warm demander pedagogues design instructional activities with the cultural norms and traditions of their students in mind (Foster, 1993; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006). For some teachers, this involves using communicative and participation structures, questioning techniques, and dialogue styles that are reflected in the traditional community interactions and discourses of diverse families (Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Warm demander pedagogy also involves contextualizing curriculum, thus enabling students to make connections to their real world experiences.

In addition to their efforts to engage students in instruction, warm demander pedagogues hold high expectations for students' learning. Importantly, they do not stop at insisting students achieve. They work tirelessly to create the conditions necessary for students to succeed, and they show them how to do so (Bondy et al., 2007; Howard, 2001; Ware, 2006; Williamson, Bondy, Langley, & Mayne, 2005). For example, Williamson et al. describe a third- and a fifth-grade teacher who used a variety of strategies to help students understand new content. These included using what was familiar to students to teach new material, providing a variety of opportunities to make sense of new material, and deconstructing complex material into meaningful parts to be examined and reassembled.

Warm demanders also take a holistic, broadly focused approach to instruction, concerning themselves with students' academic, emotional and social development (Foster,

1993; Howard, 2001; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006). Their whole-child focus is directly related to their awareness of inequitable conditions that shape the learning and lives of people of color in the U.S. (King, 1991, 1992; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2007). Warm demanders understand that an empowering education must include the bolstering of students' resilience as well as instruction in and critique of societal norms and expectations. Their knowledge of the sociocultural context that subordinates people of color (Foster, 1993; Howard, 2001; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006) undergirds their insistence and demand for high expectations, their concern and compassion towards students, and their emphasis on teaching the whole child. Exemplary educators know the stakes are high for children of color and project a sense of urgency in their instruction (Foster, 1993; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Ware, 2006).

Gay (2010) insists, "Teachers and other educators should act now, without a moment's hesitation and with deliberate speed, to revise the entire educational enterprise so that it reflects and responds to the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes U.S. society and schools" (p. 247). In this spirit, we pursued the study of the teacher as a warm demander. We incorporated the insights from our own and others' research into our teacher education program in an effort to cultivate a warm demander stance among our teacher education students. In the current study, we followed our graduates into their first year of teaching to learn from their experiences in striving to become warm demanders.

## **Methodology**

The study was undertaken to address the question, “How do first-year teachers think about and enact warm demanding?” It was designed to be exploratory and descriptive and based on the qualitative analysis of observations and interviews.

## **Participants**

Following internships in a low-income and predominately African American school during the fall of 2008, four, middle-class, White, female preservice teachers accepted first-year teaching positions at the school. During the internship, the student teachers spent 14, full-time weeks in the school, the student demographics of which included 76% African American, 24% White, and 88% free/reduced lunch. They also attended a weekly course, designed to support the blending of theory and practice in the internship, and a weekly seminar with a university supervisor who observed and coached them. The course and seminar focused on culturally responsive teaching and classroom management and incorporated explicit attention to the literature on the teacher as a warm demander. The interns read about, discussed, and viewed video of warm demanding teachers. They were coached on their implementation of warm demanding and reflected on their attempts with their instructor, supervisor, and peers.

The four former interns volunteered and participated in the study. Although we collected data on all four first-year teachers, we report on two of them in this paper. The rationale for focusing on two teachers emerged in the data analysis. It became clear that the two teachers provided contrasting experiences in warm demanding, and we concluded that the contrasts provided insight into the challenges teachers may face in enacting the warm demander stance. Fully certified and having graduated from a state- and NCATE-accredited

(National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) teacher education program, Alyson, age 24, taught first grade, and Dianna, also 24, taught fourth grade.

### **Data Collection**

The study was based on videotape and interview data. Participants were videotaped three times, from January to the end of the academic year in May. The participants and videographer negotiated the timing of videotaping in order to capture academic lessons at least 30 minutes in length. Videos were posted using FlipShare, a software that allows users to share videos privately online. Participants watched their video prior to each interview. In the interviews (A1, A2, A3, D1, D2, D3), which were scheduled to follow the videotaping with as little time delay as possible, each first-year teacher was asked to reflect on her video and describe her progress in using what she learned about warm demanding in her internship and coursework. In each interview participants were asked how their definition and understanding of the term “warm demander” had changed and to describe their current successes and challenges in relation to the concept. The interviewer frequently referred to specific incidents in the videotape and asked the teacher to comment on her decision-making and interpretations. Interviews lasted 40-55 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **Data Analysis**

Four researchers collaboratively analyzed the data from the four teachers. Using an inductive approach (Hatch, 2002), we reviewed the data with three general questions in mind: 1) How does the beginning teacher understand warm demanding? 2) What practices does the beginning teacher use to enact warm demanding? 3) What challenges to warm demanding does the teacher face? Each researcher began by analyzing interview and videotape data of one

participant and generating a list of possible codes using the process of domain analysis as described by Spradley (1980). The purpose of domain analysis is to “develop a set of categories of meaning...that reflect relationships represented in the data” (Hatch, 2002, p. 104). Spradley’s framework is helpful in that he provides prompts that help the researcher to identify categories/codes. For instance, he suggests that the researcher scour the data for “ways to do things,” “reasons for things,” “steps in things,” “kinds of things,” and “parts of things.”

As a second step, the three researchers discussed the codes generated and developed clear definitions of the meaning of each code. Based on the preliminary analysis, we developed a list of codes that aligned with the three questions we brought to the data (see Appendix A). For example, codes related to the topic, How the beginning teacher understands warm demanding, included Ways her views of warm demanding have changed, Reasons warm demanding is important, Short- and long-term goals of warm demanding, Reasons to develop relationships with families, and Kinds of expectations of students. Within each code we listed specific interview and/or observation data related to that code.

In a third step, each researcher analyzed data from one teacher independently and the team met again to discuss data to ensure consistency in coding. At this point, the researchers decided to focus on two of the teachers whose experiences provided contrasting definitions of warm demanding and contrasting practices and challenges.

For the fourth data analysis step, each researcher reviewed data from the two teachers in order to clarify the beliefs, practices, and challenges that were emerging as characterizing each of their first-year teaching experiences. As a final step, the two senior researchers each reviewed all the video tapes, interviews, and analysis for one target teacher and wrote a

comprehensive research memo explaining the way the individual teacher understood and enacted “warm demanding” during her first year of teaching. Indeed, they understood and enacted warm demanding very differently, and not surprisingly, they experienced very different challenges in their attempt to become warm demanders.

### **Findings**

Although Alyson (first-grade teacher) and Dianna (fourth-grade teacher) taught their first year at the same school and grade level as their internship, their first-year experiences differed greatly. Both of the teachers were highly successful in their internships, demonstrated strong relationships with students, received high ratings from mentor teachers and supervisors, and were hired by the same principal after interviews and observations of their practice. Nevertheless, their definitions and practice of warm demanding were quite different. Alyson conveyed a view that warm demanding was an over-arching concept that impacted every aspect of her work in the classroom. Dianna, in contrast, began with the view that warm demanding was an approach to classroom discipline. Although her perspective broadened over the course of the year, the focus on warm demanding as an approach to discipline continued.

#### **Alyson: Warm Demanding as an Organizing Stance to Teaching**

Alyson (first grade) demonstrated a consistent understanding of warm demanding as a stance that shaped her interactions with children. She believed that this stance was characterized by care for students, belief in their ability to succeed, and commitment to facilitating their success. She stressed that her over-arching goals were not about controlling behavior or even developing academics but about making sure children develop academic, behavioral, and social skills and knowledge necessary for responsible citizenship. Alyson

continually talked about what she wanted to “show” her students, demonstrating that for her the warm demander stance focuses on what students perceive as much as on what teachers do.

**Warm demanding as stance.** Alyson viewed warm demanding as a stance, or professional positioning, guided by her commitment to helping her students succeed within and outside the classroom. She communicated the stance was grounded in the relationships she established with her students, relationships that in turn enabled her to engage them and hold high expectations for their performance. She explained the connection she understood between warm demanding and her goals for her students:

If you actually want them to leave the classroom as better individuals...and as better students, then you need to be a warm demander. They'll learn what to expect out of a teacher, they'll learn what to expect of themselves, they'll learn how they should behave, and not just because somebody told them to, but because...they will internalize it more. (A3)

Alyson elaborated on what she meant by student success:

You need to make sure that they're not just succeeding academically but also behaviorally and socially, and they're able to work with others. That's a huge part of life, and if you want them to be successful at life, which you should if you're a warm demander, then they need to be socially responsible, and they need to care about those kinds of things. (A3)

Alyson appeared to have broad goals for her students (i.e., “to be successful at life”) and to believe she was responsible for helping her first graders to achieve those goals. Another important aspect of her stance was a commitment to communicating unwavering care. Of

course, most teachers would say that they care about their students, but Alyson's approach to care was more than a feeling or a personality trait (i.e., I am a caring person). Her concern about communicating care to her students was often evident:

A warm demander is somebody who conveys that she loves them and cares about them through her actions all the time, whether she is disciplining them or not...they know she cares about them, so even if they're upset, or even if she is having to discipline them ... it still never falters; they still know that she cares about them. (A2)

In effect, the care aspect of warm demanding for Alyson was something she *did* throughout the year to help her students succeed. Another aspect of Alyson's care for her students was her confidence in their ability to succeed. This confidence was enacted through the high expectations Alyson held for her students and her insistence that they performed to a high standard. In the following quote, we also get a sense of Alyson's commitment to do "whatever it takes" to help her students succeed:

It's okay that [the warm demander] demands so much ... because she will also do a lot for them and go out of her way to make them feel she really does care about them and loves them and is concerned for them and is looking out for their best interests. (A3)

Alyson often expressed her stance of care, insistence, and belief in her students:

You lay a lot of ground work at the beginning of the year, and I think throughout the year you have to continue to show an interest in them, in their personal lives, and then you also have to show them that you have high expectations for them in the classroom, and that you care about them at home, but you also care about their grades. (A2)

In short, Alyson's warm demander stance was characterized by a commitment to establishing and maintaining caring relationships with her students while also maintaining an authoritative stance of insisting that students live up to her high expectations. Her stance was grounded in a strong commitment to helping the children to be successful students and citizens. She enacted the stance with practices that she believed communicated care and insistence.

**Enacting the stance.** Alyson used two kinds of practices to enact her warm demander stance. One, she got to know the children which included becoming familiar with their families, and two, she was consistently insistent that students live up to high expectations.

Alyson referred so often to the importance of knowing students that it clearly forms the backbone of her instructional stance:

I think you have to spend extra time with them. I think you have to go out of your way to do things that show them that you actually care about them on a personal level. You have to call home. You have to know their families. You have to know what they did over the weekend, to ask them, "How's so-and-so, how's your mom? Is she feeling better?" You need to really show them on that personal level that you care. (A2)

Alyson concentrated on "getting to know you" activities early in the school year. Drawing on practices she learned during the internship course, she telephoned every child's parent or guardian during the first week of school and sent positive notes home indicating something specific she had learned about the child, in hopes of promoting interactions with family members. She pointed out that although "you lay a lot of ground work at the beginning of the year (A2)," the effort to get to know students and communicate care must continue all year.

Alyson got to know students in other ways, as well. She invited them to do their homework in her classroom after school, and she attended outside special events:

I take my students in after school, and they all come in the classroom and do their homework or help clean up. I form a personal relationship, whether it's taking them in after school or going to a game or math bowl, or doing something that shows I'm interested in them. (A3)

From Alyson's perspective, in order for students to believe that the teacher cares about them, the teacher must communicate her interest by spending extra time with them and incorporating what she has learned about them into the classroom. For example, in her comments about a videotape, she described capitalizing on what she had learned about one student's affection for his older sister in order to motivate and reward him. She referred directly to a student's infant brother when the class was discussing the meaning of "spoiled" (i.e., "Is your baby brother spoiled?"), and upon learning that a student's grandmother had a coin collection, she enlisted the grandmother's help to complete the class collection of quarters for each state in the U.S. By doing these kinds of things, Alyson believed she was making instruction more "personal" and communicating her care for her students.

Alyson used a variety of other practices on a daily basis to reinforce and build on her relationships with her students. In talking about one of the videotaped lessons she said:

I get close to them, and I usually have a hand on them, or just have my body close to them, so I can talk in a lower voice. I'm playful with them, and I have fun with them. I allow them a certain amount of freedom to make decisions and enjoy that they are learning. (A1)

She noted the importance of smiling at her students and using high-fives and positive comments to acknowledge good performance. She also pointed out that she liberally uses “terms of endearment” such as “Baby” and “Sweetheart” when addressing her students. She explained that sometimes those words helped her deliver a message of care and insistence:

I just feel very close to them, and I think they’re used to being called that by people who take care of them. [Sometimes] I’ll say it when I’m not necessarily happy about something...because I think it’s like sending both messages at once— “[Name], I love you, but!” It lets them know, “She cares about me, but she’s upset about this, or she cares about me, but I’m not doing what I’m supposed to be doing.” (A2)

Alyson also communicated her warm demanding stance by consistently insisting that students meet her expectations. Not surprisingly, she saw her high expectations and insistence as a form of care. She felt they were a way to demonstrate her belief in the students’ ability to succeed. By expecting a lot, she continually reinforced her respect for them.

An important feature of Alyson’s view of insistence was that it was done in a business-like manner without sarcasm or humiliation. She explained that a warm demander “conveys that she loves them and cares about them through her actions all the time, whether she is disciplining them or not” (A2):

For example, if a student is misbehaving, you let them know what they’re doing is wrong and they need to stop it. But you don’t say it in a punitive way. It’s more like, “I know you can behave better than this, and you need to....You need to sit the right way.” (A1)

Alyson also pointed out the importance of establishing clear expectations for students from the first day of school and delivering consequences if those expectations are not met:

I started off very strict. I did start giving checks every time someone did something they weren't supposed to do, and I was very consistent at the beginning. .... If it was something that mattered to me, I was very consistent about either praising it or disciplining right away so they knew the things I wanted and the things I didn't want. .... I think if you start off letting them get away with certain things they immediately see that, and they want to always be able to do that. And it's not really fair to them to let them do something the first week because you...want to be nice, if you're not going to let them do that the rest of the time. (A2)

She believed that establishing "very clear and strict rules" (A3) along with high expectations for students' success was critical if students were to "want to meet her goals not just for her but for themselves" (A3). Following through on consequences was necessary to communicate high standards and Alyson's belief in the students' ability to succeed. As she said, "You show them you have high expectations by following through. If you've said something, you have to follow through with it" (A2). In addition to communicating expectations, following through is also a way to establish a climate of fairness and safety. She explained,

I think it's very important that a warm demander shows her care for all her students by making sure it's fair and making sure that she's going to treat them fairly and they're going to treat each other fairly. Making fun of others is not going to be tolerated...and I wouldn't let somebody just pick on you. (A3)

Although she insisted that students meet her expectations, Alyson also believed in keeping the focus on the academic task at hand. This means that she tried not to lose academic time or focus by lecturing students when they failed to meet her expectations:

I like to address a problem with a look or with saying something quickly so that we can keep moving. I don't want to pick at them. I don't think there always needs to be some huge conversation about it. Sometimes it's better to just say something so they know you care about it and you want it addressed. But let's keep moving. (A2)

She talked about the importance of maintaining academic pace, which could be particularly difficult when she felt frustrated:

If I'm frustrated, I'll harp on an issue, and we'll spend more class time talking about it than I should or want to...I feel like the days where we just keep moving, and I don't let those things become a big thing are better days. (A2)

Alyson's understanding of warm demanding as a holistic stance toward teaching was demonstrated repeatedly in the interviews. Her goal was to establish and maintain caring relationships with students so that they believed she was committed to their well-being and success. An important component of her care was the authoritative disposition she maintained by respectfully insisting that they perform to a high standard. Alyson recognized that she had to be consistently insistent; that is, being "sort of insistent" would not serve students well.

Although she described and enacted this stance confidently from January through May, she noted that being a warm demander was not as easy as she had thought during her internship.

**Challenges to enacting the stance.** According to Alyson, being a warm demander was hard work. In fact she confessed that "it requires more work than [I] originally thought it did" (A3). She described challenges of time, consistency, and emotions.

Alyson explained that she began the year believing that a teacher was either a warm demander or she was not. She quickly realized that warm demanding was not simply a

personality trait; it required a lot of time to establish this way of being. In particular, she referred to the time she invested beyond the school day to get to know students and families:

It takes more than the hours that school allows, and it takes more thought and care than just what you're being paid for, so I think if you're just in it for the job, you probably can't become a warm demander. (A3)

In addition to the amount of time required to build and maintain relationships with children and families, Alyson found the consistency required of a warm demander to be challenging. She saw consistency as important, as illustrated in these comments:

Consistency is absolutely important, consistency with showing them that you care and following through. (A2)

When I'm consistent, I can tell. I can tell from the kids' behavior that they know what to expect. They know what to do. (A1)

However, she also found it challenging to be consistent because she understood that "they're just kids!" and she did not want to demand more than they were developmentally able to demonstrate (A1). She also wrestled with consistency because she believed that sometimes it made more sense to ignore problems in order to maintain academic focus. She confessed, "I'm working on letting it go. Let's just keep the pace so we can keep on moving and learn!" (A2).

A third challenge Alyson experienced was related to the extent to which she should share or hide her emotions from her students. This challenge is related to warm demanding because Alyson sometimes felt frustrated, annoyed, or disappointed when students did not meet her expectations. She was unsure about how to manage her emotions:

I think there's a lot of times when I'm annoyed, and I don't know if I want to show them that or if I just need to take a minute to breathe, but I mean it's hard to not show them your true emotions. (A2)

Her ambivalence about whether to communicate these kinds of feelings to her students was a challenge to Alyson. She was concerned that her facial expressions might communicate negative messages to the students, and she did not know if doing so might be detrimental to the students and the classroom climate. Dianna's experience of warm demanding communicated a different and evolving understanding of warm demanding.

### **Dianna: Warm Demanding as an Approach to Classroom Management**

In contrast to understanding warm demanding as a stance, Dianna (fourth grade) appeared to see warm demanding as a set of strategies used to bring students' behavior under control so she could teach the academic curriculum. She seemed to equate "warm" with "nice" as defined from a middle class perspective. She believed a warm demander is able to communicate with students without yelling or sounding harsh, and she believed she was unsuccessful because she had not found her assertive voice. She struggled continuously with how to insist without sounding "mean," and over the course of the year worked to develop the basics of classroom management such as giving explicit directions, celebrating positive behavior, and implementing consequences. As she communicated her perspectives, she focused almost exclusively on her actions as a teacher and seldom focused on what students perceived.

**Warm demanding as a set of strategies.** Like Alyson, Dianna used strategies learned in university coursework to establish positive relationships with her students, as illustrated here:

I leave notes on their desks at the beginning of the day, like “Let’s try our best today” or “You can do it” –those encouraging notes. I try to get to every student and ... I try to do it weekly. (D3)

She also used notes to focus on the teacher-student relationship when a child had a difficult day. She described writing a more extended positive note to a child because “she just broke down yesterday and just started crying because she got in trouble. [I wrote the note] as a way to let her know I care about her even though I had to get on her yesterday” (D3).

Dianna clearly worked throughout the year on her relationships with each child, but her lack of experience in being an authority seemed to overshadow her focus on building relationships. She talked much more extensively about issues of authority than about issues of relationship in her interviews, communicating that she was struggling to establish an authoritative identity in her classroom. She worried whether it was acceptable to raise her voice, and whether and how being authoritative was different from being “mean.” Her definition of warm demanding was grounded in developing respectful relationships with students, but her dilemmas about exercising her authority continually surfaced. She talked about the importance of being forceful and explicit in communicating high expectations. Additionally, she conveyed a belief that “warm” defines the tone of feedback rather than the nature of teacher-student relationships. For example, she described a warm demander as:

someone that’s forceful yet not demeaning, but very explicit in what they want the child to do but not in a way that is cruel or mean but is very direct in a warm kind of manner. (D1)

Dianna's comments indicate her understanding of warm demanding as gentle yet clear insistence that students meet expectations. Unlike Alyson, whose beliefs about the broad purposes of warm demanding were constant throughout the year, Dianna's beliefs evolved. Although she did not refer often to the purposes of warm demanding, her early comments focused on two narrow goals: conveying expectations very clearly so that children know what to do, and staying calm so that children are not embarrassed. In these comments she focused on why she should be a warm demander, and the benefits for children almost seemed secondary. By the May interview, she focused on the goal of helping children meet high expectations and explained it more expansively, providing examples and making it clear that the focus is on children's academic and social success. That is, she shifted the focus from why she should be a warm demander to the benefits for children of a warm demanding teacher:

[It's important to ensure] student success academically and behaviorally and just like overall as the student.. just so they can continue on to be a functioning member of society, not even in the classroom, just overall, like through manners and how we treat one another and just like I treat them, hopefully they will carry that on. (D3)

By the end of the school year, she seemed to have expanded her view of warm demanding, beginning to see relationships as a critical component rather than seeing warm demanding as simply a set of management strategies. For example, in talking about her expectations she was still concerned that her students not waste instructional time and that they follow directions immediately. However, her focus broadened to include concerns about community and relationships among the students:

Just respect for everyone; whenever anyone's talking just turn your head and listen. [I expect that they will] only use positive comments toward each other. I still have some that will give attitudes to each other and they just know it's not tolerated in here. ....

[When others are answering] I tell them to let them try; give them a chance. Don't make fun of anyone in this class and I just tell them how it won't be tolerated. (D2)

These comments demonstrate that her perspective on warm demanding was evolving and that broadening beyond the focus on strategies to gently ensure students follow directions.

**Enacting warm demanding.** Over the year, as Dianna worked on establishing herself as an authority, she also became increasingly explicit about the strategies she used to convey expectations and communicate with students when they failed to meet expectations. In the first interview, she talked about proactive and reactive strategies that she believed a warm demander used. Her statements were simple and brief, sounding like rules she had for herself:

- Be very explicit in what you want the child to do but not in a way that is cruel or mean but is very ... direct.
- Give an explicit, direct instruction.
- Go over to the student and say this is exactly what I need you to be doing right now and I expect to see this of you.
- You don't embarrass a child.
- You are not cruel or demeaning about it.
- You explain the why of everything so they at least understand it.
- I was ... walking around and like going to different tables and instead of ... using words ..., I just ... point to the kids that have to refocus. (D1)

By the third interview, Dianna conveyed a more comprehensive perspective about the strategies of a warm demander. She talked about varied strategies that included clear, direct statements of expectations and clear use of strategies that encouraged effort and success.

I talk with them... Like every student in this class I'm expecting you to try your best, so can you check [your work] over [before you turn it in]. I make sure I make that eye contact ... and tell them ... I know you can do it. ... I always tell them each person is capable... Like yesterday we had an on-track test which is kind of similar to [the state accountability test]. I told them each person is capable of passing. .... You just have to try your best, check over your work, and just... Yeah. So I make sure by telling them and um... just that reinforcement. But like today, um... Like if the student begins to shut down just be there for them, just encourage, encourage them. (D3)

She also talked about proactive strategies focused on the social skills students needed to work productively and respectfully with one another.

I tell them...just little things, like even if ... someone is holding the door, make sure you say thank you. Like bringing manners in, just being polite .... A lot of times at the beginning of the year when they got mad ... they would say, "Girl! Boy!" to each other and just ... referring to each other by our names and they've gotten to that point....And they will still say it [occasionally] and I give them a look .... [and they know]. (D3)

It is important to note, however, that Dianna did not talk about building relationships with students as part of what teachers do to enact warm demanding. Even at the end of the year when her definition had broadened to focus on meeting academic expectations and demonstrating positive social interactions with peers, she focused on the management

strategies she used to accomplish this rather than describing the significance of her relationships with students, as Alyson did. It was striking that Alyson was able to talk so much more extensively and explicitly about what warm demanders do than Dianna. However, Dianna spoke much more extensively than Alyson about the challenges she faced.

**The challenges of warm demanding.** Dianna's struggles were fairly consistent across the school year in that she continued to express concern about claiming her authority in the classroom. However, the way she talked about these challenges shifted, demonstrating changes in her conception of warm demanding. Like many novice teachers, Dianna struggled with transitions, setting consistent standards, follow-through, students who "talk back" to her, students who call-out during class discussions, and students who are disrespectful to peers. In her initial interview, Dianna seemed to equate being a warm demander with asserting her authority. She defined a warm demander as a teacher who is consistent and insistent and who maintains a calm, warm, respectful tone at all times. When she was able to assert her authority without getting upset or raising her voice, she felt successful. At other times, when she raised her voice or lost her patience, she felt she had failed as a warm demander.

You try to be a warm demander all the time but obviously things come up and you get frustrated and you realize after..... why...why did I just yell? ..... I feel it's hard to be a warm demander like a hundred percent of the day, especially when you're learning how to deal with certain situations. (D1)

Dianna seemed to see warm demanding as a set of practices one uses rather than as a way of being or a stance in the classroom. Certainly developing strategies to "live" the stance of warm demander is a task of the novice teacher, but for Dianna the connection between

strategies and adopting a warm demander stance seemed elusive. Dianna talked about many strategies that would help her become a warm demander, however, all of them focused on management. For example, at the time of the first interview she was working on: giving more explicit directions, using more non-verbal cues for behavior, working to maintain a calm tone, providing a rationale for desired behavior, and making sure students understood the reasons she instituted consequences. What seems significant in this interview is that even though Dianna had been working to build relationships with students, she did not identify work on relationships as a key strategy in her stance as a warm demander. Nor did she talk about any form of moral code that served as a foundation for her classroom. For example, when she talked about her expectations, she described technical behavioral examples. She wanted students to: listen and follow along so they didn't get lost; be productive, always be doing something; follow instructions; stop arguing with each other and with her.

As the year progressed, Dianna continued to struggle with issues of authority. However, her struggles became more nuanced, more focused on issues of judgment and balance. In addition, her decisions seemed more grounded in a broader set of expectations related to building the community. Dianna talked in interviews two and three about how hard it was to be consistent and to know if she was achieving "the right balance." She wondered if she was too easy or too hard on students. She wondered if she gave too many chances or if she should give any at all. She was very skilled at creating engaging, fun, learning activities and struggled over the decision to end an activity because of students' off-task behavior:

I plan fun activities and I tell them "Don't take the fun out of it." But I'm not saying we get through every fun activity. ... The other day we got halfway through [an activity] and

I'm like, "We're done." I told them you can have fun... but we have to do it in an appropriate way. So having the consequences means we can't always get through the fun activities. (D3)

She continued to implement these kinds of activities, and through the year she believed that she and the students improved at sustaining engaged behavior. Nevertheless, her empathy for the students coupled with her hesitancy to assert her authority continued to plague her and make it more challenging to implement the engaging lessons she created. For example, she wanted her students to be excited about learning but found that their excitement sometimes spilled over into misbehavior.

Like I think it's great that they're so excited, but then sometimes that excitement goes on to like other conversations ... and it's just like controlling that ... and I'm like, "Come on, we need to get moving or it will take twice as long." ..... It drives me nuts. (D2)

Even in the third interview it was clear that consistently insisting on appropriate behavior remained a challenge for her:

That's one I need to work on I know, like not even giving the warning -- just automatically the lights go off and they should know exactly what to do right away but ... I still feel like I give them too many chances ... because they want to finish what they're writing and so, you know, as long as they're getting their work done in some way...and they are not goofing around, that's why I give them a chance but.. I give too many chances. (D3)

In the second and third interviews, it was clear that Dianna's perspectives about what it means to be a warm demander expanded beyond thinking about a set of management

strategies and the tone of communication with her students, though these were still the primary issues she struggled with. In talking about her accomplishments, she described management strategies she had mastered. For example, she believed she had improved at using non-verbal cues, using a count down strategy to orient group behavior, being explicit about expectations, being consistent, and supporting students in for smoother transitions. She still worried about whether her voice sounded too harsh, and whether raising her voice was the same as yelling and how she could tell the difference between the two.

Some of the challenges Dianna experienced were related to the fact that she taught a high stakes grade in a high stakes context; that is, her students' scores directly impacted the grade the school would receive from the state. It was not surprising that she felt compelled to cover the academic curriculum. Not wasting time was a recurrent theme in her interviews, perhaps because she was intensely aware of holding herself and her students accountable for their learning. Although she had strategies for connecting with her students, recognized the significance of students' respectful relationships with peers, and had clear social and academic goals for her students, these themes dropped to the background when she was asked about her work as a warm demander. Covering the academic curriculum leaped to the foreground.

Throughout the year, issues related to Dianna's ability to establish herself as an authority while maintaining a warm tone dominated her comments about warm demanding. She communicated that she believed a warm demander has an authoritative presence in the classroom and is able to express that authority in a calm, respectful tone. She saw this as a key in maintaining a culture of respect in the classroom; and she saw this as her biggest challenge. When she talked about her learning, she noted:

I'm twenty-four years old and I've never been in an authority position before in my life, you know. (D3)

As a first-year teacher, Dianna became responsible for 23 active, low income, children of color in a school the state gave a "D" grade. Her on-going challenge was how to be authoritative. For her, raising her voice felt like yelling, and yelling made her worry she was being "mean" and that students would "hate her." Yet, in watching herself in the videos, she began to wonder whether "mean" was in her head and not in her behavior:

Watching the videos, I think I got to a point where I thought I was screaming. I wasn't. In my head I thought I was, but in reality I wasn't, and in my head I think I sound a lot harsher than in reality. I don't [sound harsh] and it's all... I thought I was so mean. (D3)

Her comments suggested that Dianna struggled to see herself as a person with legitimate authority and with her responsibility to act with authority. Over the year, she gained many classroom management strategies. She relearned the value of strategies she had learned in her teacher education program such as repetition, modeling, consistency, use of consequences, the importance of follow-through. She made progress but had not quite figured out what a strong, assertive tone sounded like. In short, there is evidence that Dianna is on her way to being a strong classroom manager, one who has clear, high expectations, who respects children and demands they respect her, and who helps children improve their achievement. But to become a warm demander there is still more work to be done.

### **Discussion**

The study documents the experience of two young, white, first-year teachers of low-income African American students as they worked to become warm demanders in classrooms

very similar to the classrooms in which they completed successful internships. The differences provide a contrast between a novice who perceived warm demanding as an overall stance to teaching and one who conceptualized it as an approach to classroom management that enables a teacher to gain students' cooperation in pursuit of academic goals. Within the literature, warm demanding is defined as a stance in which the teacher is positioned as a caregiver, pedagogue and disciplinarian who strives to situate instructional activities within the cultural norms and knowledge of students in order to empower students to gain access to high academic achievement and ultimately the culture of power (Delpit, 1995; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ware, 2006). Discussion of the two teachers in terms of this framework provides insight into the differences manifested in their enactment and understanding of warm demanding.

Both teachers spoke sincerely of caring for students. Both used strategies learned in the internship to convey personal interest in each student. Dianna manifested care by working tirelessly to provide an orderly classroom environment. She also stated a sincere belief in her students and a desire for them to succeed. However, Dianna talked most consistently about how *she* demonstrated warmth and care through her words and actions. For Dianna, care was a component of warm demanding but not the unifying structure. In contrast, Alyson's enactment of care was predicated on *students'* perception of her caring behavior. For her, care was the essence of the enactment of warm demanding. Alyson's caregiving transcended proclamations of caring and was manifested in her daily actions towards students. Children, particularly children of color, must feel their teachers care as it is demonstrated in classroom discourse, teacher actions and gestures, and instruction (Case, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Noddings, 1984). For Alyson, such understandings were foundational to her enactment of warm demanding. Feelings

of connectedness and solidarity with students guided her interactions inside and outside the classroom and motivated her to work diligently on their behalf. Alyson's positioning as a caregiver was evident in her concern and commitment to students' future success.

A second foundation of the warm demander stance is an authoritative stance that enables the teacher to teach with authority and insist on a culture of mutual respect and task orientation that is essential to student success (Bondy et al., 2007; Delpit, 1995; Irvine & Fraser, 1998). Both teachers experienced some challenges in classroom management, particularly in finding the balance between being consistent in addressing misbehavior and maintaining instructional momentum; however, for Dianna the challenges in establishing herself as an authority dominated her thinking about warm demanding. Faced with these challenges, she searched for management strategies and seemed to forget the significance of relational strategies. Uncomfortable viewing herself as an authority, she worked to deliver her expectations and consequences in a "warm" tone. That is, she adopted a narrow definition of "warm" as a feature of her voice, and a definition of warm demanding as being able to maintain control without sounding harsh. Although she cared about her students, it seems likely that her stress and inability to convey her authority meant that students could not hear and feel her care, undermining her ability to demonstrate a warm demanding stance (Ware, 2006).

In contrast, Alyson defined warm demanding as grounded in relationships with students that enabled her to insist that students be respectful towards her and each other and to be consistent as a way to promote fairness. Alyson linked insistence with her overarching goals of helping students develop academic, social, and emotional competence within an environment where they felt a strong sense of emotional connectedness and belonging. Though a novice

who still struggled occasionally with discipline, she understood that her authoritative stance was essential in helping her students develop the skills necessary for responsible citizenship and long-term accomplishment inside and outside the classroom (Irvine & Fraser, 1998).

The third foundation of the warm demanding stance is that of a pedagogue who establishes a “culture of achievement” in which diverse learners come to “see” themselves as successful, or identify with school achievement (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Ware, 2006). Scholars note that systemic and institutional inequality, as well as ideologically flawed knowledge significantly shapes the learning experiences for children of color in the United States (King, 1991, 1992; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2002, 2007). Cognizant of this, warm demanders teach with a sense of urgency and strive to empower children as students and as future citizens. Both teachers had strong pedagogical skills and were able to design engaging instruction that focused on development of skills and higher order thinking. Unfortunately, Dianna’s challenges in establishing her authority and her sense of urgency to cover the curriculum, at times impeded her ability to sustain student engagement. Alyson demonstrated more intentionality about incorporating elements of students’ lives into the curriculum. This conveyed an ethos of care and also made the content comprehensible for students. For Alyson, being a warm demander meant making sure students had the knowledge and skills they needed to be responsible citizens. Her *modus operandi* was never solely focused on solely academic skills. She expressed a desire to impart life skills to her students. Although Dianna also wanted to impart life skills to her students, her dominant practice was more focused on the attainment of academic skills and staying on pace through the formal curriculum. The findings of this study do not highlight a critically conscious disposition in either participant;

however, Alyson's enactment of warm demanding provides evidence of concern about the future achievement orientation of students, rather than a more narrow focus on immediate performance.

Although there are clear differences in the definition and enactment of warm demanding for these two novice teachers, both were on a journey in developing their skills and orientation. Dianna demonstrated a broader definition of warm demanding at the end of the year than at the beginning, indicating the potential for a more mature enactment over time. Additionally, it is important to consider the role that high stakes testing might play in the teachers' differences. Alyson taught first grade. Although students are tested in this grade, the stakes are not as high for students, teachers, or the school, though this will change as "pay-for-performance" plans are enacted over the next few years. Did the pressure to cover the curriculum that would be tested create challenges in the enactment of warm demanding for Dianna that were not encountered by Alyson? Although we must acknowledge that possibility, our knowledge of these teachers suggests that the central challenge for Dianna was her discomfort with her role as an authority, rather than the pressure she felt from testing. Additionally, despite the same internship requirements that focused on developing relationships with children and families and using cultural and personal knowledge in instruction, Dianna undervalued these strategies in defining and enacting warm demanding. However, it remains possible that testing pressure impeded her ability to spend time building relationships and to overcome her discomfort with authority.

### **Implications**

The most recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (2011) indicates the persistent gap between the educational experience of white and black students. In particular, stark differences exist in reading and mathematics achievement as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, school drop-out rate, college enrollment rate, and the rate of bachelor's degree attainment. Nevertheless, the potential of African American students to excel in school has been demonstrated repeatedly (e.g., Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). The warm demanding stance bears great promise for facilitating students' success.

These cases of two high achieving, young, white graduates of a teacher education program will be useful to teacher educators, preservice and inservice teachers, and school administrators who are committed to the success of all students. Their stories illustrate understandings and misunderstandings of well-intentioned novices attempting to facilitate academic engagement and achievement. The details of the teachers' beliefs and practices can help others examine warm demanding and engage in self-study as they work to enact it.

Furthermore, Alyson and Dianna's stories give us plenty to think about related to our own teaching of warm demanding. These two young, highly motivated beginning teachers experienced the same content and pedagogy in the teacher education course that introduced the conceptual foundations and practical tools for warm demanding. The differences in their practice cause us to wonder whether we placed too much emphasis on warm demanding as a classroom management strategy. Perhaps by linking it to the literature on culturally responsive classroom management, we encouraged some students to assume a more narrow definition of warm demanding than we intended. Is it possible, too, that the language itself, "warm

demanders,” might mislead some students? That is, do they associate the phrase with a way of communicating with students rather than a broader commitment to act “in behalf of the other” (Noddings, 2005, p. 16)? Teacher educators may wish to remind themselves of Ware’s warm demander framework, including caregiving, authoritative discipline, and pedagogy. Moreover, the central purpose of warm demanding as a means of uplifting individuals and their communities must be made explicit and incorporated into educational efforts. In this way teachers may come to view warm demanding as a moral imperative that defines their approach to teaching rather than as a collection of strategies to achieve student compliance.

In addition, the cases indicate the importance of helping teachers consider the difference between telling students you care and showing them that you care. It would be useful to highlight the differences in the way the two teachers spoke of how they enacted the practice of warm demanding. Dianna used the word “tell” and “told” to describe her interactions with her students. Her words convey the fundamental misconception that “telling” students you care about them and believe in them is enough. Noddings (1984) made this point in explaining that a caring relation between teacher and student exists if and only if the student recognizes that the teacher cares for him/her and that the care is genuine.

Alyson’s case might help demonstrate the difference between vocalizing words of care and focusing on students’ perceptions of the teacher’s enactment of care. Alyson repeatedly used words that show action (i.e., a warm demander is somebody who conveys that she cares about them through her actions all the time; she will do a lot for them and go out of her way to make them feel she really does care). Her words demonstrate a focus on students’ perceptions rather than teachers’ actions and communicate her understanding that warm demanding is not

something that is spoken into existence. She also understands that she must hold certain expectations of herself, in that she knows warm demanding is action based and that she must show and demonstrate continuously her care for her students.

As teacher educators, we must consider whether we have made explicit for our students the connections across caregiving, disciplining, instructing and committing to help all children succeed in and out of school. Alyson's case helps to communicate this, but it is surely more difficult to develop a "stance" than a set of strategies, just as it is more difficult to show students you care than it is to say the words. We have no doubt that Dianna wanted to demonstrate a comprehensive ethos of care, but her difficulties establishing herself as an authority impeded her ability to show care. When a teacher has no experience as an authority, what might we do to help develop an authoritative identity? At the least, we must find ways to communicate what an authoritative position looks like and sounds like, and we must coach our students to enact this position. In addition, teacher educators must think carefully about how we can model warm demanding for our students.

This study also raises a number of important questions. We already have indicated the potential role of academic pressure in fourth grade in the differences the teachers displayed. We also wonder: What role does the mentor teacher play in the way preservice teachers come to understand warm demanding? What role do the behavior challenges of a specific group of children play in the development of a warm demanding stance? Surely, various features of the context could influence the development and enactment of warm demanding. With greater insight into teachers' and student teachers' experiences of warm demanding, teacher educators

and school leaders can be better prepared to cultivate in teachers this deep commitment to the well-being and achievement of all learners.

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## Appendix A: Codes for Warm Demander/Warm Demanding (WD) Analysis

Note: Codes (or “domains”) were identified based on data from interviews and videotapes and aligned with the three questions the researchers asked of the data: (1) How does the beginning teacher understand warm demanding? (2) What practices does the beginning teacher use to enact warm demanding? (3) What challenges to warm demanding does the teacher face?

### **How she understands warm demanding**

Definitions she provides of WD

Ways her views of WD have changed

Reasons being a WD is important

Short- and long-term goals of a WD

Reasons to develop relationships with families

Kinds of expectations for students

### **Practices she uses to enact warm demanding**

Practices she’s working on related to WD

What she believes a WD does/should do

How she believes a WD starts the school year

How her teaching has changed from beginning of year to end of year

Things related to managing behavior that she believes she is doing well

How she believes students’ behavior has changed and why

Differences between internship and first-year teaching related to WD

Teaching and management strategies she implements

What she would do differently (from what she sees in the video)

### **Challenges she faces related to WD**

Challenges she perceives in developing relationships with families

Things she believes she doesn't do well

Things she does that she thinks she shouldn't do

Things she is unsure about

Specific challenges she believes she faces with students

Supports she wishes she had