

## ABSTRACT

HOBBS, PATRICIA ANN. A Q-Methodological Study: Examining Teachers' Beliefs, Perceptions, and Attitudes about Cultural Competence. (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers perceive their cultural competence. The overarching research questions are "How do teachers perceive their cultural competence and how does their cultural competency impact their professional work?" Individuals' beliefs have a powerful impact on practice. The aim of this study is to understand the cultural competency of current teachers in a rural district in North Carolina. Moreover, the study aims to ascertain what factors foster or inhibit the development of cultural competency of teachers.

We know there is a substantial gap between the performance of white, middle class students as compared to that of minority and low-income students. There is a clear and present need to study and understand issues that may contribute to the amelioration of this achievement gap. This study targets one understudied topic that may in fact help us understand teacher beliefs that may in turn improve teacher and student engagement and thus performance.

Using Lindsey and CampbellJones' theoretical framework of Cultural Proficiency and Davis's framework of *Teaching Students Who Don't Look Like You*, the findings from this study will explore whether teachers' attitudes and practices are indicative of cultural competence or whether they are indicative of cultural destructiveness, culturally incapacity, or cultural blindness.

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A Q-Methodological Study: Examining Teachers' Beliefs, Perceptions, and Attitudes about  
Cultural Competence

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to God first, then my late mother, Janie G. McNeill, who is still teaching me the value of life in my dreams and thoughts and instilled in us that “our destiny is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice - a thing to be achieved.”

To my husband Bill, children, and grandchildren, thank you for your love, guidance, support, and encouragement.

Also, to the memory of my father, Willie H. McNeill, who worked hard, always wanting more for his children and brother, Reubin McNeill, my role model and a true educator.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Patricia Ann Hobbs was born in Erwin, North Carolina and moved to Dunn, North Carolina in 1978. After graduating from Erwin High School, she enrolled in Winston-Salem State University majoring in intermediate education with a minor in reading. Upon graduation from WSSU, Patricia remained in the Dunn area and was hired by the Harnett County Public School System as a 6<sup>th</sup> grade math and science teacher.

While teaching, Patricia earned a Masters in Intermediate Education from Fayetteville State University in 1985, Masters in School Administration from North Carolina State University in 2007, and Sixth Year Certificate and Curriculum and Instruction Specialist licensure from North Carolina State University in 2005. She served 21 years in the classroom before going to Central Office and serving one year as Gifted Support Specialist for Grades 6-12, six years as Middle School Director, and currently in her 6<sup>th</sup> year as Assistant Superintendent. She has achieved additional certifications in the following areas: AIG (Academically and Intellectually Gifted) State Certification, State Certified Mentor, Principal Certification, and Superintendent Certification-Advanced Level II Education

In her position as Assistant Superintendent, she implemented the district's first short-term suspension program and 21-credit program to assist at-risk students from dropping out of school and graduating from high school. Her philosophy is "All students can learn. Every educator must serve as a change agent and catalyst that actively challenges the status quo and ensures a fair and equitable education for all students."

Patricia is married to William Hobbs, Jr. and resides in Dunn, N.C. They have four children that have all been successful in their educational career and four grandchildren. She

enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with family. She has a deep and abiding faith in God and is a member of The Oak Grove A.M.E. Zion Church where she broke the paradigm by being the first woman appointed by the pastor and elected by the membership to hold one of the highest offices in the church – The Pastors Steward and Chairman of The Board of Stewards. She also serves as an usher and member of the choir.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are numerous people who have provided assistance or made significant contributions to this project. First and foremost, I wish to thank God, for I know without a shadow of doubt that He has been my source of strength throughout this entire journey. God says, “Lift up the hands that hang down. March straight through the flood, and behold! The waters will divide, the Red Sea will open, the Jordan will part, and the Lord will lead you through to victory. Remember, the goal is simply to carry the cargo and to make it to the port (Malthie D. Babcock).” These words of wisdom were a constant reminder that I would succeed on this journey.

I also wish to thank my family, for which this journey would have been extremely difficult without their unconditional love and support. My husband Bill, has made real sacrifices and accepted the extra responsibilities that are associated with my late night classes and writing sessions. I appreciate his support and encouragement. I would like to thank my three children, Nicky, Shonda, and BJ, who are college graduates and have pursued and is currently pursuing advanced degrees and understand the rigor involved in writing a thesis and dissertation. I wish to thank my stepson, Brandon, son-in-law, James who is pursuing his doctorate degree in engineering in Maryland, and sister Alda, who has completed her doctorate degree in education, for their words of encouragement and support. I hope that my pursuit of the doctoral degree will inspire my grandchildren to reach deeper into their own big questions.

In addition, I would like to thank my late mom, Janie Mc Neill, who died six months ago and my siblings. For those who know me and my story, they know I would not be where I am today without their love, support, encouragement, and commitment.

I owe a lot to my dissertation chair, Dr. Matt Militello, for his encouragement, support and guidance. He introduced me to the world of Q methodology and constantly recommended scholarly books and articles to read. Even at my lowest point in this process he continued to offer encouraging words. Thank you to Dr. Militello for nominating me and subsequently receiving the Wilcox Hodnett Doctoral Fellowship Scholarship. I would like to extend a wealth of thanks and appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Lance Fusarelli for easing some of the tension with his practical dissertation advice, Dr. Angela Wiseman and Dr. Paul Bitting for their guidance and support.

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I will always remember each of the individuals aforementioned for they have touched my life, knocked down “Jericho” walls, and allowed my dreams to flourish. “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*“You can tell what they are by what they do.”* — Mark 10:43

#### **Background of the Study**

As they attempt to prepare students to be twenty-first century learners, school leaders face a number of challenges. Well-known among these challenges is the task of ensuring that all—not just some—students perform well in their respective institutions (Ryan, 2003). Currently, Latinos, Asian Americans, American Indians, and African Americans make up more than half of the student populations in California, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, and Texas (U.S. Department of Education, 2004; Gollnick & Chinn, 2005). Whites make up less than one fourth of the student population in the nation’s largest cities, while 84% of teachers are White and 75% are female. In P-12 schools, nationally, 82% of public school principals are White, 11% are Black, 5% are Hispanic, and less than 3% are identified as Asian and Native American (Digest of Education Statistics, 2004).

At the same time that demographics influence the success of schools and school leaders in the U.S., other socio-economic issues have an effect as well. The number of children of color in U.S. public schools has increased dramatically in recent years while the number of Blacks entering the teaching profession has decreased. As most principals come from the teaching ranks, the number of potential Black principals has also decreased (Ferrandino, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Page & Page, 1991; PR Newswire, 2003). According to 1999-2000 survey results from the U.S. Education Department’s National Center for

Education Statistics, fewer than 2% of the nation's nearly 3 million public school teachers are Black males.

Census statistics show that 42% of all Black boys have failed a grade at least once by the time they reach high school, and 60% of Black males who enter high school in 9th grade do not graduate, according to a report by the Schott Foundation for Public Education. By 2020, principals will lead schools where 49% of the school-aged population will be White, 26% of all children will live in poverty, and 8% will speak a language other than English (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Student success and failure follow particular patterns (Ryan, 2003). One of the most noticeable of these patterns involves ethnicity and cultural background. American society is becoming increasingly diverse, and its vitality is being enhanced as its members redefine and rediscover their diverse cultural identities (Kuykendall, 2004). Predicted demographic changes necessitate an acceptance of America's pluralistic cultural heritage (Diller & Moule, 2005; Howard, 1999). Educational leaders and researchers have theorized much about the necessity of school reform (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, 2004). Culturally responsive teaching has become more common in American classrooms as schools have experienced the largest influx in history of immigrant students who speak a language other than English (Howard, 1999). In 50% of the nation's largest urban public schools, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans now make up 76.5% of the student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

As more and more students from diverse backgrounds populate twenty-first century classrooms, and as efforts mount to identify effective methods of teaching these students, the

need for culturally responsive pedagogical approaches intensifies. Today's classrooms require teachers to educate students who vary widely in culture, language, abilities, and many other characteristics (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). To meet this challenge, teachers must employ not only theoretically sound but also culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers must create a classroom culture where all students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, are welcomed, supported, and provided with the best opportunity to learn (Gay, 2000).

There are systematic barriers to student achievement that in some ways are associated with a phenomenon we have come to refer to as racism. Some scholars go so far as to say that racism and issues of race are the main reason why students of color do poorly in schools (Ogbu, 1994, 2008; Young & Laible, 2000). While racism has undoubtedly always existed in some form or another in schools, it has become more obvious in recent times, particularly with the increase in diversity in Western countries. In Western countries such as Canada, the USA, the UK, and Australia, students who do not belong to the dominant ethnic (Anglo) group routinely have to overcome significant barriers if they are to succeed in these countries' educational institutions (Ogbu, 1994; Young & Laible, 2000). Many researchers (e.g. Alladin, 1996; Gillborn, 1995, 1996; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Troyna, 1993) have documented the insidious presence of racism and race-related barriers in educational institutions.

### **Pervasive Issues that Impact Student Achievement**

Given its invasive presence, racism ought to be a serious concern for educational leaders, particularly for principals, lead teachers, and others who hold positions of



responsibility in schools (Ryan, 2003). Racism is often most evident in the general school environment and in the classroom. This is where the various and complex forms of racism emerge in their obvious and not so obvious guises, in name-calling, harassment, and interpersonal conflict; in the subtle stereotyping and taken-for-granted assumptions and practices; and in curricular and organizational patterns (Ryan, 2003).

I examined the issue of race because the manner in which administrators, teachers, students, and parents perceive racism is highly relevant to the effects that it can have. Administrators and teachers' preference for one particular understanding of race and culture will inevitably and significantly affect how they perceive and address their own actions associated with race and culture. One of the most difficult tasks we face as human beings is that of communicating across our individual differences, of trying to make sure that what we say to someone is interpreted the way we intend (Delpit, 1995, 2006). Since teachers are responsible for communicating to increasingly diverse groups of students and parents (Delpit, 1995, 2006), assessing teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about racism and cultural competence might illuminate some prime barriers to effective communication. Figure 1.1 identifies three types of racism that have compelling effects on students and student achievement.

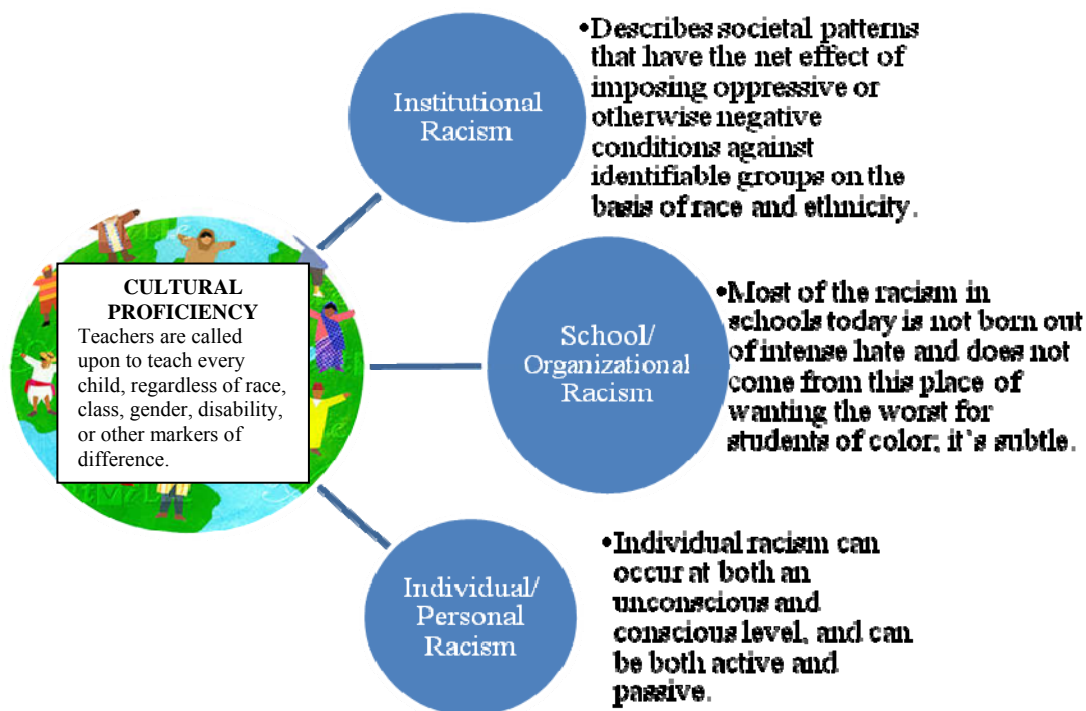


Figure 1.1 Fleras and Kunz Typology of Racism. These issues point to the need for cultural competence at all levels of education, but especially in the classroom.

People tend to hold different beliefs about different cultures. To address many of the complex issues—such as socio-economic class and language—that are associated with culture and diversity is tough under any circumstances. These issues become even more complex when they pertain a school setting where the experiences of a large number of students reflect diverse ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, languages, genders, and sexual orientations. When students are exposed to high quality teaching and nurturing that are part of a compelling pedagogy, they can succeed, despite factors that commonly prevent it: low IQ, poverty, family instability, crime-and-drug ridden neighborhoods, and so on. Ordinary

teachers who are well-prepared, motivated, and dedicated will produce high-achieving students (Gay, 2000).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. The overarching research question is, "What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?" Belief dictates practice. This matters to instruction and ultimately affects student learning. We know that there is a substantial gap between the performance of white, middle class students and that of minority and low-income students (Center on Education Policy, 2007). There is a need for this study to deepen and accelerate the process of changing teacher beliefs—a process that, in turn, will improve teacher and student engagement and performance. This study seeks to know what teachers believe and understand about cultural competence. If this study demonstrates that teachers need to change their beliefs, they must begin by knowing their short-comings. For the middle school teachers in the two schools included in this study, this means undergoing a discovery of cultural consciousness.

### **What We Know**

The first step toward maximizing educational outcomes is having high expectations and supporting the belief that low-performing students can master challenging academic standards. Teachers' standards, expectations, and behaviors have an impact on student motivation, engagement, and academic performance (Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement, 2010). Educators must believe that students can achieve at high levels, and

they must build relationships to reach students' untapped potential. The belief that students can reach proficiency must become a natural component of their pedagogy.

The underlying philosophy of an instructional delivery system that maintains high standards and high expectations for achievement for all students must acknowledge and affirm that students who have not yet reached proficiency nonetheless arrive with the cultural capital that, when combined with a culturally responsive, rigorous curriculum and meaningful connections with educators and students, help them achieve (Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement, 2010). Culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy involve instructional practices that demonstrate a deep understanding of the socio-cultural groups served by the district, as well as methodologies for embedding this pedagogy into content area instruction. In addition to adapting instruction to accommodate the wide range of student needs, the curriculum should provide opportunities for students to learn about the cultures, histories, experiences, and contributions of diverse groups (Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement, 2010).

The school district in this study has major, persistent gaps in achievement and performance that seem to be associated with race, ethnicity, language, and disability. According to the 2010 Adequate Yearly Progress Report Results by Subgroups (NCDPI), in Reading Grades 3-8, there is a 32.7% gap between White and Black students; a 27.7% gap between Whites and Hispanics; a 14% gap between Whites and American Indians; an 8.9% gap between Whites and Asians; and a 7.7% gap between White and Multi-Racial students. In Math Grades 3-8, there is a 27.5% gap between White and Black students; a 16.5% gap between Whites and Hispanics; a 14.6% gap between Whites and American Indians; a 2%

gap between Whites and Asians; and a 4.3% gap between White and Multi-Racial students. In Reading Grade 10, the largest gap exists between White and Hispanic students: 23.8%. In Math Grade 10, the largest gap exists between White and Black students: 21.9%.

Reviewing schools that have closed the achievement gaps for underperforming subgroups reveals that they share common elements that distinguish them from schools that have not yet attained success. Those elements include: 1) insistence on high expectations, 2) use of performance data to drive educational decision-making, 3) a clearly articulated and focused improvement plan, 4) high-quality leadership, 5) a school culture that embeds cultural competence, 6) multifaceted formal and informal models of targeted professional development, 7) alignment of curriculum to standards, and 8) family and community engagement (Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement, 2010).

It is essential that schools align their missions, plans, and practices with those of school cultures that have systematically closed the achievement gap by incorporating each of these elements in its delivery of services. Moreover, teachers must employ deliberate, proactive, and culturally relevant strategies to ensure educational equity for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

A main goal of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is to close gaps in test scores between different groups of students while raising achievement for all groups. Of particular concern are the persistent achievement gaps between African American, Latino, and Native American students and their White and Asian counterparts, and the gaps between students who are from low income families and those who are not (Center on Education Policy, 2007). For these gaps to narrow and eventually close, achievement for lower-scoring

subgroups must not only increase but increase at a faster rate than that of the higher-scoring comparison group. Since 2007, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) has been collecting and annually updating a vast array of test data from all states. These data focus on results of the state tests used to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act.

Obtaining a national picture of achievement for different racial/ethnic subgroups is complicated because state tests vary widely in content, difficulty, format, cut scores for proficiency, and other characteristics. Table 1.1 shows that in grade 4 reading, the median percentage of students scoring proficient on state tests was 58% for the African American subgroup, 83% for Asian American students, 64% for Latinos, 62% for Native Americans, and 81% for Whites. This national data clearly shows the pervasive, persistent gaps in student achievement between White and non-White students.

Table 1.1 National Data for Median Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient on State Tests (Center on Education Policy, 2007).

<b>Subject &amp; Grade</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Native American</b>	<b>White</b>
<b>Reading</b>					
Grade 4	58%	83%	64%	62%	81%
Grade 8	58%	83%	58%	57%	81%
High school	53%	78%	56%	57%	78%
<b>Math</b>					
Grade 4	56%	88%	67%	63%	82%
Grade 8	46%	86%	55%	54%	77%
High school	45%	81%	50%	44%	71%

### **Significance of the Study**

With the growing diversity of the student body in U.S. public schools, it is increasingly imperative that teachers have and continually develop a cultural competence that enables them to connect with, respond to, and interact effectively with their students. The achievement gap between cultural minority and majority students suggests that some sort of communication disconnect often occurs in the classrooms. A cultural mismatch between teachers and students is common and should be positive and productive for both parties, provided that the teacher is a culturally competent communicator (Gay, 2000). The following passage from Gloria Ladson-Billings's *The Dreamkeepers* best sums up why this study is so significant:

Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others. They see their teaching as an art rather than as a technical skill. They believe that all of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some. They see themselves as a part of the community and they see teaching as giving back to the community. They help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural and global identities. Such teachers can also be identified by the ways in which they structure their social interactions: Their relationships with students are fluid and equitable and extend beyond the classroom. They demonstrate a connectedness with all of their students and encourage that same connectedness between students. They encourage a community of learners; they encourage their students to learn collaboratively. Finally, such teachers are identified by their notions of knowledge: They believe that knowledge is continuously re-

created, recycled, and shared by teachers and students alike. They view the content of the curriculum critically and are passionate about it. (p. 25)

It is my firm belief that very dedicated teachers, counselors, and administrators want all students to learn and achieve at their highest possible level. Nonetheless, some students still just don't reach their potential. Low-income and minority students, who are more likely to live in poverty, tend to be overrepresented in special-education, vocational-education, and general-education programs and underrepresented in college-prep tracks (Arnold & Lassmann, 2003).

### **Policy Implications for Educators**

To further validate the significance of this study, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has developed a new executive and teacher evaluation instrument, approved by the State Board, to assess teachers, school executives, and superintendents in several areas, including cultural competence. In December 2006, the State Board of Education adopted new standards for school executives (administrators) that reflect a new vision of school leadership. Likewise, in September 2007, the Board adopted new standards for superintendents. The new standards for both school executives and superintendents focus on seven areas of leadership: strategic, instructional, cultural, human resource, managerial, external development, and micropolitical.

Standard 2 of the teacher evaluation instrument specifically evaluates whether teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, treat students as individuals, maintain high expectations (including graduation from high school) for



students of all backgrounds, and appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment by building positive, appropriate relationships.

Standard 3 of the school executive evaluation instrument evaluates the administrator's cultural leadership. It specifically states that a principal must be able to "re-culture" the school if needed to align with the school's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning, and purpose. Cultural leadership implies understanding the school and the people in it each day, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the school's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals. School leadership is critically important if we are to transform our schools into twenty-first century learning communities and ensure that every student not only graduates from high school, but is globally competitive for work and/or postsecondary education and prepared for life in the modern age (NCDPI, 2007).

### **Expectations and Assumptions**

When teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs were examined, for the district included in the study, the results were skewed by their initial assessment of the students' potential, based on assessment data and pervasive gaps. Both experience and research find a relationship between expectation and achievement. Teachers' expectations, unconscious biases, and assumptions about students' potential have a tangible effect on achievement (Brown, 2006). Their unconscious biases and assumptions about students' potential have a substantial effect on performance, as low-expectation students are given fewer opportunities

to perform (Brown, 2006). Before reformation can take place in the schools, teachers must revisit their own ethical values, beliefs, and cultural principles.

Teachers must be able to self-assess and examine their own behaviors and biases as far as their ethical judgments and pedagogical approaches to diversity in the classroom. There should be training sessions—offered on a regular basis at individual schools—on effective instructional strategies and classroom management techniques, in order to direct teachers toward strategies that are successful with students at various levels of learning. When children do not succeed in school, educators and others disagree about who or what is the central cause.

Given the diversity of students in terms of race, ethnicity, language, learning, behavioral styles, and achievement levels, professional development will ensure teacher mastery not only of curriculum and instruction but also of the relationships required for effective teaching and learning (Gay, 2000). Professional development will give educators the cultural competence required to understand and value the diversity of students and families, to demonstrate high expectations for all students, and to differentiate instruction so that all can meet high standards (Gay, 2000). Professional development promises to ensure, in other words, that all students have equal access to the resources needed to achieve proficiency irrespective of the differences they bring.

Learning is a process that takes place both inside and outside school. Thus, inadequacies in any arena of life—school, home, community, or the self—can contribute to academic failure when not compensated for in another arena. Each year, increasing numbers of students enter school with circumstances in their lives that schools are ill prepared to

accommodate. When educators are not sensitive to these circumstances, our students' educational lives are like the life of a trapeze artist who falls without a safety net. Yet, with or without a safety net, these students and their peers are the population from which the next generation of scientists, engineers, and other skilled professionals must come.

What is always good and sensitive practice with all students, in other words, becomes especially important when the teacher comes from a different background than the students. All teachers—inexperienced and experienced—should receive cultural diversity training. It's the right thing to do. So how can schools overcome deeply embedded cultural conflicts and assist all students? Teachers and school leaders need to become experts in culturally responsive teaching, a method that uses students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles in daily lessons (Gay, 2000). Educators need to be mindful that culturally responsive teaching doesn't mean adopting a "tacos on Tuesday" fest or a "tourist approach to diversity." Classroom lessons on holidays and food perpetuate ethnic stereotypes instead of promoting genuine understanding of real-life, everyday experiences and the problems of other cultures (Gay, 2000).

Culturally responsive classroom management goes hand-in-hand with culturally responsive teaching. Classroom management is often thought to be "culturally neutral," when in fact it is primarily a "white, middle-class construction" that can potentially limit minority students' achievement (Goleman, 2006). Although many educators are familiar with differences in the visible or tangible aspects of culture—customs, clothing, and language, for example—developing cultural responsiveness entails understanding the invisible aspects of culture as well. These include important aspects of cultural variance,

such as thinking and communication styles, power distribution, role expectations, and identity development (Guerra & Nelson, 2009).

Since educators' beliefs are the lens through which all decisions about schooling are made, inequities exist in many areas and at all levels of the system. Examining data that have been disaggregated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES) makes these inequities visible. A wide variety of data that include information related to special education, discipline, course failures, retentions, advanced classes, gifted education, college-bound students, vocational programs, and parent participation can be used to help teachers understand that the achievement gap is not created by deficiencies in students and families but by a system that serves some groups better than others (Guerra & Nelson, 2009).

So how do you help teachers who might be comfortable simply tolerating diversity engage in the process of transforming for equity? There are always resisters in an organization. The leverage point is to nurture courageous conversations that will bring them along in this process. Conversations around cultural competency focus not so much on changing others, but on how to work together (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). In such conversations, continuous efforts should be made to address the five essential elements of cultural competence. These elements include: assessing cultural knowledge, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to difference, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. They represent the standards of behavior that educators need to meet themselves in order to meet the needs of students. A culturally proficient teacher or leader uses these elements to facilitate conversations that surface the beliefs and values of

individuals who tend to influence the policies and practices of an organization (Guerra & Nelson, 2009).

### **Overview of Approach**

This study used a mixed method approach. A major focus was on the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of teachers as it relates to cultural competence. The study involves a group of teachers in two schools at sixth, seventh and eighth grade configurations. The subjective perspectives of teachers regarding their beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, teaching styles, and cultural relativity were examined. Through triangulation of three methods—interviews, questionnaires, and Q-methodology—I led the teachers to think about issues of diversity and reflect on their own developing cultural competence.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Culture.* “[T]hose elements of a people’s history, tradition, values, and social organization that become implicitly or explicitly meaningful to the participants...in cross-cultural encounters” (Green). Of the many, often widely divergent definitions of culture available, Green’s is most pertinent to this discussion because it encompasses worldviews, behavioral styles and inclinations, and thinking patterns that present and can be anticipated in interpersonal interactions across social boundaries. It is one’s culture that distinguishes and brings meaning to social events, necessitating knowledge of readily observable distinctions as well as less discernible nuances between and among groups.

*Cultural Proficiency.* A way of being that enables both individuals and organizations to respond effectively to people who differ from them. It is an approach to addressing diversity issues that goes beyond political correctness. Cultural proficient responses may

appear similar to politically correct ones at first glance, but on closer inspection, they reveal greater depth of knowledge (Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell 2003).

*Cultural Competence.* In this context, the ability to respond to diversity issues equal to the requirement; the ability to respond effectively to the purpose or goal. Further, the competent practitioner is able to conduct her or his “professional work in a way that is congruent with the behavior and expectations that members of a distinctive culture recognize as appropriate among themselves” (Green). Dana et al. likewise describe *cultural competence* as “an ability to provide services that are perceived as legitimate for problems experienced by culturally diverse persons.” *Cultural competence* connotes the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and/or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client-system functioning within the appropriate cultural context. This definition compels one to ask, “What purpose is served by providing services in any other context?”

*Race.* A concept developed by social scientists that was misinterpreted and popularized by eugenicists and social Darwinists in the nineteenth century in an attempt to characterize people by their physical features and then use those differences in society to justify the subjugation of people of color and perpetuate the dominance of the white race (Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell 2003).

*Ethnicity.* A collection or nation of people who are more than a mere collective group but an aggregate consciously related by common origins and shared experiences. Incorporated into a group’s ethnicity are a distinct language, religious beliefs, and political institutions, which are passed down generations (Cashmore, 1984).

*Racial bias/racism.* A pre-formed negative opinion or attitude toward a group of persons who possess common physical characteristics including, but not limited to, skin color, eye shape, and/or other physical features.

*Teacher expectations.* These are just inferences made about present and future academic achievement for students, specifically minorities. These inferences tend to be self-sustaining, affecting both teacher perception and interpretation of student actions.

*Culturally relevant teaching.* Theories and strategies for engaging students through constructs relevant to their cultural backgrounds.

*Diversity.* The variations in social and cultural identities among people existing together in a community.

*Attitude.* A complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values, and dispositions to act in certain ways.

*Perception.* The act or faculty of apprehending by means of the senses or the mind; cognition; understanding.

### **Chapter Summary**

The concept of cultural competence presents us with a moral imperative to make our communities and our world a place where justice and harmony are the norms. Piaget, in his work with cognitive development, demonstrated that children need to construct an understanding of the world for themselves (Piaget). In order for this to happen, teachers must implement effective culturally responsive strategies, if they aim to be color-blind (Singleton & Linton, 2006). In addition, systemic procedures must be established to move cadres of teachers to a level of readiness where they can more thoughtfully examine and

change their own classroom practices. The entire school community as an entity needs to be engaged in dialogue about how to define and deliver an appropriate education for the children in that community.

A significant component in closing the achievement gap is the assurance that all students will be provided with instructional and support staff who are knowledgeable, competent, and committed to high standards for all students. The recruitment, placement, retention, and promotion of staff should be grounded in a deep commitment to ensuring that those who are most challenged by the traditional educational delivery system are provided with the highest quality staff who are sensitive to the unique characteristics of all youth, competent in their areas of expertise, and open to learning about new strategies for closing the gap between the subgroups in the populations they serve (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Increasingly, teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds. If you line up a representative sample of students from the nation's classrooms with a sample of teachers, you'll see striking differences. Teachers are overwhelmingly White and English-speaking. Socioeconomic differences are significant: Most teachers are middle-class, but a significant percentage of U.S. students come from poor families and neighborhoods. The differences can erupt into cultural clashes.

To further validate my theory, anecdotal case studies exist that show how culturally responsive practices improve students' behavior and achievement. Sensing their teachers' disapproval and rejection, students give up trying to succeed. To address racial achievement disparities in our schools, teachers must use culturally relevant classroom strategies needed to eliminate the racial achievement gap (Goldman, 2006). Teachers must assist in creating



schools that offer every student a world-class education appropriate for our rapidly changing, increasingly diverse society.

The public schools of North Carolina are currently subject to a very high-stakes accountability program known as “The New ABCs of Public Education.” The program bears some resemblance to one that Dr. Seuss once described in verse:

*All schools for miles and miles around  
Must take a special test.  
To see who’s learning such and such  
To see which school’s the best.  
If our small school does not do well,  
Then it will be torn down,  
And you will have to go to school  
In dreary Flobbertown.*

Adults often have expectations about children that are based not on objective evidence, but on assumptions (Richardson, 2002). Many of these are inferred or unconscious and not expressed, and are usually related to race, culture, ethnicity, gender and social class (Richardson, 2002). It is a teacher’s job to embrace and acknowledge the rich diversity that all the children collectively bring to the classroom, while understanding that the children should not be treated the same (because they are not the same), but rather respected equally and accepted for their differences. Whenever and wherever we choose, we can successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t done it so far (Edmonds, 1979).

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction, the background and purpose of the study, definitions of key terms, the significance of the study, an overview of the approach, and

summary. Chapter 2 reviews current relevant and scholarly literature for the study that adds to the existing body of knowledge. Chapter 3 provides a justification for the research guiding the study; it also includes the research design, research questions, two phases of the research procedures, participants, the type of data collected, data analysis, limitations of the study, subjectivity statement, ethical issues, and summary. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and Chapter 5 provides a summary and discussion of findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

*“I don’t become what I think I can, I don’t become what you think I can, I become what I think you think I can.” — Jawanza Kunjufu*

The purpose of this chapter is to review research literature pertinent to this study. The chapter opens with an exploration of the topic of teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. Next, the chapter presents a brief historical background illustrating the evolution of factors that have had an impact on culture and cultural competence. After the historical context, the chapter explores the following general topics: the impact of teacher expectations, attitudes, and perceptions on student achievement; teacher self-efficacy beliefs; barriers to cultural competence; and shared values for diversity. Finally, the chapter examines cultural competence and culturally responsive instruction as well as the factors that make a good school and culturally competent teachers.

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. The overarching research question is, “What are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?” Moreover, the study aims to ascertain what factors foster or inhibit the development of cultural competence in teachers. Individuals’ beliefs have a powerful impact on practice. For the purposes of this study, *belief* is defined as an opinion or conviction; *attitude* is a manner, disposition, feeling, or position with regard to a person or thing; and *perception* is the mental grasp of people, environments, objects and their qualities by means of the senses. The theoretical framework structures the analysis of teacher beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and cultural competence. It is important to

note that cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together as a system, an agency, or a shared professional code.

Teachers' expectations can have many positive effects. They can (a) influence the level of academic engagement, (b) foster academic motivation, (c) create pleasant classroom experiences, and (d) catalyze high academic achievement (Arroyo et al., 1999; Bemark, Chung, & Sirosky-Sabdo, 2005; Crosnoe, Kirkpatrick, & Elder, 2004; Diamond et al., 2004; Hargrove, 2005; Kaplan & Maehr, 1999; Pajares, 1996). According to Jackson (2005), when teachers expect their students to do well, students tend to meet that expectation. Likewise, when teachers expect students to fail, they tend to fail (Jackson).

As stated in Chapter 1, the main goal of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is for all students to meet targets set by each state by the year 2014 and to close test score gaps that exist between different groups of students while raising achievement for all groups. NCLB forced us to look at subgroups that have been hidden for years; in other words, it forced accountability that before was nonexistent (Sherman, 2007). If reauthorized, NCLB will continue—if not expand—accountability efforts. Missing from accountability efforts are resources, support, and account for cultural competency.

Also, as mentioned in Chapter 1, of particular concern are the persistent achievement gaps between African American, Latino, and Native American students and their White and Asian counterparts, and between students who are from low-income families and those who are not. For these gaps to narrow and eventually close, achievement for lower-scoring subgroups must not only increase but increase at a faster rate than for the higher-scoring comparison group (Center on Education Policy). Since 2007, the Center on Education Policy

(CEP) has been collecting and annually updating a vast array of test data from all states.

These data focus on results of the state tests that were used to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act. The national data shown in Table 1.1 clearly illustrates the pervasive, persistent gaps in student achievement between White and non-White students.

Before outlining how the research questions were answered, I reviewed the existing literature and its relevance to the topic of cultural competency and its impact on student learning.

### **Historical Context**

*“The goal of public education is to provide children with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective, meaningful participation in all aspects of society, from access to adequate housing and employment, to engagement in and transformation of the political process” — Powell*

The history of the United States includes slavery, genocide, racial discrimination, war—in other words, it’s a country like all others. What is exceptional is that this country has created a vision of a new world and a new human being (Bercovitch, 2007). Through its rhetoric, its poetry and prose, it has succeeded in investing the word “America” with enormous symbolic power. Rhetoric can also shape reality. American rhetoric has changed the reality of race in the United States only very gradually over the past few hundred years, and only under the pressure of sustained struggle. Some among us are still treated as less “American” than others, and thus the struggle continues, albeit with more allies and less resistance (Bercovitch, 2007). In her recent book, *Color Mute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School*, Pollock conceptualizes how people in one U.S. high school struggle to talk about race at the most basic levels. She states that we do not know what to call each other or whether we should call each other anything that has a racial designation. Pollock

demonstrates, however, that even when we avoid talking about race, we are talking about race; that is, even our avoidance of the subject is a kind of engagement with it.

Research has shown that public schooling always reflects the social conditions of society (McMillian, 2003; Ogbu, 2003). In the not-so-distant past, the Jim Crow laws of the South were exhibited via segregated schools and separate and unequal curricula. In the early 1980s, the need for a rigorous mathematics, technology, and science curriculum was addressed to the public. This legislation was known as *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). Most recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 called for closing the apparent achievement gap in academic performance between Black students (along with other minorities) and White students in the core subject areas of mathematics, science, reading, and the social sciences (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Raising achievement levels for all segments of the population is a key to keeping America strong and vital. Striving to remove group identities as predictors of achievement—in other words, to close achievement gaps between groups—will help make the fruits of America’s vitality more equally available (Bercovitch, 2007).

Educational oppression of minorities, specifically Blacks in the United States, began with slavery. Slaves were mostly illiterate, and their education was forbidden in many places. In many southern states, ignorance laws were implemented with the basic idea of keeping slaves completely uneducated. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, free Blacks had more, but still very limited, educational opportunities (Greene, Peschiera, Shuleva, & Stricklen, 2002). The Civil War, however, brought all education in the U.S. to a halt, and afterwards, a policy of separation was implemented. The schools for Blacks were of

infinitely poorer quality than the schools for Whites. The idea was that Black children did not need anything more than the most basic skills (Greene, Peschiera, Shuleva, & Stricklen, 2002).

The first steps taken to improve education for Blacks and to desegregate the school system were the education reforms implemented in the 1950s, beginning with the court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Thurgood Marshall argued in front of the Supreme Court that Black parents in several states had had their rights violated by the basic segregation in education law, due to the fact that the law itself prevented them from having equal educational opportunities. Although Marshall won his case, public schools ignored the ruling for equality in schools until the 1960s. The second major landmark in the struggle to eliminate racism and discrimination in education was the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which required the desegregation of schools and colleges, in addition to creating a commission to outlaw job discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, or national origin. The act had divergent effects: some integration occurred, but some school systems exploited the act as an opportunity to close down Black schools and fire teachers in the name of equality (Greene, Peschiera, Shuleva, & Stricklen, 2002).

In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Black students remained isolated and struggled to gain and maintain equal access to quality education, as demonstrated by the inferior education they continued to receive in comparison to the White students (Greene, Peschiera, Shuleva, & Stricklen, 2002). During the time of segregation, Black schools were often housed in older buildings. Also, textbooks and the curricula were usually outdated, automatically creating a

gap that hindered Black students from learning the same material as their White counterparts (Snipes & Waters, 2005).

Change has been slow in coming. Although there have been changes in law and policy, students today still experience racism in their learning environments. The forms that racism takes now, however, are more subtle than the taunts and separate schools of years gone by (Greene, Peschiera, Shuleva, & Stricklen, 2002).

With an overwhelming majority of teachers being White, middle-class, and female, a progressively wider communication and cultural gap is being created in America's public schools, a gap that further compounds the academic woes of many minority students (Gehrke, 2005). The U.S. grows more diverse in its demographic makeup every day. The population of persons of color is currently 47% and moving rapidly toward 50%, according to the U.S. Census of 2006. Public schools are currently resegregating at alarming rates, both racially and economically. National and state educational reforms focus primarily on educational accountability measures (e.g., high stakes testing), often to the exclusion of school desegregation issues. Compounding this dilemma, students attending poor inner-city schools with novice and poorly prepared teachers, inadequate physical facilities, and insufficient resources are steadily increasing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

The gap in academic achievement that pervades every public school in the United States has prompted—as well as resurrected—many explanations for its prevalence. Prior to addressing the theories explaining the gap, a definition is warranted. The *achievement gap*, as defined by John Ogbu (2003), is the difference in achievement between Black and White American students in school performance on achievement test scores, graduation rates, Grade



Point Average (GPA), upper-level course enrollment, and college attendance (Ogbu). It is important to address the causes of the achievement gap in U.S. schools before attempting to understand how, and why, it should be closed.

Several conclusions have been drawn regarding why the achievement gap in academic performance has persisted and even widened in recent years. Some scholars attribute the achievement gap to tracking, a deleterious grouping practice teachers employ to place minority students into lower ability courses (Dash, 2005; Oakes, 1992). According to Oakes, tracking and ability grouping can begin as early as third grade. As a result of tracking and ability grouping, minority students are at risk of being ill-prepared to participate in college preparatory courses, and the chance of these students securing white-collar jobs in later years becomes limited (Farkas, 2003).

Many researchers assert that inadequate teacher preparation, low teacher expectations, and a lack of teachers who are culturally responsive to minorities all exacerbate the gap in academic achievement in public schools (Bemark et al., 2005; Bol & Berry, 2005; Ferguson, 2003; Kunjufu, 2002). Others argue that the achievement gap has resulted from biased standardized tests, while others believe that it has been widened by the low representation of minority teachers at the college preparatory, honors, and AP levels (Moses-Snipes & Snipes, 2005). A small segment of scholars offer the extreme argument that Black students are inherently inferior in intelligence, and thus the gap between Black and White students is fact of nature (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). In 1911, Henri Bergson noted, “The present contains nothing more than the past, and what is found in the effect was already in the cause” (as cited in Miller, 2002, p. 167).

This pervasive gap is evident in the rural district included in this study. According to the 2010 Adequate Yearly Progress Report Results by Subgroups (NCDPI), in Reading Grades 3-8, there is a 32.7% gap between White and Black students; a 27.7% gap between Whites and Hispanics; a 14% gap between Whites and American Indians; an 8.9% gap between Whites and Asians; and a 7.7% gap between White and Multi-Racial students. In Math Grades 3-8, there is a 27.5% gap between White and Black students; a 16.5% gap between Whites and Hispanics; a 14.6% gap between Whites and American Indians; a 2% gap between Whites and Asians; and a 4.3% gap between White and Multi-Racial students. In Reading Grade 10, the largest gap exists between the White and Hispanic students: 23.8%. In Math Grade 10, the largest gap exists between the White and Black students: 21.9%. The district met the attendance goal at 95.3%, but it did not meet the target graduation rate. The essential question is, “If the minority students were in attendance, why aren’t they performing on grade level and graduating?”

### **Critical Race Theory, Teacher Education, and their Relevance to Cultural Competence**

Critical race theory allowed the researcher to consider teacher perspectives across issues such as race, racism, poverty, class, power, test scores, and dominant assumptions. Critical race theory, which began in the legal arena with activists such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado working to transform racism and power, has spread in the past decade to the education discipline. Critical race theory grew out of a dissatisfaction with the extremely slow rate of real racial reform since the civil rights movement (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Scholars in education have begun to use critical race theory to understand issues in curriculum and achievement testing (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race

theory is a more inclusive theory that expands on two previous movements: critical legal studies and radical feminism. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) indicated that critical race theory makes use of legal indeterminacy. Legal indeterminacy is a basic premise of critical legal studies, and it is useful because it allows for the recognition that not every case has one correct outcome (e.g., equity is not necessarily the same thing as equal treatment for students).

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), critical race theory rests on the following basic tenets: (a) racism is ordinary and an everyday experience for people of color (i.e., racism is a commonsense way of understanding and acting), (b) binary oppositions between White and Black serve elite interests and specific purposes in society, (c) the notion of “race” is socially constructed, (d) differential racialization occurs as attention to minority groups shifts at different times in society, (e) subjectivity is recognized, as is the intersectionality of multiple identities, and (f) people of color have the unique ability to communicate their experiences to their White counterparts. Understanding of the above tenets alone will not work to challenge dominant ways of thinking. As Delgado and Stefancic put it, “Only aggressive, color conscious efforts to change the way things are will do much to ameliorate misery.” (p. 22)

Critical race theory in educational research challenges dominant thoughts about colorblindness (Bernal, 2002), allows for multiple interpretations of data, recognizes the importance of experiential knowledge, challenges traditional ways of knowing, emphasizes a commitment to social justice, and recognizes the intersection of various forms of subordination and oppression (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). To date, critical race theory in

educational research has been used to expose racism within existing educational practices and policies.

Much of this research has focused on the experiences of people of color as students and faculty in secondary or higher education (Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Solorzano, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). These research projects have all been conducted in the United States. Race has played a fundamental role in shaping relationships of power and notions of citizenship through inclusions and exclusions. This suggests that it is worth exploring critical race theory in educational research. Others have used critical race theory as a basis for critiquing specific legal cases in education (Parker, 1998; Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999), while others (Duncan, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) have used critical race theory to examine practices used to prepare teachers to teach culturally diverse students.

In *Just What is Critical Race Theory and What's it Doing in a Nice Field Like Education* (1998), Ladson-Billings discusses the possibilities for critical race theory being applied to education, outlining its potential to analyze aspects of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment as well as wider issues such as funding. She indicates that concern has been expressed, however, about how White researchers and academics might use critical race theory. Bergeson (2003), herself a White academic, discusses this in *Critical Race Theory and White Racism: Is There Room for White Scholars in Fighting Racism in Education?* Bergeson emphasizes the need to center “race” within the contexts of work and personal lives in order to engage in the sensitive and strategic use of critical race theory and join in the effort to legitimize research that uses alternative methods such as critical race theory. (p. 51)

Ladson-Billings (1998) also sounds a note of caution against critical race theory being appropriated and “diluted” by the predominantly White teacher workforce. She compares this to the failure of multicultural education to fulfill its promise to address inequality and racism. She writes, “Rather than engage students in provocative thinking about the contradictions of U.S. ideals and lived realities, teachers often find themselves encouraging students to sing ‘ethnic’ songs, eat ethnic foods, and do ethnic dances. Consistently, manifestations of multicultural education in the classroom are superficial and trivial ‘celebrations of diversity.’ (p. 64)

In order for critical race theory to avoid meeting the same fate, the legal context within which it was developed needs to be better understood. Ladson-Billings (1998) stresses, for example, the need to understand the challenges made against traditional American legal scholarship in favor of a form of law that acknowledges the “specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts.” (p. 52) Ladson-Billings (1998) also emphasizes the importance adopting radical approaches to exposing and addressing racism in education.

Gillborn (2005, 2008) has recently applied aspects of critical race theory to education policy in the United Kingdom, concluding that it can offer new and powerful insights into “race” inequity and racisms. He defends criticisms of critical race theory as pessimistic suggesting that its recognition of contemporary white supremacy is intended to advance and inform the struggle for greater equity, not detract from it.

So, what does this historical context mean to the culturally competent educational leader? It means that the culturally competent leader has to be adept at recognizing that a

typical school faculty comprises teachers, aides, staff, counselors, and administrators who have had widely different life experiences (Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell, 2009). More importantly, the culturally competent teacher recognizes that his/her experiences may be much different from the experiences of students and parents in the community served by the school (Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell, 2009). In order to know this, the culturally competent teacher must have some knowledge of critical race theory and the evolutionary context of education.

### **Impact of Teacher Perceptions, Attitudes, and Expectations**

Attitudes, beliefs, and expectations have been found to guide and direct teachers' responses toward various students (Good & Brophy, 1987; Grant, 1985; Pajares, 1992). Research reveals that teachers hold beliefs about students based on race/ethnicity, language, social class, gender, religion, ability/disability, and other differences, and that these beliefs lead teachers to differential expectations and treatment of their students (Richardson, 1996; Sparapany et al., 1995). If schools are to serve the needs and interests of increasingly diverse student populations, then low teacher expectations, negative stereotypes, biases, and cultural misconceptions must be identified, challenged, and reconstructed (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001). Many feelings, beliefs, and attitudes toward differences are reflections of culture (Matsumoto, 2000). Culture both *unites* and *divides* people, and it plays a powerful role in determining human social behavior. Values and beliefs are strongly influenced by culture; since people generally take culture for granted, they rarely consider alternatives to what they usually think and do.

As a microcosm of society, the school often replicates societal inequities in its broad policies and its specific curricular and instructional practices. When unexamined, education tends to proceed as business-as-usual and, in the process, perpetuates the status quo (Brint, Conteras, & Matthews, 2001). To develop the capacity to provide *all* students with an equal opportunity to learn—a central goal of multicultural education—educators should examine the status quo, both societal and educational. Not only are schools microcosms of society; individual classrooms are, as well. In the classroom, children must learn and adapt to various social norms and standards in order to succeed (Brint, Conteras, & Matthews, 2001). Sociologists have focused upon the school system for this very reason, as it is our first encounter with a formally organized social structure that mimics external civilization. Through teacher-student interaction and classroom organization, children internalize social messages that will either help them function in society or hinder their success (Brint, Conteras, & Matthews, 2001).

Teachers' beliefs about the academic ability and achievement level of students influence their instructional and evaluative decisions in the classroom setting. Instructional practices that communicate high expectations for all learners are not readily visible in many classrooms (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 1996). Rodriguez and Bellanca (1996) noted that “the scarcity of these practices says more about the lack of conviction behind the espoused belief than it does about the sentiment itself.” (p. 10) When faced with challenging students, some teachers tend to “give up” on them, accept failure, and often blame the student for their failure. Lavoie (1996) characterized this as “blaming the victim,” but such failure may be the result of the teacher's own incompetence or lack of understanding. Good and Brophy (1997)

argued that “this attitude psychologically frees the teacher from continuing to worry about the student’s progress and from seeking more successful ways to teach them.” (p. 113)

Intimately related to teacher attitudes, beliefs, and expectations are the teacher-student interactions in the classroom and the school environment (Hernandez, 1989). Hernandez (1989) reported that experiences within the same classroom vary for each child, and that this is sometimes related to ethnicity. He elaborates by stating that teacher expectations and the attention shown to majority and minority students vary greatly, as does the quality of teacher-student interactions. Direct and indirect messages conveying low expectations contribute to the academic performance and achievement of many students. The research and literature clearly show that a teacher’s expectations are a critical factor in decreasing the number of academically at-risk students (Mehan et al., 1994).

### **Teacher Expectations of Minority Students**

Teachers’ expectations have been found to have a significant impact on student achievement. The research glaringly shows this to be the case with regard to White teachers’ expectations of minority students, particularly Black students (Diamond et al., 2004; Farkas, 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Ogbu, 2003). Regardless of academic ability and other performance measures, Black students face harsher and more frequent disciplinary actions, are subject to lower expectations, are ignored more frequently during classroom discourse, and perceived as less academically capable than their White peers (Casteel, 2000; Diamond et al., 2004; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Felton, 2006; Ferguson, 2003; Good & Weinstein, 1986; Hester, 2002; Jackson, 2005; Kunjufu, 2002; Russell, 2005). For example, teachers expect that Hispanic students will perform more poorly than white students on learning tasks across the



curriculum (Jensen & Rosenfeld, 1974; McCombs & Gay, 2001; Wong, 1980). Rather than consider the linguistic differences that might account for initial learning deficits for Hispanic children, teachers choose to refer these children to special classes and thus classify them as learning disabled.

Sirota and Bailey (2009) asserted that teachers' negative expectations have a serious effect not only on the opportunities available for children to learn, but also on actual academic achievement. The researchers went on to state that Black and Hispanic students report being graded unfairly due to their race and ethnicity, feel wrongfully subjected to disciplinary actions by their teachers, and are discouraged from joining advanced-level classes (Sirota & Bailey). Low teacher expectations have been shown to cause lower self-esteem, decreased academic motivation, racial mistrust, and greater levels of anger and depressive symptoms in students (Booker, 2006; Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004; Sirota & Bailey, 2009; Wineburg, 1987). In a study of teachers' expectations, Diamond et al. (2004) found that in schools with a majority of Black students, teachers emphasized students' deficits, but in schools where most of the students were middle- to upper-class White and Asian, teachers honed in on the intellectual assets students brought to the classroom.

Public schools have been viewed as the place where students become Americanized (Noguera, 2009): that is, where they become absorbed or assimilated into American culture or are brought under American influence or control. Furthermore, far too often, the cultural differences of these children are equated with cultural inferiority; not surprisingly, children from these groups are more likely to do poorly in school, get into trouble, or drop out.

In September 1998, President Clinton stated that every child needs and deserves dedicated, outstanding teachers, teachers who know their subject matter, are effectively trained, and know both how to teach to high standards and how to make learning come alive for all students. Education is key to a vibrant and prosperous America seeking to maximize the contributions of all its citizens by embracing the richness and possibilities that our nation's diversity affords.

Teachers have such great opportunities to enrich the lives of all children. They are pivotal players in society's quest to create a well-educated labor force and a more secure and prosperous citizenry (Brookover, 1982). A study completed by Brookover revealed numerous factors that can lead teachers to hold lower expectations for some students than others. These include:

- *Socioeconomic status.* Teachers sometimes hold lower expectations of students from lower SES backgrounds.
- *Type of school.* Students from inner city schools and rural schools are sometimes presumed to be less capable than students from suburban schools.
- *Halo effect.* Some teachers generalize from one characteristic a student may have, thereby making unfounded assumptions about the student's overall ability or behavior.
- *Negative comments about students.* Teachers' expectations are sometimes influenced by the negative comments of other staff members.

Many teachers tend to give up when confronted with students who are indifferent, show resistance, have behavior problems, or are achieving below grade level. Other teachers

are overwhelmed by the problems that confront their students, especially if those students come from communities plagued by poverty, violence, drugs, and death. Students from racial minorities or from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be subject to distorted perceptions about their skills and abilities (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Many of these skewed perceptions continue because there is little surveillance of what goes on in the classroom and thus a failure to address the ways that difference plays out within the classroom context (Ferguson, 1998; Goode, 1981; Goodlad, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

According to the theory that teachers' expectations have a significant impact on student achievement, low teacher expectations of minority students result in a self-fulfilling prophecy that contributes to significant achievement gaps between them and non-minority students (Ferguson, 1998; Goode, 1981; Goodlad, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 1994). When a teacher demonstrates an attitude of low expectations, this can produce a negative "Pygmalion effect" (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) or self-fulfilling prophecy. This occurs when individuals internalize inaccurate expectations, which in turn causes the inaccurate expectation to become a reality (Good & Brophy, 1997). Unfortunately, teachers often have misconceptions about urban children and as a result develop and adopt low expectations for them. Consistent exposure to low expectations can lead to the erosion of a student's self-confidence, motivation, and academic success (Good & Brophy, 1997).

Perception is the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting, and organizing sensory information. Perceptions are the link between a person and his or her surroundings. What is perceived may alter reality. Research indicates that individuals only experience and comprehend a certain portion of their social world (Bucher, 2004). This limited experience

and comprehension causes individuals to take shortcuts to understand others. Cultural learning largely determines what individuals are consciously aware of and how they conceptually structure that awareness (Reeves, 2006).

### **Shared Values for Diversity and Attitudes about Cultural Competence**

*“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” — Albert Einstein*

Well, what is diversity? In general, diversity refers to the quality of being different, dissimilar, distinct or unique; to the state of having a variety of types; or to a state of heterogeneity among a group of people or things. There are many types of diversity: behavioral, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and racial, to name a few. *Diversity* has been associated with behavioral issues, low academic achievement, poor classroom management, drop-out rates, and other problems. If these issues are to be effectively addressed, a different level of thinking and a different approach to diversity must be used. Again, diversity itself is not the problem; rather, it is the approach to diversity that requires attention and reform (Knight & Wiseman, 2005). Beverly Tatum (1997) takes the point even further when she says that silence has a psychological cost and that, as a society, we pay a price for our silence. Unchallenged personal, cultural, and institutional racism results in the loss of human potential, lowered productivity, and a rising tide of fear and violence in our society.

When diversity is valued, the differences that exist between people are acknowledged as a valuable asset (Barkman & Speaker, 1999). Children who are linguistically, racially, and culturally different bring a rich background of diversity into the classroom. They look

different, they speak differently, they have a different historical heritage, their value systems are different, and their religious beliefs are different.

Setting a classroom tone and creating an appropriate environment conducive to learning is a basic tenet of successful classroom instruction that meets the academic needs of diverse students. Diversity and the study of various cultures in the classroom must be viewed in a positive way by the classroom teacher in order for successful instruction to take place (Brophy, 1983; Cooper & Good, 1983; Cooper & Tom, 1984; Dusek, 1985; Good & Brophy, 1997). Respect for individual differences is essential for maximizing students' learning opportunities and potential. The way that a teacher feels toward the ability of a student can greatly impact the academic growth of that student (Brophy, 1983; Cooper & Good, 1983; Cooper & Tom, 1984; Dusek, 1985; Good & Brophy, 1997).

Teachers from any cultural group can use their identity status to encourage cross-cultural friendships, social interaction, cooperation, and socialization both at school and in the community. The core idea is that one's sense of identity or identity status is determined largely by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits. Effective teachers of culturally diverse students acknowledge both individual and cultural differences in a positive manner (Ferguson, 1998; Goode, 1981; Goodlad, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This positive identification creates a basis for the development of effective communication and instructional strategies.

Social skills such as respect and cross-cultural understanding can be modeled, taught, prompted, and reinforced by the teacher. Teachers should build relationships with their students and focus on the ways they learn. Teachers should also observe students closely to

identify their task orientations and teach them to match their behaviors to the setting (Ferguson, 1998; Goode, 1981; Goodlad, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Simply put, task-oriented students take an assignment and immediately break it down into specific tasks. Then they complete the tasks, one by one. They are likely to make lists of things to do, and they take great pride in checking tasks off the list.

For many students, the kinds of behaviors required in school (e.g., sitting in one's seat and only speaking when called on) and the types of discourse used contrast with the cultural and linguistic practices of their homes (Allen & Boykin, 1992). To increase student success, teachers must help students bridge this discontinuity between home and school (Allen & Boykin, 1992). Moreover, a culturally responsive instructional environment minimizes the students' alienation as they attempt to adjust to the different "world" of school (Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

### **Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs about Diversity**

McGeehan (1982) and Garmon (1996) observed that prospective teachers who, when they began a diversity course, were already favorably disposed toward racial/cultural diversity tended to become more favorably disposed during the course, whereas those who were unfavorably disposed tended to become more unfavorably disposed. In other words, prospective teachers holding more favorable racial attitudes at the outset of the course were much more likely to move toward embracing viewpoints generally considered to be more sensitive to the needs of diverse learners. This finding is consistent with Kagan's (1992) observation that "candidates tend to use the information provided in course work to confirm rather than to confront and correct their preexisting beliefs." (p. 154)

The idea that the entering attitudes and beliefs of prospective teachers serve as filters for subsequent learning has been well documented in the literature. Hypothesizing that prospective teachers' entering perspectives serve to filter what they learn, Pohan (1996) studied the personal and professional beliefs of 492 prospective teachers to identify variables related to the development of multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Pohan found a significant relationship between prospective teachers' personal beliefs and their professional beliefs. Student-teachers who bring strong biases and negative stereotypes about diverse groups will be less likely to develop the types of professional beliefs and behaviors most consistent with multicultural sensitivity and responsiveness.

Another relevant finding from Pohan's study is that personal and professional beliefs are significantly related to student-teachers' cross-cultural experiences. Although causation cannot be inferred, the clear implication is that prospective teachers who have more cross-cultural experiences are more likely to develop favorable personal and professional beliefs about diverse learners. Smith, Moallem, and Sherrill (1997) conducted another study that also sought to identify the factors that may help prospective teachers develop greater multicultural awareness and sensitivity. These researchers identified four factors that appeared to be instrumental in initiating positive change:

- exposure to different cultural backgrounds (e.g., friendships, dating, sports)
- education (e.g., influences of teachers and colleges)
- travel (e.g., moving, vacationing, and military experience)
- personal experience with discrimination as a child or an adult. (p. 54)

Although there is considerable evidence that prospective teachers' entering beliefs and attitudes, along with their intercultural experiences, are important factors influencing the development of their multicultural awareness and sensitivity, research conducted by Garmon (1998) suggests that certain personal dispositions (or character traits) may be yet another important factor. Garmon sought to explain why student-teachers from similar backgrounds and with apparently similar racial attitudes and beliefs appeared to respond differently to a diversity course. He found that student-teachers demonstrating a quality of openness, along with self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, were influenced in a positive direction, whereas those not displaying these two characteristics appeared to be unchanged by the course. The above study suggests that, in addition to student-teachers' beliefs and experiences, certain dispositions that they bring to courses on diversity may also influence their development of multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Teaching about the consequences of color-blindness to pre-service teachers can also make them aware of how this ideology may affect their practice (Neville, 2000).

### **Barriers to Cultural Competence**

Research has revealed that state standards and most district-mandated textbooks are written with a Eurocentric bias (Loewen, 1996). Many texts neglect to mention the complex histories and realities of people of color in this country, or they acknowledge them in very marginal and superficial ways (Perez, Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006). Promoting White cultural values and perspectives in the absence of the culture and perspectives of communities of color is a subtle, but powerful, form of racism. Learning about the world



through this hierarchical lens can have a deep impact on the way students see themselves and the world around them.

The literature tells us that many White teachers hold deficit views of children of color, prefer not to teach in urban schools, and feel underprepared to work with children of diverse backgrounds (Marx, 2004; Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1996; Van Hook, 2002; Zeichner, 1996). They may not see themselves as racialized beings (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004) and try not to acknowledge race by the use of colorblind language (Marx, 2006). Some understand multicultural education as a largely technical enterprise, which requires them to use multicultural literature, accommodate different learning styles, or include international holidays (Weisman & Garza, 2002).

Deficit thinking, another barrier, is a framework that blames the deficiencies of communities of color for low academic achievement. Those who subscribe to this paradigm often believe that (1) students enter school without normative cultural knowledge and skills, and (2) parents neither value nor support their child's education (Yosso, 2005). This is often connected to the belief that academic problems lie with the student rather than with the system. When teachers view students of color through these stereotypes, this often results in poor treatment, low-expectations, and low standards (Valencia, 1997). Many teachers continue to believe that some students cannot learn. As a result, they do not expect all students to succeed in school. However, schools that establish and communicate high expectations and create high achieving learning environments for all students have high rates of academic success.

Color-blindness is another factor that serves as a barrier for many teachers when it comes to expectations specifically for students of color. The ideology that “race should not matter” in how individuals are treated, is often confused with “race does not matter” (Neville, 2000). The notion of color-blindness in the U.S. can trace its beginnings to these words of Justice Harlan’s in his 1896 dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Used extensively over the last several decades in the law field to argue for equal treatment of individuals regardless of color, race, or creed, the color-blind notion was considered a progressive response to racial bigotry. The premise was that justice--in the form of equal rights and equal opportunities--should be blind to skin color and racial differences (Cose, 1997).

Neville refers to the modern-day notion of color-blindness as the idea that “race should not and does not matter” (Neville, 2000, p. 60). While the “should not matter” philosophy implies a goal of achieving true color-blindness--in education, this means not showing favoritism or discrimination to certain students based on skin color--the “does not matter” philosophy requires that teachers turn a “blind eye” to racial differences, despite the fact that skin color does indeed impact how individuals are treated (Neville, 2000).

Schools must provide academic opportunities for all students and visibly promote the expectation that all students, regardless of individual circumstances, can succeed. Teachers must cultivate their classroom environments so as to elicit better behavior and greater academic engagement for all racial compositions. As a middle school teacher for twenty-two years, I ensured the success of all students by cultivating a welcoming, exciting climate conducive to learning and by periodically self-assessing not only my pedagogical practices but my ethical beliefs and values as well. It is important to note that until a teacher reaches a

level of cultural competence, the possibility of eliminating racial disparity in schools is very problematic.

The education system of the United States has not been very culturally responsive to ethnically diverse students. Instead, these students have been expected to divorce themselves from their cultures and learn according to European American cultural norms. This places them in double jeopardy: they simultaneously have to master the academic tasks while functioning under cultural conditions unnatural (and often unfamiliar) to them (Gay, 2000). Removing this second burden can contribute significantly to improving their academic achievement.

### **Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Instruction**

Cultural competency in public administration and public service delivery must be explored from two perspectives: teaching and practice. First, cultural competency courses must be required in university-based public administration education programs and core curricula. Second, steps must be taken to get a public agency to implement cultural competency programs, strategies, and practices in service delivery. School reform efforts demand that schools become places of excellence for all students. Educators committed to these reforms face enormous challenges, not the least of which is the challenge of how to educate teachers (Clair, Adger, Short, & Millen, 1998).

According to Bowers (2000), teachers who consider the cultural connections of their students negate any misunderstandings the students might have had of their schooling experiences. For example, students respond to their schooling experiences based on their “invisible culture”—the values and norms of their families and community (Cazden, 1988).

Conflict can arise when the ideals of the teacher and school don't recognize or appreciate the cultural norms of children (Banks, 2001; Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996).

Too many teachers and teacher educators think that their subjects (particularly math and science) and cultural diversity are incompatible, or that combining them is too much of a conceptual and substantive stretch for their subjects to maintain disciplinary integrity. This is simply not true. There is a place for cultural diversity in every subject taught in schools (Gay, 2000). Misconceptions like these stem, in part, from the fact that many teachers do not know enough about the contributions that different ethnic groups have made to their subject areas and are unfamiliar with multicultural education (Gay, 2000).

School effectiveness is contingent on classroom success (Pollard-Durodola, 2003) and therefore, special attention must be given to improving the schooling experience for all students. When teachers use students' cultural and social experiences as a means to implement best practices and to develop new knowledge, learning becomes more significant (Pardon, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). Furthermore, when teachers understand resiliency, support behaviors that demonstrate high expectations, consider social dynamics, and use diverse teaching methods, student success is inevitable (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2002; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994).

This study and my own experience led me to reflect on the reasons commonly given for why students do not perform successfully in school and pass their grade. Did they not want to succeed? Why were they not more motivated to learn? Motivation, that inward drive that causes students to work hard or not, is an important intrinsic mechanism for student success in school (Glasser, 1998). How do outside influences contribute to a child's

motivation to do well or to do poorly in school? Adolescent motivation, therefore, is a critical factor to consider when examining student success in school.

All of the tenets in Figure 2.2 must be addressed in order for educators or any individual in an organization to become culturally competent and effectively relate to people who differ from them. Teachers must be aware that their expectations, perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and self-efficacy can negatively impact student performance thus serving as barriers promoting the achievement gap. The data collected reflect these aspects of cultural competence. Teachers were cognizant of how these tenets may impact student achievement and their professional practices.

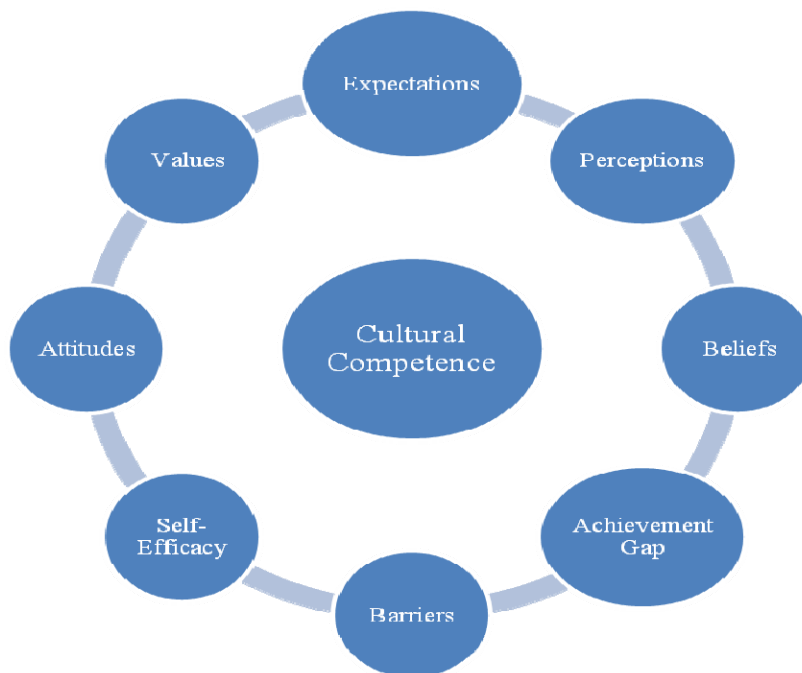


Figure 2.1 Tenets of Cultural Competency. All of these must be addressed when examining one's cultural competence.

### **What Makes a Good School?**

To be a good public school today, when diversity is vast and complex, requires a strong functioning culture that aligns with a strong vision of purpose. Duran (2009) conducted in-depth interviews with eight parent partners from various races and cultural backgrounds about perceptions of race and academic success in their affluent suburban middle school. Undeniably, the results from the interviews suggest that where the rubber meets the road is in the classroom. McSheehy (2009) draws the conclusion from her study that some teachers view their varied life experiences as assets in their work. A culturally competent school provides opportunities for individuals to gain competence through professional development, pre-service courses, and immersion of various cultures in instruction.

### **Culturally Competent Teachers**

Effective teachers possess the emotional stamina, persistence, and resilience that enable them to negotiate the school bureaucracy, solve difficult problems, and help their students cope with day-to-day setbacks and misfortunes as well as more serious hardships (Foster, 1997; Haberman, 1992, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

One of the most crucial skills for a culturally competent teacher is the ability to engage a culturally different reality in an accepting, genuine, non-offensive manner. Teachers who give equal value to others' worldview are more able to engage students in ways that put them at ease quickly and successfully. People of color are adept at reading the slightest nuance or cue that carries even the most carefully concealed message of disapproval, discomfort, or non-acceptance because of one's race, culture, or ethnicity.

Acquiring such a fundamentally important skill can only take place through consistent practice motivated by an authentic goal to be real with others, be culturally competent, and value multicultural diversity (Rossmann, 2007; Davis, 2005).

Teachers can create a warm and positive climate in their classrooms by identifying and considering their students' needs and interests. They can meet students' needs for belonging and control by involving them in decisions that concern them. De-Cuir Gunby (2009) determined that culturally relevant programs significantly promote continued academic performance. Students attending high poverty schools are faced with multiple challenges: concentrated poverty, violence, victimization, family instability, and the perils of collective socialization. The impact of these social conditions and hardships can extend into the actual classroom setting when teachers are unable or unwilling to adopt an ideology that can overcome these barriers to success (Haberman, 2005). This can be readily seen through the demonstration of low expectations and the use of instructional practices that are not culturally congruent. However, current research concludes that effective teachers within these settings can overcome these obstacles and lead students in reaching both social and academic success. "Students in these schools need effective teachers who make a difference" (Haberman, 1995, p. x). Even among the harsh realities of high-poverty urban schools, effective teachers can enable and inspire their students for continual learning and lifelong development.

Educators working within a culturally responsive framework incorporate elements of their students' home, personal, and community lives into the classroom. In practice, culturally responsive education ranges from the inclusion of specific pedagogical strategies

to the construction of school environments rooted in a given cultural prototype (Nieto, 1999). When school cultures parallel home environments, students are more successful than when there is little continuity between school and home (Ladson-Billings, 1990). Teachers who work within this tradition serve as cultural mediators, activists, and supporters of students' growth and development (Mitchell, 1998). Given that the majority of public school teachers in the United States are White and that African Americans constitute a growing percentage of student populations in most schools (Irvine, 2003; King, 1993; Sleeter, 2001), the importance of understanding cultural differences is clear.

Research by Ladson-Billings (1994), Mitchell (1998), and others demonstrates that effective teachers of African American students align their professional practice with their students' culture. Such practitioners are often referred to as culturally responsive educators (Ladson-Billings, 1992) and warm demanders (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). Cultural differences, by their very existence, complicate the bridging of what often appear as gulfs. An inferior knowledge base, coupled with a skewed view of our multicultural reality, doom the best efforts to connect with students in productive work. Closing this cultural gap is the professional responsibility of the culturally competent teacher.

### **Summary**

Chapter Two examined some of the existing literature on teacher beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, values, and expectations about culture and how students learn. Teacher-student interactions should be personalized, and teaching should be responsive to students' needs. In the age of President Obama, many people tend to believe that racism is diminishing and that we have ushered in a new era of change and equality. For many, their vote for the nation's



first Black president became their contribution to eliminating racism. Activist Tim Wise explains that talking about racism and then actually doing something about it are the only ways to make the subject go away. It won't disappear just because we choose not to mention it.

The racial hierarchy plays itself out in schools where more white students succeed and students of color still struggle to find their accomplishment. The existence of this achievement gap (which is really an opportunity gap, an expectation gap, and a teaching gap) is very real and continues to thrive.

The terms diversity and cultural competence harbor many underlying philosophies and approaches. In conducting this study, I was mindful of the potential for my own complicity in the very practices and assumptions raised in the research questions. My observations and ideas were offered in a spirit of critical discourse that challenges all teachers engaged in these efforts to examine the profound implications of their work, which impacts the lives of children. Table 2.2 summarizes and links the literature in this chapter to research design, literature typology, research questions, theoretical foundations, and main findings. In the next chapter, I proposed how to answer the research questions guiding this study.

Table 2.2 Summary of Literature Reviewed in Chapter 2

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
			Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Roley, S. (2009). Creativity, cultural proficiency and self-efficacy in rural school principals: The relationship to reducing the achievement gap for low-income students	Dissertation	What fosters the development of cultural proficiency?	Mixed: Case Study	A group of rural principals	Cultural Proficiency and Self-efficacy	Census survey conducted to determine relationship between principal and low-income students. Use of multiple regression and secondary analysis indicated a significant relationship. Interviews with the principals revealed behaviors associated with self-efficacy
Duran, R. (2009). Perceptions of race and academic success in an affluent suburban middle school	Dissertation	What do teachers believe about cultural proficiency in regards to their professional practice?	Qualitative Study: Phenomenological Study	Eight Parent Partners	Perceptions held among minority and non-minority parents	In-depth interviews were conducted with parent partners of varied races and cultural backgrounds and undeniably the results suggest that where the rubber meets the road is in the classroom.
McSheehy, S. (2009). Elementary school teachers and students living in poverty: Teacher understanding and pedagogy	Dissertation	What do teachers believe about cultural proficiency in regards to their professional practice?	Qualitative Study	Three elementary teachers from three different schools	Culturally responsive pedagogy	Teachers working in predominantly low-income non-minority communities view their varied life experiences as assets in their work with no poverty training.

Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
APA	Conceptual, Empirical, or Dissertation		Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Jessor and Jessor, (1977); Austin, (1991). Problem behavior and psychosocial development	Empirical	What fosters the development of cultural proficiency?	Quantitative Study	4,668 grade 6–8 students	Biological, psychological, and social stresses during adolescence	School bonding, school adjustment and perceived school climate were positively correlated with each other but inversely correlated with problem behavior.
Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, (1996). Improving the educational experience of low income students by building supportive bonds among children, parents, and school staff	Empirical	What are the barriers to cultural proficiency?	Qualitative/ Case Study	Selected SDP schools in three cities (New Haven, Benton Harbor, and Norfolk)	Improvement of school climate	Through the use of the Comer Process or the Comer Model, there were significant student gains in achievement, attendance, behavior, and overall adjustment in SDP schools. The Comer Model was developed to improve the educational experience of poor ethnic minority youth by improving school climate through a collaborative, consensus-building, no fault approach to problem solving between parents and school staff.

Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
APA	Conceptual, Empirical, or Dissertation		Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Greene, J., Peschiera, C., Shuleva, J., & Stricklen, E. (2002). History of Racism: The changing nature of racism on college campuses: Study of discrimination at a northeastern public university	Empirical	What are the barriers to cultural proficiency?	Qualitative Study	a sample from three minority groups (Black, Asian and Hispanic) proportionally from the percentage that those groups represent in the campus minority community	Subtle Racism and Discrimination	A survey was given that included structured and open ended questions and data was collected from the completed surveys. The results seemed to indicate that although racism is less obvious, it is still very present on college campuses. Interesting was the longer minority students are on campus, the more likely to experience some sort of racially motivated attack (verbal, physical, etc)
Freire, P. (2007) Pedagogy of the oppressed	Conceptual	<p>Paublo Freire states education has become an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store.</p> <p>In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers’ existence -- but unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher.</p>				

Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
APA	Conceptual, Empirical, or Dissertation		Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Rossmann-Brown, M. (2007). A qualitative exploration: Teachers' knowledge and perception of cultural competence	Dissertation	How do teachers perceive their cultural proficiency?	Qualitative Phenomenological Study	24 Texas certified, elementary, public school teachers	Cultural Competence	The findings showed the varying levels of Texas certified, elementary, public school teachers' knowledge and perception of cultural competence. The study supports the need for additional research and teacher training in the area of cultural competence.
Davis, W. (2005) Cultural literacy vs. cultural proficiency: A study of the effects of gender and ethnic biases on euro-american women and people of color from marginalized ethnic groups	Dissertation	What fosters the development of cultural proficiency?	Mixed Methods Study	Children in early literacy programs	Gender and ethnic biases; cultural literacy; cultural proficiency	The qualitative and quantitative data assessed the social and academic movement toward Cultural Proficiency that values multicultural diversity and celebrates positive gender role models.
Lindsay, R., Robins, K., & Terrell, R. (2009) Culturally responsive leadership	Conceptual	As an educational leader, it is essential to recognize that responses and reactions to students' cultural identities have a profound influence on what students learn and how they learn it. Furthermore, a leader's responses and reactions to difference, whether conscious or unconscious, can be manifested in several ways that range from devastating a student's sense of cultural identity to maximizing and enlarging a student's uniqueness.				

Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
APA	Conceptual, Empirical, or Dissertation		Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Noguera, P., 2009 The trouble with black boys: And other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education	Conceptual		Pedro Noguera takes a thoughtful yet critical look at the myriad of social, cultural, and political factors that have resulted in the troubling achievement levels for poor and minority students. Noguera critiques the currently pervasive habit of blaming schools, teachers, parents, and especially kids for the educational failures of inner-city public schools instead of acknowledging the larger social and economic inequalities at work in our society that undermine our ability to educate all children. Using many case studies and vignettes, Noguera shows how instead of recognizing the fact that poor children come to school with very different needs, policy-makers have become accustomed to condemning and humiliating urban schools and the poor and minority students who attend them. And in the instances where schools <i>are</i> experiencing success in educating poor and minority kids, Noguera argues that remarkably less energy has been focused on studying and replicating those particular schools and techniques.			
DeCuir-Gunby, J., Taliaferro, J., & Greenfield, D. (2009). Educators' perspectives on culturally relevant programs for academic success: The american excellence association	Empirical	How do teachers perceive their cultural proficiency?	Qualitative Study	16 educators (teachers, counselors, and principals) from 10 high schools	Cultural Relevance	Each participant's interview provided thick descriptions of each AEA chapter. Several significant themes emerged. All advisors saw the importance of belonging that AEA helped create. The participants thought that AEA provided the support needed for students' continued academic performance.
Ladson-Billings, (1994). Culturally relevant teaching	Empirical	How does their cultural proficiency impact teachers' professional work?	Qualitative Study	Several exceptional teachers in public schools in low-socioeconomic, mostly African American school districts	Culturally relevant teaching	Ladson-Billings found that all of the teachers shared pride in and commitment to their profession and had an underlying belief that all children could be successful.

Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
APA	Conceptual, Empirical, or Dissertation		Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Ferguson, 1998; Goode, 1981; & Goodlad, 1984. Variables affecting student achievement.	Conceptual		In the United States, students from ethnic minority backgrounds have experienced varying levels of academic achievement in schools. The literature identifies many factors that might account for the variance in achievement including individual attributes as well as those of the school, home, community and society. Variables associated with each of these factors influence the academic achievement of all student populations. However, it is clear that their combined effect results in a significant disparity in the level of achievement among White, Asian, African American, Native American and Hispanic student population groups.			
Moran, M. & Hoy, W. (2001). Teacher trust in students and parents	Conceptual		A collective set of beliefs about in which optimism is the overarching theme that unites efficacy and trust with academic emphasis. Teachers believe in themselves to achieve, the faculty believes in its students to achieve, and the faculty focuses on student achievement. Teacher Academic Optimism is a set of beliefs held by individual teachers that they can teach effectively, that they trust students to learn, and that parents will support them to set and pursue high academic standards.			
Baier, A. (1986). Trusting people	Conceptual		An assumption developed from this book is that people prefer to be able both to trust individual persons and rely on the institutions that structure their conduct, so prefer to be able to regard it a good thing if people are trusting people. The philosopher observed that we notice trust as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted.			
Bercovitch, S., (2007). Toward excellence with equity	Conceptual		Working to raise achievement levels for all segments of the population is a key to keeping America strong and vital. Striving to remove group identities as predictors of achievement—in other words, to close achievement gaps between groups—will help make the fruits of America’s vitality more equally available. These are the goals toward which this book is directed and that reflect the meaning of the title, <i>Toward Excellence with Equity</i> . This book also chronicles an intellectual journey that Sacvan Bercovitch began nearly two decades ago that initially focused on black-white inequality in earnings.			
Abrahams, R.D. & Troike, R. C., (2002). Does the pot melt, boil, or brew? Black children and white assessment procedures	Conceptual		The experiences Black youths bring to school with them constitute a distinctive, viable culture. Their subsequent performance in educational and psychological testing situations cannot be assessed adequately without consideration of their particular attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral patterns, for all of these are determined by a kind of cultural conditioning which differs, in some fundamental ways, from mainstream Americans. Several of the social and psychological characteristics of Black culture are discussed. Included are Blacks' attitudes toward whites, systems of time allocations, expressions of identity, attitudes toward learning, dissemination of information among Blacks, Black learning styles and maturation processes. Each is discussed further in terms of its manifestation in a testing or assessment situation; how it conflicts with the assessor's orientations and expectations; and how distorted, unreliable evaluations result from the failure of assessors to consider implications of cultural relativism in interpreting Black behavior.			

Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
			Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Glasser, W. (1998). <i>Choice theory</i> : A new psychology of personal freedom	Conceptual	William Glasser believes educators will never have the kind of success in school that is so desperately wanted until educators can get external control out of the classroom and replace it with choice theory. "Just as a rising tide raises all ships, we need to do far more than most schools do now to create classrooms in which almost all students both succeed and enjoy school." <i>William Glasser</i>				
Glasser, W. (1969). Schools without failure	Empirical	How do teachers perceive their cultural proficiency?	Mixed Methods Study	Female juvenile delinquents in reform school	Motivation and Antimotivation	Glasser found that these females firmly believed that they were failures in life and that they could not reverse this failure. Without motivation, education is a battle.
Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice	Conceptual	Culturally responsive teaching is: <u>validating</u> , <u>comprehensive</u> , multidimensional, <u>empowering</u> , <u>transformative</u> , and <u>emancipatory</u> . Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students.				



Table 2.2 Continued

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design		Theoretical Foundation	Main Findings
APA	Conceptual, Empirical, or Dissertation		Qual., Quant., Mixed & Procedure	Unit of Analysis & Sample		
Goddard, Y., Goddard, R. & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2007) A theoretical and empirical investigation of teacher collaboration for school improvement and student achievement in public elementary schools	Empirical	How do teachers perceive their cultural proficiency?  Does this belief match the district's theory of cultural proficiency?	Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was the primary analytic method	47 elementary schools with 452 teachers and 2,536 fourth-grade students	Teacher collaboration for school improvement and student achievement	The authors suggest that the results provide preliminary support for efforts to improve student achievement by providing teachers with opportunities to collaborate on issues related to curriculum, instruction, and professional development. The authors also discuss the need for more research on the effects of different types of collaborative practices using more representative samples.
Merriam, S. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach	Conceptual	Merriam indicates there are no problems in education that exist in isolation from other areas of human behavior. Consequently, there is always some research study, some theory, some thinking related to the problem that can be reviewed to inform the study at hand.				

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

In an effort to improve schools and create learning environments that enhance student achievement, principals and teachers are charged with the daunting task of reforming their instructional programs to ensure that every child has equal access to a highly qualified teacher and a high quality instructional program. Working to raise achievement levels for all segments of the population is a key to keeping America strong and vital. Striving to remove group identities as predictors of achievement—in other words, to close achievement gaps between groups—will help make the fruits of America’s vitality more equally available (Bercovitch, 2007). Closing the teaching and learning gap requires that teachers think about their pedagogy differently.

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. The overarching research question is “What are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?” Individuals’ beliefs have a powerful impact on practice. Moreover, the study aimed to ascertain what factors foster or inhibit the development of cultural competence of teachers.

Teachers can reach a level of cultural competence necessary to eliminate racial disparity in schools and increase student achievement if they are willing to examine their own beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes and deepen their understanding of racial barriers and factors in student academic performance. This chapter takes you step by step through the procedure used to answer the research questions.

## **Research Design**

This study utilized a mixed method approach. This chapter shows the step-by-step sequence of actions that are essential for obtaining objective, reliable, and valid information in an investigation. The chapter also indicates how the resultant information was used to determine conclusions about the hypothesis, a theory, or the correct answer to a question (Mauch & Birch, 1998). A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of a study. Every empirical study has an implicit, if not explicit, research design (Yin, 1989). How a study proceeds depends on certain theoretical assumptions (that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behavior, that descriptive data is what is important to collect, and that analysis is best done inductively) and on data collection traditions (such as participant observation, unstructured interviewing, and document analysis). The research design provides the parameters, the tools, and the general guide for how to proceed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

## **Justification for Methods**

Qualitative research seeks out the “why,” not the “how,” of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information such as interview transcripts, emails, notes, feedback forms, photos, and videos. Unlike quantitative research, it does not rely strictly on statistics or numbers. Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observations; and (3) written documents (Patton, M., 2002). Qualitative research uses these kinds of data to gain insight into people’s attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, cultures, or lifestyles. It is used to inform decisions and to shape policy, communication, and research (Ereaut, 2004). The

qualitative approach, as described, is well suited to address this study's specific research question. Therefore, it was selected for this study as part of a mixed-method design that also employs quantitative research.

This study used data collected from two focus groups comprising middle school teachers while maintaining the anonymity of the participants. Data was collected from each participant to assess those characteristics and practices that are similar and different and to examine their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about culture and cultural competence. Three data collection techniques are dominant in the qualitative inquiry: participant observation, interviewing, and document collection. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) urge researchers to choose techniques that are likely to elicit the data they need to understand the phenomenon in question, to contribute different perspectives on the issue, and to make effective use of the time available for data collection. The data collection techniques for this study consisted of surveys, Q-Sort, official documents, and artifacts.

Q methodology provided a foundation for the systematic study of subjectivity—that is, a person's viewpoint, opinion, beliefs, attitudes, and the like (Brown, 1993). In quantitative research, the aim is to determine the relationship between one thing (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable) in a population. Quantitative research designs are either descriptive (subjects usually measured once) or experimental (subjects measured before and after a treatment.) It also involves gathering data that is absolute (typically, numerical data), so that it can be examined in as unbiased a manner as possible. As the researcher, I had to have a very clear idea of what was being measured before measuring it, and the study set up with controls and a very clear blueprint.

Q methodology is based on two premises about subjectivity. The first premise is that one's subjectivity is communicable to others. For example, when prompted by an appropriate question, an individual should be able to express or communicate to others what he/she likes about a specific encounter or issue. The second premise is that subjectivity always advances from the *point of self-reference*. What is important in Q methodology is the individual's feeling or opinion as opposed to others' feelings or opinions. This is why Q samples are useful for examining individual perceptions.

Typically, in a Q methodological study, people are presented with a sample of statements about some topic. The participants are then asked to rank-order the statements from their individual point of view, according to some preference, judgment, or feeling about them, mostly using a quasi-normal distribution. By Q sorting, people give their subjective meaning to the statements, which in turn reveals their subjective viewpoint (Smith, 2001) or personal profile (Brouwer, 1999). The limited number of comparative studies that have been carried out indicate that different sets of statements structured in different ways can nevertheless be expected to converge on the same conclusions (Thomas & Baas, 1992).

A Q study begins by identifying a concourse, or a body of literature about the topic. A concourse usually consists of text, often created from interviews with well-informed people. From the concourse a sample of Q statements is strategically selected. Each Q statement is an expression of an individual opinion. Q participants are people with clearly different opinions who are asked to express opinions about the Q statements by sorting them, i.e. "doing a Q sort." Q researchers look for patterns across the variables (people's Q sorts) for each subject (Q statement). They look to see if the saliency of one variable (a Q sort by

person 1) is related to the saliency of another (a Q sort by person 2) for the same Q statement. Participants sort statements according to how those statements fit into their beliefs and understandings. Q researchers then look for patterns that show up across the participants' Q sorts. Patterns suggest that there are inter-subjective orderings of beliefs that are shared among people (Brown, 1980).

The Q set (or Q sample) often consists of 40 to 50 statements, but more or fewer statements are certainly possible. I selected 40 statements widely different from one another in order to make the Q set a broadly representative as well as balanced set of statements. The statements were edited where necessary and randomly assigned a number; the statements and their corresponding numbers were printed on separate cards (called the Q deck) for the purpose of Q sorting. A Q methodological study requires a limited number of respondents: All that is required are enough subjects to establish the existence of a factor for purposes of comparing one factor with another. [...] P sets, as in the case of Q samples, provide breadth and comprehensiveness so as to maximize confidence that the major factors at issue have been manifested using a particular set of persons and a particular set of Q statements (Brown, 1980).

Figure 3.1 provides a visual representation of the model sort. Participants sorted the 40 cards on a continuum (+4 to -4) from the functions they felt were most representative of their perception, attitude, and beliefs about cultural competence.

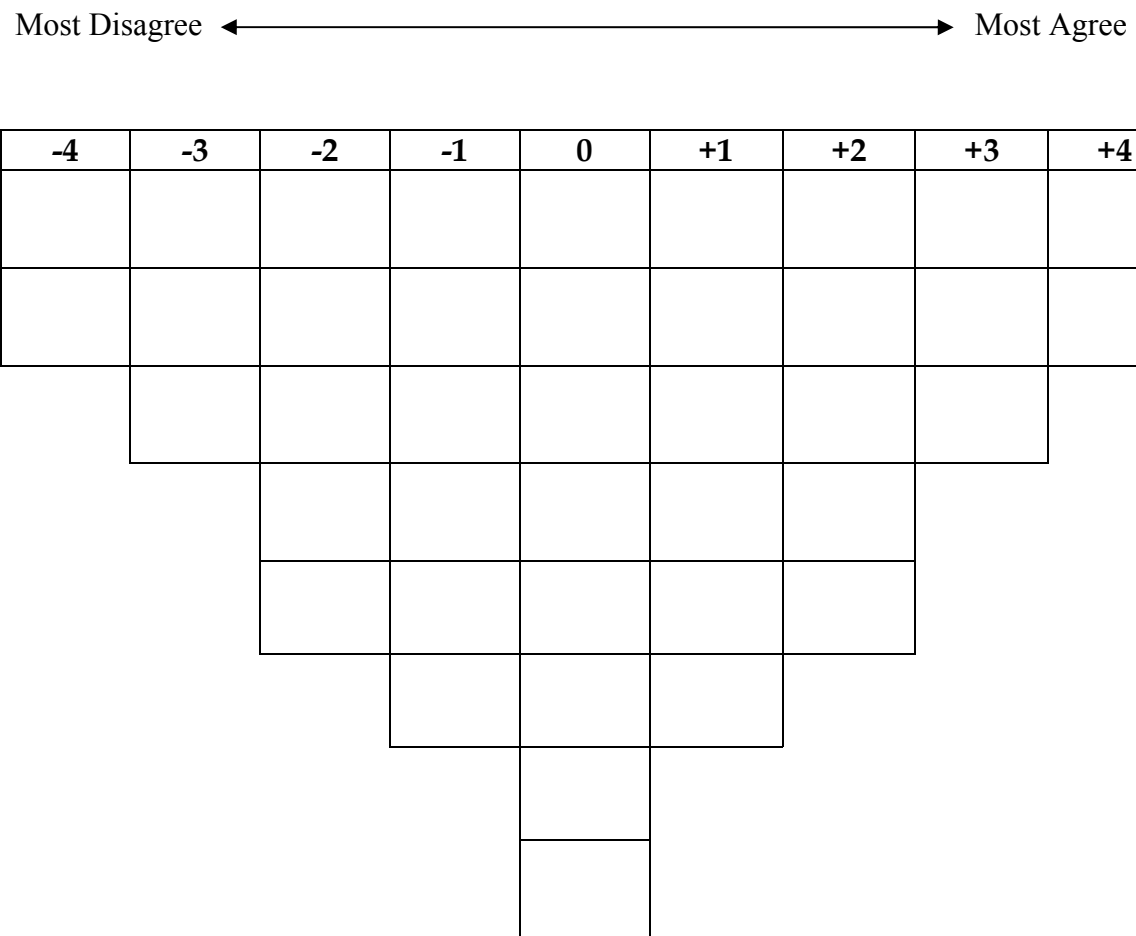


Figure 3.1 Model Array for Distribution of Statements

### Statements Used for Q Sort

1. Professional development is key in providing teachers with the knowledge and skills required for cultural competency.
2. My school and school district model cultural competency on a regular basis.
3. While I do not believe in the practices and beliefs of many cultures outside my own I tolerate them.
4. There is a lack of equal representation of teachers and administrators that reflect diversity in our district.
5. Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs).
6. Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality biased toward the dominant culture.
7. I believe students should go to neighborhood schools—busing to desegregate schools does not make sense.
8. Children of various cultures learn differently; therefore, I teach differently to different races of students.
9. The lack of an immigration policy is a problem for our schools today.
10. Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it.
11. When recruiting and hiring teachers for our district, diversity is taken into account.
12. Our school does not need a specific focus on multicultural education.
13. I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same.
14. I incorporate cultural celebrations (e.g., Black History Month) into my teaching.
15. Teachers should teach about cultures represented in their classroom.
16. In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.



17. Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.
18. Cultural competency is an off-the- shelf program adding yet another educational buzzword.
19. In my classroom, I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my students.
20. In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.
21. I don't think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content.
22. Students should not be allowed in schools to speak a language other than the one from their community.
23. It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens.
24. We should be able to exempt ELL and SpEd student test scores so they do not have a negative impact on our classroom and school ratings.
25. I am interested in students who have religious beliefs that are different than my own.
26. In my classroom, I regularly use school materials (supplies, picture books, and magazines) featuring people of multiple races.
27. Schools should not become more accepting of gay/lesbian lifestyles.
28. Cultural programs should be led by those of that particular background.
29. At our school we do our best to ensure that students with exceptional needs feel part of the AIG, Honors, and Advanced Placement courses.
30. Islamic students should be allowed to wear head cover in the classroom.
31. I was adequately trained as a teacher to develop cultural proficiency.
32. If I have low credibility as a teacher or leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.
33. When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well.
34. Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.

35. I differentiate my teaching based on my students' interests.
36. Making all public facilities accessible to the disabled is simply too costly.
37. I am aware that culturally acceptable behavior or what's considered normal varies among cultural groups.
38. Students with physical, cognitive, and sensorial limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.
39. Every effort is made in my classroom to not intentionally impose my own cultural values on others.
40. Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. The overarching research question is, "What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?" Individuals' beliefs have a powerful impact on practice. Moreover, the study aimed to ascertain what factors foster or inhibit the development of cultural competence in teachers. The research questions were addressed in two phases. Phase One used surveys to gather the expertise of a district focus group in order to develop the concourse statements. Phase Two involved one hundred teacher volunteers from the two middle schools, grades six, seven, and eight. This mixed method approach also assisted in answering the research questions guiding this study.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?
  - a) What do teachers believe about cultural competence in regard to their professional practice?

2. How do their perceptions about cultural competence impact teachers' professional work?
  - a) What are the barriers to cultural competence?
  - b) What fosters the development of cultural competence?

### **Brief Description of School District**

In the district examined in this study, more than one-fifth of the population resides in towns. Agriculture and agricultural products are the greatest source of income to the county. Most of the population either is engaged directly in agriculture or derives a major portion of its income from the economy created by agricultural pursuits. The school district has major, persistent gaps (as described in Chapters 1 and 2) in achievement and performance based on race, ethnicity, language and disability.

There are 27 schools in the district: 17 elementary, five middle, four high schools, and one alternative school. In this district, 55% of the students are on either free or reduced lunches. Of the 428 students at School A, 71% are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and at least 60% are proficient, working on grade level. Of the 989 students at School B, 55% are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and at least 60% are proficient, working on grade level. At School A, 97% of the teachers are highly qualified. At School B, 96% of the teachers are highly qualified.

The schools examined in this study are two of the five middle schools where the ethnicities of the students and the geographical location vary significantly, while the available resources and the ethnicities of the teachers and administrators are very similar. Neither school made AYP or "Met" their minority subgroups. The sites selected have the

likelihood that the viewpoints or actions to be investigated are present and can be studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 410).

### **Phase One**

#### *Purpose*

Phase One focused on the development of the concourse statements using ordinary conversation, commentary, and discourse. The concourse (meeting with respondents) is supposed to contain all the relevant aspects of all the discourses (dialogue). I had to draw a representative sample from the concourse at hand. The goal of the Q sample, or research instrument, was to represent the subjectivity of a given topic.

To facilitate narrowing the research focus, I wanted to work with educators in rural North Carolina middle schools. I wanted to examine teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about cultural competence. To explore the perceptions of selected teachers and the perspectives of administrators, I chose Q methodology. Q methodology begins with the development of the research instrument, referred to as the Q sample, which is generated by interviewing individuals who have expertise or experience in the topic (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

This methodology then asked each person to rank order the set of statements composing the Q sample from "least" to "most" characteristic, in a forced distribution. Participants were also interviewed about the decisions they made in ordering the statements. Consequently, this method allowed participant involvement from the creation of the research instrument through the data collection phase. Finally, the ranked distributions of statements and interviews were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed.

### *Participants*

Prior to conducting the Q sort with the middle school teachers, a Q sample (set) was collected from a focus group—the district’s Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force. This committee consists of a representative from each of the 27 schools in the district; the representatives came from various disciplines, of varying ethnicities and cultures, and can included community leaders, ministers, and administrators. The committee meets once a month to discuss and develop a plan for implementing strategies and programs to close the achievement and racial gap in the schools. In this study the specific topic to be examined was teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culture and cultural competence.

In qualitative research participant selection fulfills multiple research purposes (illuminating, interpreting, understanding) and depends on the researcher’s own imagination and judgment (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 27). Prior to gathering data for the study, the third party facilitator discussed the study with each participant and informed them that participation was voluntary and they could discontinue at any time during the study. I shared the same information with the principal of the site to make him/her aware of the study being conducted with the teachers. The Informed Consent Form, found in Appendix E, was discussed and signed by each participant.

A third party facilitator conducted the Q sort. Due to my position in the district, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) required I use a third party facilitator to serve as a buffer. The Dropout Prevention Mediator & Project Administrator for the district agreed to assist with the data collection process. She taught high school English for several years. She is

highly qualified, articulate, and was capable of performing the task. She maintains professional licensures in professional counseling, public school teaching, school guidance counseling, and school administration. She is also a National Board Certified Counselor. She is well respected by the district and works closely with a Judge (District Court Judge for three surrounding counties), Juvenile Justice, and Governor's Crime Commission.

#### *Data collection*

The Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force was used for the concourse. I engaged the group in a discourse about cultural competence, teacher-student relationships, teacher perceptions, racial disparities that exist among the different ethnic groups and the impact these have on student achievement. Survey responses from this group were used to develop the Q statements. District and school level administrators were also surveyed about their perspective and perceptions of culture and cultural competence and their beliefs about how teacher perceptions and attitudes impact student achievement.

The concourse consisted of self-referential statements (i.e., opinions, not facts) and objects (such as pictures and videos). A verbal concourse may be obtained in a number of ways: by interviewing people; via participant observation; through popular literature, such as media reports, newspapers, magazines, and novels; and through scientific literature, in the form of papers, essays, and books. The gathered material represents existing opinions and arguments, the things that lay people, politicians, representative organizations, professionals, and scientists have to say about the topic; this will be the raw material for a Q (Gjalt de Graaf, 2004). For the interview protocols and survey pertaining to district and school level administrators, see Appendices A and B.

### *Data analysis*

All data was transcribed, analyzed, and coded for emerging patterns and themes. This preliminary analysis gave me a sense of any strong patterns that may be present and may help guide the research that followed. As I looked for patterns and themes, I had to sift through the information to determine what data was relevant to focus on when it came to what teachers perceived about cultural competence. The statements were edited for clarity, along with the assistance of Dr. Militello, dissertation chair, but the original language and words of the participants were retained as much as possible.

## **Phase Two**

### *Purpose*

Phase Two involved one hundred teacher volunteers from the two middle schools used in this study, grades six, seven, and eight. One of the middle schools is located in the eastern part of the county and the other is centrally located. A Q sort was conducted with these teachers in both of the schools included in this study. Using the statements with the teachers gave a better representation of their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about culture and cultural competence and how that translates into pedagogical practices. In the classroom, teachers must model positive attitudes and interactions with all children—particularly those who might be alienated from the rest. In order to do this, teachers must address their own preconceptions, for students pick up on the most subtle and implicit cues and patterns.

### *Participants*

This group comprised of one hundred teachers. There were fifty-eight participants from School A: “Raiders” and forty-two from School B: “Greenwaves.” To gain a wide array of different perceptions, the volunteer participants had a varying range of years of experience, ethnicities, ages, grade level taught, and subject area taught. I was also interested in whether these teachers are deemed highly qualified in the area in which they teach. The volunteer teacher participants were used to conduct the Q sort. The two middle schools are on a traditional calendar, their students have varying socioeconomic status, and enrollment is less than 1,000. One of the middle schools is located in the eastern part of the county and the other is centrally located. The teachers represent various discipline areas, ethnicities, and cultures.

### *Data collection*

During a meeting approved by the administrators of the two schools, the Q set was given to the middle school teacher participants in the form of a pack of randomly numbered cards, each card containing one of the statements from the Q set for the purpose of Q sorting. All teachers followed the same step-by-step procedure. Once a participant completed the Q sorting, they were asked to respond to some additional follow-up questions. It was imperative that the participants understood that I, via third party facilitator, was only interested in their perceptions or points of view and that there were no right or wrong answers. The same questions were used for all participants and were thought-provoking and meaningful. A copy of the follow-up questions is included in Appendix D. Data was



collected primarily through Q sorting, follow-up questions and interviewing, and document analysis. For the sorting protocol, see Appendix C.

The purpose of interviewing, according to Patton (2002), is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Patton goes on to say, "We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories." (p. 341) I wanted to get the "stories" from six of the middle school teachers, to understand their perspectives on different cultures, on the problem of low student performance (specifically that of minority students), and on how teachers' expectations and perceptions impact student achievement. To start the interview process, the third party facilitator asked the participants to tell her a bit about their background, primarily with regard to their teaching experience, present position, and responsibilities, as well as, perhaps, a bit about their training—whatever they feel comfortable telling.

The special strength of interviewing is that it provides an opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations for what you do see. To this opportunity, add the unanticipated learnings that can emerge from the unexpected turns in discourse that a researcher's question can produce. During the process of listening to the teachers being interviewed, the third party facilitator quickly learned what questions to ask.

An interview guide (Patton, 2002) facilitated the interview process found in Appendix D. Using this approach, the third party facilitator and I were able to develop a more accurate response analysis. The interviews lasted no longer than forty-five minutes to an hour per participant and were conducted in their classrooms during their planning period and after school hours. I worked with each participant on establishing a convenient day of the week

and an appropriate time of day to hold the interview. The follow-up interview questions were given to the participants prior to the interview process.

The Q set was given to the middle school teacher participants in the form of a pack of randomly numbered cards. Each card contained one of the statements from the Q set. The participants were instructed to rank the statements according to a defined rule—the person’s point of view regarding the issue—and provided with a score sheet and a suggested distribution, resembling a normal distribution, for the Q sorting task. The score sheet was a continuum ranging from “most likely to disagree” on one end “most likely to agree” on the other end; in between, the distribution will take the form of a quasi-normal distribution. The topics of race and culture, and of teacher beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about these issues, are all very controversial; therefore, the distribution was steep in order to leave more room for ambiguity and indecisiveness in the middle and also to allow for participants who have strong or well-articulated opinions on the topic, with a range of -4 to +4. The participants were requested to adhere to the distribution provided.

The participants were asked to read through all of the statements very carefully. This way he/she got an impression of the type and range of opinions at stake. The participants did a rough sort while reading, dividing the statements into three piles: (1) statements with which he/she generally agrees, (2) those with which he/she disagrees, and (3) those about which he/she is neutral, doubtful, or undecided. The piles were checked for agreement-disagreement balance in the Q set by counting the number of cards in each pile and recording this number in the corresponding boxes. The numbers entered in the three boxes should add up to 40. Participants were asked to go over the distribution and shift cards if they desired.

The participants were asked to rank order the statements according to their own perception or point of view and to place them in the score sheet provided. They were then asked to elaborate on their point of view, especially as regards the most salient statements—that is, those placed at the extreme ends of the continuum on the score sheet. Participants sorted the cards into the grid. Finally, participants were asked a series of questions regarding the decisions they made, including the six volunteer participants that were probed on their responses, in performing the Q sorts and why they sorted the Q sample as they did. Follow-up questions included:

- Briefly describe your reasons for choosing the statements with which you are “most likely to agree are characteristic of your perception of cultural competency” (+4’s). (Please list by number at least one statement in the +4 column and your reason for placing it there).
- Briefly describe your reasons for choosing the statements with which you are “most likely to disagree are characteristic of your perception of cultural competency” (-4’s). (Please list by number at least one statement in the -4 column and your reason for placing it there).
- Were there other statements that you had difficulty placing? If so, please list the statement(s) by number and describe your dilemma.
- Is there a statement that you would have liked to have seen included in the sort? If so, what would the card have said and where would you have placed it?
- To the best of your ability, define cultural competency for teachers?

These questions helped me better understand the participants' rationales for sorting the cards in the manner they did, and probing those follow-up interview questions gave me an opportunity to clarify points which initially may be obscure (Brown, 1980).

### *Data analysis*

Data analysis is the process of systematically examining and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

After the sorts were completed and collected, they were analyzed using PQMethod 2.11 software (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2002). In keeping with common practice in Q methodology, Principle Component Analysis was used to find associations among the different Q sorts (Brown, 1980). As previously stated, in Q methodology, it is the Q sorts (or participants) that are factor analyzed for inter-correlations, rather than the individual opinion statements. Following factor analysis, the emergent factors were rotated to simple structure using the varimax method. The factor arrays are estimates of the expressions of individual Q sorts that are closely related to that factor.

Factor scores were calculated for each of the 40 statements. Here individual sorts that significantly contributed to the makeup of each factor were constructed into factor arrays. Statements displaying the greatest range between factor arrays were highlighted and analyzed as distinguishing statements (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). I analyzed the array along with the follow-up interview transcripts of the open-ended responses in the protocol. An examination of each participant's perspectives on his or her level of cultural competence

from the Q methodology approach, as documented on the score sheet, was conducted.

Themes and patterns emerged when the distributed framework was used to analyze the data.

The main question to be answered in this study was, “What are teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about cultural competence?” Usually the theory, the hypothesis, or the research questions guide the researcher in sifting through a mass of data. They focus the search and provide implicit criteria for evidence (Mauch & Birch, 1998, p. 126). Additional document analysis consisted of examining students’ attendance, test data, and the annual district survey responses from parents and students about the climate and culture of their school.

Teacher and administrators’ comments proved helpful. Patton (2002) supports using this kind of data: “These kinds of documents provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed. They may reveal things that have taken place before the evaluation begin” (p. 293). The data analysis helped identify commonalities and patterns in the data. These interpretations may be called “lessons learned” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). The “lessons learned” in this study were extracted from the data collected.

With permission from the participants, follow-up interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim from six volunteer participants. All data was analyzed and coded for emerging patterns and themes. As I looked for patterns and themes, I had to sift through the information to determine what data was relevant to the research questions. The statements were edited for clarity, but the original language and words of the participants were retained as much as possible.

### **Research Validity and Reliability**

Validity with respect to qualitative designs is the degree to which meanings of the interpretations and concepts are held mutually by the participants and the researcher. Robert Yin (1989) identifies four logical tests—construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability—which serve as criteria for judging qualitative research designs. Two of the four were utilized in this study:

- *Construct validity*: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (concourse theory)
- *Reliability*: demonstrating that the operations of a study—such as the data collection procedures—can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 1989, p. 40-41).

To ensure validity and reliability, this study utilized triangulation and member checking.

#### *Triangulation*

Denzin (2002) identified four basic types of triangulation: 1) Data—the use of a variety of data sources, 2) Investigator—the use of several different researchers or evaluators, 3) Theory—the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and 4) Methodological—the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or program. The Q methodology and focus group used in this study provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the plausibility and trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed.

### *Member checking*

Responses in the Phase Two follow-up interviews were probed to obtain a more complete meaning. Interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts for the study were shared with the participants to verify that what was being stated was true and that their ideas were being represented accurately and appropriately. I used three central office staff to verify the transcripts for all sessions. They were able to assess whether I captured the correct intention of the participants' statements and to volunteer additional information in the effort to clarify prior responses.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are consistent with the partial state of knowing inherent in social research; researchers elucidate the limitations of their work to help readers know how they should interpret it (Glesne, 1999, p. 162). It was my intent to focus on middle school teachers, to discover their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about cultural competence, how they translate them into pedagogical practices, and how they impact student achievement. I used my perspectives and that of a third party facilitator as outsiders in the district as well as study a group of teachers. Perspectives were also gathered from administrators, guidance counselors, students and parents.

The first limitation to this type of study concerns the use of “outsiders”—that is, individuals other than the teacher participants. Outsiders do not reveal the participants' ambitions, motives, pleasures, fears, and ways of interpreting events. Also, the “objective truth” will be impossible to establish using outsiders. Participant observers can or may diminish objectivity by becoming too intimately immersed and may fail to convey an

accurate picture of the actual participants. Time spent conducting the follow-up interviews was limited and probing questions relatively short.

The second limitation concerns the follow-up interview data. The disadvantage of using data from interviews is that diverse interpretations can be offered of the problems at hand. My understanding of the data and how decisions are made might impact the entire process of data collection, coding, and analysis. The data obtained was to some extent determined by the questions. The follow-up interview questions were meant to answer specific research questions. Given the qualitative nature of this study, I had to adapt certain questions for the follow-up interviews in order to obtain better data. However, using open-ended questions reduced this influence. Also, the process of transcribing oral responses into written text may have limited the results: although the decoding was carried out carefully, some aspects of the teachers' unedited voices may not have been heard in the written version. I know that future research studies may be required to verify whether teachers' practices matched their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes and their descriptions of their work. Only direct and extended observation of teachers' work in the classroom will address this limitation.

The third limitation of this study has to do with reliability. What if some cards in the Q set were not valid for all participants? For example, a participant's idea may not be represented on any of the cards in the Q set. Also, no other researcher was involved in the data analysis, so co-rater reliability was not established. Given time restrictions, an additional student or colleague was not available to help establish co-rater reliability for this study.



A fourth limitation was the teacher selection procedure. The experiences of one hundred teachers in the district may not represent those of all teachers in the district. Also, this group of teachers was only representative of middle school, not high or elementary school. Further studies will need to be carried out to conclude whether the results from this research can be generalized to the general population of middle school teachers.

### **Subjectivity Statement**

I conducted this study because I have a particular interest in knowing about teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions and how these have an impact on student achievement. I have worked in and with schools that have similar demographics and issues to the ones included in the study. This study was conducted in two middle schools in a rural district in North Carolina; the district has a large minority population and a history of low student performance in the eastern part of the county, and a more affluent population in the western part. One of the biases brought to this research arises from the fact that I am African American and currently serving as one of the Assistant Superintendents in the rural district that is the focus of the study. Minority students across the board in this district are failing on EOGs/EOCs and not deemed proficient at their grade level. This past school year none of the schools made AYP, missing all minority subgroups.

My race and ethnicity are important because of the unique perspective that they brought to the study. I have a personal interest in, and professional knowledge of, issues pertaining to how cultural competency, student achievement, and student-teacher relationships interact. My experiences and background result in a somewhat biased view, especially as regards to the hypothesis that teachers who are culturally challenged can

negatively affect student achievement. However, as I utilized triangulation and member checking to diminish the impact of subjectivity, these biases did not significantly affect the process of data collection and sorting.

I have spent my entire 34-year education career working in the same rural district as the schools under study. Of those 34 years, 22 were spent in the classroom teaching advanced middle school math and science. In 2001-2002, I accepted a position at Central Office as the Gifted Education Support Specialist for grades 6-12. In March of 2002, I accepted another position as Middle School Director, which I maintained for six years prior to applying for Assistant Superintendent. For the past five years I have served as one of the Assistant Superintendents for the district. My belief has always been that educators are the most basic educational resource that communities provide their children, and thus that training and support need to be provided to ensure that every classroom, and all students, have a talented, dedicated, well-prepared, and culturally sensitive teacher striving to lead them to success.

Upon graduating from high school, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career that would allow me to work directly with people. My brother, a graduate of the same university that I attended, inspired me to enroll in the school of education. He graduated from the program with honors and nurtured my desire to be positioned so as to have a direct impact on others, preferably students. He spent the bulk of his educational career in the same rural district used in the study until transferring to Wake County Schools, where, unfortunately, premature death ended his career.

As a leader in the district, I strived to remain as objective as possible about cultural differences and not let subtle prejudices and biases influence my perspective while conducting the study. I am very aware that my own interpretations, whether negative or positive, may have added a subjective element to the follow-up interviews on teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions, and made every effort to remain objective. As a matter of fact, a third party facilitator was used to ensure objectivity.

At the end of the day, I know that teaching and being an effective leader are both moral activities. Judgments must be grounded in commitments that are both visible and equitable: visible so as to make transparent the values on which the judgments are based, and equitable so as to prevent more conflicts of rights or privileges. I truly believe that all students can learn and should learn. Educational leaders must ensure that every child is afforded opportunities to attain a good education.

### **Ethical Issues**

The participants needed to trust the third party facilitator as well as myself and be open. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state that “[t]wo issues dominate traditional official guidelines of ethics in research with human subjects: informed consent and the protection of subjects from harm” (p. 43). This is critical when dealing with educators and children. The consent form, found in Appendix E, outlined what I was doing and why. It explains the expectations of the participants. They were told the risks they were facing by agreeing to participate in the study. The participants knew that if I learned something that could be considered harmful to them or others, I would have to report it. Participation was on a

voluntary basis, and the participants were given the opportunity, at any time, to drop out of the study with no penalty.

Participants were assured complete confidentiality, protection, and anonymity. I used pseudonyms for all places and subjects so as to ensure that no one will ever know who the subjects were or where they are from. Participants were asked to sign the consent form and provided a copy. As reputable administrators, the third party facilitator and I gave no cause for the subjects not to trust us. This also afforded the opportunity to access the middle schools and any documents necessary for the study.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Three reviewed the methodology used in the study. Q methodology was used for examining teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about cultural competence and the impact these issues have on student achievement. Triangulation of the findings for the study was achieved by means of probing follow-up interviews, documents, and artifacts. The use of Q methodology and teacher groups in this study provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the plausibility and trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed.

The chosen research design provided an opportunity to understand the participants, their perceptions, and the implications their perceptions have for student achievement. The research questions were addressed by the data collected. Table 3.1 links the research questions to the unit of analysis and data source. This study will benefit educational leaders, inform instructional practices, create a unified vision for school improvement, and provide data and conclusions that might one day ensure a fair and equitable education for all students.

Chapter Four will present the data, which was collected during second semester (late May), and analyze the findings. Chapter Five will include the summary, discussion, and conclusions of study.

Table 3.1 Link to Research Design and Research Questions

Unit of Analysis	Research Question and sub-questions	Data Source
Teachers	<p>What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?</p> <p>What do teachers believe about cultural proficiency in regard to their professional practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Interviews</li> <li>• Q-Methodology (Sorting &amp; Post Interviews)</li> <li>• Artifacts</li> </ul>
Teachers, Principals, Central Office	<p>How does their cultural competence impact teachers' professional work?</p> <p>What are the barriers to cultural proficiency?</p> <p>What fosters the development of cultural proficiency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher Interviews</li> <li>• Q-Methodology (Sorting &amp; Post Interviews)</li> <li>• Artifacts</li> </ul>
Principals and Central Office Directors	<p>What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?</p> <p>What are the barriers to cultural proficiency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals and Central Office Interviews</li> <li>• Artifacts</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

This chapter provides a complete overview of the results for this study. The chapter is organized into seven sections. The first section introduces the chapter. Subsequent sections are as follows: Q Analysis and Findings; Factor One; Factor Two; Factor Three; Consensus Statements; Distinguishing Statements; and Summary. This chapter discusses the results of a Q methodological approach that explored middle school teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about cultural competence. The 100 Q sorts in this study were factor analyzed using the PQMethod 2.11 software (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2002). Factor analysis is the statistical means that reveals how participants group themselves through the Q-sorting process and aids in the interpretive process. "All that the factor analysis does is lend statistical clarity to the behavioral order . . . by virtue of similarly (or dissimilarly) performed Q-sorts" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 50).

As discussed in Chapter 3, factor analysis reveals those sorts that are statistically correlated with each other as reflected in their factor loadings (factor loadings are correlation coefficients that represent the degree of agreement between individual Q sorts and the factor). What is important to remember is that each Q sort reflects one's "operant subjectivity"—one's mind in *operation*, which is a person's way of "thinking, evaluating, and interpreting" (Brown, 1980, p. 44).

The participants interpret and thus determine what each statement means to them, and arrange the statements accordingly from, in the case of this study, *most agree to most*

*disagree*. These correlated Q sorts create a composite factor array, or factor, which represents an overall shared perspective. “The people in a given cluster may be characterized as resembling the profile of item scores that define that cluster or factor” (Khare, 1972, p. 231). It must also be noted that demographics in Q have practically no meaning; i.e., that the importance of the factor is in the perspective that it represents and not in the social traits of the persons who entertain that perspective.

### **Q Analysis of Findings**

In this study, the P-sample used was 100 current certified North Carolina middle school teachers located in two different schools. There were 58 participants from School A: “Raiders” and 42 from School B: “Greenwaves.” The participants were predominantly female (78 females, 22 males) and the majority of the participants primarily identified themselves as Caucasian, 83%; 14% were Black; 1% Asian; and 2% Multiracial. Their years of experience ranged from 1<sup>st</sup> year teacher to 37 years. As far as educational level, 73 % held a Bachelor’s degree, 24 % held a Masters’ degree, with 2% of participants having an advanced degree beyond Masters and 1% with a Doctorate. Fifty-eight of the middle school teachers completed the Q-sort on the same scheduled day of one week and the other 42 completed their Q sort the following week on the same scheduled day; however, the researcher followed up with 6 additional interviews for a smaller participant group. All Q-sorts were completed within the same month.

The 40 concourse statements that made up the Q-set were derived from survey responses from the Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force. The discourse among the group was relative to cultural competence, teacher-student relationships,



teacher perceptions, racial disparities that exist among the different ethnic groups and the impact these have on student achievement. District and school level administrators were also surveyed about their perspective and perceptions of culture and cultural competence and their beliefs about how teacher perceptions and attitudes impact student achievement.

The Q-Sort data was assigned a number by participant and entered into the PQ Method program. For example, participant A08 is the eighth participant in the Q-sort who currently works at Raiders Middle and B08 is the eighth participant in the Q-sort who currently works at Greenwaves Middle. The 100 Q-sorts were entered in the program by statement numbers.

Subsequent to the sorts being completed and collected, they were analyzed using the software program, PQ Method, accessed through a free website on [www.qmethod.org](http://www.qmethod.org). The PQ Method provides a DOS-based statistical program that analyzes data. In Q methodology, it is the Q sorts (or participants) that are factor analyzed for inter-correlations, rather than the individual opinion statements. The PQ Method program defaults at eight factors. These eight factors provide eigen values, the ratio of the between-groups sums of squares to the within-group sums of squares. They were then examined to determine rotation. A scree plot was used to display eigen values. The scree plot graphs the eigen value against the factor number. Figure 4.1 displays the scree plot.

The first stage of factor analysis involves extracting factors from a correlation matrix to make initial decisions about the number of factors underlying a set of measures. The principal components factor analysis was used to make these decisions. There is a very clear, distinct elbow at factor two. The plot shows the comparative importance of the factors with

the slope flattening at a point known as the elbow which shows the most critical factors occurring before the flattening and the less critical factors following the flattening of the slope. After plotting the eight factors chosen by the PQ method program, it shows one elbow to the curve of factor one. I decided to look at more factors in order to provide a more detailed analysis of the data. There appears to be a very close correlation among the factors after factor three. The ones following factor three appeared to be very similar to one another. Therefore, I decided to rotate the three factors to provide three discrete depictions of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about cultural competence.

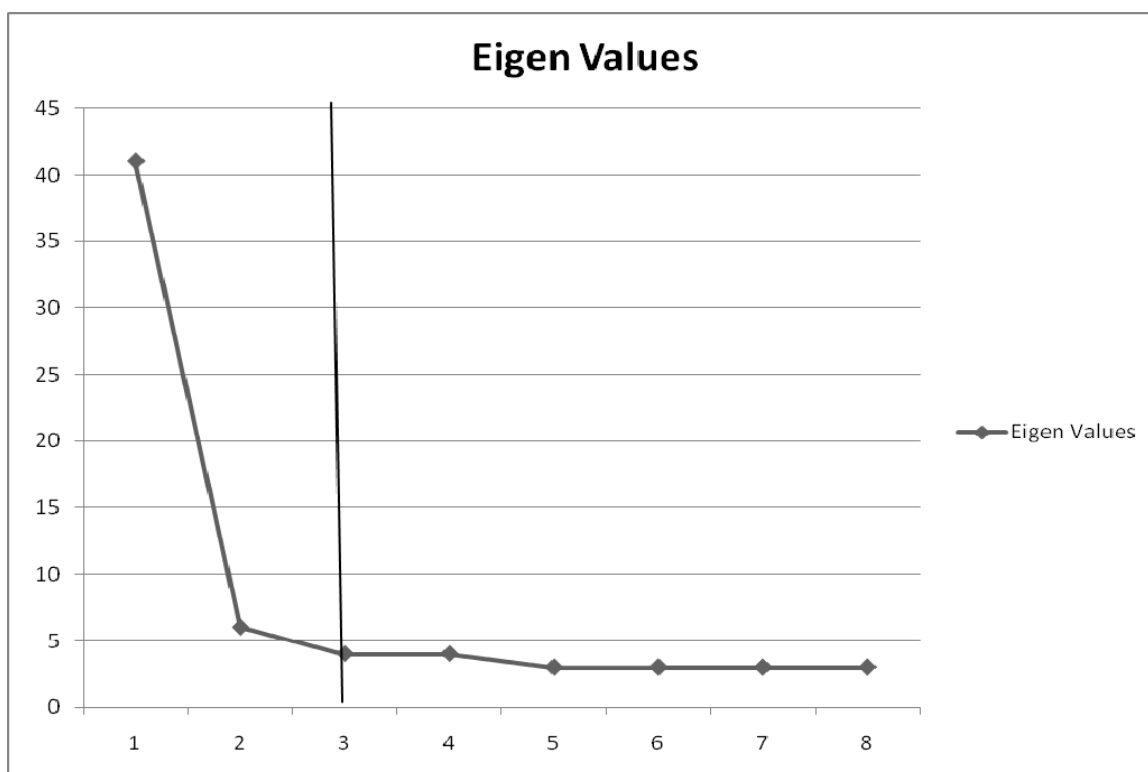


Figure 4.1. Scree Plot of Eigen Values.

### Significant loadings

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Standard error of a zero order loading is given by the expression:

$$\begin{aligned} SE &= 1/\sqrt{N} & N &= \text{number of statements} \\ &= 1/\sqrt{40} \\ &= 6.3245 \end{aligned}$$

A statistical criterion commonly used is the eigen value criterion. Thus, the selected factors must have an eigen value greater than or equal to 1. An eigen value is the variance of the factor. Because this is an unrotated solution, the first factor will account for the most variance, the second will account for the second highest amount of variance, and so on. The scree plot graphs the eigen value against the factor number. There appears to be almost a clear elbow at two. From the third factor on, you can see that the line is almost flat, meaning that each successive factor is accounting for smaller and smaller amounts of the total variance.

In consultation with Dr. Matthew Militello, dissertation chair, we ran a number of solutions, looked at a number of rules, and decided on a three factor solution. A one factor solution makes for an uninteresting study. In order for a loading to be significant at 0.01 level, it must exceed 2.58 (SE) = 2.58 X 6.3245 = .4079. In order for a loading to be significant at .05 level, it must exceed 1.96 (SE) = 1.96 X 6.3245 = .309. A confidence interval is a way of estimating a parameter by constructing a pair of limits that have a certain probability of including the population parameter. When the standard deviation of the population is known, the standard error of the mean, or the standard error of the difference in the means, can be used to estimate a confidence interval.

Table 4.1  
*Correlations Between Factor Scores*

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1.0000	0.6246	0.7745
0.6246	1.0000	0.5590
0.7745	0.5590	1.0000

*Humphrey's Rule*

Humphrey's rule (Fruchter, 1954; 79-80) states that a factor is significant if the cross product of its two highest loadings (ignoring sign) exceeds twice the standard error, ... Per this rule all three factors that the researcher selected for final interpretation are significant.

The factors are representative of all participants. The factor arrays are models of the perspectives of individual Q sorts that are closely related to that factor. The factor scores are calculated for each of the 40 statements. Individual sorts that significantly contribute to the composition of each factor are developed into factor arrays. These factor arrays are subject to interpretation by examining and comparing composite statement arrays, also known as factor scores. Individual statements were also compared across the factor arrays. The statements displaying the greatest range between factor arrays are highlighted and analyzed as distinguishing statements (McKeown & Thomas, 1988)

Table 4.2  
*Humphrey's Rule*

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Cross Product of Two Highest Loadings	.5910	.6176	.4880
Standard Error	.309	.309	.309
Difference	.282	.3086	.179

All three of the factors satisfy the criteria listed above. They were also selected for rotation and interpretation.

#### *Analysis of Factors*

The analysis of the factors resulted in three groupings, Factor One, Factor Two, and Factor Three, which represented different viewpoints. Together, these factors explain 51% of the variance: Factor One (19%), Factor Two (16%), and Factor Three (16%). Forty-seven of the 100 participant sorts were significantly represented for  $p > .01$  in Factor 1 of these three groups. Fifteen of the 100 accounted for  $p > .05$  significance. Factor One was named “*Others' Perspectives*,” Factor Two named “*Colorblindness*,” and Factor Three named “*Culturally Competent Educators*.” Each of these sorts provides insight into teachers’ perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs about cultural competence.

Table 4.3  
*Factor Matrix Using Participants' Q Sort (Loadings)*

Participants	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1 A01	0.1181	0.6456**	0.2474
2 A02	0.1057	0.4937**	0.5859**
3 A03	0.0739	-0.0202	0.3837*
4 A04	0.6225**	0.1380	0.3174*
5 A05	0.0804	0.5590**	0.0842
6 A06	0.4031*	0.3277*	0.6276**
7 A08	0.5194**	0.2368	0.3329*
8 A09	0.5907**	0.0336	0.5633**
9 A10	0.7544**	0.3808*	0.1849
10 A11	0.3994*	0.2893	0.0273
11 A12	0.5504**	0.3191*	0.2780
12 A13	0.4381**	0.2373	0.6338**
13 A14	0.7835**	0.1244	0.1103
14 A15	0.1989	0.5329**	0.4969**
15 A16	0.5083**	0.2166	0.3485*
16 A17	0.3818*	0.5060**	0.4678**
17 A18	0.3660*	0.5313**	0.4974**
18 A19	0.3540*	0.4925**	0.5227**
19 A20	0.3658*	0.3325*	0.4878**
20 A21	0.2872	0.2461	0.4828**
21 A22	0.6105**	0.4246**	0.0948
22 A23	0.6640**	0.3051	0.2139
23 A24	0.7185**	0.4878**	0.1719
24 A25	0.4403**	0.6101**	0.4852**
25 A26	0.5966**	-0.1216	0.3069
26 A27	0.6362**	0.2303	0.1970
27 A28	0.2148	0.1421	0.6702**
28 A29	0.3348*	0.3547*	0.5594**
29 A30	0.7191**	0.1432	0.1595
30 A31	0.5858**	0.4962**	0.0299
31 A32	0.2618	0.4222**	0.1389
32 A33	0.1910	0.3848*	0.3841*
33 A34	0.6033**	0.1705	0.4916**
34 A35	0.5287**	0.3615*	0.4223**

Table 4.3 Continued

Participants	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
35 A36	0.1176	0.6625**	0.2977
36 A37	0.5955**	0.5074**	0.3529*
37 A38	0.0535	-0.0581	0.5433**
38 A39	0.5693**	0.3485*	0.4802**
39 A40	0.4365**	0.3836*	0.5677**
40 A41	0.6048**	0.2936	0.4320**
41 A42	0.6742**	0.2207	0.4535**
42 B01	0.5271**	0.3271*	0.4065**
43 B02	0.0487	0.1344	-0.0961
44 B03	0.3353*	0.3799*	0.3025
45 B04	0.4515**	0.6409**	-0.1656
46 B05	0.2097	0.5279**	0.4980
47 B06	-0.2532	0.2946	-0.1169
48 B07	0.4009*	0.6204**	0.3292*
49 B08	0.7077**	0.0986	0.4826**
50 B09	0.3473*	0.3996*	0.1129
51 B10	0.5493**	0.2136	0.4939**
52 B11	0.2550	-0.0901	0.5304**
53 B12	-0.1455	-0.3250*	0.0925
54 B13	0.0257	0.7742**	-0.3318
55 B14	0.3333*	0.4227**	-0.0160
56 B15	0.1069	0.3585*	0.5041**
57 B16	0.0479**	0.7978**	0.1557
58 B17	0.6711**	0.2121	0.5079**
59 B18	0.4974**	-0.0051	0.6078**
60 B19	0.0377	0.2466	0.5929**
61 B20	0.7065**	0.3380*	0.2315
62 B21	0.4897**	0.3076	0.5491**
63 B22	0.5437**	0.4455**	0.0858
64 B23	0.2428	-0.0987	0.4845**
65 B24	0.2161	-0.0375	0.4887**
66 B25	0.2268	0.7100**	0.0476**
67 B26	0.3035	0.4457**	0.3135*
68 B27	0.2112	0.6065**	0.4372**
69 B28	0.6611**	0.0188	0.2944

Table 4.3 Continued

Participants	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
70 B29	0.1403	0.4370**	0.5195**
71 B30	0.3610*	0.6267**	0.1025
72 B31	0.5497**	0.3492*	0.3536*
73 B32	0.2818	0.3895	0.4183**
74 B33	0.3396*	0.5761**	0.2395
75 B34	0.5491**	0.5315**	0.3837*
76 B35	0.1117	0.4351**	0.0483
77 B36	0.1456	0.4464**	0.2886
78 B37	0.4195**	0.3636*	0.3075
79 B38	0.6610**	0.3057	0.3532*
80 B39	0.5471**	0.2268	0.2845
81 B83	0.1493	0.5006**	0.1572
82 B84	0.4645**	0.3694	0.5919**
83 B85	0.6260**	0.2713	0.3524*
84 B86	-0.0993	0.7268**	0.0384
85 B87	0.3101*	0.5632**	0.2282
86 B89	0.1961	0.3082	0.7282**
87 B90	0.5860**	0.4388**	0.3131*
88 B91	0.4096**	0.5730**	0.3080
89 B92	0.1548	0.4399**	0.3523*
90 B93	0.3012	0.3317*	0.4961**
91 B94	0.2939	0.1048	0.5873**
92 B95	0.1913	-0.0545	0.4278**
93 B97	0.2954	0.3508*	0.6374**
94 B98	0.4182**	0.2720	0.3133*
95 B99	0.4276**	0.2655	0.5060**
96 B100	0.3031	0.4185**	0.3397*
97 B101	0.1282	0.4889**	0.1851
98 B102	0.4859**	0.2033	0.6161**
99 B103	0.6128**	0.0056	0.4676**
100 A07	0.3388*	0.5643**	0.2230

% expl.Var.

19

16

16

\*\* for .01 significance  $1/\sqrt{40} \times 2.58 = .4079$  at or above significance  $p > .01$  99% confidence\* for .05 significance  $1/\sqrt{40} \times 1.96 = .309$  at or above significance  $p > .05$  95% confidence



In Table 4.3 above, some of the participants' sorts loaded significantly (either at  $p > .05$  or  $p > .01$ ) on two or more factors. This indicates they partially favored each of the factor viewpoints their sort loaded on, with emphasis on the factor where the loading was statistically higher (S. Brown, 1980). For Factor One, 47 of 100 loadings were significant at  $p > .01$  and 15 at  $p > .05$  which accounts for 19% of variance, Factor Two, 38 of 100 loadings were significant at  $p > .01$  and 19 at  $p > .05$  which accounts for 16% of variance, and Factor Three, 44 of 100 loadings were significant at  $p > .01$  and 16 at  $p > .05$  which accounts for 16% of variance. Note that some participants have confounding loadings on multiple factors.

### **Factor One**

#### *Looking at Another's Perspective Through Another's Lens – "Others" Perspectives"*

Forty-seven out of 100 teachers had statistically significant loadings on Factor 1. The high number of teachers representative of this factor indicates that most of the participants in the study shared similar perspectives. Thirty-eight participants were White; eight were Black; and one Multiracial. Thirty-seven participants were female; ten were male. Note that practically half of the male participants for this study loaded on Factor One. Twenty-one participants have been teaching 1 - 9 years; seventeen have been teaching 10 - 19 years; and nine have been teaching 20 - 28 years. Twenty-six participants hold a Bachelor's degree, twenty with a Master's degree, and one with an advanced degree beyond a Masters. Table 4.4 displays an overview of how the 47 teacher participants with 99% confidence loaded in Factor One.

Table 4.4  
 Factor One: *Looking at Another's Perspective Through Another's Lens – "Others Perspectives"*

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Level	Years of Experience
4	Male	White	Bachelor	6.5
7	Female	Black	Bachelor	8
8	Female	Black	Bachelor	4
9	Female	White	Bachelor	28
11	Male	White	Bachelor	5
12	Female	White	Bachelor	22
13	Female	White	Bachelor	27
15	Male	White	Bachelor	17
21	Female	White	Masters	13
22	Female	White	Masters	7
23	Female	White	Masters	5
24	Female	Black	Masters	23
25	Female	Black	Masters+	19
26	Female	White	Bachelor	4
29	Female	White	Bachelor	15
30	Female	White	Bachelor	6
33	Female	White	Bachelor	24
34	Female	White	Bachelor	10
36	Female	White	Bachelor	8
38	Female	White	Bachelor	13
39	Female	White	Bachelor	1
40	Female	White	Bachelor	11
41	Male	White	Bachelor	1
42	Female	Black	Masters	9
45	Female	White	Masters	12
49	Female	White	Masters	2
51	Female	White	Masters	8
57	Female	White	Masters	7
58	Female	White	Masters	10
59	Female	White	Masters	5
61	Female	White	Masters	7
62	Female	White	Masters	12
63	Male	White	Masters	24

Table 4.4 Continued

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Level	Years of Experience
69	Female	White	Masters	1
72	Male	White	Masters	24
75	Female	Multiracial	Masters	13
78	Male	Black	Masters	23
79	Female	Black	Masters	12
80	Female	Black	Masters	16
82	Female	White	Bachelor	16
83	Female	White	Bachelor	10
87	Male	White	Bachelor	15
88	Female	White	Bachelor	8
94	Male	White	Bachelor	14
95	Male	White	Bachelor	3
98	Female	White	Bachelor	20
99	Female	White	Bachelor	1

In terms of *Looking at Another's Perspective Through Another's Lens – "Others Perspectives,"* the middle school teachers in Factor One offered varied viewpoints for their most salient statements, that is, those placed at the extreme ends of the continuum. Repetitive attention to the audio-tapes was instrumental in determining descriptions in order to allow me to generate a composition for the interpretation of the analyzed data. Reasons for choosing the statements were extracted from some of the participants. In reference to statements 11 and 34, Participant #69 indicated "The district is diverse compared to where I came from. I was trained in cultural proficiency in my grad program in D.C." She also felt "gays/lesbians make wonderful, fun teachers." This female participant works at School A- "Raiders" and is a first year teacher. She appeared to be very open-minded especially on issues of diversity and

making personal choices. She also indicated all new staff participated in cultural proficiency professional development through New Staff Orientation and first year teachers received ongoing professional development through New Teacher Induction.

Participant #78 stated for statements 40 and 34, “I strongly believe that if you are not aware that culturally we are different, then there will be no progress to change what is wrong. When you close the door to anyone because of their differences, then we have lost the opportunity to learn and grow as a society.” When responding to statements 4 and 34, Participant #80 felt that there is a lack of equal diversity in the classroom. At her school is a large population of Hispanic students and do not have teachers who are Hispanic. Both participants worked at School B- “Greenwaves,” one female and the other a male with 16 and 23 years of teaching experiences, respectively.

Participant #61 responded to statements 20 and 23 by stating “So many times conflict is the result of lack of perspective (23) and I often see girls taking the leadership role (20).” A prevailing perception from several of the participants was conflict is also very important in order to bring social changes, as it challenges the status quo. If there are no conflicts in the society then it will come to a standstill and will not grow or bring any change in the lives of human beings. This theory observes that different groups have different values and agendas and they are always competing with each other to achieve their goals and agendas.

In response to statement 4, Participant #59 stated “Most of our teachers are white females. We are lacking in diversity and it is not equal to the diversity at my school.” In both schools in the study eighty-three percent of the teachers are white. When defining cultural

competence for teachers, Participant #82 indicated that cultural competence was understanding the needs and capabilities of all students. The participants were not shy about expressing their personal beliefs and displaying their attitudes centered around the subject of cultural diversity. Participant #80 defined cultural competence as teachers being able to teach all cultures and be successful at it. One of the most interesting definitions of cultural competence for teachers came from participant #75, “tolerance education, understanding, it begins at home, must live (be part of you) not a suit you wear.”

Table 4.5 displays the z-score for a statement loaded in Factor One. This factor table shows the most-to-least significant statements for Factor One. It also indicates how far and in what direction, the statement deviates from its distribution’s mean. This z-score transformation is especially useful when seeking to compare the relative standings of the statements from distributions with different means and/or different standard deviations.

Table 4.5  
*Normalized Factor Scores -- For Factor One*

No.	Statements	Z-SCORES
23	It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens.	1.680
16	In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.	1.649
19	In my classroom, I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my students.	1.584
37	I am aware that culturally acceptable behavior or what's considered normal varies among cultural groups.	1.568
40	Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator.	1.354
35	I differentiate my teaching based on my students' interests.	1.246
39	Every effort is made in my classroom to not intentionally impose my own cultural values on others.	1.175
25	I am interested in students who have religious beliefs that are different than my own.	1.163
13	I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same.	0.970
15	Teachers should teach about cultures represented in their classroom.	0.854
26	In my classroom, I regularly use school materials (supplies, picture books, and magazines) featuring people of multiple races.	0.832
3	While I do not believe in the practices and beliefs of many cultures outside my own I tolerate them.	0.676
14	I incorporate cultural celebrations (e.g., Black History Month) into my teaching.	0.609
1	Professional development is key in providing teachers with the knowledge and skills required for cultural competence.	0.580
6	Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality biased toward the dominant culture.	0.518
2	There is a lack of equal representation of teachers and administrators that reflect diversity in our district.	0.332
38	Students with physical, cognitive, and sensorial limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.	0.096
11	When recruiting and hiring teachers for our district, diversity is taken into account.	0.052
30	Islamic students should be allowed to wear head cover in the classroom.	-0.015
2	My school and school district model cultural competency on a regular basis.	-0.213
8	Children of various cultures learn differently; therefore, I teach differently to different races of students.	-0.216

Table 4.5 Continued

No.	Statements	Z-SCORES
32	If I have low credibility as a teacher or leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.	-0.244
28	Cultural programs should be led by those of that particular background.	-0.285
18	Cultural competency is an off-the-shelf program adding yet another educational buzzword.	-0.312
24	We should be able to exempt ELL and SpEd student test scores so they do not have a negative impact on our classroom and school ratings.	-0.347
7	I believe students should go to neighborhood schools-busing to desegregate schools does not make sense.	-0.384
29	At our school we do our best to ensure that students with exceptional needs feel part of the AIG, Honors, and Advanced Placement courses.	-0.512
31	I was adequately trained as a teacher to develop cultural proficiency.	-0.595
9	The lack of an immigration policy is a problem for our schools today.	-0.632
12	Our school does not need a specific focus on multicultural education.	-0.710
17	Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.	-0.865
10	Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it.	-0.957
3	Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs).	-0.977
21	I don't think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content.	-0.983
33	When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well.	-1.254
36	Making all public facilities accessible to the disabled is simply too costly.	-1.342
22	Students should not be allowed in schools to speak a language other than the one from their community.	-1.372
27	Schools should not become more accepting of gay/lesbian lifestyles.	-1.385
20	In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.	-1.627
34	Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	-1.710

After individual statements were compared across the factor arrays, using Z scores, I was able to distribute the statements for each factor. For example, the statements with the two highest Z scores in Factor One represent the +4 category. Statements that were most characteristic (+4) of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs included:

- It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another's lens.

[Statement 23].

- In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.

[Statement 16].

Expressions of determination, appreciation, and acknowledgment permeated the most agreeable characteristics of Factor One. Statements that were least characteristic (-4) of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs included:

- Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools [Statement 34].
- In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls [Statement 20].

These statements reflect an awareness of the impact of gender biases.

Figure 4.2 is provided to visually show the perspectives which are most representative of Factor One, based on the high-positive and high-negative statements in the composite factor array. The rationale for focusing on the high-positive statements is that these are statistically most valued by the factor participants as their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about cultural competence. This rationale applies to the use of figures for Factors Two and Three. Now let's focus on the participants' model factor array.



<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>
<b>34-</b> Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	<b>27-</b> Schools should not become more accepting of gay/lesbian lifestyles.	<b>19-</b> In my classroom, I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my students.	<b>23-</b> It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens.
<b>20-</b> In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.	<b>22-</b> Students should not be allowed in schools to speak a language other than the one from their community.	<b>37-</b> I am aware that culturally acceptable behavior or what's considered normal varies among cultural groups.	<b>16-</b> In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.

Figure 4.2 High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

These four high-positive statements suggest that Factor One participants strongly agree that when looking at others' perspectives, teachers take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge and awareness about diversity and cultural norms. These types of opportunities renewed Factor One participants' commitment to becoming culturally competent. One example was offered by Participant #4, a male, white middle school teacher. He discussed how he was ready to turn in his transfer papers this past year to work elsewhere in the district, as "the daily apathy of the kids really wears me down." Yet, at the end of the year, one of his students did something so unexpected that it altered his decision. He responded that, "I mean, I walked in ready to stick it [the transfer papers] in the box, and I found out I got this letter of appreciation from a student I had befriended when she was a 6th grader. So it kept me from putting in the papers."

Overwhelmingly, the ideas of gays/lesbians not being allowed to teach in public schools and boys making better leaders than girls were negated by Factor One. These negations were due to a number of reasons having to do with their belief in not imposing their values when it comes to individuals' personal lives and gender biases. There was one interesting twist to statement #20's interpretation. Participant #13 indicated "sitting in the same classroom, reading the same textbook, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different educations." She went on to express "in fact, upon entering school, girls perform equal to or better than boys on nearly every measure of achievement." However, discrepancies between the performance of girls and the performance of boys in middle school education may lead some critics to argue that boys are being neglected within the education system. Participant #41, a male teacher, further stated "across the country, boys have never been in more trouble: They earn 70 percent of the D's and F's that teachers dole out. They make up two thirds of students labeled learning disabled."

The negation of statements 34, 27, and 22 suggest teachers in Factor One are open to alternative ways of thinking, listen to kids and accept them as human beings regardless of their native language or choice of lifestyles. That belief, perception, or attitude encourages students to rethink negative things they have heard about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and bilingual people in school or elsewhere. Teachers' unconditional acceptance models to students to be open to diverse groups of people particularly in today's society.

Participant #33 stated "a teacher who supports all kids is a teacher that kids will respect and often work academically harder for. In my experience when I have listened to gay/straight students or students whose native language is not English, and find out what is

happening in their daily lives, I can be sympathetic with the student and find the proper resources for them. In turn the student has found that I listened to them and gains respect for our relationship. Mutual respect makes for a more cohesive classroom and learning environment.”

### **Factor Two**

#### *“Colorblindness”*

For Factor Two, 38 of 100 loadings were significant at  $p > .01$  which accounts for 16% of variance. Thirty-one participants were White; five were Black; one Asian, and one Multiracial. Twenty-seven participants were female; eleven were male. Note that practically the other half of the male participants for this study loaded on Factor Two. Twenty participants have been teaching 1 - 9 years; eleven have been teaching 10 - 19 years; three have been teaching 20 - 28 years, and four with 29+ years of teaching experience. Thirty-two participants hold a Bachelor’s degree, four with a Master’s degree; one with advanced degree beyond a Masters, and one with a Doctorate degree. Table 4.7 displays an overview of how the 38 teacher participants with 99% confidence loaded in Factor Two.

Table 4.6  
Factor Two: “*Colorblindness*”

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Level	Years of Experience
1	Female	White	Bachelor	6
2	Female	White	Bachelor	14
5	Female	White	Bachelor	7
14	Male	White	Bachelor	6
16	Female	White	Bachelor	29
17	Male	White	Bachelor	28
18	Female	White	Bachelor	18
21	Female	White	Bachelor	6
23	Male	White	Bachelor	27.5
24	Female	White	Masters	18
30	Female	White	Masters	15
31	Female	White	Masters	7
35	Female	White	Masters	37
36	Male	White	Bachelor	11
45	Female	White	Bachelor	4
46	Female	White	Bachelor	1
54	Female	White	Bachelor	8
55	Male	Black	Bachelor	32
57	Male	Black	Doctorate	9
63	Female	White	Bachelor	15
66	Male	White	Bachelor	6
67	Male	White	Bachelor	5
68	Female	White	Bachelor	2
70	Male	White	Bachelor	3
71	Female	White	Bachelor	28
74	Female	White	Bachelor	10
75	Female	White	Bachelor	5
76	Female	White	Bachelor	13
77	Female	White	Bachelor	12
81	Female	White	Bachelor	7
84	Female	White	Bachelor	7
85	Female	White	Bachelor	6
87	Female	Multiracial	Bachelor	7

Table 4.6 Continued

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Level	Years of Experience
88	Female	Asian	Bachelor	10
89	Female	Black	Bachelor	9
96	Male	Black	Bachelor	30
97	Female	Black	Bachelor	9
100	Male	White	Masters+	14

In Chapter Two, Neville states that colorblindness, the ideology that “race should not matter” in how individuals are treated, is often confused with “race does not matter.” Put into practice, color-blind operations use no racial data or profiling and make no classifications, categorizations, or distinctions based upon race (Neville, 2000). An example of this would be a college processing admissions without regard to or knowledge of the racial characteristics of applicants. When conducting a post-sort conversation with Participant #96, a black male at “Greenwaves” school, he felt that folks who enjoy racial privilege are closing their eyes to the experiences of others. The statements negated by the participants in this factor relates to gender biases. Although colorblindness chronicles race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, the latter two are not a part of this discussion.

“It benefits me not to pay attention,” says Participant #66, who is white. “I never have to question whether or not my race is being held in question when I apply for a job. It benefits me not to question that (because) it makes it look like I got here on my own.” Paying attention to the cultural experience of students is becoming increasingly important, given the differences between the demographics of American students and their teachers.

Some participants never claimed to be colorblind. Participant #54 indicated “before becoming a teacher, she had quite a bit of interaction with African-American children because she worked with the parks and recreation department. She was surprised, then, when she had trouble reaching her students. She finally decided to find mentors in other veteran teachers who were African American at her school. She also stated “My point is that it behooves us as educators to utilize the strengths that our children bring to the classroom — a rich language, a strong culture, a remarkable history. We do not need to be afraid of these strengths. The children I teach are more likely to be productive members of society if they have a strong sense of self to accompany their mastery of the curriculum.” It was obvious that Participant #54 was open to becoming culturally competent.

Figure 4.3 shows the perspectives which are most representative of Factor Two, based on the high-positive and high negative statements in the composite factor array. The rationale for focusing on the high-positive statements is that these are statistically most valued by the factor participants as their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about cultural competence. This rationale also applies to Factors Three. Let’s focus on the participants’ model factor array.

<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>
<b>20</b> - In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.	<b>33</b> - When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well.	<b>3</b> - While I do not believe in the practices and beliefs of many cultures outside my own I tolerate them.	<b>13</b> - I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same.
<b>5</b> - Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs).	<b>36</b> - Making all public facilities accessible to the disabled is simply too costly.	<b>39</b> - Every effort is made in my classroom to not intentionally impose my own cultural values on others.	<b>1</b> - I believe students should go to neighborhood schools-busing to desegregate schools does not make sense.

Figure 4.3 High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

Q sort statements were compared across the factor arrays and using Z scores, the researcher was able to distribute the statements for each factor. For example, the statements with the two highest Z scores in Factor Two represent the +4 category. Statements that were most characteristic (+4) of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs included:

- I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same. [Statement 13].
- I believe students should go to neighborhood schools – busing to desegregate schools does not make sense. [Statement 7].

Statements that were least characteristic (-4) of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs included:

- In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls [Statement 20].
- Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs [Statement 5].

As humans we tend to do things because we are comfortable doing them. We are afraid as a society to branch out and try new things so we stick to the people around us that are familiar.

Although the majority of the participants in Factor Two felt they did not see color and they treated all students the same, Participant #21 had a different opinion. A female middle school teacher with six years of teaching experience, shared “to be honest, a lot of teachers judge the students at her school – not all; depends on student attitude; not always based on culture which directly affect my desire to keep teaching. She also shared “what continues to engage me and makes *me* look forward to my day and going to teach is looking forward to interacting with my students and being involved . . . and helping them gain new perspectives or new connections to something. . . .That’s what sustains *me* as I go, having those conversations and one-on-one interactions and opportunities to really, you know, be involved in the student’s life.”

On the flipside, Participant #70, a special education teacher who works with emotionally disturbed (ED) students at “Raiders” school, discussed his frustration regarding some teachers’ communication styles with students. He feels many teachers disrespect their students by not acknowledging them as people. The one thing he did notice about teachers he has worked with is they sometimes talk to students like they’re idiots. You know, they’re just people. Just talk to them. “What’cha do this weekend?” “What’cha have for dinner last night? It’s something that simple. You know, they [the students] like talking just like anybody else. It brings loyalty. . . . It’s about communication. I think some teachers have forgotten that. That’s how you treat students all the same.”

Table 4.7 below displays the z-score for a statement loaded in Factor Two. This z-score is a standardized score that indicates how many standard deviations a data point is from



the mean. Scores above zero are considered above average, while those below zero are considered below average.

Table 4.7  
*Normalized Factor Scores -- For Factor Two*

No.	Statements	Z-SCORES
13	I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same.	1.864
1	I believe students should go to neighborhood schools-busing to desegregate schools does not make sense.	1.558
3	While I do not believe in the practices and beliefs of many cultures outside my own I tolerate them.	1.208
39	Every effort is made in my classroom to not intentionally impose my own cultural values on others.	1.167
40	Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator.	1.156
37	I am aware that culturally acceptable behavior or what's considered normal varies among cultural groups.	1.054
18	Cultural competency is an off-the-shelf program adding yet another educational buzzword.	1.031
23	It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens.	0.991
35	I differentiate my teaching based on my students' interests.	0.888
29	At our school we do our best to ensure that students with exceptional needs feel part of AIG, Honors, and Advanced Placement courses.	0.867
16	In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.	0.704
19	In my classroom, I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my students.	0.660
24	We should be able to exempt ELL and SpEd student test scores so they do not have a negative impact on our classroom and school ratings.	0.638
17	Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.	0.560
32	If I have low credibility as a teacher or leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.	0.451
14	I incorporate cultural celebrations (e.g., Black History Month) into my teaching.	0.370
2	My school and school district model cultural competency on a regular basis.	0.366
11	When recruiting and hiring teachers for our district, diversity is taken into account.	0.348

Table 4.7 Continued

No.	Statements	Z-SCORES
26	In my classroom, I regularly use school materials (supplies, picture books, and magazines) featuring people of multiple races.	0.279
9	The lack of an immigration policy is a problem for our schools today.	0.177
31	I was adequately trained as a teacher to develop cultural problem.	0.121
25	I am interested in students who have religious beliefs that are different than my own.	-0.018
38	Students with physical, cognitive, and sensorial limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.	-0.018
15	Teachers should teach about cultures represented in their classroom.	-0.103
12	Our school does not need a specific focus on multicultural education.	-0.304
30	Islamic students should be allowed to wear head cover in the classroom.	-0.311
27	Schools should not become more accepting of gay/lesbian lifestyles.	-0.337
1	Professional development is key in providing teachers with the knowledge and skills required for cultural competency.	-0.361
28	Cultural programs should be led by those of that particular background.	-0.496
22	Students should not be allowed in schools to speak a language other than the one from their community.	-0.763
28	Children of various cultures learn differently; therefore, I teach differently to different races of students.	-0.810
21	I don't think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content.	-0.813
34	Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	-1.150
6	Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality based toward the dominant culture.	-1.223
4	There is a lack of equal representation of teachers and administrators that reflect diversity in our district.	-1.233
29	Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it.	-1.336
36	Making all public facilities accessible to the disabled is simply too costly.	-1.486
33	When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well.	-1.609
5	Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs).	-1.929
20	In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.	-2.156

Several of the statements that loaded in Factor Two were salient because of their position at the extreme ends of the continuum. Some reasons given for choosing the

statements by Participants #55 and #24 were “We do not have equal representation in our district” and “I do not discriminate against immigrants, but I do feel that they often put additional burdens on our schools due to language barriers. Students from other cultures who know English when they come into our schools usually are more prepared. I don’t see color – I only see the attitude and participation of the student. When teachers say they are color blind, they are usually saying that they do not discriminate and that they treat all their students equally. Of course, being fair and treating each student with respect is essential to effective teaching. However, race and ethnicity often play important roles in children’s identities and contribute to their culture, their behavior, and their beliefs. When race and ethnicity are ignored, teachers miss opportunities to help students connect with what is being taught. This is backed by De-Cuir Gunby,s research cited in Chapter Two on multiculturalism.

Participant #21, a white female from “Raiders” school admitted “I constantly practice what I preach [try to] and am very tolerant of other cultures. I personally believe our culture has been multicultural – USA is the melting pot. I also feel it is very important to understand where students come from and their background to understand how they learn and what adversities they have overcome.” Participants spoke of the need to take proactive steps to change whatever is creating the difficulty in reaching all students and ensuring they reach their highest potential.

Either consciously or unconsciously, teachers often behave differently toward students based on the beliefs and assumptions they have about them. One of the post-sort questions had participants give their definition of cultural competence. Some of the participants in Factor Two believed cultural competence to be “an awareness of your culture

and others' cultures as well as accepting their differences. Participant #30 stated that cultural competence meant being able to teach without bias and prejudice and accept all for who they are and being aware of others around you and of their background without pushing your own personal beliefs on others." "Recognizing and understanding cultural differences and reacting to and teaching about those cultures appropriately" was stated by Participant #18 as to her definition of cultural competence.

### **Factor Three**

#### *"Culturally Competent Educators"*

For Factor Three, 44 of 100 loadings were significant at  $p > .01$  which accounts for 16% of variance. Thirty-nine participants were White and five were Black. Thirty-seven participants were female and seven males. Twenty-one participants have been teaching 1 - 9 years; ten have been teaching 10 - 19 years; nine have been teaching 20 - 28 years, and four with 29+ years of teaching experience. Thirty-six participants hold a Bachelor's degree and eight with a Master's degree. Table 4.8 displays an overview of how the 44 teacher participants with 99% confidence loaded in Factor Three.

Table 4.8  
 Factor Three: “*Culturally Competent Educators*”

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Level	Years of Experience
2	Female	White	Bachelor	14
6	Female	White	Bachelor	5
8	Female	Black	Bachelor	4
12	Female	White	Bachelor	22
14	Male	White	Bachelor	6
16	Female	White	Bachelor	29
17	Male	White	Bachelor	28
18	Female	White	Bachelor	18
19	Female	White	Bachelor	26
20	Female	White	Bachelor	20
24	Female	Black	Masters	23
27	Female	White	Bachelor	6
28	Female	White	Bachelor	30+
33	Female	White	Bachelor	24
34	Female	White	Bachelor	10
37	Female	White	Bachelor	3
38	Female	White	Bachelor	13
39	Female	White	Bachelor	1
40	Female	White	Bachelor	11
41	Male	White	Bachelor	1
42	Female	Black	Masters	9
49	Female	White	Masters	2
51	Female	White	Masters	8
52	Female	White	Bachelor	3
56	Female	White	Bachelor	20
58	Female	White	Masters	10
59	Female	White	Masters	5
60	Female	White	Bachelor	3
62	Female	White	Masters	12
64	Female	White	Bachelor	24
65	Female	White	Bachelor	30+
66	Male	White	Bachelor	6
68	Female	White	Bachelor	2
70	Male	White	Bachelor	3
73	Female	White	Bachelor	10
82	Female	White	Bachelor	13

Table 4.8 Continued

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Educational Level	Years of Experience
86	Female	White	Masters	18
90	Female	White	Bachelor	7
91	Female	White	Bachelor	4
92	Female	Black	Bachelor	9
93	Male	Black	Bachelor	32
95	Male	White	Bachelor	3
98	Female	White	Bachelor	20
99	Female	White	Bachelor	1

With the growing diversity of the student body in U.S. public school, it is increasingly imperative that teachers have and continually develop a cultural competence that enables them to connect with, respond to, and interact effectively with their students. The achievement gap between cultural minority and majority students in this district suggests that some sort of communication disconnect often occurs in the classrooms. Cultural mismatch between teachers and students is common and should not prevent positive, productive for both parties, provided the educator is a culturally competent communicator. As evidenced in Factors One, Two, and Three, the majority of the participants are white females with teaching experiences between 1 – 9 years. Table 4.9 displays the z-score for a statement loaded in Factor Two. This z-score is a standardized score that indicates how many standard deviations a data point is from the mean. Scores above zero are considered above average, while those below zero are considered below average.

Table 4.9  
*Normalized Factor Scores -- For Factor Three*

No.	Statements	Z-SCORES
40	Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator.	1.707
23	It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens.	1.623
38	Students with physical, cognitive, and sensorial limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.	1.616
19	In my classroom, I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my students.	1.605
14	I incorporate cultural celebrations (e.g., Black History Month) into my teaching.	1.302
29	At our school we do our best to ensure that students with exceptional needs feel part of the AIG, Honors, and Advanced Placement courses.	1.072
13	I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same.	1.064
16	In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings.	1.059
1	Professional development is key in providing teachers with the knowledge and skills required for cultural competence.	1.015
35	I differentiate my teaching based on my students' interests.	0.880
37	I am aware that culturally acceptable behavior or what's considered normal varies among cultural groups.	0.590
25	I am interested in students who have religious beliefs that are different than my own.	0.563
39	Every effort is made in my classroom to not intentionally impose my own cultural values on others.	0.498
8	Children of various cultures learn differently; therefore, I teach differently to different races of students.	0.452
15	Teachers should teach about cultures represented in their classroom.	0.443
26	In my classroom, I regularly use school materials (supplies, picture books, and magazines) featuring people of multiple races.	0.439
30	Islamic students should be allowed to wear head cover in the classroom.	0.222
4	There is a lack of equal representation of teachers and administrators that reflect diversity in our district.	0.220
6	Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality biased toward the dominant culture.	0.193
31	I was adequately trained as a teacher to develop cultural proficiency.	0.129
32	If I have low credibility as a teacher or leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.	-0.160
11	When recruiting and hiring teachers for our district, diversity is taken into account.	-0.205

Table 4.9 Continued

No.	Statements	Z-SCORES
34	Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	-0.292
9	The lack of an immigration policy is a problem for our schools today.	-0.318
2	My school and school district model cultural competency on a regular basis.	-0.355
7	I believe students should go to neighborhood schools-busing to desegregate schools does not make sense.	-0.389
27	Schools should not become more accepting of gay/lesbian lifestyles.	-0.497
3	While I do not believe in the practices and beliefs of many cultures outside my own, I tolerate them.	-0.511
24	We should be able to exempt ELL and SpEd student test scores so they do not have a negative impact on our classroom and school ratings.	-0.566
22	Students should not be allowed in schools to speak a language other than the one from their community.	-0.715
18	Cultural competency is an off-the-shelf program adding yet another educational buzzword.	-0.788
12	Our school does not need a specific focus on multicultural education.	-0.792
21	I don't think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content.	-0.859
17	Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.	-0.964
5	Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs).	-1.009
36	Making all public facilities accessible to the disabled is simply too costly.	-1.336
20	In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.	-1.543
28	Cultural programs should be led by those of that particular background.	-1.697
	Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it.	-1.725
33	When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well.	-1.969

The Q sort statements were compared across the factor arrays and using Z scores, the statements were distributed for each factor. For example, the statements with the two highest Z scores in Factor Three represent the +4 category. Statements that were most characteristic (+4) of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs included:



- Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator. [Statement 40]

- It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens. [Statement 23]

There is no one place to begin with an awareness of cultural differences. Individuals and schools start at different points along a cultural competence continuum. Cultural competence requires that teachers have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally. This means examining biases and prejudices, developing cross-cultural skills, searching for role models, and spending as much time as possible with other people who share a passion for cultural competence.

Statements that were least characteristic (-4) of teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs included:

- Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it. [Statement 10]

- When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well. [Statement 33]

For Factor Three, the idea that awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator is seen as an intrinsic part of one's inner self. For Participant #49, this belief provides strength when struggling with adversity, and is linked to coping strategies that enables her to find solutions, rise above her challenges, and value the various cultures that are represented by her students in the classroom. "I think I can always

think of things to do with my students when I am having a rough time in teaching that are fulfilling and self-rewarding.” One strategy she uses is to contextualize the current challenges as far as her beliefs, perceptions, and attitude in the broader arc of her life, linked to having some sort of purpose, be it as a teacher or otherwise. “I always tend to look at the bigger picture when faced with adversity in teaching. I guess all of that is just one part of my existence. I hope to make a difference in my teaching but that may not always happen so I have to consider my worth for other tasks as well for all the students in my care.”

Figure 4.4 shows the perspectives which are most representative of Factor Three, based on the high-positive and high-negative statements in the composite factor array. The rationale for focusing on the high-positive statements is that these are statistically most valued by the factor participants as their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about cultural competence. This rationale also applied to all three factors. We will now focus on the participants’ model factor array.

<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>
<b>10</b> - Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it.	<b>28</b> - Cultural programs should be led by those of that particular background.	<b>38</b> - Students with physical, cognitive, and sensorial limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.	<b>40</b> - Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator.
<b>33</b> - When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well.	<b>20</b> - In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls.	<b>19</b> - In my classroom, I take advantage of teachable moments to share cultural knowledge or to learn from my students.	<b>23</b> - It is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another lens.

Figure 4.4 High-Positive and High-Negative Statements

Several statements were salient from how they were placed at the extreme ends of the continuum. Participant #91 stated “It is important to overcome obstacles and work together for the betterment of the student. Intimidation is not an option for anyone for a student to be successful.” When asked how she defined cultural competency, her response was “the ability to accept different cultures into the classroom and address the needs of the students learning styles based on culture.” This belief that one must overcome obstacles and work together for the betterment of the student is a step in the right direction of becoming culturally competent. To be truly effective, a teacher in today’s classroom needs to teach from a multicultural perspective. To achieve this, educators must experience culture, explore their own culture and cultures different from their own, and examine how cultural perspectives collide and intertwine. In other words, if educators are to improve the quality of the classroom experience for all of their students, they need to become culturally competent.

Critical Race Theory, as described in Chapter 2, maintains a critique of colorblindness. As racism is inherent in U.S. society, claims of colorblindness and colorblind ideologies and language make invisible the presence of racism and how race is practiced in institutions like schools (Neville, 2000). Some of these ideologies were present in a few of the comments made by the teachers. Participant #68 said “I see color and cultures- they are beautiful – but I do not treat people better/worse based on a color nor does the parent background or EC status of a child determine the ability of children to succeed.” The comments by participants in Factor Three are viewed as particularly hope-renewing in that there is awareness for respecting cultural differences. Participant #49 eloquently articulates these same emotions, echoing the convictions of several Factors One and Two teachers by stating “Even though

teaching can be thankless, those few times that something positive happens with a student are powerful and help me remember why I wanted to become a teacher in the first place.”

A middle school math teacher, participant #14, a white male, felt he needed to take advantage of teachable moments because those are the best times to teach children and make material relevant. He also said “I’m of 2 minds on busing students. I understand why parents don’t want to ‘ship’ their children around but I also appreciate diversity. When asked his perception of cultural competence, he answered that cultural competence is “understanding different cultures, teaching different cultures, and accepting different cultures.” Participant #8 took another viewpoint on cultural differences by stating “The student’s choice whether to be gay or not is just that – HIS or HER choice! We don’t have to accept or like it though because to be cultural competent means “to be aware of the different ways in which we live and grow.” To be truly effective, a teacher in today’s classroom needs to teach from a multicultural perspective.

### **Consensus Statements**

Each factor was examined independently and perspectives identified that were not consensual and also not in strong disagreement (i.e. “non-confrontational”) with each other. For example, three perspectives on “Every effort is made in my classroom to not intentionally impose my own cultural values on others (statement 39)” were observed. Factor One agreed at +2 and Factor Two agreed at +3 and Factor Three deviated more toward neutral at +1. Neither Factor One, Two, nor Three were opposed to statement #39. Consequently, statement #39 is *non-consensual* but it is also *non-confrontational*.

Statements, consensus statements - *points of agreement* across perspectives, those that do not distinguish between any pair of factors are listed below. The five listed statements in Table 4.10 are non-significant at  $p > .01$ , and flagged with an \* because they are also non-significant at  $p > .05$ . Understanding these statements and the participants' perspectives may assist teachers in becoming culturally competent educators.

Table 4.10 *Factor Q-Sort Values for Statements sorted by Consensus vs. Disagreement (Variance across normalized Factor Scores)*

Statement	Factor Arrays		
	1	2	3
*36	-3	-3	-3
*21	-2	-2	-2
*35	2	2	2
*40	3	3	4
*20	-4	-4	-3

Across all factors, one hundred teachers disagreed that making all public facilities accessible to the disabled is simply too costly. They also disagreed with the statement it is not especially important that textbooks include multicultural content. The participants positively agreed they differentiated their teaching based on their students' interests. Statements #40 and #20 were very close in consensus that it is worth mentioning the participants agreed awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator while strongly disagreeing that boys make better leaders than girls.

### Distinguishing Statements

Distinguishing statements are those that rank highly for a given factor in comparison with the other factors, and allow for deepened understanding of a factor's nature. There were 19 distinguishing statements for Factor One, 27 for Factor Two and 18 for Factor Three.

Distinguishing statements lie at extreme ends for a given composite view (factor) and give us an appropriate starting point for its description. Listed in Tables 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13 are the comparative rankings of the other factors for these statements.

Table 4.11  
*Distinguishing Statements for Factor One*

Factors	1		2		3	
Statement	Rank Score		Rank Score		Rank Score	
16	4	1.65*	1	0.70	2	1.06
37	3	1.57*	2	1.05	1	0.59
35	2	1.25*	2	0.89	2	0.88
25	2	1.16*	0	-0.02	1	0.56
15	2	0.85*	0	-0.10	1	0.44
26	1	0.83*	0	0.28	1	0.44
3	1	0.68*	3	1.21	-1	-0.51
1	1	0.58*	-1	-0.36	2	1.02
6	1	0.52	-2	-1.22	0	0.19
8	0	-0.22*	-2	-0.81	1	0.45
18	0	-0.31*	2	1.03	-2	-0.79
29	-1	-0.51*	2	0.87	2	1.07
31	-1	-0.60*	0	0.12	0	0.13
9	-1	-0.63	0	0.18	0	-0.32
10	-2	-0.96*	-3	-1.34	-4	-1.73
33	-2	-1.25*	-3	-1.61	-4	-1.97
22	-3	-1.37*	-1	-0.76	-1	-0.72
27	-3	-1.39*	-1	-0.34	-1	-0.50
34	-4	-1.71*	-2	-1.15	0	-0.29

( $p > .05$ ; asterisk (\*) indicates significance at  $p > .01$ )

Seventeen out of nineteen statements were significant at  $p > .01$ ) and two at  $p > .05$ . Both the Factor Q-Sort value and the normalized score are shown in Table 4.11. For example in Factor One, statement 16, “In my classroom, I appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings” is a significant, distinguishing statement among the participants. Participants in Factor One most agreed with statement 16 and most disagreed with statement 34, “Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.

Table 4.12  
*Distinguishing Statements for Factor Two*

Factors	1		2		3	
Statement	Rank Score		Rank Score		Rank Score	
13	2	0.97	4	1.86*	2	1.06
7	-1	-0.38	4	1.56*	-1	-0.39
3	1	0.68	3	1.21*	-1	-0.51
37	3	1.57	2	1.05*	1	0.59
18	0	-0.31	2	1.03*	-2	-0.79
23	4	1.68	2	0.99*	4	1.62
16	4	1.65	1	0.70	2	1.06
19	3	1.58	1	0.66*	3	1.60
24	-1	-0.35	1	0.64*	-1	-0.57
17	-2	-0.86	1	0.56*	-2	-0.96
32	0	-0.24	1	0.45*	0	-0.16
2	0	-0.21	0	0.37*	-1	-0.35
11	0	0.05	0	0.35	0	-0.21
9	-1	-0.63	0	0.18*	0	-0.32
25	2	1.16	0	-0.02*	1	0.56
15	2	0.85	0	-0.10*	1	0.44
12	-1	-0.71	-1	-0.30*	-2	-0.79
30	0	-0.01	-1	-0.31	0	0.22
1	1	0.58	-1	-0.36*	2	1.02
8	0	-0.22	-2	-0.81*	1	0.45
34	-4	-1.71	-2	-1.15*	0	-0.29
6	1	0.52	-2	-1.22*	0	0.19
4	1	0.33	-2	-1.23*	0	0.22
10	-2	-0.96	-3	-1.34*	-4	-1.73
33	-2	-1.25	-3	-1.61	-4	-1.97
5	-2	-0.98	-4	-1.93*	-2	-1.01
20	-4	-1.63	-4	-2.16*	-3	-1.54

( $p > .05$ ; asterisk (\*) indicates significance at  $p > .01$ )

Twenty-three out of twenty-seven statements were significant at  $p > .01$ ) and four at  $p > .05$ . For Factor Two, both the Factor Q-Sort value and the normalized score are shown in Table 4.12. For example, statement 13, “I don’t see color in my students. I treat all students



the same” and statement 7, “I believe students should go to neighborhood schools – busing to desegregate schools does not make sense” are significant, distinguishing statement among the participants. Participants in Factor Two most agreed with these statements and most disagreed with statement 20, “In my classroom, boys make better leaders than girls” and statement 5, “Parents of other races can be intimidating to me (especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs).”

Table 4.12  
*Distinguishing Statements for Factor Three*

Factors	1		2		3	
Statement	Rank Score		Rank Score		Rank Score	
40	3	1.35	3	1.16	4	1.71
38	0	0.10	0	-0.02	3	1.62*
14	1	0.61	1	0.37	3	1.30*
16	4	1.65	1	0.70	2	1.06
1	1	0.58	-1	-0.36	2	1.02*
37	3	1.57	2	1.05	1	0.59*
25	2	1.16	0	-0.02	1	0.56*
39	2	1.18	3	1.17	1	0.50*
8	0	-0.22	-2	-0.81	1	0.45*
15	2	0.85	0	-0.10	1	0.44*
6	1	0.52	-2	-1.22	0	0.19
34	-4	-1.71	-2	-1.15	0	-0.29*
9	-1	-0.63	0	0.18	0	-0.32
3	1	0.68	3	1.21	-1	-0.51*
18	0	-0.31	2	1.03	-2	-0.79*
28	0	-0.29	-1	-0.50	-3	-1.70*
10	-2	-0.96	-3	-1.34	-4	-1.73*
33	-2	-1.25	-3	-1.61	-4	-1.97

( $p > .05$ ; asterisk (\*) indicates significance at  $p > .01$ )

Thirteen out of eighteen statements were significant at  $p > .01$ ) and five at  $p > .05$ . For Factor Three, both the Factor Q-Sort value and the normalized score are shown in Table 4.13. For example, statement 40, “Awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator” is a significant, distinguishing statement among the participants. Participants in Factor Three most agreed with this statement and most disagreed with statement 33, “When a parent admits he/she was a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can’t expect their child to do well” and statement 10 “Diversity and multiculturalism are not part of my curriculum, therefore I do not teach it.”

### **Summary**

Within Factors One, Two, and Three there exists aspects or attributes of varied perspectives. In Factor One, there are attributes, as perceived by the second factor, which are related. There is recognition within these factors that making all public facilities accessible to the disabled as being simply too costly was a disagreeable statement (-3). Notably, for all three factors, in addition to statement 36, statements 21 (I don’t think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content. -2), 35 (I differentiate my teaching based on my students’ interests. +2), and 11 (When recruiting and hiring teachers for our district, diversity is taken into account. 0), were consensus statements.

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected from 100 middle school teachers regarding their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about cultural competence. Q-methodology was utilized to explore their subjective points of view. Three factors emerged from data analysis. These factors represent three distinct perspectives on what teachers believe as well as their perceptions and attitudes about cultural competence. An analysis followed for

each of the factors based on interpretation of data analysis, distinguishing statements, and interview data. An identifying label was given for each factor that best expressed its underlying theme. These labels were for Factor One - "*Others' Perspectives*," Factor Two - "*Colorblindness*," and Factor Three - "*Culturally Competent Educators*."

Factor One teachers most agreed that it was interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another's lens. They also felt in their classroom, they appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings. The perceptions that gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools and boys making better leaders than girls were rejected.

Factor Two teachers felt that they don't see color in my students and they treat all students the same. They also believe students should go to neighborhood schools – busing to desegregate schools does not make sense. Ignorance of cultural differences could lead teachers to "underestimate the true academic potential" of minority students. Teachers loaded in this factor rejected the perception that parents of other races can be intimidating, especially those who speak a different language or have different religious beliefs. As with Factor One, boys making better leaders than girls were rejected.

Factor Three participants centered heavily on an awareness of cultural differences as the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator. Also vitally important was looking at another's perspective through another's lens, which correlates with Factor One. They rejected the perceptions that diversity and multiculturalism are not part of their curriculum, therefore they did not teach it. The perception "When a parent admits he/she was

a special education student when he/she attended school, then I can't expect their child to do well" was also refuted.

In Chapter 5, the study concludes with a discussion of the results, interpretations of findings through the literature lens, implications, and areas for future lines of inquiry.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

*“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.”  
~ Henry David Thoreau*

This chapter provides a summary of this study, including a review of its purpose, research methodology, and discussion of the findings regarding the three factors that emerged as well as the four statements held in agreement by Factors One, Two, and Three. This Q methodological study of 100 middle school teachers’ perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about cultural competence produced three factors each expressing a unique perspective. This methodological approach enabled the researcher to identify these specific opinion types through the analyses of common and differentiated statement sorts.

The participants sorted 40 statements along a continuum of *most agree* (+4) to *most disagree* (-4). The resulting data were factor analyzed and rotated, from which three factors emerged. Interpretation of these factors also yielded perspectives preferred by some factors and shared between others. My anticipation with this study is that it may pave the way for greater understanding of and further research into the phenomenon of cultural competence and “what teachers believe and perceive.”

These findings are important to teachers, who are grappling with ensuring academic success for their students, and to principals supporting those teachers. The findings can influence teacher beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, professional practices and instruction. They can also influence a principal’s decision-making about providing teachers with resources such as professional development. The findings are also important for parents and students who need to be assured that their children’s teacher believes in his/her students.

A dilemma exists as the cultural composition of the United States continues to become more diverse (NCES, 2009). The expectation that educators will instruct a widely diverse student population is a current reality, yet incomplete in prospective. In a rapidly growing school district within North Carolina where the research study occurred, teachers do not receive much professional development in the area of culturally sensitive instruction and have within the last year been evaluated in any manner, using the new teacher evaluation tool, as it relates to delivering instruction that acknowledges cultural diversities.

It is not known how a teacher's perception, belief, and knowledge of cultural competence impacts classroom instruction. The literature did show that teacher beliefs, actions, and attitudes can have a direct impact on school climate, which influences student achievement (Howard, 2006; Kohn, 2001). Little evidence of teachers' beliefs and understandings of the implications of cultural integration in today's schools exist. In the two schools under investigation, no formative training in the area of culturally sensitive practices is required, and there recently was guidance or evaluation of instruction that is culturally sensitive being used.

An email presenting the study was sent to middle school teachers at both schools soliciting volunteers for the study. Teachers eligible for the study had to be North Carolina certified in any combination of subject areas, or grades 6-8, and are deemed highly qualified. One hundred teachers volunteered from the two school sites. Q-sorts and interviews with six of the eligible teachers were conducted providing me with distinctive viewpoints concerning teacher participants' awareness, knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions of cultural proficiency

and competence. The findings were recorded and documented throughout each individual interview for use in triangulation of data. Data for all one hundred Q-sorts were analyzed to identify themes in which three emerged.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?
  - a) What do teachers believe about cultural competence in regard to their professional practice?
2. How do their perceptions about cultural competence impact teachers' professional work?
  - a) What are the barriers to cultural competence?
  - b) What fosters the development of cultural competence?

It must be noted regarding the research questions that, based on the Q sort, for virtually all the participants—regardless of the factor on which they loaded— felt they differentiated their teaching based on their students' interests and the statement "I don't see color in my students and I treat all students the same" was very evident when loaded in Factor Two. Through the use of Q methodology, a mixed-methods research approach that explores participants' subjective perspectives on any given topic, three factors or themes emerged and were labeled Factor One - "*Others' Perspectives*," Factor Two - "*Colorblindness*," and Factor Three - "*Culturally Competent Educators*." These labels arose from analysis of each factor's highly ranked statements and distinguishing statements that represented what suggested itself as the underlying theme for each factor.

All the factors displayed a wide range of teacher demographics in respect to geographic locale, years of teaching experience, gender, and educational level. Overall, these variables appeared to play no role with respect to the participants' perspectives regarding their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultural competence nor were that the focus of this study, as demographics served to define the requirements for participant selection.

*Research Question One*

*What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?*

- a) *What do teachers believe about cultural competence in regard to their professional practice?*

In examining perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of the teachers in this study, the consensus statements indicated they don't think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content, while at the same time agreeing that they differentiate their teaching based on their students' interests. The teachers also consented that when recruiting and hiring teachers for the district, diversity was taken into account. The latter statement conflicts with the reality of the population of teachers in the district. However, based on the fact they agreed that they differentiate their teaching based on their students' interest provides hope there is an awareness of cultural competence as defined by Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell, 2003. Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell defines cultural competence as the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and/or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client-system functioning within the appropriate cultural context.



There are over 1,200 teachers in the district and approximately 5% are minorities. Out of twenty-seven principals, only seven are minorities, six females and one male. Therefore, the belief behind this statement totally contradicts the reality for the district. From the follow-up interviews with the six middle school teachers, they agreed that knowledge of pedagogical content and establishing positive relationships were key factors in high student achievement and definitely directed their professional practices.

One of the key issues faced by the teachers at the two participating schools was that not all subgroups met the federal and state academic performance requirements. If educators knew what professional practices had the most impact on each subgroup, then teachers and school administrators could strive to apply or change these practices. In addition to knowing which practices affect which subgroups, it would be of interest to know how their beliefs, perceptions and attitudes affect each subgroup and whether or not they drive their practice or if practice drives the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about various cultures. During the data analysis of this study, the questions arose about whether or not teachers acted in accordance with their espoused beliefs and professional practices. Q-sort statements were used to collect that data.

Future research on this topic also needs to investigate how teachers believe they came about their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about cultural competence. If they have certain beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that translate into instructional behaviors, this has important implications for school leaders.

More research studies should be conducted to pinpoint exactly how students' success can be maximized. Hopefully, all of these studies should bear in mind the implications they

might have on the daily practices in classrooms and schools to maximize student achievement. The six middle school teachers felt they were effective teachers that believed their students can and will learn and that this learning is a reflection on their professional practices.

*Research Question Two*

*How do their perceptions about cultural competence impact teachers' professional work?*

Teachers in this study did not think it is especially important that textbooks include multicultural content and felt they treated all students the same regardless of their skin color. They felt professional development on diversity and multiculturalism was critical and appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings. Teacher beliefs and assumptions about good teaching rarely change during the course of a teacher education program (Richardson & Placier, 2001).

Consequently, it is important to understand how teacher practices impact how they culturally respond to students' needs. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes shape their understandings, judgments, and actions in their classrooms. The sociocultural contexts of teaching are influenced by the culture of the teachers and students; therefore, it is not surprising that teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about their students' cultures, races, and ethnicities shape instructional actions in the classrooms. There is a place for cultural diversity in every subject taught in schools (Gay, 2000).

*What are the barriers to cultural competence?*

Some teachers' belief systems are slow to change (Martin & William-Dixon, 1994). This is manifested in their interactions with students, the strategies they use for instruction, their classroom management systems, their selection of what to teach, and their assessment and evaluation practices. Lack of awareness about cultural differences creates barriers for both teachers and students to achieve positive student outcomes as supported by the literature in Chapter Two (Reeves, 2006). Despite our similarities, fundamental differences among individuals arise from nationality, ethnicity, culture, as well as from family background and individual experiences. These differences affect teacher beliefs, practices, and behavior. Furthermore, such cultural perspectives contribute to differences in expectations from students, specifically students of color. Ironically, in this study for the teachers that loaded in Factor Two, statement 13, "I don't see color in my students. I treat all students the same" and statement 7, "I believe students should go to neighborhood schools – busing to desegregate schools does not make sense" were significant.

*a) What fosters the development of cultural competence?*

Becoming a culturally competent educator ranked high for participants that loaded in Factor Three. Becoming aware of the barriers to cultural competence is the first step towards successful integration with individuals from different backgrounds. Educators must learn to develop an understanding of how prejudice and fear affect their interactions with their own students. Merely educating people about the differences is not enough; one must confront the differences (Gay, 2000). When collecting data from the middle school teachers, their belief, perception, and attitude implied having positive relationships with students, having high

expectations, and knowing pedagogical content will foster the development of cultural competence while simultaneously boosting student achievement.

### **Interpretation of Findings through the Literature Lens**

Data were gathered from responses given by participants during individual interviews and Q-sort. Collectively, among individual interview sessions, participants consistently referenced their childhood experiences and environment due to demographics and their educational backgrounds in relation to their knowledge of cultural competence. Generally, if participants were hesitant or unsure of how to best respond to the question, they would pause, chuckle, and talk around the subject; suggesting uncertainty. Participants shared anecdotal stories from their professional and personal experiences, generally referencing their own behavior or the behavior of colleagues and their students. Three themes emerged from analysis of all the data.

#### *Theme One [Factor One]: Other's Perspective - Looking at Another's Perspective Through Another's Lens*

*... listening... requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs... It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue. -Lisa Delpit*

Putting on life lenses bring insight to where you shine, where your strengths are. They also show you your biases or blind spots and how you see the world and how the world sees you. Communication is clarified making your world easier. When you can see both yourself and others more clearly, decisions are made with ease and conflicts get resolved easier.

When you consider others' perspectives, you see the world through another's lenses and you expand your perspective for good.

We all believe our perspective to be natural, normal and right and our personal perspective is often unexamined and unconscious. As educators our personalized perspective dramatically affects how we view and interpret other's outlooks and actions oftentimes wearing blinders; blinders that color our view and affect our effectiveness. Teachers in this study that loaded in Factor One most agreed that it is interesting and important to look at another's perspective through another's lens. They "most disagreed" that gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools. Participant #61 stated "So many times conflict is the result of lack of perspective." Participant #78 indicated "I strongly believe that if you are not aware that culturally we are different, then there will be no progress to change what is wrong. When you close the door to anyone because of their differences, then we have lost the opportunity to learn and grow as a society."

*Theme Two [Factor Two]: Color-Blindness*

Color-Blindness projects the idea that ignoring or overlooking racial and ethnic differences promotes racial harmony. Paying attention to the cultural experience of students is becoming increasingly important, given the differences between the demographics of American students and their teachers. According to reports from the National Center for Education Statistics, roughly 80 percent of American teachers are white, while children of color make up more than 40 percent of the student body (NCES, 2009).

In order to be effective, teachers will have to learn about the cultural experiences of their students, while using these experiences as a foundation for teaching (Wooten, 2009).

Thirty-eight out of 100 teachers in the study indicated they don't see color in their students and they treat all students the same while at the same time they also believe students should go to neighborhood schools – busing to desegregate schools does not make sense. Participant #18 stated “I don't see color – I only see the attitude and participation of the student.”

Participant #21 personally believes our culture has been multicultural and the USA is simply a melting pot.

*Theme Three [Factor Three]: Cultural Competent Educators*

Participants in Factor Three articulated that a teacher's cultural competence is important and does affect efficacy and instruction in class. The explanations as to why cultural competence was important and how it affected classroom instruction varied. Commonly used definition from some of the participants was “the ability to accept different cultures into the classroom and address the needs of the students learning styles based on culture.” Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell defines cultural competence as the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and/or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client-system functioning within the appropriate cultural context.

The most frequent rationale discussed was that teachers' cultural competence is important to build relationships with students. Findings suggest that teachers understand that cultural competence is vital to effective classroom instruction.

Learning about various cultures is fundamental to student learning as well as understanding mainstream culture by means of respect and recognition (Gay, 1992; Delpit, 1992; Anchorage School District, 2009). The relationship between culture and classroom instruction develops from evidence that cultural practices form thinking processes (Gay, 1992;

Delpit, 1992; Anchorage School District, 2009). Results of this study are consistent with the literature to support the need for teachers to be culturally competent in order to offer effective classroom instruction to all students (Gay, 2000). Forty-four out of 100 teachers that loaded in Factor Three supported the concept that awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator.

Every child deserves to have an education where their cultural identity is acknowledged and respected. Educators must be culturally sensitive in order to cultivate and nurture positive self-images of their students. Chapter Two discussed critical race theory, teacher education, and their relevance to cultural competence and cultural sensitivity in the literature review. Critical race theory allowed me to consider teacher perspectives across issues such as race, racism, poverty, class, power, test scores, and dominant assumptions. When asked how the students are perceived at their school, in an effort to further examine teacher perspectives, Participant A13 stated “They are all normal people; some are more socialized than others. Teachers look at students as individuals, at-risk and some neglected, and look for a positive way to have a relationship - extra academic assistance. Administration seeks to view students on a case-by-case basis; trust is a factor between both parties.”

Critical race theory in educational research challenges dominant thoughts about colorblindness (Bernal, 2002), allows for multiple interpretations of data, recognizes the importance of experiential knowledge, challenges traditional ways of knowing, emphasizes a commitment to social justice, and recognizes the intersection of various forms of subordination and oppression (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). In the examples above, where teachers and administrators lacked cultural understanding, carried racialized stereotypes of the

students they taught, or just ignored their responsibility to intervene on racism, those adults were failing at their responsibilities as educators. Case-in-point where colorblindness and white privilege was evident was in a statement made by Participant B10 when she stated “I came from a very affluent family. Growing up in that – have and have nots – helped me to better understand people without. I had a hard time understanding why people were treated differently. I believe I have more compassion because a lot of my family was teachers and I also had wonderful teachers in school.” White privilege and colorblindness were subliminal in this statement because as Tim Wise stated in his article “*With Friends Like These, Who Needs Glenn Beck? Racism and White Privilege on the Liberal-Left,*” disregarding the lived realities of people of color, individuals elevate a destructive white perspectivism to the level of unquestioned and unassailable universal truth, and reinscribe the concerns of whites as those of paramount importance.”

Consider the literature review of teacher preparations, Pohan in 1996 found a significant relationship between prospective teachers’ personal beliefs and their professional beliefs in his study. When participants in this study were asked if they were prepared through in-service training (college, etc.) about cultural competence, overwhelmingly they responded “no.” Two of the teachers were trained in the military, so they felt they had been educated about every race and taught to respect all cultures. Whether they are able to articulate their racialized understanding of education or not, data reveals that most teachers enter teacher preparation programs without a wealth of knowledge about race and educational inequality. It is essential that teacher preparation programs utilize this knowledge as a strength and tool in combating racism in schools.



With prompts that encouraged personal reflection, the teachers in this study shared and hopefully gained multicultural perspectives about K-12 education. Thus the research served not only as a means to collect data, but as a pedagogical space for participants. Teacher preparation programs can better serve their students if they recognize the knowledge of multiculturalism as a strength and provide space for teachers to share and reflect on their experiences and observations. With critical race reflections, these teachers can utilize their insight as a tool to understand student experiences and to challenge racism in schools.

This research was coupled with constant self-reflection about attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and their relationship to K-12 educational inequality. If educators can “de-construct” perceptions, that is, looking at it while holding aside internalized beliefs and expectations, new understandings become possible. De-construction focuses on giving their tenets of cultural competence, Figure 2.2, “new life” and their old way of thinking can no longer continue. I like to look at it as “construction in reverse.” To practice this perspective, then, educators must constantly ask themselves why they believe what they do about the makeup of the world and the ways in which they have come to understand the world. Then they must try to explain that world in the absence of their old beliefs.

Table 5.1 below depicts a visual representation of how teachers loaded in each factor for this study. As you can see there were substantially more white female teachers, supported by the National Center for Education statistics found in Chapter Two, than minority teachers. More teachers, especially Black teachers, loaded in Factor One where the teachers “most agreed” they appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings. Multiracial teachers were evenly spread across Factors One and Two.

Secondly, teachers loaded higher in Factor Three than Factor Two where they “most agreed” awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator. White teachers loaded higher in this factor. This surprised the researcher based on her own perceptions of the practices of teachers in the district. Lastly, the teachers in Factor Two “most agreed” they don’t see color and they treat all students the same. More males loaded in this factor. The one Asian teacher also loaded in Factor Two. It would be this group in which to start first with “de-constructing” perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. Several suggestions are given in the “Recommendations for action” section.

Table 5.1  
*Visual representation of loadings across factors*

Factors	1	2	3
Gender			
Female	37	27	37
Male	10	11	7
Ethnicity			
Black	8	5	5
White	38	31	39
Multiracial	1	1	0
Asian	0	1	0

In Chapter Two Literature Review, Lindsay, Robins, & Terrell defines cultural competence as the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and/or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client-system functioning within the appropriate cultural context. Digging further into the literature, another description is offered by Cross, B. as a process of developing proficiency in effectively responding in a cross cultural context. It is the process by which individuals, agencies, and systems integrate and transform awareness of assumptions, values, biases, and knowledge about themselves and others to respond respectfully and effectively across diverse cultures, language, socioeconomic status, race, ethnic background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and ability.

Cultural competence recognizes, affirms, fosters, and values the strengths of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the worth and dignity of each. The influential work of Cross, in 1989, offered a definition of cultural competence that established a solid foundation for the field. The definition has been widely adapted and modified during the past 15 years. However, the core concepts and principles espoused in this framework remain constant as they are viewed as universally applicable across multiple systems.

The majority of these definitions are oversimplified theories of actions. So, do we trust what the researchers are saying? If any one of these definitions is adopted as a standard definition for the district in this study, how do we measure it? What evaluative tool will be used? What interventions other than professional development will be provided to ensure fidelity?

## **Implications**

### *Implications for Practice*

Many factors are at play within the educational profession that can overly stress teachers and reduce their ability to cope; this may lead to teacher burnout and thereby influence teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about cultural competence and professional practices. One implication for school principals relates to the impact of recruiting and hiring teachers who might fit into a culture of ‘no excuses’ for low student achievement. In times of limited fiscal resources, it is more crucial than ever that school leaders expend the energy to hire faculty equipped with the desired beliefs, behaviors/attitudes, perceptions and characteristics to support a culture of success in raising student achievement. Once teachers are hired, it becomes expensive and time consuming. Some of this could be avoided by doing a better job with the selection if school leaders really knew what teacher beliefs and behaviors would have the greatest impact on student achievement.

Teachers in this study that loaded in Factor Three indicated that professional learning opportunities translated into their doing a better job for students. They also mentioned that awareness of cultural differences is the first step in becoming a culturally competent educator and it is interesting and important to look at another’s perspective through another lens. Participant #91 stated “It is important to overcome obstacles and work together for the betterment of the student. Intimidation is not an option for anyone for a student to be successful.” She also described cultural competency as “the ability to accept different cultures into the classroom and address the needs of the students learning styles based on culture.”

Another implication is when teachers gain awareness that multicultural literature may be used as a stimulus for creating classrooms where all students are valued, then children can celebrate their own cultures and explore the uniqueness of others. Dietrich and Ralph (1995) discuss the vital role of the teacher: When multicultural literature becomes an integral part of the curriculum and teachers act as models and guides, classrooms can become arenas for open exchange. Literature and the ensuing discussion permit students to read, think, and become actively engaged with the texts. As a consequence, it should be easier for a student or a teacher to cross cultural borders. The participating teachers in this study need on-going, sustained multicultural professional development with a focus on capturing and inspiring students.

#### *Implications for Policy and Social Change*

The response of the teachers under investigation mirrored a larger national concern to ensure that no child, regardless of their cultural orientation, will be deprived of equal opportunity of instruction and academic success. Based on the findings of this study, the following implications are offered:

1. Teachers in this study were unable to articulate a concise definition of cultural competence. Embracing a standard definition will serve to ensure that all educators are consistently seeking to provide instruction in a way that is culturally sensitive and clearly understood by all.
2. In this study, findings report uncertainty of an acceptable definition and a lack of cohesion among responses and teachers lacked confidence in responses offered.

Participants also did not contribute their existing knowledge of cultural competence to professional training offered by the school.

3. A requirement of ongoing professional development in cultural competence for all educators may create a culture of shared beliefs and values that will establish institutions of learning that clearly embrace a culturally sensitive environment and build teacher confidence in instructional practices that are culturally sensitive.
4. Establishing a viable evaluative measure for cultural competence may serve well to create a clear quantifiable measure that will guide and assess the use of culturally sensitive practices in every public classroom. North Carolina has developed a new teacher evaluation instrument in which Standard II addresses teachers establishing a respectful environment for a diverse population of students. Principals also have a new evaluation instrument in which Standard III addresses cultural leadership.

#### *Implications for Inquiry Research*

The implications below are based on the findings and conclusions of this study:

1. The study can be replicated in a different geographical region of North Carolina or even the United States.
2. A quasi-experimental study, which provides an intervention of professional development and mentoring support in the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy, can be conducted utilizing middle or elementary school teachers' perceptions and high school teachers' perceptions.

3. Use a teacher survey to compare responses of initially licensed teachers, who received training in culturally responsive pedagogy, with the responses of veteran or tenured teachers.
4. From “Implications for Practice” professional learning opportunities translated into teachers doing a better job for students. Further research is needed to validate whether professional development actually impacts teacher practices in the classroom. Again, I ask the question, how can this be measured with fidelity?
5. Other questions for further research include: What does cultural competency look like? Why does it matter? What is a culturally competent organization? What government guidelines or regulations guide or influence programs and initiatives regarding ethnic/cultural diversity and cultural competence?

There were several potential aspects for future research emerged with this study. First, the participants in the study were teachers from only two schools in the district. Future research will need to be conducted in other schools and districts that have experienced the same phenomenon. Also, the research was somewhat limited by the nature of the participants. In the schools under investigation, primarily Black and White teachers along with one Asian and two Multiracial volunteered to participate. As a result, more research must be conducted in order to understand if other minority teachers have similar beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of cultural competence.

In addition to the limitations of sample of teachers, more research should be conducted utilizing a wider range of grade levels. Teachers who taught at the elementary and high school levels were not included in the scope of this study; hence, it is anonymous if beliefs,

attitudes, and perception of cultural competence varies according to grade level, or if teachers on other grade levels agree that cultural competence impacts instruction. Students could also be surveyed to determine their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions and how they feel instruction is directed to them in future studies. There might possibly be a correlation between students and teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that could provide greater depth of evidence into this phenomenon.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Legislators, educators, parents, and students can potentially positively alter the current state of education and close the achievement gap by using a study like this one. As society grows more global, there is a mandate across the nation which requires professional learning development and policy modifications in order to allow teachers to meet student needs. The need for teachers to have knowledge and awareness of cultural competence responds to a larger need addressing national legislation to ensure that every student be offered instruction in a manner that offers research-proven best practices for students.

The cultural dissension between teachers and students is arguably largely responsible for the achievement gap (National Collaborative on Diversity, 2004; Nieto, 2004), thus establishing an operational standard for cultural competence, requiring educators to participate in training programs that focus on multicultural education. The questions now become how do we provide time for professional development with fewer workdays in the school calendar? Can it be done? My preconceived notion is it can be done and it goes beyond "drive-by" professional development to build in mechanisms that foster continual learning that help



teachers in adapting instruction on an ongoing basis to be more respectful, effective and appropriate to diverse populations.

Status quo can no longer exist or continue to be the norm when it comes to relationships with students and helping them achieve high growth. If I were Superintendent, for starters, professional development training in the area of cultural competence would be required of all faculty and staff members in the district throughout the school year. Their Individual Growth Plan would reflect strategies to becoming culturally competent and assessed on their summative evaluation.

Research has indicated that teachers' sense of efficacy impacts their motivation and confidence in instruction (Gaye & Kirkland, 2003), and this study showed that teachers are not confident in their level of cultural competence. This finding parallels other research that shows that teachers' lack of cultural competence is directly linked with low student achievement and the widening of the achievement gap (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; National Collaborative on Diversity, 2004; Nieto, 2004). A requirement for every educator to be trained to implement practices that are culturally sensitive could serve to increase student achievement, specifically among minority students, and create a culturally sensitive school culture.

I can add a link to the Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps' link on the district's webpage dedicated to culturally sensitive instructional practices that will be available to every employee of the school district. On this page will be an overview of the study findings and a list of instructional strategies that will best meet the needs of all students. I will also disclose a summary synopsis of the study on the webpage and use this as a method to disseminate the

findings and results of this study. It is my hope that other teacher leaders will analyze and utilize the findings and results to implement site-based trainings and classroom use district wide.

Other recommendations include providing leadership interventions to guide faculty in activities which promote cultural pedagogy and sensitivity, while becoming more aware and critically reflective of themselves (Cooper, 2003). Additionally, teachers need experiences in acknowledging and understanding their own world views before they are able to understand the beliefs and views of their students, especially those representing cultures different from the teachers (Bennette, 1993).

Teachers can be offered in-school support groups and teacher mentors who can provide ideas and support to teachers working with students representing culturally diverse backgrounds (Milner, 2001; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). Furthermore, administrators can present inquiry and student-centered teaching strategies to faculty members, these instructional strategies are representative of teaching practices utilized by highly efficacious teachers (Bandura, 1986).

Additionally, recommendations include having teachers becoming more aware of the existence of cultural differences and similarities. Other suggestions include advocating the use of teachers and students' cultural backgrounds as part of the school curriculum. This change encourages culturally relevant teaching (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Powell, 1996). School leaders could provide opportunities for authentic teaching experiences for teachers who do not exhibit culturally responsive teaching. Co-teaching with a teacher, who includes cultural relevant pedagogy within their curriculum, can encourage appreciation,

understanding, respect and sensitivity for cultures other than their own as well as supporting change in the co-teacher's teaching philosophy and instruction (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Powell, 1996).

### **Reflections**

Teachers' knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and belief systems are constructed by their experiences and how they view themselves and others. The understood perspective of the teacher is the existing subjectivity that is transferred through instruction. Realizing that teacher beliefs have a direct impact on student achievement, the focus of interest lies in the awareness of teacher beliefs and understandings about the cultural diversities of the students they teach.

From the review of the research and literature it is clear that there is a relationship between beliefs, perceptions and behaviors. Some scholars ascertained that beliefs inform behaviors (Brown & Webb, 1968; Covey, 1989; Davis-Kean et al., 2008; Vartuli, 2005). Others stipulated that behaviors shape beliefs (Fullan, 2010; Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Meyers, 1980; Schlechty, 1997). While it is unclear in this study which came first, the beliefs or the behaviors, it is interesting to note that they were in harmony with each other. The beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that teachers expressed were evidenced in the way the statements were sorted in the Q sort.

It is my belief that a teacher's degree of awareness and understanding of cultural competence governs their instructional approaches. Prior to conducting the Q sort with the teachers, I did a "mock run" with three of my colleagues and included myself to determine the length of the process. During the "mock run" the three colleagues expressed how they had

“aha” moments when reading the statements. I also had the same experience but did not allow subjectivity to permeate the analysis of the findings in the study. Before conducting the research exploration, I was continuously and consistently frustrated because it was apparent by teacher comments, parent remarks, and student academic performance that teachers were experiencing difficulty teaching all diverse students. I regularly voice my opinion that forming positive relationships and understanding the cultures of children that do not look the same as the teacher are key in achieving positive student outcome.

Some of the instructional practices being used by teachers did not address the way that minority students learn best. However, as evidenced in the annual assessment data, teachers often disagreed with the idea of modifying instructional approaches and often resumed to teach students in a manner that they were comfortable and familiar with and from the way they remembered learning. Introducing this study allowed me the perfect opportunity to have a discourse of cultural competence among teachers, administrators, and community leaders and culturally sensitive practices becoming more prevalent.

Interest in the topic created a greater sense of awareness of cultural diversities in the schools within the district. I was able to integrate more culturally acceptable language in discussions relative to high student academic performance. It was also noted a change in the manner that student performance data were analyzed to include cultural variations. I had to acknowledge my biases about why I felt teachers were resistant to modifying instruction and was relieved to find that most teacher inhibitions did not exist out of prejudice but out of lack of knowledge.

I have a personal interest, as well as a professional knowledge base, of issues pertaining to understanding different cultures, student achievement and student-teacher relationships. As such, because of my experiences and backgrounds, a somewhat biased view, in terms of experiences as being key factors to improve student achievement, specifically in schools where educators are culturally challenged. My belief has always been that educators are the most basic educational resource communities provide their children, and training and support need to be provided to ensure that there is a talented, dedicated, and well-prepared, culture sensitive, teacher in every classroom. It is the committing of teachers to racial change that helps give me the motivation to stick with the field of teacher education as a sight for potential social justice, and the “what could be” that the fight against racism may bring.

I know that future research studies may be required to verify whether teachers’ practices matched their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes and their descriptions of their work. I don’t really know what works that’s measurable. Only direct and extended observation of teachers’ work in the classroom will address this limitation. Professional development alone is not the solution.

### **Summary**

The findings in this study support what the research says about “what one believes dictates his/her practices.” Students’ reactions to instructional practices remind us how important it is to integrate multicultural literature in the classroom as one method for creating learning communities that acknowledge and celebrate diversity. However, some of the teachers did not think it to be especially important that textbooks include multicultural content.

Teachers need to examine their materials and challenge their own cultural perspectives (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). This is confirmed by Beverly Daniel Tatum (O'Neil, 1998) who states, "Educators and student themselves need to explore racial stereotypes, beliefs, and perspectives if classrooms are to become places where equity is valued" (p. 12). Study findings revealed only recently there were formative parameters that guided and evaluated culturally-sensitive practices in the classroom. This allowed individual teachers, schools, and district to rely solely on their personal interpretations to assess if the instruction is being delivered in a manner that is culturally inclusive and understandable to all students.

During the follow-up probing with the six teachers, their comments indicated that for the most part, teachers do see the importance of using multicultural literature in the classroom, but may need an outside stimulus to become aware of the issue. Neito (2000) argues that unintentional discrimination is practiced by well-meaning teachers in schools where there is a lack of talk about differences, particularly about race. Learning standards and goals set by the state and school district are required to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) as mandated by the NCLB Act (USDOE, 2009).

Teachers play significant roles in teaching and designing the instruction to meet mandated state and federal standards for their students. The NCLB Act of 2001 required states to establish standards so that grade level curriculum is taught throughout public schools (USDOE, 2001). Additionally, NCLB Act requires every student to be reading and solving math problems at or above their grade level by 2014. Through mastering these standards, all students can be successful.

The influx of widely diverse demographics of students has altered the appearance of students in today's public classrooms and dictates a drastic need for school improvement that addresses cultural differences. The intricacy of cultural blending in public schools, calls for educators to accept the challenge of diversity and implement instructional practices that will best prepare all students to succeed. This study has presented the varied levels of beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of teachers and exposed the necessity for professional development that properly prepares teachers to instruct the students they are to teach. The teachers believed across factors that it was important to look at others' perspectives and felt they did not see color as well as teachers becoming culturally competent educators.

In education legislation has framed expected requirements that best practices be employed to ensure quality educational opportunities for all students. Yet when we look at student academic performance in the district as well as the state, data suggests that minority students are not being equally addressed through instruction. Teachers in many instances have not been aptly trained to modify or differentiate appropriate instruction based on the variation of students. Unless teachers are professionally developed to possess a knowledge base and a heightened awareness of their level of cultural competence, they will not recognize themselves as qualified to execute the instructional practices required to manage today's multicultural classrooms (Gay, 1992).

Additional, if culturally sensitive instructional practices are not established as a standard of expectation by all to be governed and evaluated as the accountability of the classroom teacher, the instructional needs of many students will continue to be ignored. Educational legislators, administrators, classroom teachers, parent and guardians must take

responsibility to ensure that every student, regardless of race or ethnicity is offered the most equitable opportunity to experience academic success.

Gollnick and Chinn (1986) stated “educators today are faced with an overwhelming challenge to prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and world (p. 2). Teacher perceptions and attitudes toward teaching culturally, linguistically, economically, ethnically, diverse students are based on teachers’ beliefs. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate teachers’ perceptions of teaching students. Benefits from exposure to multiple and varied perspectives broadens teachers professional, cultural, and intellectual points of view. Students also enjoy enriched classroom learning through exposure to others’ highly varied educational, cultural and professional backgrounds and experiences.

A window’s purpose is to provide ventilation and light into the room, as well as an opportunity to look outward (Burbank & Pfister, 1959). Through perspectives, this study framed windows that can supply our schools with a freshness and a light on a topic that should be central in educational conversations. “We must look unblinkingly at the way children really are, and struggle to make sense of everything that we see in order to teach them” (Ayers, 1993, p. 33). “We must keep the perspective that people are experts in their own lives” (Delpit, 1995, p. 47). Students come with their own lived realities. With critical reflection, some prevailing assumptions about teaching and how we teach children that don’t look like us require a restructuring to include new window designs.

A teachers’ belief system guides them in making decisions based on organizing a framework of learning, establishing patterns of meaning, conducting students’ evaluations and determining classroom behaviors and practices (Romanowski, 1997). It is through teachers’



perceptions, their beliefs and attitudes that the success of students representing diverse populations can be compromised or promoted. Teachers throughout the district, state, and country play significant roles in teaching and designing instruction to meet mandated state standards for all their students. A school can create a coherent environment, a climate more potent than a single influence-teachers, class, family, neighborhood - so potent that for at least six hours a day it can override almost everything else in the lives of children (Edmonds, 1986).

Since teachers are responsible for communicating to increasingly diverse groups of students and parents (Delpit, 1995, 2006), assessing teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about racism and cultural competence might illuminate some prime barriers to effective communication. In Figure 1.1 Fleras and Kunz identified various typologies that have compelling effect on students and student achievement. Based on some of their comments, such as "I don't see color" or "I treat all my students the same," a few of the teachers in this study fell mostly in the individual/personal typology. I feel that some of the reasons why some of the teachers fell into this typology was due to the limited professional development on cultural awareness, their socio-economic status, background experiences and limited access to post secondary coursework and training, especially for the tenured teachers.

The impact of a thoughtful teacher can be profound. As teachers become more aware of their own beliefs, attitudes and practices relating to diversity in the classroom, the children they teach will benefit. If educators are to improve the quality of the classroom experience for all of their students, they need to become culturally competent. When teachers are committed to teaching all students, and when they understand that through their teaching change CAN

occur, then the chance for transformation is great. This may well be an important step towards reaching our goal of assisting children as they develop into productive citizens in a pluralistic society.

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**APPENDIX**

**Appendix A. Phase One Protocol Survey Questions for District Focus Group  
Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force**

**Write four statements in response to these questions.**

1. What do you believe teachers know about students?
2. What do you believe teachers perceive about how students learn?
3. How do teacher beliefs impact student achievement?
4. What are barriers to cultural proficiency?
5. What are the factors that foster and/or inhibit positive relationships with students?



**Appendix B. Phase One Protocol Survey Questions for Administrators**

1. How is data used to improve instruction at your school?
2. What instructional practices do you believe contribute to high student performance?
3. What instructional programs do your teachers or school use? Do you think they are effective? Why?
4. Briefly describe the culture of your school?
5. Do you feel there are equity issues in your school? Why or Why not?
6. How do teachers/administrators perceive students at your school?
7. What role do teachers'/administrators' expectations play in student success?
8. Envision yourself driving to and from your current school. Take note of the neighborhood and the services present, or not present, for your students. Also, note whether or not you would live in neighborhoods of your students. Do the visible elements of the neighborhood environment cause you to judge your students and their parents?
9. Can cultural proficiency have an impact on student achievement, specifically those students at risk of failure?
10. Is what we "say" as school leaders congruent to what we "do?"

### Appendix C. Phase Two Q Sort Protocol for Middle School Teachers

1) Gender: \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ F

2) Ethnicity (Check One):

- \_\_\_ Black  
 \_\_\_ White  
 \_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino  
 \_\_\_ Native American  
 \_\_\_ Asian  
 \_\_\_ Multiracial  
 \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Current educational level:

- \_\_\_ Bachelor  
 \_\_\_ Masters  
 \_\_\_ Masters +30 (or Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study)  
 \_\_\_ Doctorate

4) How many years have you worked as an educator? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Q Sort Instructions:

Please sort the statements on a continuum (+4 to -4) from the functions that you feel are most representative of your perception of cultural proficiency (+4) to those functions that you feel are least representative of your perception of cultural proficiency (-4).

1. Lay out the number cards from left to right with the negative (-) numbers on your left
2. Read through all **40** cards to become familiar with the statements.
3. As you read through the statements for a second time, organize them into three piles:
  - On the right, place the cards that represent the functions that are most representative of your perception.
  - On the left, place the cards that represent the functions that are least representative of your perception.
  - In the middle, place the cards that you feel less certain about.
4. Beginning with the pile on the right, place the **two** cards that you **agree** with the most under the **+4** marker.

5. Now, turning to your left side, place the **two** cards that you **disagree** with the most under the **-4** marker.
6. Continue this process until all the cards are placed. You are free to change your mind during the sorting process and switch items around.
7. When completed, you should have the following number of cards under each row:
  - You should have **2** cards under markers **+4** (most **agree**) and **-4** (least **agree**).
  - You should have **3** cards under markers **+3** (most **agree**) and **-3** (least **agree**).
  - You should have **5** cards under markers **+2** (**agree**) and **-2** (**disagree**).
  - You should have **6** cards under markers **+1** (slightly **agree**) and **-1** (slightly **disagree**).
  - You should have **8** cards under marker **0** (**neutral**).

#### **KEEP YOUR CARDS DISPLAYED**

- Now, write the card numbers in the diagram provided.
- After you fill in the diagram, answer the remaining questions using the card sort.
- When all the questions have been answered, please return the cards to the **third party facilitator**.

### **Appendix D. Post Q Sort Follow-up Questions**

The participants will then be asked to elaborate on their point of view, especially as regards the most salient statements—that is, those placed at the extreme ends of the continuum on the score sheet. Finally, participants will be asked a series of questions regarding the decisions they made in performing the Q sorts and why they sorted the Q sample as they did. Follow-up questions will include:

- Briefly describe your reasons for choosing the statements with which you are “most likely to agree are characteristic of your perception of cultural competency” (+4’s). (Please list by number at least one statement in the +4 column and your reason for placing it there).
- Briefly describe your reasons for choosing the statements with which you are “most likely to disagree are characteristic of your perception of cultural competency” (-4’s). (Please list by number at least one statement in the -4 column and your reason for placing it there).
- Were there other statements that you had difficulty placing? If so, please list the statement(s) by number and describe your dilemma.
- Is there a statement that you would have liked to have seen included in the sort? If so, what would the card have said and where would you have placed it?
- To the best of your ability, define cultural proficiency for teachers?

These questions will help me better understand the participants’ rationales for sorting the cards in the manner they did.

## Appendix E. IRB and Informed Consent Forms

### North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. <b>Date Submitted:</b> <u>March 18, 2011</u>
1a. <b>Revised Date:</b> <u>April 27, 2011</u>
2. <b>Title of Project:</b> <u>A Q-Methodological Study: Examining Teachers' Beliefs, Perceptions, And Attitudes About Cultural Competence</u>
3. <b>Principal Investigator:</b> <u>Patricia Ann Hobbs</u>
4. <b>Department:</b> <u>Department of Leadership, Policy, and Adult &amp; Higher Education</u>
5. <b>Campus Box Number:</b> <u>608A Poe Hall Campus Box 7801</u>
6. <b>Email:</b> <u>phobbs@harnett.k12.nc.us</u>
7. <b>Phone Number:</b> <u>910-893-8151, ext. 416</u>
8. <b>Fax Number:</b> <u>910-893-8839</u>
9. <b>Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission:</b> <u>Dr. Matthew Militello matt_militello@ncsu.edu</u>
10. <b>Source of Funding? (required information):</b> <u>Student</u>
11. <b>Is this research receiving federal funding?:</b> <u>No</u>
12. <b>If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number:</b> <u>NA</u>
13. <b>RANK:</b> Faculty Student: Undergraduate; Masters; or PhD X Other (specify): <u>Doctoral Candidate EdD</u>

*As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.*

#### Principal Investigator:

<u>Patricia Ann Hobbs</u>	_____*	<u>3-18-11</u>
(typed/printed name)	(signature)	(date)

*As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the **principal investigator of record**.*

#### Faculty Sponsor:

<u>Dr. Matthew Militello</u>	_____*	
(typed/printed name)	(signature)	(date)

**\*Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.**

Please complete this application and email as an attachment to: [debra\\_paxton@ncsu.edu](mailto:debra_paxton@ncsu.edu) or send by mail to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III). **Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document.**

\*\*\*\*\*

*For SPARCS office use only*

**Reviewer Decision** (Expedited or Exempt Review)

Exempt	Approved	Approved pending modifications	Table
Expedited Review Category: 1	2 3	4 5 6 7 8a 8b 8c	9

Reviewer Name	Signature	Date
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**North Carolina State University**

**Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research**

**GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE**

**In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. The overarching research question is “What are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?” What one believes dictates ones’ practice. This matters to instruction and ultimately affects student learning. What we know is there is a substantial gap between the performance of white, middle class students as compared to that of minority and low-income students (Center on Education Policy, 2007). There is a need for this study to deepen and accelerate the change process of teacher beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that will in turn improve teacher and student engagement and performance. This study also seeks to know where teachers are in regard to cultural competence. As a result, if teachers need to change their beliefs, it starts with knowing their short-comings. This allows the middle school teachers in the two schools included in this study to undergo a discovery of cultural consciousness.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

The proposed study will be conducted as dissertation research

**B. SUBJECT POPULATION**

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?

The study will consist of one researcher, a third party, two principals, 45 members of the district Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force as collaborators, and 120 middle school teachers in

which six volunteer participants will be asked additional questions.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

The researcher holds regular monthly meetings with the Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force, engage them in dialogue and informal conversations about teacher perceptions and expectations for students and how that impacts student learning. They will be asked to write statements about what they believe teachers in the district know or perceive about students, their culture, having positive relationships with them and their parents, and specifically how they learn based on the informal conversation. These statements will be used as the Q sample (set) in the Q Methodology.

The researcher will contact the principals at each school included in the study to discuss the purpose of the study, the third party, and the procedure to be used to conduct the Q sort and interview for the teachers from their site. A third party will conduct the Q sort as well as serve as a buffer. The Dropout Prevention Mediator & Project Administrator for the district, has agreed to assist with the data collection process. She taught high school English for several years. She is highly qualified, articulate, and capable of performing the task. She maintains professional licensures in professional counseling, public school teaching, school guidance counseling, and school administration. She is also a National Board Certified Counselor. She is well respected by the district and works closely with a Judge (District Court Judge for three surrounding counties), Juvenile Justice, and Governor's Crime Commission.

The district's Mediation & Dropout Prevention Project is designed to provide an avenue by which student offenders, disputants, or victims can come together around a problem, a serious infraction, or wrong which has been done and reach a solution agreeable to all parties without the necessity of the student or students being processed through the county court system.

The third party does not serve in a supervisory role; however, she makes contact with teachers, parents, and administrators only for the purpose of developing plans that best meet the needs of students she serve. Once IRB is approved, the dissertation chair will meet with the researcher and third party to be trained on how to conduct a Q sort and administer the consent form.

The third party will share talking points with both faculties and six of the middle school volunteer participants will be asked additional questions and receive gift bags as part of the recruitment strategies. All 120 middle school teachers will be provided in person a copy of the Research Study Participant Informed Consent Form, which they will complete (read and sign) and return to the third party before the Q sort process. The volunteer teacher participants will also be provided with a hard-copy of the Research Study Participant Informed Consent Form.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

The eligibility requirements for the researcher, third party, and study participants are they be employees of the local school district and community partners of the local schools included in the study.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

N/A

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

As Assistant Superintendent for At-Risk Programs and Student Services, the researcher is responsible for meeting once a month with the district's Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force. This committee consists of one Principal-selected representative from each of the 27 schools, administrators, central office personnel, ministers and community leaders. The committee does a book study each year relative to closing the achievement gap. The committee informally discusses issues relative to dropout prevention, graduation rate, initiatives, community and parental involvement, and other pertinent issues related to closing the achievement gap for the district. A focus for this school year has been assessing teacher beliefs about cultural competence and forming positive relationships with students in order to impact student achievement. The committee will write statements about what they believe teachers in the district know or perceive about students, their culture, having a positive relationship with them and their parents, and specifically how they learn. This will be done informally, as a brainstorming session engaging in informal conversations. Indeed these individuals will be asked to participate as collaborators. They are not research participants; therefore, there will not be a need to have them sign a consent form.

The Q statements will be used for the Q sort as explained in the methodology section of the proposal.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature  
 fetuses  
 pregnant women  
 persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities  
 persons with physical disabilities  
 economically or educationally disadvantaged  
 prisoners  
 elderly  
 students from a class taught by principal investigator  
 other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

### C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.



In Phase One of the research study, the Q sample will be developed from an informal conversation with the district's Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force. This committee consists of a representative from each of the twenty-seven schools in the district, from various discipline areas, varying ethnicities and cultures, community leaders and ministers that are former educators, and administrators. The committee meets once a month to discuss and develop a plan for implementing strategies and programs to close the achievement and racial gap in the district.

Phase Two focuses on 120 volunteer middle school teachers. During a meeting agreed upon by the researcher and the administrator of the school, the teachers will be asked to voluntarily participate in the data collection process. The Q set will be given to the middle school teacher participants, facilitated by a third party, in the form of a pack of randomly numbered cards, each card containing a number and one of the statements from the Q set. They will then be instructed to rank the statements according to a defined rule--the person's point of view regarding the issue--and is provided with a score sheet and a suggested distribution for the Q sorting task. Once the participants complete the Q sorting and respond to some open-ended questions about the Q sort activity, an individual meeting will be held with six of the participants in a predetermined location. The six volunteer teacher participants will be selected from the pool of 120 based on years of experience (a varying range), individual student test data, different ethnicities, age, grade level and subject area taught and whether these teachers are deemed highly qualified in the area in which they teach. They will be given an explanation for the purpose of the study and a consent form. The six volunteer teacher participants will then be asked a series of questions regarding decisions they made in performing the Q sorts, their perceptions and beliefs about how students learn and their cultures, and why they sorted the Q sample as they did. Follow up interview questions for the six teachers will be submitted to IRB for approval separately.

It is imperative the participants understand the researcher is only interested in their perceptions or point of view and there is no right or wrong answers. The same questions will be used for all participants and will be thought provoking and meaningful. Participants will be asked permission to tape record responses to questions for the purpose of transcribing. The transcribed information and a copy of research findings will be shared with participants and provided to the district.

## 2. How much time will be required of each subject?

Having the informal, brainstorming dialogue with the Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force and developing the statements for the Q-set should last approximately 45-60 minutes. The Q-sort and follow-up questions with the middle school teacher participants will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The session with the six middle school teachers should last approximately 30 minutes.

## D. POTENTIAL RISKS

### 1. State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

There may be some risks in that the participants will be asked to share feelings and insights about issues that tend to be sensitive such as culture, perceptions, and their belief systems. The participants will be selected from a pool of volunteers and will be informed that if something is said that could be considered harmful to them or others; the researcher will have to report it. The researcher will take steps to maximize anonymity with the use of pseudonyms for study participants. Participants will be given the opportunity, at any time, to drop out of the study with no penalty. A third party will conduct the Q sort as well as serve as a buffer and does not serve in a supervisory role.

2. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

None of the above information will be requested from the participants and the questions asked do not lend themselves to revealing information of a personal nature.

- a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

- b. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

None of the study procedures will be so invasive that it causes stress for the participants.

3. How will data be recorded and stored?

The responses to the questions will be audio taped and later transcribed. The Q-sort data will be collected and analyzed. All materials and data will be stored with the researcher in a secure location.

- a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Pseudonyms will be used in place of subjects' names and site locations. Actual information will be noted in researcher's data notebook and securely stored at home. The researcher will maintain a link between pseudonym and actual participant identity via a crosswalk as well as maintain a master list in the secure location.

- b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

The participants' individual responses to questions and score sheets after the Q sort will be included in the reports. The responses will be transcribed from the six middle school teachers, to understand their perspective, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about culture and cultural competence. The researcher is attempting to find some of the answers to low student performance-specifically for minority students, perspectives on different cultures, and the impact of their expectations, attitudes, and perceptions on student achievement. The responses will be edited for clarity, but much of the original language and words of the participants will be retained as much as possible. Pseudonyms serve to increase confidentiality of any select individual responses.

The Q sort data will be collected and coded to extract common themes and ideas expressed by the participants along with their responses to the questions relative to the Q sort. Once the common themes have been extracted, the researcher will interpret and write a description of each as part of the data analysis.

4. If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The audio tapes will be stored under lock and key, along with the other materials, in a secure office desk at the researcher's home. Upon completion of the dissertation project, the Principal Investigator will erase the audio tapes and any identifying information but will keep the data for a standard period of time (between 3-10 years).

5. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

There will be no deception techniques used in this study.

#### **E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

*This does not include any form of compensation for participation.*

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

The middle school teachers in this study will undergo a discovery of how their own perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes have a direct impact on students from various cultures and how they learn. The primary benefit of the study will be teachers understanding the need to change instructional practices in order to demonstrate a deep understanding of the socio-cultural groups served by the district and methodologies for embedding this pedagogy into content area instruction.

In addition to adapting instruction to accommodate the wide range of student needs, districts across the state could benefit from the findings of the study to help increase opportunities for students to learn about the cultures, histories, experiences and contributions of diverse groups as well as assist teachers in self-assessing and examining their own behaviors and biases as far as their ethical judgments and pedagogical approaches to diversity in the classroom. In an effort to improve schools, create learning environments that enhance student achievement, and close the teaching and learning gap, teachers will have to think about their pedagogy differently. An additional benefit is this study will expand the body of research literature on the need for development of cultural competence.

#### **A. COMPENSATION**

*Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.*

1. Describe compensation

Six participants from a pool of 120 volunteers will be identified and receive a gift bag of assorted goodies, ex: colorful sticky notes, highlighters, small desk organizer, etc. for their desk as part of the recruitment strategy and for responding to additional questions the other volunteer participants were not given.

2. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.

The participant will still be allowed to keep gift bag for participation thus far in the study.

3. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

**G COLLABORATORS**

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on **Cover Page**) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

The Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force will be asked to participate as collaborators. This will be done more informally, as a brainstorming session engaging in informal conversations. They are not research participants; therefore, there will not be a need to have them sign a consent form.

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

No; the third party facilitator will only participate in the data collection process.

**H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project?  
No
2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? N/A

**I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.
2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.
3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

**J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING**

\*Please consider taking the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.

**North Carolina State University****INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH**

Title of Study: A Q-Methodological Study: Examining Teachers' Beliefs, Perceptions, And Attitudes About Cultural Competence

Principal Investigator: Patricia Ann Hobbs      Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Dr. Matthew Militello

**What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the third party, which will serve as the facilitator for the data collection process, for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above or the third party.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about cultures and cultural competence. The overarching research question is "What are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about cultural competence?" What one believes dictates ones' practice. This matters to instruction and ultimately affects student learning. What we know is there is a substantial gap between the performance of white, middle class students as compared to that of minority and low-income students (Center on Education Policy, 2007). There is a need for this study to deepen and accelerate the change process of teacher beliefs that will in turn improve teacher and student engagement and performance. This study seeks to know where teachers are in regard to cultural competence. As a result, if teachers need to change their beliefs, it starts with knowing their shortcomings. This allows the middle school teachers in the two schools included in this study to undergo a discovery of cultural consciousness.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort cards that are comprised of statements derived from an informal, brainstorming session with the district Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Committee and Task Force on teacher beliefs about how students learn their cultures, and having relationships with them and their parents. You will be asked to Q sort statements and then respond to some open-ended questions about the Q sort activity. The activity and open-ended questions will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Additionally, 6 middle school teachers will be selected based on demographic criteria to be invited to participate in a follow

up interview. The research will take place at your school in the media center for the Q-sort activity and at a predetermined time in your classroom, after school hours, if you are one of the six middle school teachers selected to participate in follow up interviews.

### **Risks**

The only risks involved will be the sensitivity and anxiety that you may have relative to discussing your belief system, perceptions, and attitudes about students' culture, how they learn, and the relationship you have with them and their parents.

### **Benefits**

You will undergo a discovery of how your own perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes have a direct impact on students from various cultures and how they learn. The primary benefit of the study will be knowledge gained regarding teachers' beliefs about cultural competence.

An additional benefit is this study will expand the body of research literature on the need for development of cultural competence.

In an effort to improve schools, create learning environments that enhance student achievement, and close the teaching and learning gap, you will think about your pedagogy differently.

### **Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked desk in a secure location. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. Pseudonyms will serve to increase confidentiality of any select individual responses.

### **Compensation**

For participating in this study you will not receive compensation, other than a gift bag of items for your desk for the small group of six teachers, due to answering additional questions, in appreciation for your willingness to voluntarily participate in the study. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you (the six teachers) will still receive a gift bag for your contributions prior to withdrawing.

### **What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Patricia Ann Hobbs, at (910) 892-8151 or (910) 893-8151, ext. 416 or Miranda Pearson, (910) 893-8151, ext. 266.

### **What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

**Consent To Participate**

*"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."*

**Subject's signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator's signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_