

Culturally Responsive Leadership:

Inspiring Reaching Within In Order to Reach Out

Lisa M. Aguilar

Concordia University Portland, OR

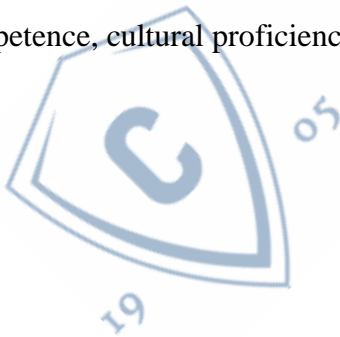


A Thesis Presented to  
The Graduate Program in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Education in  
Administration/Initial Administrator License Requirements

Concordia University Portland, OR  
2011

## Abstract

We are failing too many students. The achievement gap between students of color and their White peers still exists. Although the numbers of students of color entering our public schools each day increases, the students continue to be served by a predominately White teaching force. Many principals and teachers will attest to not seeing color and will claim to treat all students the same, however the statistics prove otherwise. Dropout rates, suspension rates and expulsion rates are still higher for Latino and African American students than they are for White students. Treating all students the same, disregarding their culture, has not closed the gap. Not until the awareness gap between educators is closed will the achievement gap between students be closed. Administrators and teachers cannot continue to ignore culture as a key factor in education; they must become aware of the role culture plays in their lives and in the lives of their students. Culturally responsive leaders can inspire teachers to develop cultural proficiency and use culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. Leaders must be intentional in their work and create spaces for the process of self reflection and transformation to begin. Key words: cultural competence, cultural proficiency, cultural responsiveness and culture.



## Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	5
The Problem.....	5
Significance of the Problem.....	8
Dropout Rates and Graduation Rates.....	10
Gifted Programs and Special Education.....	12
Lack of Cultural Proficiency.....	12
Investigation of the Problem.....	13
Operational Definitions.....	14
Chapter 2.....	16
The Development of the Problem in Published Literature.....	16
Overview.....	16
Historical Background.....	16
Presentation of the Literature.....	20
Summary.....	24
Chapter 3.....	26
Review of the Literature.....	26
Teacher Education Programs.....	27
Teacher-Student Relationship.....	51
Culturally Responsive Leadership.....	62
Chapter 4.....	71

Summary.....71

Conclusions.....73

Recommendations.....76

References.....80



## Chapter One – The Problem

The keywords, “achievement gap” when typed into the United States Department of Education’s website search engine, yield 14,400 results. Closing the “achievement gap” has been a focus of our nation since 1983 when *A Nation at Risk*, a report published by the United States Department of Education during Ronald Reagan’s presidency was released. A sense of urgency to reform education and an expectation for all students, regardless of economic advantage, to be prepared for life after high school was presented. The report states, “we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all—old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority” (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983, p. 10). The concept of “all” was reiterated, “All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost” (p. 11). Even though the focus was on “all” succeeding there was never mention of the need for cultural competency, cultural proficiency or culturally responsive leadership or practice. There was very little attention given to this topic. The following statement was included, “The twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling have profound and practical meaning for our economy and society, and we cannot permit one to yield to the other either in principle or in practice” (p. 14). However, the focus was on coursework and time on task rather than the elements of culturally responsive practices. The authors included the following warning, “We have come to understand that the public will demand that educational and political leaders act forcefully and effectively on these issues” (p. 13). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 continued with the push for educational reform. The high performance for all and the acting forcefully on these issues theme continued. The NCLB Act focused on the “all” students such as English language learners, African American students, Hispanic students, Native American students,

economically disadvantaged students, students with learning disabilities and other minority populations. Schools across the nation were suddenly scrambling to push “all” students to perform well on standardized tests in order to prove that they could indeed close the “achievement gap” and stave off the government’s repercussions if they did not.

Although NCLB has been the catalyst to focus on specific student populations and their academic performance in comparison to each other, the concept of an “achievement gap” was first formally called to the public’s attention in the 1960s when reports started to surface regarding the disparities in the education between African American and White students as well as economically disadvantaged students and their affluent peers. With the passing of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 and the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 there was focused attention on African American students’ school performance.

One such report was the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS), also known as the “Coleman Study” published in 1966. Coleman (1966), a sociologist and university professor, conducted a study investigating the various educational opportunities provided to students of varying race, color, and religion. His research was conducted “in response to provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and serves as an example of the use of a social survey as an instrument of national policy-making” (EEOS, 1966, Bibliographic Citation). Coleman’s initial findings supported integration of African American and White students as well as the bussing necessary to support integration. His later findings suggested that poverty had a higher impact on students’ lives than their schooling and therefore no longer supported bussing for desegregation as well as suggested that private schools provided a better education than public schools. Although Coleman’s findings were controversial they did call the disparities between low income and affluent students in regard to academic achievement into the limelight.

The “achievement gap,” as noted earlier, is still a major focus in education today. The topic has extended to the possibility of a learning gap, a resource gap, a gender gap, an equity gap, a race gap, a privilege gap and so on. The problem, however, lies not only with an “achievement gap” between Hispanic, African American students, English language learners and their White peers; but also with an awareness gap between educators lacking cultural proficiency and those who are culturally responsive. Not until the awareness gap between educators is closed will the achievement gap between students be closed. There are hundreds of thousands of Hispanic children, African American children, Native American children, and English language learners each day who are not achieving at the same level as their White peers. A keyword search of “culturally responsive leadership” in the United States Department of Education’s website, yields 935 results which is 6% of the results for an “achievement gap” search. This study explores the following questions: How do culturally responsive leaders instill a sense of urgency in educators to work toward cultural proficiency, narrowing the “awareness gap” of educators in order to narrow the “achievement gap” of students through the use of culturally responsive practices?

We cannot help our students overcome the negative repercussions of past and present racial dominance if we have not unraveled the remnants of dominance that still lingers in our minds, hearts, and habits. As Malcolm X reminded us years ago, “We can’t teach what we don’t know and we can’t lead where we won’t go.” (Howard, 1999, p. 4)

How can culturally responsive leaders inspire teachers to reach within in order to reach out to students?

### **Significance of the Problem**

The achievement gap and the awareness gap have deeply impacted education for nearly fifty years. Student dropout rates are higher and graduation rates are lower for Hispanic, African American, and Native American students than they are for White students. Students in minority populations are underrepresented in gifted programs and overrepresented in special education programs. There is an increasing population of students of color yet the majority of educators are White. There has been an increase in the number of educators of color; however, it has been only a slight increase. According to a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Information (2005), “The proportion of K-12 teachers who are (W)hite has gone from 91 percent in 1986 to 92 percent in 1990 to 89 percent in 1996 to 85 percent in 2005.” According to the United States Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics (2007), “In 2004, minorities made up 42 percent of public prekindergarten through secondary school enrollment. The percentage of minority enrollment in individual states, however, ranged from 95 percent in the District of Columbia to 4 percent in Vermont.” With statistics showing 42 percent students of color and 15 percent educators of color the need for cultural proficiency by all educators is evident. Minority students do not have a high probability of having many teachers who look like they do throughout their educational career so it is of the utmost importance that they have teachers who are culturally competent. Cultural competency is not the norm however. The lack of cultural competency leads to less student engagement and motivation which are two key factors to student success.

The amount of instructional time English language learners lose to test preparation and test taking in comparison to their English only peers poses another challenge. This lost time is

due to English language learners not only having to prepare for the standardized state tests for all children but for the English proficiency assessment as well. It may take an English language learner multiple attempts to pass an exam in his/her second language as opposed to his/her peer who speaks English as his/her first language and would therefore have a better chance of passing the exam the first time. The valuing a child's first language and understanding language acquisition is not something always promoted or encouraged in pre-service teacher education programs. Therefore, many of our teachers are entering the workforce ill prepared to understand the complexity of their students and their needs. These teachers may spend an inordinate amount of time on test preparation rather than on culturally responsive practices.

In regard to passing English assessments bilingual education programs have been continually scrutinized and in some instances dismantled fueled by the belief that bilingual education programs are hindering student achievement. Bilingual programs are diminishing as evidenced by the passing of English only laws such as California's Proposition 227 passed in 1998 and Arizona's Proposition 203 passed in 2000. Although these laws passed, there are still proponents of bilingual education. Just a few years ago Oregon voters defeated Measure 58 which was another attempt to dismantle bilingual education. However, the value of bilingualism which is inherent in bilingual education programs continues to be dismissed. The lack of cultural competency among law makers is apparent in these English only propositions. The message students are receiving under these conditions is that part of their value system, their language, is not valued so they are not valued and therefore do not fit in with the school norm.

### **Dropout Rates and Graduation Rates**

In the state of Oregon dropout rates have continued to decrease, however, Susan Castillo, State Superintendent, included the following statement in a speech given at the Eliminating Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System Summit: “We’ve made incredible strides in the dropout rate in Oregon. We’ve cut the dropout rates for African Americans and Hispanics in half over the past decade. But they’re still much higher than that of Whites” (Castillo, 2008, speech). Castillo went on to explain how African American students are twice as likely to drop out as Whites and Hispanic students are two and a half times as likely to drop out. She also noted that Hispanic and African American students are disproportionately expelled or suspended. In the 2007-2008 school year the dropout rate was 3.7% for the state of Oregon, which is the lowest it had been during the statewide reporting. However, there were 2,227 African American, Hispanic or Native American/Alaskan Native students who dropped out of high school that year. Graduation rates are increasing with eighty-four percent of the student population graduating. Eighty seven percent of White students graduated in 2008 while sixty-eight percent of African American students graduated, seventy percent of Hispanic students graduated and seventy-five percent of Native American students graduated; overall, 5,404 students from these three categories graduated (Oregon Department of Education Table 2007-2008 Statewide High School Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates). In speaking about the dropout and graduation rates Castillo explained that her priority since she had been in office was to close the achievement gap. She discussed “having the courage to talk about the issues and do something to fix the situation” (2008, speech). Her final remark in regard to closing the achievement gap was, “If a child is engaged by learning, if they feel connected to their teachers and their schools – they are far less likely to get into trouble down the road” (2008, speech).

“Missing: Black and Latino boys” is a title of an article discussing the dropout rate and a connection to incarceration. In this article, Karp (2009) interviewed Matt Rodriguez, principal of a Chicago Public School; Rodriguez stated, “Studies show a clear connection between lack of education and incarceration: Research has found that as many as two-thirds of the nation’s prison population doesn’t have a high school diploma” (Karp, p. 10). Rodriguez shared that students drop out because they feel alienated from school. A staggering figure was included in this article showing how in a five year period this past decade more than 85,000 students dropped out of Chicago Public Schools, most of them African American and Latino boys (Karp, p. 10). A gender gap can also be noted. More boys than girls dropped out of school. Thirty five percent of African American boys and twenty-three percent of African American girls dropped out as well as nineteen percent of Latino boys and twelve percent of Latina girls (Karp, p. 10). Of those who did attend an alternative school twice as many girls than boys graduated from those alternative schools.

Along with students dropping out are students who are being pushed out. In Brownstein’s (2010) article titled “Pushed Out” she discussed how “zero tolerance” policies regarding discipline are pushing kids out of school. Brownstein continued, “While nobody questions the need to keep our schools safe, teachers, students and parents are questioning the methods we are using in pursuit of that goal” (p. 23). Suspensions and expulsions are on the rise. Brownstein shared that, “according to the United States Department of Education over 100,000 students were expelled and 3,300,000 students were suspended at least once in the 2005- 2006 school year” (p. 24). There is a greater risk of poor academic performance as well as dropping out if students have been suspended or expelled (Brownstein, 2010, p. 24).

### **Gifted Programs and Special Education**

“African Americans continue to have disproportionately high rates of dropout, high representation in special education, low representation in gifted programs, and high rates of poor academic performance” (Frye & Vogt, 2010, p. 11). In the United States African American students make up 8.4 percent of students in gifted programs when they make up nearly sixteen percent of students. According to Frye and Vogt this can be due to teachers’ attitudes toward the students and lack of referrals to the gifted program as well as culturally biased tests. If a student does test into a gifted program then she/he is usually one of a few minority students in the class; more often than not, the teacher is not of the same race as the student. Along with a low percent of African American students in gifted programs, African American students are “half as likely as (W)hite students to be placed in Honors or Advanced Placement English or math classes, and 2.4 times more likely than (W)hite students to be placed in remedial classes” (Frye & Vogt, 2010, p. 11).

### **Lack of Cultural Proficiency**

With the melting pot ideal of America and all of the races and cultures blending into one, many educators have turned a blind eye to race and culture in their classrooms. This “color blindness” prevents educators from not only accepting but embracing the differences in their students in order to create an environment of cultural respect and cultural competency. “The notion that skin color, should not and does not matter fits in nicely with the American value of the importance of the individual” (Castro-Atwater, 2008, p. 247) however, discrimination does exist and there is a need to “see” the color in a classroom. “Research shows that teachers often hold cultural biases that can spark racialized, or cultural ‘pygmalion effects’ in the classroom”

(Castro-Atwater, 2008, p. 247). The teachers are often unaware of their biases and the impact their biases have on their students. “It appears that teachers often inadvertently bring to the classroom unconscious biases or conscious beliefs that certain cultural practices are ‘deficits’ to individual growth, which result in low student expectations of success” (Castro-Atwater, 2008, p. 248). These biases, beliefs and practices may cause a disconnect between the teacher and the student. The Pew Hispanic Center conducted research in October of 2009 regarding Latinos in education and explaining the attainment gap. In this study it was found that more than forty-four percent of Latino/a youths age 16 to 25 said that different cultural backgrounds of Hispanic students and their teachers was a major reason for students not to perform as well as their White peers. When students were asked, “Why don’t Hispanic students do as well as others in school?” forty-six percent stated the major reason was, “too many teachers don’t know how to work with Hispanic students.” This shows that although educators may want to be “color blind” students “see” color and feel the disconnect between themselves and their teachers.

### **Investigation of the Problem**

The problem of an achievement gap and an awareness gap persists. In the Oregon Equity Plan (2010) it is stated that, “School and district leadership for equity is viewed as a promising strategy to accomplish closing the achievement gap, a high priority for the state superintendent. Leadership is second to only classroom instruction” (p. 2). Investigating how culturally responsive leaders can instill an urgency in educators to self reflect and analyze their own beliefs and biases and how those impact students will encourage the implementation of culturally responsive practices in classrooms. This implementation will lead to a stronger connection between students and school thus engaging and motivating students to reach their fullest

potential. This study will give leaders the tools to enhance their own cultural awareness and expand the cultural awareness of teachers in order to directly impact student achievement.

### **Operational Definitions**

**cultural competence:** “A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that comes together in a system, agency, or among professionals, and enables them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.” There are five elements to promote cultural competence “1) Valuing diversity, 2) Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment, 3) Being conscious of the dynamic inherent when cultures interact, 4) Having institutionalized culture knowledge, 5) Having developed adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity” (Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko & Stuczynski, 2011, p. 217).

**cultural proficiency:** “Honoring the differences among cultures, viewing diversity as a benefit, interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups” (Lindsey, Roberts, & CampbellJones, 2005, p. xviii).

**cultural responsiveness:** Follows the same premise as cultural competence but goes deeper. 1) Valuing diversity: Demonstrating respect for other ways of interacting with the world by seeking knowledge about different cultures, withholding judgment, and moving beyond just tolerance. 2) Having a capacity for cultural self-assessment: Being aware of our own cultural framing in order to understand how others define themselves. 3) Being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact: Paying attention to the feelings in the pit of our stomach, confronting our prejudices, and refining our perceptions. 4) Embedding cultural diversity and responsiveness into all aspects of the school or classroom: Recognizing that

schools operate under a certain culture, and acknowledging the need to make that culture more inclusive. Searching for ways to make the classroom a blend of school and home cultures for the benefit of students. 5) Implementing different interactions and behaviors in response to cultural diversity: Understanding the ‘double consciousness’ students go through when home and school cultures are at odds with one another. Obtaining a willingness to adjust our own teaching style to reach all children (Saifer, et. al., 2011, p. 47).

**culture:** “The integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group” (Saifer, et. al., 2011, p. 218).



CONCORDIA  
UNIVERSITY

## Chapter Two – The Development of the Problem in Published Literature

### Overview

How do culturally responsive leaders instill a sense of urgency in educators to work toward cultural proficiency and use culturally responsive practices with their students? Research regarding “the how” pertaining to cultural proficiency and culturally responsive practices is rather recent as opposed to past research which focused on “the why” for cultural competency. Within the past decade many authors have come forth with specifics regarding culturally competent leadership and practices. The writer will focus on this latest research of culturally proficient leadership and practices in order to promote closing of the awareness gap of educators which in turn will help close the achievement gap of students. Cultural proficiency’s counterparts, equity and bilingual education, have been a topic of study since the 1800’s. It is essential to explore the background of this field of research before focusing on the current findings.

### Historical Background

The *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society* documents the fact that the first kindergarten in the United States used German as the language of instruction, “In the United States Margarethe Schurz founded the first kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1856. Her German-language kindergarten impressed Elizabeth Peabody, who opened the first American English-language kindergarten in Boston in 1860” (Berg, faqs.org, 2008). German born Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) was a famous Educationalist who created the word - kindergarten. Froebel’s meaning encompassed “both ‘a garden for children’, where children

meet with environment and also ‘a garden of children,’ where they play together and express themselves in a smaller garden world by means of play with their age group”

(germanculture.com, 1998-2011). Hence, kindergarten, the very foundation of the American Schooling system is a German term.

The debate over languages other than English used in educating the country’s youth has continued to present day. The debate of equity as a vital component of education as well has been a concern in education since early times. In Dr. Joan Wink’s book, *Critical Pedagogy Notes from the Real World*, she shares an understanding from Dewey’s work, *Democracy and Education*, “obviously, a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equitable and easy terms (Dewey, 1944/1916, pp. 88-89; Wink, 2011, p. 118). The understanding, valuing and incorporation of both bilingual education and equity are inherent in cultural proficiency and culturally responsive practices. As stated previously the earlier research focused on bilingual education. In 1962 Edgerton wrote “The Teaching of Russian in America; A Modest Proposal” in which he stated that the United States needed a “required foreign language program beginning in the elementary school” (1962, abstract). Five years later, in 1967, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was amended to include Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act. This Act’s intent was “that children participating in the program will develop greater competence in English, become more proficient in their native language, and profit from increased educational opportunity” (p. 1). It is here where the concept of culture combined with bilingualism appears in legislation. The Bilingual Education Act explained that a bilingual program would “include the study of the history and culture associated with the students’ mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the child’s self-esteem and legitimate pride in both cultures” (p. 1). After this

amendment a constant stream of research regarding bilingual education, multicultural education, culture and power and finally cultural proficiency emerged.

One of the earliest published works from Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) can be found in the “Doble Research Supplement Digest of Bilingual Education” by Berney and Eisenberg (1968). Berney and Eisenberg tied language to culture. Their view of the school system in the 1960s was as follows: “In significant ways, our educational system ignores the language and culture of minority groups in this society” (1968, p. 1). They went on to explain how this impacted students, “the schools’ rejection of the mother tongue sharply reduces the possibilities for strengthening school-community ties” (p. 1). In their study Berney and Eisenberg reiterated the goals of bilingual education according to the Bilingual Education Act of 1967 and included, “the development in students of respect, not tolerance, for cultural and social differences” (p. 4). Their research found “that true bilinguals test as well as, if not better than, monolinguals” (p. 3) and the teachers in the program felt that “the bilingual pupils have a ‘better self-concept’ and ‘greater pride in their home culture and its language’” (p. 5). Berney and Eisenberg included over forty references from the sixties in their research. This demonstrates that bilingual education was a hot topic in the sixties and continues to be today. Bilingual education research made way for bilingual-bicultural and multicultural education research.

The 1970’s and 1980’s research covered a broad range of topics. “Passive and Covert Bilinguals – A Hidden Asset for a Pluralistic Society” (Sawyer, 1977), “Bilingual Bicultural Teacher Training Program” (Reeves & others, 1978), “Developing the Multicultural Process in Classroom Instruction: Competencies for Teachers, Cognitive Competencies” (Baptiste, H., & Baptiste, L., 1979) and “Developing a Model for Cultural Proficiency in the ESL Classroom”

(Bermudez, 1983) are examples of topics researched during these decades. These works focused on why bilingual education is an asset as well as on student behaviors. It started to touch on the importance of cultural awareness among teachers and some strategies for implementing multicultural education. Freire's book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* published in 1970 was the first in a series of work that examined oppression and the roles played by both the oppressed and the oppressors. In this work he stated,

The oppressors do not perceive their monopoly on having more as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves. They cannot see that, in the egoistic pursuit of having as a possessing class, they suffocate in their own possessions and no longer are; they merely have (Freire, 1970, p. 59).

Freire linked students' lives to education and the responsibility policy makers have in education, "One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding" (Freire, 1970, p. 95). Freire's work was influential in the field of education, especially critical pedagogy. In the eighty's he contributed, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* (1985) and *Literacy: Reading the Word & the World* (Freire & Macedo, 1987). His work continues to impact education and will be noted in the literature review to follow. The published works up until this time focused primarily on the reasoning behind bilingual education and multicultural education as well as examined the cultural aspect of students in education. The published literature of the 1990's until the present time expanded on the theory and linked it to practice.

### **Presentation of the Literature**

The 1990s continued with the theme of culture and power and how education was impacted by both. In 1991, Darder wrote, *Culture and Power in the Classroom A Critical Foundation for Bilingual Education*. In this work Darder focused on the teacher's role in regard to her/his students and spoke of self reflection. She explained her work as follows, "In essence, this work represents a pedagogy of possibilities – one that, above all, respects the capacity of teachers to redefine their roles as transformative intellectuals rather than simple dispensers of sterile and decomposing knowledge" (1991, p. xv). Darder built on Freire's work and that of American educational theorist, Giroux, as well as others and offered a chapter on informing practice in a bicultural classroom. Freire wrote that Darder's work, "provides us with a language of possibility. Darder inspires and challenges us to rethink what it means to live in a truly cultural democracy" (Darder, 1991, p. xiv). Ploumis-Devick and Follman (1993) wrote "Appreciating Differences: Teaching & Learning in a Culturally Diverse Classroom." They, as well, incorporated the need for teachers to self reflect in regard to their cultural beliefs. Their work incorporated a quiz regarding culture to help teachers analyze their understandings of culture and perhaps their biases. In that same year, Robisheaux (1993) wrote her dissertation titled, *Aspects of Culture, Language and Teacher Expectations in Public Schools: Implications for Spanish Speaking Student*. The theme continued with the publishing of *Literacy con Cariño* by Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler. *Literacy con Cariño* (1998) continued with the importance of cultural proficiency in a classroom setting. It described the teaching and learning between a classroom teacher, two of his professors and his migrant students. Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler (1998) demonstrated how cultural proficiency inclusive of a strong teacher-student relationship can yield academic success. The published works during this time period began to investigate

how the cultural understanding of those in education impacted the lives and success, or lack thereof, of their students. The responsibility started to shift from student, to teacher and student. Work in the 2000s became very specific in how to attain cultural proficiency and how to use culturally responsive practices in the classroom.

In the past decade a plethora of published literature can be found regarding cultural proficiency. At this point the need for cultural proficiency has been well documented and the “how to” is described. *The Culturally Proficient School An Implementation Guide for School Leaders* (2005) by Lindsey, Roberts and Campbell Jones is one such book. The authors describe their observations pertaining to this work, “we have observed that schools begin to change when their leaders recognize the disparities that exist in our schools and then intentionally raise issues of bias, preference, legitimization, privilege, and equity” (2005, p. xviii). This illustrates a shift in focus from only teachers as change agents to teachers and principals as change agents. Leaders now were challenged to bring equity issues out into the open and take steps to change preexisting conditions. Lindsey, Roberts and Campbell Jones continued, “By choosing to face these issues and grapple with them directly to understand their effects on student learning, these leaders are moving their schools and districts toward culturally proficient practices” (2005, p. xviii). They also headed the warning,

However, if they choose to turn away from these as if they have no effect on student learning, then, of course, nothing will change. In these circumstances, the achievement gap between students who experience privilege and entitlement and the students who do not will continue to grow and deepen. It is our choice as educators: We can contribute to

the gap, or we can challenge and change the contextual conditions that support the inequities that created and perpetuate the academic achievement gap. (2005, p. xviii)

*What Is It About Me You Can't Teach? An Instructional Guide for the Urban Educator* by Rodriguez and Bellanca was published in 2007. The issue is revised from its original work published in 1996. The focus of this work is on classroom instruction and student engagement and again challenges educators to rethink their practice. Numerous strategies can be found in this work to help motivate students to connect to school. The authors' purpose is for the reader to walk away with this belief,

In my classroom, I know there is nothing about you that I can't teach. I am going to help you transform your learning potential from words to actions. I will refuse to accept any gap in your achievement that separates you from the advantages that any others may have. (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 2007, p. xi)

Nieto's (2010) work, *The Light in Their Eyes Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* is a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of her initial work. Nieto incorporates all of the key concepts of cultural proficiency into her book. Inequality, culture, the need for transformation of the institution of education as well as transformative teachers and the creation of learning communities are included in her book. Nieto (2010) wrote, "In spite of recurrent pledges to close the achievement gap (even the subtitle of the No Child Left Behind law is 'An Act to Close the Achievement Gap'), the gap has remained stubbornly in place for many years" (p. 11). She incorporates, as in *literacy con cariño* described previously, the caring aspect of education and the impact of the teacher student relationship. Nieto (2010) sites one of her works with Bode,

*Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2008)

regarding the following statement,

Yet while the ‘achievement gap’ is real, I prefer to think of it as ‘the resource gap’...or ‘the caring gap,’ because of the level of care, attention, and high expectations given to children in poor schools as compared with those in wealthy ones. (p. 11)

*Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching Classroom to Community and Back* (2011) by Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko and Stuczynski “is an approach that asks educators to engage in a process of continual reflection and improvement” (p. ix). This revised edition provides many research based instructional strategies to guide educators through culturally responsive practice. Culturally Responsive Standards Based “(CRSB) Teaching values students’ culture, draws on that culture as a strength in their education, and challenges them with a rigorous, relevant curriculum” (2011, p. 4). The incorporation of standards in teaching is key to this work, “CRSB teaching is always grounded in state and local standards and the student achievement goals of the school and students” (2011, p. 8) as well as the incorporation of community. “Culturally responsive teaching is built on a foundation of knowledge and understanding of your own and your students’ family and community culture, which is critical to the process of teaching and learning” (2011, p. 9).

Wink (2011) in *Critical Pedagogy Notes from the Real World* brings educational theorists together with classroom teachers’ experiences. This book is the fourth edition of Wink’s 1997 original work which testifies to her belief in self reflection and continual growth and renewal of one’s learnings. Wink (2011) wrote,

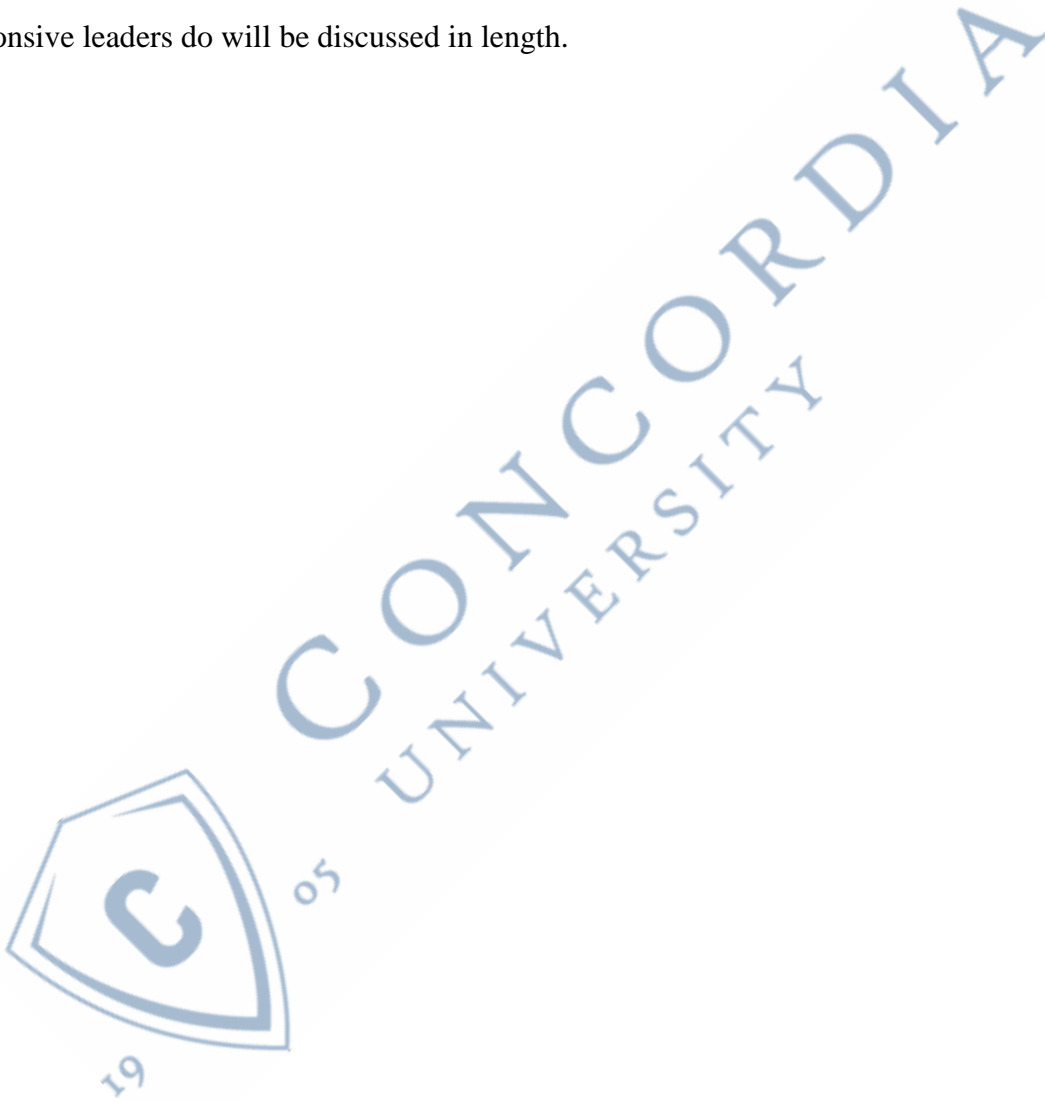
Probably, the most important legacy that I have received from my study of critical pedagogy is that all of us need to reflect critically on our own experiences and those of others; then we need to connect these new thoughts to our own lives in new ways. (p. 21)

Wink also acknowledged the difficulty in thinking differently, “sometimes when students read a new idea or hear a new thought, resistance and denial precede learning” (p. 37). Her statement is in regard to graduate students. The following statement is in regard to a teacher’s students, “Relearning takes place when students teach us all those things we didn’t learn in teacher education” (p. 37). Again, the responsibility for teaching and learning lies with both the teachers and their students.

### **Summary**

The earliest research regarding cultural proficiency has been around the need for educators to be culturally competent. Research was focused on bilingual education, bicultural education, and multicultural education which are all examples of culturally responsive practices. Research from the past decade focused on how to teach and lead in a culturally responsive manner with the understanding that the work is difficult. Incorporating care for students, their lives, their cultures, and their families into everyday curriculum is challenging. The need for self reflection is prevalent as well as a call to action to teach and lead responsibly in order to provide true equity for our students. There is not a quick fix to a lack of cultural competence. It is a process, but nonetheless, one that must take place if we are to close the achievement gap. As Milner and Ford stated in “Cultural Considerations in the Underrepresentation of Culturally Diverse Elementary Students in Gifted Education” (2007) printed in the journal, *Roeper Review* “Becoming more culturally competent is a lifetime process: one never becomes fully competent

where culture is concerned. Culture is not a static concept” (pp. 166 - 167). We do not have a lifetime to incorporate change. We are failing students. Research regarding how to move forward with the educational transformation that is long overdue will be discussed in this thesis. A focus on teacher education programs, teacher-student relationships and what culturally responsive leaders do will be discussed in length.



### Chapter 3 – Review of the Literature

#### Overview

Cultural proficiency and culturally responsive leadership are not new concepts; however, they are still more of a rarity than a norm in our educational system.

Too many students of color have not been achieving in school as well as they should (and can) for far too long. The consequences of these disproportionately high levels of low achievement are long-term and wide-reaching, personal and civic, individual and collective. They are too devastating to be tolerable. (Gay, 2000, p. 1)

States have equity plans, districts have equity plans yet somehow, there are principals and teachers who do not understand that culture and a child's connection between home and school are factors that contribute to a child's academic success or failure. There are educators who want to focus solely on the mechanics of teaching rather than the heart and soul necessary to build relationships with students in order to bridge the gap between home and school. In a recent evaluation of a staff development training on cultural awareness an elementary teacher wrote, "What does this have to do with literacy?" With the "this" being culture, Freire would say – everything. In a presentation given in 1993 Freire stated, "When kids come to school, they are already able to read the reality. Before reading the words, kids already read the world" (Audiotape transcription, Wink, 2011, p. 103). Rodriguez and Bellanca (2007) would agree,

What a child learns is rooted in the culture and values of the family. If the culture and the values of a family are systematically discounted...it becomes extremely difficult for the children to extract meaning from the world around them. (p. 60)

With the fact that an achievement gap still exists and focus has been on the mechanics of teaching, it is clear that culture and literacy are connected and the culture of many of our students is being discounted. “Research has indicated that the learning styles of children are in many ways linked to the culture in their home and community” (Ploumis-Devick & Follman, 1993, p. 15). There are various specific problems that may arise from culture and communication conflicts between teachers and students. In their research, Ploumis-Devick & Follman (1993) presented a table developed by Taylor (1987) listing problems students may have due to culture and communication conflicts such as: lowered self image, lowered self expectations, lowered achievement, poor performance on tests and assessments, misunderstandings and misinterpretations by school personnel, excessive special education placements and low student participation in gifted programs. “As role models in the lives of students, classroom teachers can significantly assist students in developing sensitivity and communication skills, helping them embrace cultural differences as a national asset rather than a deficiency” (Ploumis-Devick & Follman, 1993, p. vi). The following literature focuses on the connection between culture and education as well as how to create environments where culturally responsive leadership and cultural proficiency are the norm.

### **Teacher Education Programs**

“The ABC’s for Pre-Service Teacher Cultural Competency Development” by He and Cooper (2009) discusses the study of pre-service teachers’ development of cultural competency and the impact of Schmidt’s (1999) ABC’s model designed to prepare teachers for working with bicultural and bilingual students. The ABC’s model includes:

- 1) Autobiography, written in detail by each participant including key life events related to education, family, religious tradition, recreation, victories, and defeats.
- 2) Biography of an ESL student.
- 3) Cross-cultural analysis of similarities and differences between the life stories charted by the participants (Spindler & Spindler, 1987).
- 4) Analysis of cultural differences examined in writing with encouragement for participants to explain personal discomforts and identify positive affect.
- 5) Modification for classroom practice.

He and Cooper (2009) were particularly interested in measuring the self-reflective aspect of pre-service teachers. Where generally pre-service teachers may participate in one class pertaining to multicultural education or diversity, Schmidt's (1999) model includes self-reflection as part of the course. "The development of cultural competency, therefore, needs to start with the study of self, for it is from the study of the self that we can potentially gain more knowledge about how to work with diverse learners" (He & Cooper, p. 307).

The study was adapted to include the first three components of the ABC's model. These components were included in two courses, CUI 450 - Psychological Foundations of Education and CUI 545 - Diverse Learners. A requirement was for all pre-service teachers to write an initial autobiography reflecting on their cultural and educational background and how it pertains to them as teachers. They were expected to revise this autobiography at the end of the semester and continue their reflection of their roles as educators. They were encouraged to include their feelings about race/ethnicity, language, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status in their

reflections. Along with the autobiography, they completed a biography of a student they worked with and wrote a cross-cultural comparison including the cultural and educational backgrounds of themselves and the student (He & Cooper, 2009). The research questions were as follows: “1) How does the use of the ABC’s project impact participants’ cultural diversity awareness development? 2) How does use of the ABC’s project impact participants’ self-perception of their roles and responsibilities as teachers?” (p. 308).

Participants of this study were selected from the 102 pre-service teachers enrolled in CUI 450 and CUI 545. There were thirteen pre-service teachers who were enrolled in both classes. Of these thirteen, ten were selected to be in Group B of the study while ten others who were only enrolled in one class and were demographically similar to the members in Group B were selected to be in Group A. Group A only completed the autobiography and Group B completed the autobiography, biography and cross-cultural comparison. All of the participants were pre-service teachers in their junior or senior year and were an average age of twenty-one. All but one of the students, who is multiracial, are White. All students were studying to teach at the high school level. Group B students completed a biography of a student who identified him/herself as either African American, Mexican or Latino, Asian or multiracial. Group B participants also engaged in field experience in which they completed an internship in a rural and an urban/suburban school. There were comparative differences and commonalities between the pre-service teachers and the high school students who they completed the cross-cultural comparison with. “Participants noted comparative differences with their students’ upbringings, especially in geography (6) and students’ stories of discrimination (4); they most often mentioned the commonalities of love and family (9), family composition (7), and value of education (10)” (He & Cooper, p. 309).

This research used both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data consisted of participants' autobiography, biography and cross-cultural comparison as well as follow up interviews. Researchers "met regularly to compare memos and coding categories in order to reach consensus and resolve any discrepancies in coding" (He & Cooper, 2009, p. 310). They then applied these coding themes to all qualitative data. The Cultural Diversity Attitude Inventory (CDAI) was used to collect quantitative data. The CDAI instrument has twenty-seven Likert-scale items pertaining to cultural diversity awareness. "The reliability of the CDAI instrument is .75" (p. 310). The comparisons between Group A and Group B were made using the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data.

In regard to cultural diversity awareness there were similar findings regarding the level of understanding in Group A and Group B participants.

Unlike participants from Group A, Group B participants addressed their understanding of teachers' roles and responsibilities in their assignments – the school internship-based student biography and the cross cultural comparison – and in individual interviews. Their descriptions of teachers' roles and responsibilities can be categorized by several themes. These themes are: importance of knowing students, difficulties in relating to others' cultures, learning as an ongoing process, and benefits of completing the assignment. (He and Cooper, 2009, p. 312)

The CDAI survey data showed that Group B participants, those who completed the first three steps of the ABC's project showed "higher levels of understanding in cross-cultural communication and culturally diverse families" (p. 316). Group A focused more on their teacher role as in delivering content whereas Group B understood the role students' background plays

and recognized the need to facilitate learning beyond the classroom. This demonstrated that pre-service teachers who participated in not only writing and reflecting upon an autobiography but also completing a student's biography as well as a cross-cultural comparison with that student had a deeper understanding of culture and how it impacts students. "Teachers' self-reflections and field experiences have been proven to be effective strategies for pre-service teacher development; the application of Schmidt's ABC's model within the teacher education program linked these two powerful teacher preparation strategies" (p. 317). The researchers considered if the ABC's model could be used in professional development of practicing teachers. Not only does it seem possible to replicate similar results among pre-service teachers but also current teachers. Although each individual's experience of self-reflection is unique, the process of self-reflection yields a deeper understanding of culture and the role of an individual not only, "who they are, but also who they are in relationship with others and who they are as professionals in the teaching field" (p. 317). Therefore this study appears to be reliable and valid.

The authors of "Beyond Awareness: Preparing Culturally Responsive Preservice Teachers," Davis-Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth and Crawford (2005), referred to Schmidt's (1999) ABC's Model as a new approach toward diversity and cultural awareness training. This model was one that influenced their work which has an ethnographically informed approach. Their goal "was to gain insights into how pre-service teacher's habits of mind might inform their views of diversity and multicultural education" (Davis-Lenski, et al, 2005, p. 88). Since ethnographers "learn about a culture from the inside, and then they interpret the data in order to draw generalizations" (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 88) the researchers in this study argued that this kind of approach could be transformative, helping pre-service teachers to "move beyond awareness to deeper understandings of the complexities of culturally diverse teaching" (p. 89).

The participants were thirty-four pre-service teachers in an “urban professional development school (PDS)” (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 89). They were university students in their last year before teaching. This program took place 150 miles away from their university. The thirty-four participants consisted of three males and thirty-one females, all self identified as European American, four identified as well as either Korean, Mexican or Greek. There were five female instructors, four who identified as European American and one who was African American.

The methodology consisted of five components for the thirty-four pre-service teachers who participated in this study, 1) they described the community, 2) wrote observational field notes, 3) wrote reflections of their observations, 4) met to discuss their observations and reflections and 5) synthesized their data in a final paper. Exit interviews were also conducted with certain pre-service teachers. Participants were provided with sixteen coursework and clinical hours in the fall and then went on to student teach in the spring. They were given “the 12 steps for conducting ethnography from the book Participant Observation (Spradley, 1980)” (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 90). The twelve steps included:

- Learning about culture,
- Doing participant observation,
- Making an ethnographic record,
- Making descriptive observations,
- Making a domain analysis,

- Making focused observations,
- Making a taxonomic analysis,
- Making selected observations,
- Making a componential analysis,
- Discovering cultural themes,
- Taking a cultural inventory, and
- Writing an ethnography.

The participants were encouraged to view culture in the sense of “the ways in which people shared traditions, values, and activities” (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 89). Their focus was on interactions, language use and patterns of behavior. The data consisted of:

- 1) Students’ responses to a question about diversity before beginning the project, 2) students’ observational field notes of community sites, 3) students’ final ethnographic papers, 4) videotapes of students’ discussions of their participation in the program, and 5) exit conversations with eight students. (p. 90)

The reflective notes from the pre-service teachers were gathered and “coded using an open-coding approach in which preliminary categories were identified, and then used to guide further analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)” (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 90). The exit interviews consisted of eight questions pertaining to the field work. The interviews were videotaped. “The videotapes

were transcribed and then analyzed using a sociolinguistic approach based on the work of Gee (1985, 1991)” (Davis-Lenski, p. 91). The final papers were viewed as well.

One of the goals of the project was to encourage pre-service teachers to learn about a cultural group by taking on the role of an ethnographer. However, most of the participants resisted the role. One participant stated, “We’re not ethnographers, we’re education majors” (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 92). The researchers “viewed this tension as potentially generative – students were struggling with learning how to observe by doing rather than being told what to look for in their observations” (p. 92). Although they resisted the role of ethnographer they did understand the intention. One participant explained the purpose of the study was to “enhance our awareness of the cultures of the children and the families within the community in which we are teaching” (p. 92). The data from the interviews suggested that “students were moving from an initial awareness of how cultural issues shape the nature of teaching and learning to a better understanding of how careful observation through an ethnographically informed lens could inform their work as new classroom teachers” (p. 93).

Reliability in research such as this is difficult to confirm due to the fact that each person’s personal growth is a unique process, however, this research is valid in that it did move pre-service teachers beyond cultural awareness. This can be confirmed by the follow up interviews conducted within six of the participants’ first year of teaching. The interviews showed that the teachers “developed an in-depth awareness of the teacher’s role in differentiating the curriculum, and the know-how to build positive relationships with students and families of different ethnicities” (Davis-Lenski, et al, p. 98). One can generalize to some extent the results of this study although to what depth depends on the participants.

Lonquist, RB-Banks and Huber (2009) as well saw the importance in following up on pre-service teachers after they had completed their teacher education programs and were in their own classrooms. Their work is discussed in “Developing Cultural Competency in Adult Pre-Service Teachers Helps Diverse Learners: Graduates’ Perspectives in the United States of America.” The researchers wanted to improve the strategies they used in their Master of Teaching (MAT) program in the hopes of increasing their pre-service teachers’ cultural competency. A survey was sent to two hundred former students. The researchers received forty responses which is twenty percent of the invitations sent. Fifteen teachers agreed to participate in a focus group, however due to conflicting schedules ten were able to participate. The electronic survey included twenty-five Likert-scale questions as well as fifteen open-ended questions. Two focus groups were formed.

The data was collected from the focus groups and the surveys and coded by the research assistant. Themes and comments, including the outlier comments, were included in a matrix. Some of the responses helped the researchers to discover the limitations of the study. There were five instructors, including two of the authors of this report, who taught the multicultural education course in observation. Each MAT student had a different level of prior knowledge in regard to cultural competency to begin with and was exposed to teachings on cultural competency in some of their other classes. This made it difficult for the respondents to narrow down where their knowledge of cultural competency derived from. Although these limitations were in place the researchers found value in the results of the study.

The two instructors who conducted this research had taught this multicultural education class for at least five years. One instructor was African American who was trained in special

education and the other was White who was trained in social justice and teacher education. They both had the goal to increase their MAT students' cultural competency in order to impact the learning of the students in the k-12 system. The transmission model of teaching was avoided as much as possible and the MAT students were given opportunities to expand their experiences by working in classrooms and labs. The MAT students' background varied. Almost half lived mono-cultural lives but had traveled internationally or were in an inter-racial marriage or had adopted children from another country so they had experience in diversity, however, very few had any experience with students with specific learning needs. The researchers felt that the MAT students' varied backgrounds were worth noting.

The researchers found that all of their previous MAT students were implementing culturally responsive practices. Several stated they were using the following strategies:

- a) Getting to know and value their own and others' cultural heritages, b) cultivating critical consciousness in their students, c) incorporating multicultural information and resources, d) using instructional strategies connected to different learning styles, e) incorporating specific information/training about students with special needs, and f) focusing on topics about equity and social justice. (Lonquist, RB-Banks, and Huber, 2009, p. 45)

The participants' responses led to six key findings regarding the greatest impact the multicultural education class had as well as recommendations to improve the course. The Greatest Impact was, “ 1) Cultural experiences outside students' comfort zone, 2) Cultural resource guides and presentations, 3) Cooperative learning experiences, 4) Structured opportunities for reflection, 5) White privilege awareness and 6) Awareness of socio-economic status (SES)” (p. 45). The

recommended improvements and/or suggested additions to the class were, “1) Language/educational barriers, 2) Intercultural understanding, 3) Socio-economic backgrounds, 4) Increase real life application, 5) How to handle the discomfort while promoting equity and 6) Differentiation” (p. 45). The most significant recommendation was in regard to how to handle discomfort while promoting equity. The MAT students asked for “more in-class experiences that helped them become comfortable in discussing equity and social justice with a very diverse mix of students as well as with unenlightened colleagues” (p. 47). One participant stated, “I think there should have been more self-examination of prejudices and stereotypes and how to be more honest and comfortable in discussing diversity (Lonquist et al, St. 28, 2005, p. 5)” (p. 47). Another student expressed his/her anger in describing the class projects as not “Worth a hill of beans when you have to [work] outside of your comfort zone (Lonquist et al, St. 28, 2005, p. 5)” (p. 47).

Overall, the MAT students did increase their cultural competency, applied culturally responsive practices to their teaching and were able to provide feedback to help improve the multicultural course. The instructors concur that one class is not enough but it can spark cultural awareness in a student and new teachers need help with how to handle uncomfortable discussions with colleagues. It would have been more effective to have a broader sampling than the researchers had, however, their study was valid and the results can be generalized in the sense of increased cultural competency in pre-service teachers.

The MAT students, from the Lonquist, et al study, who wanted more in-class experiences to deal with social justice and equity conversations, as well as more self reflection of one’s prejudices, would have appreciated taking part in the following study, “White Pre-Service

Teachers and ‘De-privileged Spaces’” (Adair, 2008). This study pertains to White pre-service teachers among a mostly Latina(o) cohort beginning their Multicultural Teacher Training (MTT) program. “It is about how Whiteness can become both a handicap and an opportunity instead of a privilege” (Adair, 2008, p. 189). Adair, as a White teacher and teacher educator wanted to know “how White pre-service teachers did in multicultural teacher education contexts they choose themselves” (p. 191). Although the White students had different levels of open-mindedness, cultural awareness and were individuals they responded similarly in their class environment which led Adair to examine her own Whiteness issues. The assumption was made that each student would respond uniquely, however, they seemed “surprised by the same things” (p. 192). “It was as if these students were drawing on the same assumptions about participating in class and how valued their ideas would be and all simultaneously (and quite quickly) found those assumptions to be faulty” (p. 192). Once they realized that their assumptions were faulty they had to rely on their Latina/o classmates for new ways to think and discuss multiculturalism and diversity. When White students have to turn to students of color for directions and tools in order to be successful they are in a “de-privileged” space (Adair, 2008).

Data consisted of pre-semester interviews with six of the eight White students, entrance applications from all students in the cohort, participant-observation, project presentation and video tapes of the class sessions. Notes were taken with special attention given to the class reactions when White students spoke. Adair documented whether their comments were followed by: “seconds of silence or changing the subject or a follow-up question or supportive looks and/or comments” (2008, p. 193). How the Latino/a students’ comments were followed was also documented. Focus group discussions were also analyzed. The lesson on the first day of class was particularly interesting. The instructor of the Diversity in Education course asked the

students to take out a piece of paper and then began her lesson in Spanish. She continued in Spanish for approximately twenty minutes then told the students they would have a test on the information. As the lesson continued the instructor was sure to call on White, monolingual students for answers. They were uncomfortable since they did not understand her. Over half of the class understood Spanish. The instructor called to the students' attention that some students had left answers blank and scolded them for providing incorrect responses. After the lesson the instructor inquired as to how the class felt. The White students now spoke and shared their shock and discomfort.

In the pre-semester interview when one of the White students was asked, "Do you think there will be any times where you might be uncomfortable? Do you anticipate that?" (Adair, 2008, p. 197) she replied, "I don't...well I mean I haven't really thought about that. So I mean there may be a time if it happened, I wouldn't be upset about it but I mean I haven't really thought about anticipating being uncomfortable in my classes" (p. 197). Having a lesson delivered in a language unknown to most of the White students helped them to see that the instructor was trying to demonstrate what class is like every day for non-Native English speakers in an English-Only classroom. This experience helped the White students understand cultural capital more than they did before. "They, like most of us, don't know the full weight and power of cultural capital until we are positioned as having less of it than someone else" (p. 197). Throughout the course the students of color shared their personal experiences with racism and linguicide. This led to discussions on educational disparities and social justice. Adair states, "White privilege begins to break down when confronted with experience and with stories. It is hard to ignore experience" (p. 199). These stories became data.

With “the combination of a strong, skilled teacher, outnumbered White students, and Latina(o) and Asian students empowered to use stories as expert knowledge combined to create a de-privileged space” (Adair, 2008, p. 203) the White students perception and behavior changed. How much of a change is not necessarily measurable, however, “their behavior changed and they at least had to consider the validity and the presence of other perspectives on education” (p.203) therefore the study is valid. The “de-privileged space re-organized cultural capital, re-distributed power, and re-defined expert or legitimate knowledge” (p. 203). The opportunity for White students to participate in a de-privileged situation most probably will allow for a change in thinking and possibly a change in action. In this manner this study has generalizability. One of the factors that helped students expand their cultural competency was having an instructor who is Latina. Adair states, “Universities must insure that faculty of color are recruited and valued, who then feel free to challenge students as much as White teachers can” (p. 204). This belief is held by the Pacific Oaks College as well. Their teacher education program is described in the following discussion.

In her book, *Culture and Power in the Classroom*, Darder (1991) examined a bicultural development program at Pacific Oaks College. The college consisted of approximately five hundred students in programs related to serving professions such as teaching, counseling and nursing. The college was described as, “an independent institution of learning influenced by its Quaker heritage and dedicated to the principles of social justice, respect for diversity, and the valuing of the uniqueness of each person” (p. 130). The Bicultural Development Program was designed in response to the high dropout rate of bicultural students and the increasing bicultural population in its surrounding cities. There was a shortage of teachers and administrators who had the experience and knowledge to meet the diverse needs of the bicultural students. Darder

(1991) stated, “Daily we see the gap widening between the traditional teacher preparation received by the majority of educators and the pedagogical requirements for effectively educating bicultural students” (p. 132).

The expectation of The Bicultural Development Program was to promote teachers who were able “to engage in the world as transformative intellectuals in a counter-hegemonic struggle for democracy in the schools and a genuinely emancipatory vision of life for all students” (Darder, 1991, p. 134). The curriculum consisted of the following: 1) Social and Political Contexts of Human Development, 2) Development of Bicultural Children, 3) Working with Bicultural Children, 4) Cross-cultural Mores and Values, 5) Sociolinguistics: Issues of Language and Culture, 6) Racism and Human Development, 7) Theory of Cultural Democracy, 8) Implications of Parenting Bicultural Children, 9) Freire’s Model and Its Implications for Bicultural Educators, 10) Practicum: Bicultural Development and 11) Master’s Project. There was a coordinator and three faculty members who instructed the aforementioned courses. The coordinator was a woman from Puerto Rico. Of the other three instructors, one was White and two were Black. It was noted that the ethnic background of the instructors was similar to that of the students which, “has proven very effective, particularly with respect to the issue of voice and the students’ ability to identify with faculty members and see them as role models” (p. 138). Students were responsible for coursework as well as reflective journal writing, action projects and small group dialogues and class discussions. They were expected to demonstrate their ability to “participate in a process of reflection, critique, dialogue, and action – namely praxis” (p. 139).

Students were evaluated on their classwork, journals, projects and dialogues. In reflecting on his/her culture students had the opportunity to explore their experiences and struggles. Examples included the reflections of three women, one from China, a White woman and a Black woman. Initially one student wrote,

I am a Chinese woman. I grew up in mainland China. I identify myself with my culture which has been existing for about 5,000 years...When I moved to the U.S. I was shocked very much by the culture...I am confused since my first day here. I don't know what kind of values I should pick up. I want to maintain the values I've learned in my childhood but I find that most of them don't seem to work in such an individualized society. (Student's journal, 1988, Darder, p. 143)

Her last journal entry showed the growth she made during the course,

I never believed I could find the strength in myself. I feel I understand better how to work with the conflict of my culture in America. I believe I understand better people of color too. I don't feel so scared anymore. I am now more aware that I am not helpless. (Student's journal, 1988, Darder, p. 143)

The reflection of culture for a White woman regarding her cultural identification was quite different from her classmate. The White student who had been raised in an all White neighborhood wrote,

When asked to identify myself culturally and what that means, I just have to say I have no cultural identity. I am an American but I don't really feel that I have any culture to

speak of. I don't really think culture is something I have ever thought very much about in my life. (Student's journal, 1988, Darder, p. 143)

This student in not having thought about culture and how it pertained to her life felt that a person's culture did not really matter when it came to opportunities in society. She wrote, "I think we all have the opportunity to succeed if we work hard enough. This is what seems to really make the difference" (p. 143). Throughout the semester she continued with her stance regarding how all people regardless of skin color have the same opportunities in our country and how all people are the same, however, through much dialogue with her classmates she came to the following conclusion:

At moments, this class has been very difficult for me, but I can also say it has changed my life. If I had to describe the things I have gotten from this class they would be: (1) I now realize the depth with which racism permeates our society; (2) I now recognize the economic repression that exists in America today; and (3) I now want to work to generate change in the things that touch my life and will in the future. But I also know I still have a lot to learn about all these things. (Student's journal, p. 144)

Another student, a Black preschool teacher living in Watts, remained very quiet in class initially. She explained her views on culture in one of her first journal entries,

I am a Black woman and I grew up in the South. There was never any question in my mind about who I am. I am and will always be Black and I know that wherever I go that's how people will see me. It feels funny writing or talking about this in a college

class because this has never seemed to matter in any other class I ever been in. (Student's journal, Darder, p. 145)

As the class continued and discussions regarding racism came about the responses of some of this student's fellow classmates regarding how they should not be focusing on things that happened in the past, prompted this response, "Things may look better to you because you're White and middle-class, but maybe you should come to my neighborhood in Watts. Things there are still a mess" (Darder, p. 145). Her response helped guide the discussion toward the historical ramifications of racism and how it is still present. Her last journal entry in Darder (1991) is as follows:

I think maybe being angry and letting White people know may not be so bad after all. I feel it was good for me to finally say what was on my mind all this time. I'm not sure where the courage came from, but I felt my inner power. Also it made me realize that I always act two ways. When I'm with my own people, I feel I can be who I am, but when I'm around Whites I feel like I can't be myself. It's like play-acting sometimes. (p. 147)

These are only three examples of how students' lives were transformed over the course of a semester. The results are valid in that their journal responses demonstrated a shift in thinking which will lead to viewing themselves and their students in a different light with a focus on how culture impacts their day to day interactions with students. As stated these were journal reflections. There were also class evaluations and a program evaluation student questionnaire completed by all graduating students. The questions inquired about why a student chose the Bicultural Development Program, what he/she gained, how it improved his/her work with

bicultural children, what personal changes he/she has made and so on. Some of the responses were:

- I selected this program because I am a White teacher in a bilingual classroom and I needed help understanding what the kids really needed.
- Being a person of color myself, I wanted to develop a knowledge of various issues related to culture so it would broaden my awareness of how others learn and live.
- I have learned positive ways to teach children about differences and how to deal with conflicts in the classroom.
- I have not only gained a broader perspective of the world, reality, and my role as a teacher, but I have also gained a totally different view of life that I had never realized or been taught before. I have gained a whole new way of thinking and teaching. (p. 148 and p. 150)

Darder includes eighty-six responses from the questionnaire. Although this study was small in scope and it pertained to a new teacher program it demonstrated that this program did have an impact on students' lives in some form. Because each student is an individual and will be affected differently it is not possible to generalize the exact results of any one person, however, it is possible to generalize that a program such as the Pacific Oaks College Bicultural Development Program will promote its students to reflect on and dialogue about the role culture plays in their own lives as well as in education. This program was designed for teachers in southern California working with the student population in southern California. As Darder (1991) states,

A similar teacher education program in another part of the country would share the basic theoretical constructs but might rearrange the curriculum or requirements in a very different manner, depending on the needs of the student population, the faculty, the resources available, and institutional mandates. (p.159)

However, a program “based on the principles of critical pedagogy, cultural democracy and biculturalism can inform a critical bicultural education practice” (Darder, p. 159). The reliability of this program has been proven over time. Now, twenty years later, this program has developed and expanded into B.A and M.A. degree options and specialization in teaching English Language Learners. The college is known for its “Anti-Bias Curriculum, which was developed by Pacific Oaks faculty as a classroom teaching tool and later earned the college special recognition by the American Association of Colleges and Universities” (Pacific Oaks College website, 2011).

“In Promoting Social Justice in an Urban Secondary Teacher Education Program,” Medina, Morrone and Anderson (2005) describe the Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Secondary Education Learning to Teach/Teaching to Learn (LT/TL) program which consists of a four semester “block-sequenced” program. There are cohorts of twenty-five to thirty students. One of the main projects focusing on social justice is the Kozol Project. This is a semester long project in which all students are required to read *Amazing Grace* by Kozol. The goal was to research students’ “evolving conceptions of social justice” (Medina, et al, 2005, p. 208).

The data consisted of students’ reflections of five key passages that held meaning for them and the small group discussions held regarding those reflections. Since the students are placed in an urban middle school for their field work another piece of data collected is the

extensive research they conduct in teams regarding the community's assets. Before students' research begins they complete a "windshield survey" which gives students basic information about the community before they dive deeper into their research. Part of the research includes interviewing community members and is encouraged to "be conducted with tact and respect" (Medina, et al, p. 209). The research is synthesized into a final report accompanied by a Power Point presentation. All Power Point presentations are compiled and shared with the school faculty, administrators and all others interested in the students' research. Another component of data is the critical reflective journaling that students participate in. The assignments are designed "to balance knowledge, theory, and practice while providing a connection to what students are observing in their field experiences" (p. 209).

The results of the Kozol project show that it "provides an authentic way to expand those boundaries while also providing a way to address concepts related to diversity, social justice, and equity" (Medina, et al, p. 209). After this project the students changed the ways they defined social justice. They had opportunities for critical reflection of their own beliefs, their teaching and social justice. Many students reported this project to be the most significant aspect of their teacher education program. The authors did not discuss the process used to analyze the collected data. However, as has been observed in the previous research reports this study is valid in that it measured students' changing views on social justice and how it applies to their lives and to their students' lives.

Social justice must be accompanied by accountability in order to prepare teachers to work with diverse populations. Poplin and Rivera (2005) discusses this necessity in "Merging Social Justice and Accountability: Educating Qualified and Effective Teachers." The authors shared

their struggles faced in trying to implement a comprehensive teacher education program where “teachers emerge committed to confronting social inequities, skilled in teaching academic knowledge, convinced that poor and marginalized students can learn, and acquainted with teachers who can and do teach them effectively” (Poplin & Rivera, 2005, p. 28). Once John Rivera made a deliberate effort to merge social justice and accountability the program strengthened. Poplin and Rivera outlined critical events leading up to their success as well as proposed “a set of paradoxes that help to articulate principles of teacher education programs aimed at merging the work of social justice and accountability” (p. 28).

In regard to accountability Poplin and Rivera focused on the positive aspects of NCLB (2001). In this article they stated,

No Child Left Behind, at its root seeks to halt the very practices we have critiqued for years, such as unqualified teachers placed in poor schools, tracking, and achievement gaps by race and class. And yet, rather than assisting in its evolution, university educators have become its most ardent enemies. (p. 30)

The authors contended that we should celebrate the focus on disaggregated achievement data which helps draw attention to all students.

Though it is certainly the case that test instruments have been used against the poor, it is possible to use these instruments for them. Before students are held to account for their learning in schools, teachers, administrators, and university educators must be held accountable. (p. 30)

Teacher candidates must be able to understand various assessments, both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced in order to understand the expectations for their students. Data analysis, interpretation and how to communicate the results is essential knowledge for new teachers especially in regard to sharing achievement data with parents. Teachers need to combine teaching of common skills and concepts as well as guide them through dialogue and creative opportunities in order to help them develop their own personal perspectives (Poplin & Rivera, 2005).

In order to educate qualified and effective teachers social justice must be merged with accountability. Some strategies that have helped Poplin and Rivera have a strong teacher education program are as follows:

- 1) Increasing candidates and faculty of color, 2) Partnering with schools who are closing the achievement gap, 3) Emphasizing knowledge, understanding and creativity, 4) Inspiring teachers with the details of schools that are eliminating the achievement gap and 5) Focusing the work during the program on teaching and documenting their students' progress.

Overall, according to Poplin and Rivera, "We must search out those schools where progress is being made, study them, and support them" (p. 35). Learning from those who are using culturally responsive practices in order to replicate their success is a good strategy. "Closing the achievement gap is clearly possible but not easy" (p. 35).

To conclude this section on teacher education "Developing Cultural Critical Consciousness and Self Reflection in Preservice Teacher Education" by Gay and Kirkland

(2003) will be shared. This article, although written before Poplin and Rivera's article supports their focus on accountability but through culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Culturally responsive teaching is inclusive of social justice it "involves using the cultures, experiences, and perspectives of African, Native, Latino, and Asian American students as filters through which to teach them academic knowledge and skills" (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 181).

A challenge to teacher education is that "many prospective teachers do not clearly understand what constitutes self-reflection, or how to do it. They confuse reflection with describing issues, ideas, and events; stating philosophical beliefs; or summarizing statements made by scholars" (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 182). There often is not enough time devoted to self-reflection in teacher education programs. The traditional belief that "good teaching anywhere is good teaching everywhere" (p. 182) promotes pre-service teachers to focus on the mechanics of teaching and not the reflective component necessary to teach with culturally responsive practices. Some pre-service teachers "evoke notions of color-blindness and universality as the standard for how to engage with diverse students" (p. 184). Gay and Kirkland share their following beliefs with their pre-service teachers: "The person who performs the role of teacher, and understanding the cultural contexts in which they teach, is as crucial to instructional effectiveness with diverse students as the mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical techniques" (p. 184). The authors contend that, "teacher accountability involves being more self-conscious, critical, and analytical of one's own teaching beliefs and behaviors" (p. 181). One of the most effective ways to encourage this is for teacher education programs to provide the time for critical self-reflection and discussion. Instructors as well should model strategies that the students can use with their own students. In this way pre-service teachers will learn "effective teaching for social justice in multicultural contexts" (p. 186).

### Teacher-Student Relationship

The teacher-student relationship is a key factor in culturally responsive teaching. In *Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory, Research and Practice* Gay (2000) gives a more in depth definition of culturally responsive teaching than the one she provided in the previous article.

Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches *to and through* the strengths of these students. It is culturally *validating and affirming*. (p. 29)

It is more important now than ever for teachers to build relationships with students in order to use culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. As has been stated previously the demographics of our country are changing. Our schools continue to see an increase in the number of minority students. Wink (2011) shares why we must act now,

Many classes are filled with traditional teachers and nontraditional students, conventional teachers and nonconventional students. The past is past; it is not necessarily bad, but it is past. We all must move forward. We cannot continue to use old answers for new questions. The questions have changed, and, together, we are seeking new answers for new questions. (p. 107)

“Uncommon Teaching in Commonsense Times: A Case Study of a Critical Multicultural Educator and the Academic Success of Diverse Student Populations” by Camp and Oesterreich (2010) discusses a fifth grade teacher, Rae, who “challenges the commonsense approaches

mandated in the era of No Child Left Behind that frequently requires teachers to run-off pre-made worksheets of standardized curricula as a panacea to closing” (p. 20) the achievement gap. “Uncommon teaching offers the possibility of re-centering education on the students and away from the commonsense of scripted and restricted curricula to promote acquisitions by students of a critical consciousness in order to become agents of change for social justice” (p. 20). A life history case study was conducted of the fifth grade teacher mentioned above in order to “explore the complexity of how teachers develop and sustain the ability to teach uncommonly in commonsense times” (p. 21).

Rae is a White woman raised in a religious family in the Southwest. The Southwest is “home to Navajo Nation and therefore embedded in the diversities of race, class, gender, nationality, and spirituality” (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010, p. 21). The school she taught in during the time of this study was comprised of eighty-nine percent children of color with the majority being Latino. Rae incorporated students’ lives, interests and experiences into the curriculum. She guided students to “understand their obligation to participate in democracy in order to fight injustice” (p. 21).

Data gathered consisted of life history methods and observational methods. Two interviews were held as well as two, formal, forty minute observations of her classroom and daily informal observations. Rae’s students engaged in “research and inquiry via various library resources, the Internet, literature, and guest speakers. However, their inquiry was embedded in concepts focused on democracy and justice” (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010, p. 22). Rae recognized the “urgency to create spaces for students who have been socially constructed as less than, at-risk, deficient, and/or troublemakers to make connections to their schooling and enact change in

their worlds” (p. 22). During one of her interviews she explained her idea of a teacher-student relationship,

It’s me pulling up my chair to be a part of an audience while a student is teaching...I try to be a human being first, who is in this room with other human beings, and we’re all trying to be better each day, and be bigger, and more than we were yesterday...It is relationships. It’s relationships that make people change. (p. 23)

Rae allowed for student choice in activities to demonstrate their understanding of a concept. When conflict arose she taught students how to problem solve as a class. She also promoted dialogue between her and her students as well as between the students. Another way Rae built relationships with her students was through the use of multicultural education. This could be observed by the contents of the classroom such as books in Spanish and posters of Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King and Ghandi. A teacher’s desk could not be found only furniture suited for child or adult alike. “The room is simply comfortable, inviting her students to enter as themselves with the promise that they will be able to remain themselves while in her classroom” (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010, p. 26).

Rae helped her students make meaning of their world through validating their cultures, encouraging them to express their voices, sharing the decision making and empowering them to recognize injustice and take action when necessary. She cared about each of her students and worked hard to validate her unconventional teaching during scripted lessons times. She kept current on research so she could continue with her ways of teaching. Rae helped prepare her students for state tests but knew the tests were not her driving force rather a mechanism to continue teaching with social justice embedded throughout her curriculum. Camp and

Oesterreich did not include how they measured their data other than the analysis of their own observations. One can generalize and state that a person raised around diversity and who has witnessed injustice may work to eradicate that injustice but to what degree is unknown.

When teachers and students have a good relationship the teacher is able to help students make meaning through their experiences. Their cultural experiences are part of their lives and must be incorporated as Rae demonstrated. In the book, *What Is It About Me You Can't Teach? An Instructional Guide for the Urban Educator*, Rodriguez and Bellanca (2007) discuss the mediation of meaning. They share Feuerstein's understanding in which he discusses the role of the mediator to "connect students to the inherent power of their culture" (p. 59). This connection can be made by deepening the understanding of a student's heritage. Usually parents are the first mediators for children, however, "for those whose family is destroyed or disabled by poverty, racism, war, or other causes, there is a great chance that the children will miss the mediation that sets the foundation for successful learning, thinking, and problem solving" (p. 59).

Rodriguez and Bellanca (2007) described how Lorna Williams, a First Nation's advocate was affected by the attempt to destroy her cultural ties. When Lorna was a child the Canadian government had taken her away from her family and placed her in a boarding school. Not only was her heritage not valued but Lorna was taught to forget her family's ways. Lorna was one of forty-seven students from her village who had been taken to the boarding school. According to the government testing, forty-five out of the forty-seven students were labeled "retarded." Her teachers did not attempt to build relationships with the students rather they "ridiculed her family, debunked her customs and beliefs, raised self-doubt about her abilities to learn, and frightened her into giving up 'the old ways'" (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 2007, p. 59). Lorna began to believe

that her ways were foolish even though they taught her how to “show respect for her elders, and learn from the examples of the natural world” (p. 59).

When Lorna went home for the summer she fortunately had an aunt who intervened and helped Lorna begin to make meaning of her surroundings and her heritage “through story, song, and parental talk” (Rodriguez & Bellanca, 2007, p. 59). Her aunt’s role as mediator forever impacted Lorna’s life and encouraged her to share her “knowing” with her classmates. Although the relationships with her teachers were lacking, and were actually damaging, the relationship with her aunt saved her. Because of her aunt’s intervention Lorna went on to lead the First Nations Project for the Vancouver Public Schools. She is now committed to “find the best ways to help the children of the First Nations survive in the modern world, and yet retain their traditional ways of ‘making sense’”(p. 59).

*Literacy con cariño* by Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler (1998) is an example of how students can succeed when they have a strong teacher-student relationship. The title itself promotes a caring and loving relationship between teacher and student. *Literacy con cariño* means literacy with love/affection/care. This book describes a study of a teacher and his interactions with his twenty-two fifth grade migrant students as well as his interactions with two of his college professors. The students were children of Mexican American laborers in South Texas. The students had not performed well on district assessments. Many did not read at all. It was quickly obvious that they were frustrated with their schooling experiences and even hostile (Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler, 1998, p. 17). Bahruth knew that the students could not afford another frustrating year in school. He knew the traditional ways of teaching were not going to bring success to this group of students. “Literacy con cariño” is exactly what Bahruth’s students

needed to experience academic success. “Teaching is more than books to be assigned and read, content areas to be mastered and tested. Teaching entails a mutual as well as reciprocal act, a collaboration” (Hayes, et al, 1998, p. 9). This study demonstrated the collaboration between classroom teacher and student as well as teacher educator and student.

The success of this teacher-student relationship can be measured by the literacy growth of the students as well as their attendance. The district assessment at the time was the Informal Reading Inventory (Sucher, 1982). At the beginning of the school year this test was administered to the students. The lowest score was preprimer, the highest score from a twelve year old (the age of a seventh grade student) was a level four. The average score was grade level one. At the end of the school year the average score jumped to grade level four. Six of the twenty-two students reached grade level and one tested at grade level seven. The average gain of three years was substantial. “Their attendance rate of sixty-five percent the previous year increased to ninety-eight percent during their year together” (Hayes, et al, p. 29).

The strategies Bahruth used to promote three years worth of growth in one year were all based on meaningful interactions. Some of the strategies are included here. He began by “learning about his students while reading them books as a demonstration of his own love of literacy” (Hayes, et al, p. 29). Bahruth “provided appropriate linguistic models and took every opportunity to expose these students to language: interesting, relevant, comprehensible language” (p. 18). He shared “meaningful literacy events and written conversations in dialogue journals about their [the students’] world” (p. 29). The dialogue journal was described as a “catalytic converter” because it “helped transform reluctant writers and learners into successful and eager students – students who convinced themselves that they could learn” (p. 60). Spanish

was used to promote literacy engagement. Parent interaction was encouraged. Students became excited to take books home to read to their parents. Finally, the students learned to have high expectations for themselves due to the high expectations Bahruth had for them. They sensed his confidence and belief in them and transferred it to confidence and belief in themselves.

The data in this case is the student success, not just the fact that the students finished the school year reading and writing but that they had literacy in their grasp and could make meaning of their world in a deeper way than at the beginning of the school year. “Kids who at one time were being failed by the system are now active learners, because a teacher not only cared but presented in his classroom an opportunity for success” (Hayes, et al, p. 157). The results of this study are generalizable, caring teachers providing meaningful literacy opportunities and holding high expectations for students building students’ confidence will lead to student success.

*In Pedagogy of Freedom Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*, Freire (1998) states, “Sometimes a simple, almost insignificant gesture on the part of a teacher can have a profound formative effect on the life of a student” (p. 46). Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko and Stuczynski (2011) in *Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching Classroom to Community and Back* believe,

As educators consciously build and strengthen relationships with students and their families, their efforts foster trust, shared responsibility for education, and mutual support. If you ask students why a class or subject is their favorite, they will often tell you that they have a personal connection with the teacher. (p. 47)

Whether it is a gesture or a conscious effort, the interaction between teacher and student can be destructive or productive. In a research study by Caskey (2009), “Supporting High School Graduation Aspirations among Latino Middle School Students,” eighth grade Latinos were asked if they thought they would graduate from high school, forty-two percent were not sure if they would be able to graduate and twenty percent did not respond (p. 5). Caskey promoted the “additive model of acculturation, which seeks to be culturally responsive while encouraging students to stay in school and succeed academically” (p. 8). Culturally responsive practices promote student engagement by being student centered and by building relationships, among other components (Saifer, et al, 2011, p. 11).

Milner and Ford (2007) in “Cultural Considerations in the Underrepresentation of Culturally Diverse Elementary Students in Gifted Education” contend that “By attempting to enter into and engage in their students’ worlds, teachers are pursuing cultural competence” (p. 171). With cultural competence a teacher can “recognize the strengths and potential of culturally diverse students in a variety of learning contexts” (p. 166). They then can help in the identification process of talented and gifted students of color.

Teachers can be the voice that will not go away; they can insist that these students be better represented in such programs. In fact, it is their job (to some degree) to be advocates for deserving students and to speak on their behalf when others refuse to consider students of color for gifted programs. (Milner & Ford, 2007, p. 166).

Students of color are underrepresented in talented and gifted programs. Culturally responsive teachers have the insight to help identify and retain students of color in these programs. Strong teacher-student relationships can be valuable in so many ways. As stated, strong relationships

can help boost student achievement and student confidence. Strong relationships can help prevent students from dropping out and they can help in developing the knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses in order to know who to encourage for special education identification.

“Double-Check: A Framework of Cultural Responsiveness Applied to Classroom Behavior” by Hershfeldt, Sechrest, Pell, Rosenberg, Bradshaw and Leaf (2009) provides a case study pertaining to culturally responsive practices and the reduction of office discipline referrals and special education referrals of culturally linguistically diverse (CLD) students. “The need to consider cultural responsiveness in the classroom as a potential trigger for student behaviors is both timely and urgent” (Hershfeldt, et al, 2009, p. 3). There is a disproportionate number of Latino/a and African American students receiving “office discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions in elementary and middle schools” (p. 3). African American students were 2.65 times more likely than White students to receive an out of school suspension for a minor discipline infraction (e.g., disrespect, work refusal, classroom disruption) and Latino/a students were 4.68 times more likely” (p. 3). In knowing that a strong teacher-student relationship can promote understanding of cultural differences, the authors' goal of this study was “to promote the process of teacher self-reflection by defining culture operationally” (p. 4).

There are five components to the Double-Check Framework. They are as follows: “1) Reflective Thinking about Children and “Group Membership,” 2) An Authentic Relationship, 3) Effective Communication, 4) Connection to Curriculum and 5) Sensitivity to Student's Cultural and Situational Messages” (Hershfeldt, et al, pps. 5-7). The authors gave examples of each of these components. “Self reflection provides teachers with insights into the dynamic role they play in their students' lives and the connections they make to further impact learning” (p. 5).

There are various indicators of an authentic teacher-student relationship, evidence of warmth and caring, positive attention given, and truly listening to the student are some indicators (Hershfeldt et al, p. 6). Understanding the students' cultures in order to understand their behavior which is the "strongest form of communication" (p. 6). Aligning the curriculum with students' lives and avoiding ethnic stereotyping are ways to connect to curriculum. "Recognizing that students from CLD backgrounds may have different behaviors helps teachers to respond in culturally responsive ways" (p. 7). The authors' designed the Double-Check Self-Assessment Tool that reflects the five aforementioned components. This tool was used in the case study of Reggie.

Reggie was an elementary student in a school in a suburban area. He was from a West African country and was having behavior and social difficulties with the other students. Reggie "had difficulty keeping his hands to himself, tended to converse with classmates in close proximity, had difficulty remaining in his seat and, on a few occasions, simply left the classroom" (Hershfeldt, et al, p. 11). His teacher found him to be very bright and appreciated his thinking processes but she was concerned about his adherence to a given assignment and concerned about his ability to complete acceptable work for others.

Reflective thinking about group membership: Reggie's teacher, administrator, school counselor and parents participated in a meeting to discuss Reggie's former culture group. They discussed the differences in his schooling experiences in Africa and in the United States. The teacher made modifications to her teaching methods with Reggie that helped him to be successful in class. Authentic relationship: The teacher enjoyed Reggie's creativity and commentary during class. She wondered if he should have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder but decided that due to Reggie's cultural background he was used

to participating in a less structured school environment, one of which was held outdoors quite often. Effective communication: Reggie's teacher modeled expectations for him, she had "check ins" with him and she taught her class about how close physical proximity was valued by West African culture. Connection to curriculum: the teacher incorporated Socratic dialogue into her teaching because Reggie was accustomed to that method of teaching and she demonstrated her expectations very clearly so Reggie would know what answers were appropriate. Sensitivity to student's cultural and situational messages: the teacher's understanding of Reggie's culture deepened so she was more patient with him than she had been before.

The Double-Check framework was "developed using evidence-based components from the literature addressing culturally responsive teaching" (Hershfeldt, et al, p. 13). The authors noted that a limitation of this study is "the lack of empirical data documenting its impact on disproportionality" (p. 13), however it was being piloted in 2009 in many elementary schools that were implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The use of the Double-Check framework can promote heightened cultural awareness so that teachers can reinforce these components to establish and build upon relationships with their students that are authentic, that attend to situational messages, and ultimately that establish more effective communication and that promote learning by linking elements of culture to teaching concepts. (Hershfeldt, et al, 2009, p. 14)

Strong teacher-student relationships may not only help with discipline challenges in classrooms but also with supporting a student who has a substance abuse issue. In the instance where a Latino/a student has challenges with substance abuse and needs counselor support, Gallardo and Curry's (2009) work in "Shifting Perspectives: Culturally Responsive Interventions

With Latino Substance Abusers” may be helpful to school counselors. Gallardo and Curry promote cultural responsiveness as “having the mindfulness and the appropriate skills to accurately assess, plan and treat individuals within their own environmental and cultural contexts without pathologizing, blaming, or invalidating their experiences” (p. 319). Their work discussed very specific examples of Latino/a culture and the need for culturally responsive practices due to the fact that “Latinos face challenges as a racial/ethnic group that the traditional Euro American model of treatment neither addresses nor validates” (p. 314). Although this article was written with a clinical setting in mind it is applicable to this research in that it validates the need for culturally responsive practices in all aspects of students’ lives.

Overall,

Research concerning what works with bicultural students has found consistently that in general students respond positively to high expectations, educational environments characterized by caring and respect, positive and close relationships with their teachers, and interventions and educational strategies that build on rather than demolish their native language and culture. (Nieto, 2010, p. 75)

Culturally responsive practices are inclusive of all of the above. In order to promote the use of culturally responsive practices, school leaders need to be culturally proficient along with the teachers.

### **Culturally Responsive Leadership**

“School administrators and other school leaders have the moral responsibility to set a positive tone for valuing diversity in schools. For too long, we have turned a blind eye to the

different experiences students have in our schools” (Lindsey, Roberts, and Campbell Jones, 2005, p. 91). *The Culturally Proficient School An Implementation Guide for School Leaders* (2005) provides leaders with a set of standards for leadership behavior. The standards are as follows:

Standard 1 – Assesses Culture: Claim Your Differences, Standard 2 – Values Diversity: Name the Differences, Standard 3 – Manages the Dynamics of Difference: Frame the Conflicts Caused by Differences, Standard 4 – Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge: Teach About Differences, and Standard 5 – Adapts to Diversity: Change to Make a Difference. (Lindsey, et al, 2005, pp.88-98)

The first standard requires that a leader examine his/her own culture and how that culture affects others as well as learning about the cultures of others in the school. “To begin with yourself is an inside-out process of self-examination, evaluation, and awareness. In such a process you become self-conscious in the best sense” (Lindsey et al, p. 54). “In Cultural Proficiency: Tools for Secondary School Administrators” (2007) by Nuri-Robins, D. Lindsey, Terrell and R. Lindsey, The Cultural Proficiency Continuum gives examples from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency. Leaders can start the self examination process by determining where they fall on the continuum. “Focuses on “them” being problems - Tolerates, excludes, separates - Diversity is a problem to be solved” (Nuri, et al, p. 18) are behaviors at the Destructiveness and Incapacity stages. Diversity and inclusion are goals to be attained – Manage, leverage, facilitate conflict – Stakeholders adapt to meet needs of others – Existing policies, procedures, practices examined and adapted to changing environment” (Nuri, et al, p. 18) are behaviors at the

Competence and Proficiency stages. Leaders need to know where they are in order to know where to go.

Culturally competent leaders are individuals who develop and enact a vision of schooling that truly addresses the needs of all students. They work to eradicate distorted notions and stereotypes about students of color, and create specific conditions and practices to address the needs of diverse students. (Smith, 2005, p. 28)

Various examples of how leaders can work toward cultural competency and encourage teachers to do the same are provided in this literature review.

“Moving from Polite Talk to Candid Conversation: Infusing Foundations into a Professional Development Project” (2001) by Russo and Beyerbach is a study conducted within a professional development summer institute. Although this study investigates how to move from “polite talk” to “candid conversations” in a professional development summer institute it pertains to school leaders in that principals are the instructional leaders of their teachers and therefore must provide staff development. “Culturally competent leaders institutionalize cultural knowledge by providing training about diversity and incorporating that cultural knowledge into the school organization. They make sure the school’s professional development program includes cultural diversity training” (Smith, 2005, p. 28). Russo and Beyerbach’s (2001) study “examines the patterns of teachers’ reactions to this topic, which was presented from a combined foundations/methods approach” (p. 73).

The participants were forty-two teachers “including eleven from urban education settings and seven ‘pre-teachers’ who had just graduated from [their] education program” (Russo &

Beyerbach, 2001, p. 74). There were nine men, five people of color, and nine were secondary level teachers. Fifteen hours of the institute were devoted to teaching diversity. The other forty-five hours consisted of the participants developing curriculum units, writing in journals, reading, attending field trips and sharing meals. The data collected was teachers' reactions to their experiences. The participants "through politeness and silence...sustained a culture that denied candid talk about race, class, and gender bias in schools" (p. 75). Learning logs, field notes, and audio taped interviews between teachers were also collected as data. The researchers also observed participants comfort levels during discussions. Data analysis consisted of patterns and themes that presented themselves during collaborative discussions. The researchers also individually coded the data.

"A culture of silence pervaded the topic for teachers in this study" (Russo & Beyerbach, 2001, p. 79). "Polite talk" occurred when teachers implied good intentions but said very little about a topic. "No talk" is self defining. "If a person was challenged for not talking, she (or he) would simply talk around the topic...until she or he could be quiet again" (p. 79). "Talking around the topic" occurred when teachers deflected the conversation to another topic. Some teachers "dismissed a need to take action by claiming that the timing for such action was not right" (p. 81) or "change takes time" (p. 81). While comments like these may sound supportive they actually demonstrate the lack of desire to teach about diversity and take the steps to make change. "Misinformed talk" occurred when teachers contradicted themselves as in claiming not to have diversity in their classes yet later discussing students with special education needs or students from low socioeconomic status. Many of the conversations stayed "safe."

The data was analyzed in a methodological manner. “With polite talk being the norm, it was even difficult to challenge misconceptions, let alone challenge the silence” (Russo & Beyerbach, 2001, p. 87). The researchers determined that they “would need to think about how to re-teach the institute in a way that would help participants feel comfortable and not threatened, recognize their polite talk strategy, and then set up a system for moving beyond polite talk without being accused of rudeness” (p. 87). A suggestion was made to begin the conversation with disability and class issues and then move to race. School leaders need to use strategies to teach their teachers how to theorize and to help teachers realize that “one can be self-critical from a professional level, without undermining one’s position as a teacher” (p. 88). Staff development regarding diversity is just as important as staff development regarding reading or writing. “The most powerful professional development initiatives are effective at changing teachers at the belief level. A core strategy for surfacing assumptions and changing beliefs is the inclusion of conversations” (Hirsh, 2005, p. 43).

As mentioned earlier, people’s stories are data, data which is hard to ignore. When people of color share their stories of racism they begin to build an understanding and a knowledge in the hearts and minds of their White peers. Providing de-privileged spaces for White teachers helps their cultural competency increase. One way school leaders can increase cultural competency in their schools is to implement a diversity plan. Young, Madsen and Young (2010) in “Implementing Diversity Plans: Principals’ Perception of Their Ability to Address Diversity in Their Schools” discusses this exact notion. “Leaders are pivotal in carrying out diversity-related initiatives” (Young, et al, 2010, p. 136). Young, Madsen and Young discuss the Cox (2001) Model for Cultural Change which has five components. The components are: 1) Leadership, 2) Research and Measurement, 3) Education, 4) Alignment of Management Systems,

and 5) Follow-up” (p. 140). The case study in this research took place in a district that made the decision to enact a diversity plan in response to the increasing population of students of color. The district was demographically diverse. The participants were thirty-four people consisting of twenty-two principals, eight teachers, three district administrators and one board member.

Data collection consisted of onsite observations, open-ended interviews, reflexive journals, document analysis of the district’s diversity plan as well as a few more in depth interviews. The district consisted of 20,000 students, fifty-nine percent were minority students. The teaching staff consisted of twenty percent teachers of color and eighty percent European American. “A qualitative thematic strategy of data analysis” (Young, et al, p. 143) was used. Data was categorized and judged. “In establishing the reliability for this study, the data were analyzed using what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call a ‘constant comparative’ method” (p. 144). The study was valid as well.

The Mayflower school district’s adoption of the diversity plan prompted trouble from the beginning. Parents complaints about inequity prompted the writing of the plan. “Neither the board nor the district administrators communicated a compelling vision to persuade principals to take ownership for the plan” (Young, et al, p. 145). The district administrators began to argue with the principals over whose responsibility it would be to carry out the plan. The plan ended up being pushed off to the principals. Without accountability the plan just became another document on the shelf. In looking at Cox’s Model the school district had not been in the place to be ready to roll out the diversity plan. A principal of an alternative school did not feel the plan pertained to him. He reported that he did not have time to teach diversity when his goal was to get students back to their home school. “He questioned how the district could emphasize

diversity when it was facing high drop-out rates” (p. 149). Another principal felt that he was under pressure to perform well on state tests and he was wasting his time on diversity. The principals did not see the connection between the district’s plan and how to reduce inequities in the district. The principals needed education regarding equity. “Principals saw no value in hiring teachers of color but focused instead on hiring White teachers who could be trained to teach students of color” (p. 151). The district did not see any value in hiring leaders of color and continued hiring White female principals. Leaders did not understand equity and therefore ignored the equity plan.

The researchers believe that had the district followed the Cox Model, they would have been able to implement their equity plan. The leaders needed to be better prepared and own their equity plan. Even though over half of the students in the district were students of color the White teachers did not see a need in hiring teachers of color. As evidenced by the responses of principals in this report, “Administrators must be more than culturally competent. They should be given opportunities to practice leading diverse groups, with direction to identify and rectify mistakes” (Young, et al, 2010, p. 154).

Principals cannot wait for district leadership in regard to cultural competency. Their students need them to bridge home and school. Their students need them to “ask parents about dreams and aspirations for their children, what the school, in collaboration with the family, can do to help accomplish these goals, and talk about ways in which parents can help” (Nelson & Guerra, 2010, p. 64). Their students need them to create an environment where they have opportunities for success.

School administrators must gain a better knowledge of culturally responsive teaching practices, recognize the benefits these practices have for all students, and support teachers in their efforts to transform their teaching, classrooms, and schools so that they will be more responsive to the students they serve. (Brown, 2007, p. 61)

“Rethinking Successful School Leadership in Challenging U.S. Schools: Culturally Responsive Practices in School-Community Relationships” Johnson (2007) provides culturally responsive practices for principals. “Culturally responsive leadership practices are those that help to empower diverse groups of parents and make the school curriculum more multicultural” (Johnson, 2007, p. 50). In comparing the attributes of three strong principals Johnson found that each one “worked to create a trusting environment in her school where parents and community members could feel welcome and comfortable and held high expectations for student achievement” (p. 55). Johnson posed a question in her article regarding how we measure success for students, especially our students of color or in high poverty, “Is success about increasing performance on state mandated tests, or should we also consider how schools provide learning experiences that ‘center’ students from diverse backgrounds in the history, language, and culture of their families and home communities?” Colbert (2010) may have an answer, “A culture seeks an identity and strives to maintain its individuality and distinctiveness while recognizing the fibers that connect them to other cultures in more subtle ways” (p. 15). Could this be stated as, A child seeks an identity and strives to maintain her individuality and distinctiveness while recognizing the similarities that connect her to other children in more subtle ways? Culture and children cannot be viewed and treated as separate.

Culturally proficient leaders redefine education in a democracy to be inclusive. These leaders focus on inequity and equity, regardless of who is benefitting from the current status. They focus on confronting and changing one's own behavior to learning from and about new groups in the community. (Lindsey, et al, 2005, p. 111)



## Chapter Four – Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Summary

How do culturally responsive leaders instill a sense of urgency in educators to work toward cultural proficiency, narrowing the “awareness gap” of educators in order to narrow the “achievement gap” of students through the use of culturally responsive practices? Research regarding how culturally responsive leaders can instill a sense of urgency in educators to increase their cultural proficiency whether it be through pre-service teacher education programs, teacher-student relationships or by culturally responsive leadership demonstrates the necessary components of self-reflection, dialogue, and having high expectations for both teachers and students.

Self-reflection, the ability to critically analyze one’s beliefs, perceptions, values, judgments, and prejudices and how they relate to one’s actions can move an educator on the cultural awareness spectrum toward cultural proficiency and into using culturally responsive practices (Darder, 1991; He & Cooper, 2009; Hershfeldt, Sechrest, Pell, Rosenberg, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2009; Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2005; Lonquist, RB-Banks, & Huber, 2009; Medina, Morrone, & Anderson, 2005; Nuri-Robins, D. Lindsey, Terrell, & R. Lindsey, 2007). Having the opportunity to dialogue which is to discuss one’s beliefs and feelings, to share one’s experiences and stories as well as to listen to those of others, to connect with students, and to help students problem solve is another key component to instill the need in educators to increase one’s cultural competency (Adair, 2008; Camp & Oesterreich, 2010; Darder, 1991; Davis-Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005; Hayes, Bahruth, & Kessler, 1998; Hershfeldt, et al, 2009; Lindsey, et al, 2005; Nuri-Robins, et al, 2007; Russo & Beyerbach, 2001). Having

high expectations for leaders and teachers to include culturally responsive practices in their leading, teaching and learning promotes increasing cultural awareness as well as encourages having high expectations for students to perform to their potential (Hayes, et al, 1998; Johnson, 2007; Nieto, 2010; Poplin & Rivera, 2005). Providing opportunities for self-reflection and dialogue and having high expectations for leaders, teachers and students promotes the importance of developing one's cultural competency.

“Whiteness as an identity (and a marker of power) is linked to its insistence on being the only version of right, good, and worthy, to the exclusion of other versions of being” (Adair, 2008, p. 190). White privilege affords an educator the opportunity to not have to think about whether he/she may be uncomfortable in most situations. Educators and students of color do not have this privilege. In order to help White educators, both leaders and teachers, enhance their cultural proficiency, many researchers suggest providing de-privileged spaces as well as opportunities for field experience working with students from diverse backgrounds (Adair, 2008; Davis-Lenski, et al, 2005; He & Cooper, 2009; Lonquist, et al, 2009; Medina, et al, 2005). These experiences help promote one's desire to work toward cultural proficiency.

Using curriculum tied to students' lives helps students make meaning and promotes an increase in teachers' cultural proficiency (Camp & Oesterreich, 2010; Hayes, et al, 1998; Hershfeldt, et al, 2009; Johnson, 2007; Lindsey, et al, 2005; Nieto, 2010; Nuri-Robins, et al, 2007). The teacher-student relationship is vital. Through the use of curriculum that is tied to students' lives the teacher-student relationship is strengthened. When students know teachers care they are more apt to engage in learning. Having teachers similar in ethnicity to their students may also help bridge the home-school connection just as teachers of color may help

students of the majority culture broaden their perspectives (Adair, 2008; Darder, 1991; Poplin & Rivera, 2005). Perspectives may also be broadened and cultural proficiency enhanced by pre-service teachers taking on the role of ethnographer and studying the culture of their students (Davis-Lenski, et al, 2005; Medina, et al, 2005). Instructors in pre-service teacher education programs and principals who model culturally responsive strategies are more likely to have teachers who use these strategies as well (Lonquist, et al, 2009; Poplin & Rivera, 2005).

### **Conclusions**

There are various ways to inspire educators, both leaders and teachers, to increase their cultural competency and move beyond awareness into using and living culturally responsive practices. This inspiration must begin in pre-service teacher education programs and continue throughout an educator's career. As stated previously cultural proficiency is a life-long process. Educators develop a deeper sense of cultural proficiency as they reflect, critique, dialogue and take action (Darder, 1991). New teachers as well as new administrators must be culturally proficient in order to meet the needs of their students. As Ploumis-Devick and Follman (1993) noted, research demonstrates that a cultural disconnect between teacher and student can negatively impact students in various ways such as contributing to a lowered self image, lowered self expectations, lowered achievement, and poor performance on tests and assessments. Self-reflection, dialogue and having high expectations are necessary components to bridge the home-school gap.

In pre-service teacher education programs the findings included providing de-privileged spaces and fieldwork with diverse communities as well as participants taking on the role of ethnographer as ways to enhance one's cultural awareness. The studies were more qualitative

than quantitative however they were reliable in that each and every participant began a journey of self-reflection, even if that journey began with anger or frustration. The participants were challenged to look within themselves. Once that process begins the door has been opened to the possibility of new thinking. “Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (Freire, 2001, pp. 92-93). Providing de-privileged spaces for majority culture pre-service teachers is an effective way to increase cultural proficiency, however, it might not always be possible due to the limits on the enrollment population in a pre-service teacher education program. However, incorporating an opportunity for pre-service teachers to have experiences with a diverse population of students and take on the role of ethnographer in order to study the community the students live in is much more possible.

Once teachers are in service, providing de-privileged spaces may also be a challenge, again based on the demographics of the teachers in the school or district. One way in which majority culture teachers could experience a de-privileged space is by experiencing a lesson in a language they do not understand. The lesson as described in Darder (1991) was delivered in Spanish which some of the pre-service teachers did not understand. After this one lesson the pre-service teachers who did not understand Spanish began to have a sense of what many students go through on a daily basis. The discomfort the pre-service teachers felt for this short amount of time due to the shift in cultural capital was enough for them to begin to self-reflect, dialogue and take action. This experience can and should be replicated as a way to inspire cultural awareness. Providing monolingual leaders and teachers with an experience in which their primary language is not the language of instruction and holding them accountable to participate in the lesson and take an exam on the material, then dialoguing about their experience

will promote cultural awareness. The lesson, however, to be effective, should be delivered by a highly skilled teacher and last for a significant amount of time in order for the participants to get a feel for what English language learners face each day.

The research presented provided various ways in which teachers can expand their cultural proficiency. Having instructors in teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service as well as leaders who use culturally responsive practices will promote the use of culturally responsive practices among educators. Just as classroom teachers model strategies for students, university instructors and district administration should model culturally responsive strategies for teachers.

Having high expectations for leaders, teachers and students has also been proven to promote the use of culturally responsive practices with students. With cultural awareness comes the understanding that making connections with students is essential. Culturally proficient leaders and teachers have high expectations for themselves and for their students. When students have opportunities for success and know their teachers have high expectations for them, they, in turn, have high expectations for themselves (Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler, 1998). The generalizability here lends itself to, if leaders have high expectations for themselves and for their teachers then their teachers will have high expectations for themselves and their students. These high expectations of course are accompanied by supportive environments in order for them to yield the expected results.

Overall, the research surrounding self-reflection, dialogue and high expectations offers many ways in which cultural awareness can be inspired. How each is applied depends on

whether the setting is that of pre-service teacher education or with teachers and leaders already in schools.

### **Recommendations**

A Nation at Risk (1983) called for reform of our educational system over a quarter of a century ago. The reform was to benefit all “regardless of race, or class, or economic status” (A Nation at Risk, 1983, p. 12). NCLB (2001) continues with the call for reform. However, even with the focus on disaggregated data and the populations represented in that data, there is still an achievement gap; dropout rates are still higher and graduation rates are still lower for Hispanic, African American and Native American students than they are for their White peers. There is an overrepresentation in special education and an underrepresentation in gifted programs of these students as well. English language learners participate in more testing than their English only peers and therefore miss more instructional time. Programs, such as native literacy, continue to be questioned as valuable and in many cases, denied to students. Diversity Plans and Equity Plans may be in place but are not in use.

If the cultural awareness gap of leaders and teachers is not closed, the achievement gap will not be closed. Cultural proficiency is just one component of promoting students success, however, culturally responsive practices take into account the standards students need to meet, include high expectations and incorporate accountability into everyday practice in order to guarantee that every child is provided the opportunity to succeed. This researcher recommends that opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers and leaders to self-reflect, dialogue and act along with holding high expectations for themselves and their students must become incorporated in every day and in every way possible in education. Part of the action is to model

and expect the use of culturally responsive practices in classroom such as dialogue journals. Not only is it necessary for educators to have a forum in which to express themselves, it is necessary for students to have the same opportunity. Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler (1998) showed how the use of dialogue journals inspired meaningful, relevant learning through the opportunity of written dialogue in a non threatening interaction between teacher and student. The dialogue may take place in English and the student's first language. Using a student's first language to promote literacy engagement is vital to helping students make connections between his/her first and second language.

Teachers and leaders who are part of the dominant culture whether it be through race, ethnicity or habit of mind, may not understand the validity of culturally responsive leadership and practices.

Often when members of dominant cultures recognize that cultural differences exist, they suggest that the person in the non-dominant culture simply learn a new way of doing things: Become an American! In such a case, the word American is synonymous with 'a person who accepts assimilation into the dominant culture.' (Lindsey, Roberts & Campbell Jones, 2005, p. 26)

Disregarding students' cultures and expecting them to assimilate into the dominant culture is not closing the achievement gap. Developing and implementing a diversity plan or an equity plan is essential to place importance and focus on incorporating cultural proficiency into practice as an expectation rather than as an exception. However, these plans cannot simply be written as something to check off a list or to provide the appearance that equity is a priority; rather, they must be living and breathing documents that promote inspiration and expectation that diversity

and equity are valuable and necessary components of education. They cannot be another binder on the shelf, a way to “say” what a district is doing but instead they need to “be” what a district is doing. The plan must be embraced by all levels, including the school board, cabinet, administration, teachers, and parents. Ideally through critical self-reflection, the community as a whole would work toward unraveling the remnants of dominance (Howard, 1999) in order to support the achievement of all students.

Inspiring cultural awareness in order to lead toward cultural proficiency and culturally responsive practices not only promotes success for students of color.

Even if students, families, and school staff look similar to each other on the outside, districts are experiencing newly expanded perceptions of diversity. ‘Invisible’ diversity – such as socioeconomic status, family structure, citizenship, sexual orientation, spirituality, learning styles, and family histories – bubbles just beneath the surface.

(Saifer, et al, 2011, p. 2)

Educators who critically reflect, dialogue, have high expectations for themselves and their students and take action to transform the current practices will truly benefit all children. This writer shares Gay’s (2000) recommendation;

Teachers and other educators should act now, without a moment’s hesitation and with deliberate speed, to revise the entire educational enterprise so that it reflects and responds to the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes U. S. society and its schools. The underachievement of marginalized African, Asian, Native, and Latino American students is too pervasive to do anything less. The question is not whether to act, but how soon and

in what ways...Reform cannot wait until teachers and other educators are comfortable with the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy. (Gay, 2000, p. 212)

Students need educators who are culturally proficient in order to be provided with the conditions for students' success. It is the responsibility of the administration and teachers to work toward cultural proficiency and use culturally responsive practices. The research discussed confirms that teachers and leaders can be inspired to reach within themselves in order to reach out to their students. Every effort must be made to do so.

It is this researcher's recommendation that culturally proficient leaders be viewed and treated as valuable assets to the educational community even if their practice challenges others to broaden their perspectives and/or promotes discomfort among the dominant culture. It is this researcher's hope that further study will be made in regard to how to support educators who live cultural proficiency and use culturally proficient practices in their classrooms. From the Lonquist, RB-Banks and Huber (2009) study, the need for further research on strategies for teachers to handle discomfort while promoting equity was suggested. Further research on how to help culturally proficient leaders and teachers maintain the energy needed to carry on with this difficult work so that they will be able to continue to provide optimal environments for their students to succeed, would be welcomed.

## References

- Adair, J. (2008). White pre-service teachers and "de-privileged spaces." *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35 (4), 189-206. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Baptiste, H. P., & Baptiste, M. L. (1979). *Developing the multicultural process in classroom instruction: Competencies for teachers, cognitive competencies*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.
- Berg, E. (2011) *Encyclopedia of children and childhood in history and society*. Retrieved from [www.faqs.org/childhood/ke-me/kindergarten.html](http://www.faqs.org/childhood/ke-me/kindergarten.html).
- Bermudez, A. (1983). *Developing a Model for Cultural Proficiency in the ESL Classroom*. Detroit, MI: Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from [www.eric.ed.gov/](http://www.eric.ed.gov/)
- Berney, T., & Eisenberg A. (1968). *Doble digest of bilingual education: Research supplement*. New York City. Early Childhood Bilingual Education Project. Retrieved from [www.eric.ed.gov/](http://www.eric.ed.gov/)
- Brown, M. R. (2007). Educating all students: Creating culturally responsive teachers, classrooms, and schools. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 43 (1), 57-62. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Brownstein, R. (2010). Pushed out. *The Education Digest*, 75 (7), 23-27. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Camp, E. M., Oesterreich, H. A. (2010). Uncommon teaching in commonsense times: A case study of a critical multicultural educator & the academic success of diverse student populations. *Multicultural Education*, 17 (2), 20-26. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.

Castro Atwater, S. A. (2008). Waking up to difference: Teachers, color-blindness, and the effects on students of color. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 35 (3), 246-253.

Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.

Colbert, P. J. (2010). Developing a culturally responsive classroom collaborative of faculty, students, and institution. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 7 (11), 15-24.

Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.

Darder, A. (1991). *Culture and power in the classroom, A critical foundation for bicultural education*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Davis Lenski, S., Crumpler, T. P., Stallworth, C. & Crawford, K. M. (2005). Beyond awareness: Preparing culturally responsive preservice teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32 (2), 85-100. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.

Edgerton, W. (1962). *The teaching of russian in america: a modest proposal*. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>

Freire, P. (1970/1993/2001). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.). New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture power and liberation*. New York, NY: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Frye, B. J., & Vogt, H. A. (2010). The causes of underrepresentation of African American children in gifted programs and the need to address this problem through more

- culturally responsive teaching practices in teacher education programs. *Black History Bulletin*, 73 (1), 11-17. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G., & Kirkland, K. (2003). Developing cultural critical consciousness and self-reflection in preservice teacher education. *Theory Into Practice*, 42 (3), 181-187. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Gallardo, M. E., & Curry, S. J. (2009). Shifting perspectives: Culturally responsive interventions with Latino substance abusers. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse*, 8 (3), 314-329. doi:10.1080/15332640903110492.
- Hayes, C.W., Bahruth, R., Kessler, C. (1998). *Literacy con Cariño*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- He, Y., & Cooper, J. E. (2009). The ABCs for pre-service teacher cultural competency development. *Teaching Education*, 20 (3), 305-322. doi:10.1080/10476210902943256.
- Hershfeldt, P. A., Sechrest, R., Pell, K. L., Rosenberg, M. S., Bradshaw, C. P., & Leaf, P. J. (2009). Double-Check: A framework of cultural responsiveness applied to classroom behavior. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, 6 (2), 2-18. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Hirsh, S. (2005). Professional development and closing the achievement gap. *Theory into Practice*, 44 (1), 38-44. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Howard, G. (1999). *We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Johnson, L. (2007). Rethinking successful school leadership in challenging U.S. schools:

- Culturally responsive practices in school-community relationships. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 35 (3), 49-57. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Karp, S. (2009). Missing: Black and Latino boys. *Catalyst Chicago*, 21 (1), 10-11. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Lindsey, R. B., Roberts, L. M., & Campbell Jones, F. (2005). *The culturally proficient school: An implementation guide for school leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Lonnquist, P., RB-Banks, Y., & Huber, K. (2009). Developing cultural competency in adult pre-service teachers helps diverse learners: Graduates' perspectives in the United States of America. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 10 (1), 42-48. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.
- Lopez, M. H. (2009). *Latinos and Education: Explaining the Attainment Gap*. Pew Research Center. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org).
- Lys, D. B. & Caskey, M. M. (Ed). (2009). Supporting high school graduation aspirations among Latino middle school students. *RMLE Online*, 33 (3), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Medina, M. A., Morrone, A. S., & Anderson, J. A. (2005). Promoting social justice in an urban secondary teacher education program. *The Clearing House*, 78 (5), 207-212. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Milner, H. R., & Ford, D. Y., (2007). Cultural considerations in the underrepresentation of culturally diverse elementary students in gifted education. *Roepers Review*, 29 (3), 166-173. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education*

United States Department of Education.

Nelson, S. W., & Guerra, P. L. (2010). Eliminate inequities to transform the college prep process in elementary school. *Journal of Staff Development*, 31 (3), 63-64. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com>.

Nieto, S. (2010). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities* (10<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

No Child Left Behind Act (2001)

Nuri-Robins, K., Lindsey, D. B., Terrell, R. D., & Lindsey, R. B. (2007). Cultural proficiency: Tools for secondary school administrators. *Principal Leadership*, 8 (1), 16-22. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.

Ploumis-Devick, E., & Follman, J. (1993). *Appreciating differences: Teaching & learning in a culturally diverse classroom*. Hot Topics: Usable Research. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>

Poplin, M., & Rivera, J. (2005). Merging social justice and accountability: Educating qualified and effective teachers. *Theory into Practice*, 44 (1), 27-37. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.

Profiles of teachers in the U.S. (2005). Results of a national survey of k-12 public school teachers conducted by the National Center for Education Information. Retrieved from [www.ncei.com](http://www.ncei.com).

Ream, R. K., & Rumberger, R. W. (2008). Student engagement, peer social capital, and school dropout among Mexican American and Non-Latino White students. *Sociology of Education*, 81 (2), 109-139. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.

Reeves & Others (1978). Bilingual bicultural teacher training program. Mississippi State

- University, Mississippi State Collection of Education. Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [www.eric.ed.gov/](http://www.eric.ed.gov/)
- Robisheaux, J. (1994). *Aspects of culture, language and teacher expectations in public schools: Implications for Spanish speaking students*. Dissertation.
- Rodriguez, E. R., & Bellanca, J. (2007). *What is it about me you can't teach?: An instructional guide for the urban educator* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Russo, P. & Beyerbach, B. (2001). Moving from polite talk to candid conversation: Infusing foundations into a professional development project. *Educational Foundations*, 15 (2), 71. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Saifer, S., Edwards, K., Ellis, D., Ko, L., & Stuczynski, A. (2011). *Culturally responsive standards-based teaching: Classroom to community and back* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Sawyer, J. B. (1977). *Passive & covert bilinguals – a hidden asset for a pluralistic society*. California State University Long Beach: Swallow VI. Retrieved from [www.eric.ed.gov/](http://www.eric.ed.gov/)
- Smith, C. A. (2005). School factors that contribute to the underachievement of students of color and what culturally competent school leaders can do. *Educational Leadership and Administration*, 17, 21-32,133. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- Theoharis, G. (2010). Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice. *Teachers College Record*, 112 (1), 331-373. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/>
- United States Department of Education. Ed.gov.
- The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department. (1967) Title VII Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Wink, J. (2011/2005/2000/1997). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).

Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

[www.germanculture.com.ua/library/weekly/kindergarten.htm](http://www.germanculture.com.ua/library/weekly/kindergarten.htm) (1998-2011).

Young, B. L., Madsen, J., & Young, M. A. (2010) Implementing diversity plans:

Principals' perception of their ability to address diversity in their schools. *National*

*Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin, 94(2), 135-157. doi:*

10.1177/0192636510379901



CONCORDIA  
UNIVERSITY