BELIEFS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES
OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATORS:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Nancy Aiken Varian
December, 2008
ABSTRACT

The study used a qualitative case study research paradigm. There is a growing body of research which demonstrates that a culturally relevant instructional approach is effective with these students. The purpose of this study was to identify the beliefs of teachers who use “culturally relevant pedagogy” in their classrooms and to examine how they came to have those beliefs. In addition, the study explored the impact of these beliefs on the teachers’ instructional practices. This study was guided by two research questions: 1) How did teachers who have been identified as using a culturally relevant pedagogy develop their cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education; and 2) What beliefs, if any, do these teachers share about culturally relevant instruction and how do they implement those beliefs in their classroom practice? During data analysis, themes were identified and categories were developed for each case. Findings emerged from a cross case analysis of themes and categories.

The methodology of this qualitative case study was cross case analysis. Six teachers who successfully use a culturally relevant pedagogical approach were interviewed and observed to examine the genesis of their beliefs about diversity, and how those beliefs guided the instructional practices in their classrooms. Data collection procedures included interviews, classroom observation and artifacts.
Data analysis revealed three central influences in the development of the teachers’ cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education. Specifically, teachers were influenced by 1) their parents’ attitudes, values and behaviors; 2) culturally sensitive experiences that affected them personally; 3) firsthand exposure to social injustice that raised their awareness of culturally-rooted inequities. It also characterized teachers’ perceptions of factors that influenced their beliefs and guided their classroom instruction and practice. Data analysis revealed three broad beliefs about culturally relevant instruction that teachers demonstrated in their classrooms. Specifically, they cited the importance of 1) using a variety of instructional techniques; 2) designing student-centered instruction that promoted active learning and; 3) fostering a sense of personal empowerment in their students.

Implications of this study suggest the need for intentional firsthand experiences for student teacher education and professional development. In addition, it suggests that administrators build in effective mentoring programs to allow teachers to observe culturally relevant educators. Classroom teachers should learn all they can about the cultures and backgrounds of their students to make meaningful connections to the classroom study.

Future research is needed to continue to examine effective teachers and their beliefs and practices. More studies of the influences of teacher beliefs and how those influences impact classroom practice are needed. Furthermore, continuing to explore how more teachers can become culturally relevant educators by using culturally relevant
pedagogy in their classrooms is also critical for all students. Teacher recruitment and
teacher training are also areas which need further study.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my work to

my parents,

Charles and Jane Aiken,

who taught me the value of education

and

instilled in me a love of reading
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who assisted me in completing this research. I am grateful to my advisor and mentor, Dr. Evangeline Newton, for her continuous assistance and support. She inspired and encouraged as she directed me through the dissertation process. I have grown professionally, academically and personally from her wisdom and friendship.

I want to thank Dr. Sandra Spickard Prettyman, Dr. Ruth Oswald, Dr. Jacqueline Peck, and Dr. Lynn Smolen for serving on my dissertation committee. Their comments and encouragement were welcomed and greatly appreciated.

I wish to acknowledge the staff and faculty of The University of Akron, College of Education and Graduate School, who supported me during my doctoral studies.

Special thanks to my fellow graduate students for sharing their time and talents on projects and discussions which benefited me significantly. I especially thank my friend and fellow student, Jacki Gordon, with whom I walked throughout this journey, giving me support and encouragement.

Thanks to my colleagues and friends at Malone University for their support and interest in my work. In addition, a special thanks to Dr. Jane Dessecker who has served as my professional mentor for the many years I have worked in Stark County. Jane taught me that nothing is impossible and she gave me Stars, SEEDS, and 21st Century Dreams.
I sincerely thank Ms. Fawn, Mr. Maize, Ms. Olive, Mrs. Sable, Mrs. Coral and Mrs. Chestnut whose unselfish giving of their time, talents, and perspectives made this study possible.

And most importantly, I thank my family; Reed, Cliff & Megan, and Scott for their patience, assistance and love.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>xiii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background for the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education and Curriculum</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models of Multicultural Education</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposing Views of Multicultural Education</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education and Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Relevant Teaching</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Effective Teaching</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Beliefs</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample, Setting, and Population</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Fawn</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Maize</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Olive</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sable</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Coral</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Chestnut</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trust and Rapport and Access</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Interviews</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observations</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation and Artifacts</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Management</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation and Analysis</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Credibility and Trustworthiness</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation of Evidence</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influences</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Immersion Experiences</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessing Social Injustice</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Influences</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a Variety of Instructional Techniques</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing Student-Centered Instruction</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Student Empowerment</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Parents and Firsthand Experiences On Beliefs</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Teaching Methods with the Incorporation of Home Cultures</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Students to Independence</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for the Study</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Teacher Recruitment</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Teacher Preparation</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Staff Development</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for School District Administrators</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Research Plan</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 2003 40% of the students in grades K-12 in the public schools in the United States were students of color. It is predicted that by 2020 the number will rise to 48% of the student population. The number of students who speak a language other than English in their homes is also on the rise. The United States Census Bureau reported in 2000 18.4% of America’s students spoke a language other than English in their home. That is estimated to climb from 20 to 25% by the year 2025 (Banks, 2002). Nationally, the number of English Language Learners (ELL) students in public schools increased from approximately 2 million students in 1993–1994 to 3 million students in 1999–2000. ELL students represented approximately 7 percent of the national public school population in 1999–2000, up from 5 percent in 1993–1994 (U.S. Census, 2002). Poverty has also been rising in the United States. Thirty-three percent of the population in the United States were living in poverty in 2001. In fact, one of every five students attending American schools now live in poverty. Moreover, the gap between poor and wealthy is ever widening. In 1976 the top 1% of the population had 20% of the wealth. In 2001 the top 1% had 47% of the wealth (Banks, 2002).

These powerful statistics have implications for classroom instruction because, increasingly, America’s students come to school with life experiences that are more
economically, racially, and culturally diverse than those of previous generations. Traditionally, American schools have been designed to educate mainstream students (Banks, 2002). Mainstream American students are white, monolingual, and middle class. The tacit assumption that all five-year-olds enter the same playing field when they enroll in kindergarten comes into question when we see that children of poverty, children who have limited English proficiency, and children who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds attend American schools in increasingly large numbers. Au and Raphael (2000) contend students of diverse backgrounds differ from the American mainstream in ethnicity, primary language, and social class.

These demographic changes become even more important when considering that the majority of the teachers in the United States are white, middle-class females (Banks, 2002). Most of these teachers are not members of the students’ home cultures, so they are not familiar with the cultural experiences of their students or how these differences in experience impact school learning (Banks, 2002). As the movement to deliver instruction that recognizes the increasing diversity of American students has gained momentum in many American classrooms, some teachers have committed themselves to using pedagogical methods that recognize the significance of each student’s sociocultural experiences (Nieto, 1999). This study is based on a belief that such teachers can provide insights into how to deliver effective instruction for students from non-mainstream sociocultural backgrounds.

Multicultural education is an approach that has emerged to address these issues. Banks and Banks (2004) state:
Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to impact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civil and moral community that works for the common good. Multicultural education not only draws content, concepts, paradigms, and theories from specialized interdisciplinary fields such as ethnic studies and women studies (and from history and the social and behavioral sciences), it also interrogates, challenges, and reinterprets content, concepts, and paradigms from the established disciplines. Multicultural education applies content from these fields and disciplines to pedagogy and curriculum development in educational settings.

Early historic roots of multicultural education lie in the civil rights movements of various historically oppressed groups. Many scholars trace the history of multicultural education back to the social action of African Americans and other people of color who challenged discriminatory practices in public institutions during the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s (Banks, 1989; Davidman & Davidman, 1997). Among those institutions specifically targeted were educational institutions. The 1980s saw the emergence of a body of scholarship on multicultural education by progressive education activists and researchers who refused to allow schools to address their concerns by simply adding special units on famous women or famous people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994). James Banks (1991) was among the first of the multicultural education scholars to examine schools as social systems from a multicultural context.

Multicultural education is an effective way to deliver instruction that responds to the ethnic diversity of our American schools. In her 1994 book, The Dreamkeepers, Ladson-Billings coined the phrase “culturally relevant instruction” to describe a methodological approach that is compatible with America’s increasingly diverse student population. Ladson-Billings (1994) defines culturally relevant instruction as a pedagogy
that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The concept of “cultural relevance” moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. As a result, culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to preserve it and to transcend the perceived destructive effects of the dominant culture. These cultural referents are more than vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are an aspect of the curriculum in their own right. At the center of culturally relevant instruction is the culture of the learner (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This approach has detractors, particularly those who believe that a group must assimilate into the dominant culture while forgetting and giving up their own.

A number of critics suggest that some of the most widespread reforms in teacher education (e.g., the addition of a course in multicultural education, new requirements for field placements in “diverse” settings) have been more rhetorical than real, more piecemeal and optional than infused into a coherent multicultural curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Cochran-Smith (1995) has examined political and professional contexts as well as key syntheses that exist on the topic of multicultural education. Through both conceptual and empirical research, she concludes that the major challenge in establishing the missing program of research in multicultural teacher education is to develop rich and sensitive outcomes measures that take all of these aspects of “successful teachers” for diversity into account and then map forward from, or backward to, teacher preparation (Banks, 2004).

Often the student as a cultural resource is overlooked in the search for answers about how to improve educational effectiveness. Nieto (1996), building on Ladson
Billings’ work, advises educators to listen carefully to students because student “voices sometimes reveal the great challenges and even the deep pain young people feel when schools are unresponsive, cold places” (p. 106). This study explored the beliefs and instructional practices of teachers who have accepted the view of students as “cultural resources” by embracing the tenets of a culturally relevant pedagogy to improve educational effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

There is a mismatch between the sociocultural backgrounds of the majority of students and the majority of our teaching staff in American public schools. The K-12 American classroom is increasingly diverse, attended by students whose sociocultural experiences are not well understood by the teachers who teach them or well represented in traditional school curricula. Multicultural education (Banks, 1993; Gay, 1994; Grant & Sleeter, 1999; and Bennett, 2003) is an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994) is a way to deliver instruction that is compatible with the principles of multicultural education. However, since the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy is relatively recent, there is no historical tradition or extensive body of research documenting the effective practices of culturally relevant teachers upon whose expertise novice teachers can draw.

Few teachers identify themselves as working from this perspective. Locating such teachers and then confirming through interviews and observations that they do indeed teach from a culturally relevant pedagogical stance is often difficult. Moreover,
articulating what constitutes effective instruction can also be difficult today due to current emphasis on standardized testing and teaching to the test (Gorski & Shin, 1999). Skills-based education or test-focused instruction impedes cultural pedagogy as it often does not take student diversity or individual differences into account (Nieto, 1992). Furthermore, many educators believe standardized achievement testing is limited in its ability to measure student knowledge accurately (Gorski & Shin, 1999). These educators believe that rather than being concerned about memorization of trivial or out-of-context information, one must acknowledge the complexity of students’ knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate of 2002 has also impeded attempts to document the effectiveness of multicultural education. The NCLB legislation mandates adherence to skills-oriented, state academic standards and testing which leaves little time in the classroom for rich cultural discussions and in-depth study. The assertion is that the promise of the NCLB mandate is unfulfilled largely because it is insufficiently funded and requires the impossible: 100% proficiency in 12 years. Karp (2003), editor of Rethinking Schools, is a 27-year-veteran teacher in a high school in a New Jersey high school who finds fault with NCLB, observing that the mandate has done its best to eliminate multicultural education, teacher creativity, and student thinking. He asserts that NCLB includes provisions that try to push prayer, military recruiters, and homophobia into schools while pushing multiculturalism, teacher innovation, and creative curriculum reform out (Christensen & Karp, 2003).
Background for the Study

Regardless of the cultural and racial diversity in the United States, there continue to be racially segregated schools scattered across the country because of segregated neighborhoods (Denton & Massey, 1993; Orfield, 1993). Segregated schools are schools populated predominantly by one race or ethnicity. Orfield (1993) explains that racial homogeneity in the education system, or segregated schooling, is most readily apparent at the elementary school level. This is because school and classroom compositions tend to reflect the demographics of the immediate neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are populated by second and third generation families living in the homes built or purchased by parents or grandparents. This naturally results in homogenous schools (Orfield, 1993; Orfield & Monfort, 1992). Students in these schools are not exposed to diverse ethnicities and cultures that represent the tapestry of American and global humanity if they are being taught in classrooms with little or no visible ethnic or cultural diversity.

In the most recent census in the United States, distinct choices and combinations in the category of ethnicity were provided. Besides the five main ethnic/racial groupings: White alone, Black or African American alone, American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone, the census offered the two following designators: some other race alone, and two or more races. Although 98% of the population defined themselves as one specific ethnicity, there were ultimately 272 separate ethnicities reported (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

With this number of reported ethnicities in the United States, teachers have an increased responsibility to address the reality of the ethnically and racially diverse population. Teachers should not only be responsible for teaching an understanding of
world diversity, but should be responsible for incorporating that diversity into current curriculum. Teachers and administrators at all levels are obligated to assist their students in recognizing America’s cultural diversity and avoiding prejudicial behavior and/or attitudes about a group that are based on color or ethnicity (Montgomery, 2000).

Homogeneous schools and classrooms should not inhibit the teaching and learning of greater racial and cultural understanding and acceptance. Most children come to school with notions, preconceptions, and attitudes about cultural differences that are based on the beliefs of their families, peers, and communities. These preconceptions and attitudes are important for educators to recognize for socialization of the students (Lewis, 2001). While not all educators would agree with the value of multicultural education in a pluralistic society, this study ensues from the belief that all children benefit from a curriculum that uses all cultures and backgrounds to enrich the learning of everyone in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

Recently there has been increased interest in looking at ways to improve the academic performance of students who are culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse (Banks, 2002). Moreover, there is a respected research base which indicates that culturally relevant pedagogy makes a difference to non-mainstream populations (Au & Jordon, 1981; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981; Gay & Howard, 2000).

The purpose of this study, was to describe and explain beliefs and practices of six educators who use “culturally relevant pedagogy” in their classrooms. This study proceeded to clarify what these educators believe to be important in their “culturally
aware” classrooms. In addition, the study explored how personal and professional experiences shaped the teachers’ beliefs which have had an impact on their practice, with the hope that the insights generated by these educators will provide greater understanding of how a culturally relevant pedagogy can enhance the school experiences of children whose diverse sociocultural backgrounds come together in a multicultural classroom setting.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Vygotsky’s (1978a) contentions that knowledge and learning serve as a driving force in the human psyche, that the development of thinking is a shared process rather than an individual one, that a child learns by participating in and sharing another person’s frame of reference, and that the intellectual development of children is a function of human communities, rather than of individuals. The belief that children learn through participating and sharing another person’s frame of reference is an important framework for this study.

An additional theoretical foundation of this study comes from Vygotsky’s (1978a, 1987) belief in the central role of social interaction in the process of learning. Vygotsky (1978b) states that learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes which are able to operate only when the child is interacting cooperatively with people in his/her environment. According to Vygotsky, human learning is always mediated through others. Knowledge from this perspective is socially constructed through collaborative efforts to learn, understand, and solve problems (Garrison, 1998; Glaser, 1991; Johnson & Johnson, 1999).
In the Vygotskian perspective of education, the importance of social interaction is often associated with another theoretical idea, the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) (Kozulin, 1990). For instruction to be effective, Vygotsky observes that two different levels of development need to be identified in a child. The first level is the actual development as indicated by the problems that the child can solve independently. The second level is the potential problem-solving level that the child can reach under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. The discrepancy between these two levels is what Vygotsky identified as the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1987).

The ZPD provides a way to conceptualize how an individual’s development may be assisted by other members of the social context. In addition, the ZPD is a support through which the learner is guided towards his or her potential level of development. The metaphor of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross; 1976) has been used to characterize the forms of assistance provided by the adult to help students bridge the gap between their current abilities and the intended level (Cazden, 1993).

The term “scaffolding” evokes an image that describes the type of assistance offered by a teacher to support learning. In this process the teacher helps the student master a task or concept that the student is initially unable to grasp independently. The student is allowed to carry out as much of the task as possible without assistance. With teacher feedback and assistance, the student is able to fully achieve the task or goal (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). According to Benson (1997), “Scaffolding is actually a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know. If scaffolding is properly administered, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler.”
For “scaffolding” to be successful, it is essential that a strong relationship exists between the teacher and the learner. For this study, the ZPD and scaffolding are both significant concepts because they are compatible with the idea that learning and human development are relational constructs. For the culturally diverse learner, an adult’s guidance in fostering a community of learners is crucial for a child's development.

In addition, a Vygotskian (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991) perspective is suitable for this research because Vygotsky (Daniels, 1996) stresses the vital role of speech in the learning process. To Vygotsky, (Kozulin, 1990) speech is an important mediating tool for human mental development. When experts and novices or peer groups collaborate to solve problems, speech mediates the movement from one level to a higher level in the learners’ ZPDs. During social interaction speech serves to direct or mediate the developmental process in the participants (Palinscsar & Brown, 1984). Speech is central to this study of the culturally relevant learner because it is the principal mode of interaction between teacher and learner. Speech is vital to the expression of personal thought and the comprehension of the thoughts of others.

Bruner (1966) maintains that people interpret the world in terms of its similarities and differences. This concept is also important to this study because students with varying cultural backgrounds use the similarities and differences they see in others to help them make sense of their own worlds.

More recently, in The Culture of Education, Bruner (1996) explores the prominence of culture in shaping the mind. He contends that culture provides us with the toolkit by which one constructs not only worlds, but the very conception of oneself and
one’s powers. This theory is an important framework for the study because it is through this lens of culture shaping the mind from which students perceive themselves and their abilities.

The work of Dewey (1933), one of the early theorists to emphasize the value of reflection in education, provides the final components of the framework for this study:

1) that education must engage with and enlarge experience, and

2) that interaction and environments for learning provide a continuing framework for practice.

Research Questions

This qualitative study explores the practices and strategies of teachers who have had success teaching in the culturally diverse classroom. The questions which were studied are:

1) How did teachers who have been identified as using a culturally relevant pedagogy develop their cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education?

2) What beliefs, if any, do these teachers share about culturally relevant instruction and how do they implement those beliefs in their classroom practice?

Definitions of Terms

*Acculturation Ideology:* The mutual sharing and blending of each culture with others. From this perspective, someone new to a country takes on selected characteristics of the major culture, but retains those things which make their indigenous culture unique (Banks, 2002).
**Assimilation Ideology:** The belief that someone new to a country must join the major culture, accepting its values, ideals, and characteristics (Banks, 2002).

**Beliefs:** Mental constructions of experience that are held to be true and that guide behaviors. Beliefs are inferences, made by an observer, that represent an educator’s judgment. Beliefs can be inferred from what the individual says or does (Rokeach, 1968). In this study, beliefs are viewed as part of an educators’ practical understanding and knowledge that has evolved from his or her sociocultural background and cumulative life experiences. These beliefs can be discerned through the educators’ verbal statements, pedagogical choices, and classroom behaviors (Sigel, 1985).

**Classroom Practice:** Any observable plan, behavior, or statement by teachers that impacts either the students’ experience in a holistic way or their general learning (Cooper, 2000).

**Cultural Diversity:** An awareness of a culture that is not a part of the dominant cultural group. Implicit is the understanding that the dominant cultural group is not a deprived or disadvantaged culture. (Nieto, 1992).

**Cultural pluralism:** (alternatively called salad bowl, mosaic, or tapestry): The cultural pluralism concept is that all newcomers have the right to maintain their languages and cultures while combining with others to form a new society reflective of all the differences (Nieto, 1992).

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy:** According to Ladson-Billings (1994), culturally relevant pedagogy is “instruction as a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or
explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right” (pp. 17-18).

*Culturally Relevant Teachers:* In this study, the term refers to a group of teachers who have deliberately adopted and implemented culturally relevant pedagogy. These teachers “organize and structure social interactions and relations between and among themselves and their students” to encourage a community of learners (Ladson-Billing, 1994, p. 54).

*Culturally Diverse Classrooms:* Culturally diverse classrooms are classrooms that are made up of students of different ethnic groups. Ethnicity, race, age, gender, education, social-economic status, and religion are some of the main identifiers (Banks, 2002).

*Culturally Responsible Classrooms:* As described by Ladson-Billings (1994), the culturally responsible classroom incorporates respect, celebration, and the relevance of their own culture into the classroom curriculum and classroom setting (1994).

*Ethnic Group:* In this study, the term refers to a population that shares a common history and culture, common values, behaviors, and other characteristics that cause members of the group to have a shared identity. Cultural characteristics, rather than biological traits, are the essential attributes of an ethnic group (Banks & Banks, 2004).

*Ethnicity:* A dynamic and complex concept that refers to how members of a group perceive themselves through their culture, customs, attitudes, and beliefs; and how, in turn, they are perceived by others (Baruth & Manning, 1992).
*Melting pot:* The melting pot is a concept that maintains that differences need to be wiped out to form an amalgam that is uniquely American but without traces of the original cultures (Nieto, 1992).

*Multicultural:* Multicultural is a term used to express “an idea and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school” (Banks & Banks, 2001, p. 1).

*Multicultural Education:* As defined by Gorski, multicultural education is “a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally” (Gorski, 2001, p. 3).

*Multiculturalism:* Multiculturalism is defined as the status of several different ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural groups co-existing in harmony in the same society (Banks, 2002).

*Plurality:* Plurality is described as the state of being plural or the condition of being plural or numerous; a great number of part of something, particularly when this quantity represents more than half the whole (Encarta Dictionary, 2008).

*Self-Efficacy:* Self-efficacy is a judgment of one’s ability to organize and execute given types of presentations (Bandura, 1986). Teacher efficacy is the teacher’s belief in his or her capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully
accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context or given situation (Tschannen-Morgan, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Summary

Recent research on culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant educators recognizes the role of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs in understanding and improving instructional practices in culturally diverse classrooms. Exploring how educators’ practical knowledge and beliefs influence teaching behaviors and how those beliefs have evolved is an important and visionary area of research. The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs and practices of six effective culturally relevant educators in relationship to the backgrounds and experiences they bring to the classroom setting. Through careful and thoughtful discussion of the common insights and practices of these educators, this study provided further understanding of effective education in the culturally diverse classroom.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contains a review of the related literature and theories pertaining to current research on multicultural educational, culturally relevant pedagogy, and teacher beliefs and practices in the classroom. The chapter contains the following areas related to this study:

1) multicultural education,
2) culturally relevant teaching,
3) characteristics of effective teaching, and
4) teacher beliefs.

This study will examine the beliefs and practices of effective teachers in culturally relevant classrooms to see what patterns they have in common.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups (Banks, 2004). Its purpose is to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to impact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in
order to create a civil and moral community that works for the common good \citep{banks1996}. 

A main goal of multicultural education is to reform schools and other educational institutions in order for students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class backgrounds to experience equality in their education. In addition, as revealed in the literature, another important goal is to give male and female students an equal chance to experience educational success \citep{klein1985, sadker1994}.

Early historic roots of multicultural education lie in the civil rights movements of various historically oppressed groups. Many scholars trace the history of multicultural education back to the social action of African-Americans and other people of color who challenged discriminatory practices in public institutions during the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s \citep{banks1989, davidman1997}. Educational institutions were among those specifically targeted. The major architects of the multicultural education movement were clearly influenced by African-American scholarship and ethnic studies related to other ethnic minority groups in the United States \citep{banks2004}. In fact, the current movement is directly linked to the early ethnic studies movement initiated by scholars such as Williams \citeyear{williams1882} and continued by individuals such as DuBois \citeyear{dubois1935}, Woodson \citeyear{woodson1919, woodson1968}, Bond \citeyear{bond1939}, and Wesley \citeyear{wesley1935}. Scholars who are specialists in other ethnic groups include Cortes for Mexican Americans \citeyear{cortes1973, cortes2002}, Forbes \citeyear{forbes1973} for American Indians, Nieto \citeyear{nieto1986} for Puerto Ricans, and Sue \citeyear{sue1981} for Asian Americans.

Ultimately, multicultural education recognizes cultural diversity as a fact of life in American society, and it affirms that this cultural diversity is a valuable resource that
should be preserved and extended. It affirms that major educational institutions should strive to preserve and enhance cultural pluralism (Gay, 1994). To endorse cultural pluralism is to endorse the principle that there is no one model American. To endorse cultural pluralism is to understand and appreciate the differences that exist among the nation’s citizens. It is to see these differences as a positive force in the continuing development of a society which professes a wholesome respect for the intrinsic worth of every individual. Cultural pluralism rejects cultural assimilation (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1972).

While multicultural education has an established and respected research base, it also has detractors. Many of them advocate a paradigm of cultural assimilation which seeks to integrate members of an ethno-cultural group by “absorbing” them into an established, generally larger community (Banks, 2004). This process results in a loss of many characteristics of the absorbed group. Assimilation can be the process through which people lose originally differentiating traits, such as dress, speech particularities, or mannerisms, when they come into contact with another society or culture (Banks, 2002).

Multicultural Education and Curriculum

Multicultural education, then, is an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups (Banks, 2002). The 1980s saw the emergence of a body of scholarship on multicultural education by progressive education activists and researchers who refused to allow schools to address their concerns by simply adding special units on famous women or famous people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994). James Banks (1988)
was among the first of the multicultural education scholars to examine schools as social systems from a multicultural context.


A review of the research (Banks, 2003; Gay, 1992) suggests a high level of consensus among scholars about the aims and goals of multicultural education among educational theorists. Moreover, research on multicultural education and curriculum had a watershed event in the field when, in 1995, the Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education (Banks) was published to provide scholars and practicing educators an overview of the theory and research in the field. Gay, however, does point out that there is a tremendous gap between theory and practice in the field. She believes that a wide gap exists because theory development has outpaced development in practice (Gay, 1992). In contrast, some researchers disagree with the belief that there is a high level of consensus (Gibson, 1976; Sleeter & Grant, 1987), saying the approaches differ or overlap, as well as interrelate. Sleeter & Grant note the lack of consensus in the field and conclude that a focus on the education of people of color is the only common element among the many definitions of multicultural education. However, the overwhelming body of research suggests there are numerous approaches, statements of aims, and definitions of multicultural education by specialists in the field which indicate that there is a high level of consensus about its aims and goals (Banks, 2003; Bennett, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Parekh, 1986, Suzuki, 1984).
An earlier attempt to institutionalize reforms designed to make the schools and teacher education curricula ethnically and culturally pluralistic happened during World War II. An educational reform known as “Intergroup Education” and “Intercultural Education” emerged as a response to societal forces which took place beyond the four walls of the classroom. While World War II created many job opportunities in northern cities, it initiated a demographic shift with ramifications for public education. In cities like Chicago and Detroit where some of the 150,000 Blacks from the south settled, socioeconomic and cultural conflicts developed as Blacks and Whites competed for jobs and housing. These conflicts resulted in serious racial tension and riots. A goal of the “Intergroup Education” was to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice and misunderstanding. This movement failed to become institutionalized on a significant scale. It largely faded when special funds and projects which supported the movement ended. The “Intergroup Education” movement is, however, an important antecedent of the current multicultural education movement, if not an actual root (Banks, 1996).

Most researchers agree that for multicultural education to be implemented successfully, institutional changes must be made in the curriculum, teaching materials, teaching and learning styles, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of both teachers and administrators (Banks, 1992). In addition, the culture of the school, including its goals and norms, must also be in alignment with the practical application in the classroom (Banks, 1992; Bennett, 2001; Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

There is also a general agreement that multicultural education must be conceptualized and implemented broadly if it is to bring about meaningful change in schools. Serious problems result when multicultural education is conceptualized only, or
primarily, as content integration. For example, educators in subjects like mathematics and science perceive multicultural education only as content integration and appropriate for social studies and language arts teachers (Moreno, 1999; Moses & Cobb, 2001).

When multicultural education is narrowly conceptualized, it is often confined to activities for special days and occasions, such as Cinco de Mayo or the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. It can also be viewed as a special study or unit, such as a book by a Mexican American author or a few additional lessons. For multicultural education to be effective, adding content about ethnic groups to the curriculum is not enough. The curriculum must be reconceptualized to help students understand how knowledge is constructed and how it reflects human ideology, interests, and the experiences of diverse groups of people. This helps students to view the nation’s experiences from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives to understand its past and present (Banks, 2004).

Craviotto and Heras (1999) have determined a list of characteristics as important in making the classroom curriculum culturally relevant to students. These characteristics include using families as resources for knowledge, and using multicultural literature as a resource for understanding diverse perspectives. Students are regarded as active knowledge generators, with dialogue as a fundamental aspect of classroom interaction. From this perspective classrooms are framed as an inviting space for exploration, learning, and dialogue among peers, students, and adults. Moreover, several languages are used in the classroom as resources for communication and learning.
Models of Multicultural Education

Banks (2004) has conducted seminal research in this area. He proposes a model of multicultural education with five elements: 1) *Content Integration*, which features a multicultural curriculum that enhances awareness of these groups; 2) *Knowledge Construction Process*, in which students problem-solve issues by considering the perspectives of those from other backgrounds; 3) *Prejudice Reduction*, which seeks to change negative attitudes that students may have about each other and other cultures; 4) *Equity Pedagogy*, which fosters ways to increase fairness for all students and; 5) *Empowerment of School Culture and Social Structure*, which addresses institutional issues such as working with staff and faculty to set an institutional foundation that will foster the needed changes.

Banks (2004) has further offered a tiered approach for implementing this model in the classroom. The “contribution” component celebrates holidays, customs, and heroes in the classroom. The “additions” component adds more content without making structural changes. The “transformative” component changes the structure for real reform in the school and the “social action” component takes the reform and adds a “real-world” social action experience for students.

Within each of these components are embedded levels of knowledge (Banks, 2002). These levels of knowledge give an understanding of how to communicate in the multicultural arena. The first level is “personal/cultural,” which emphasizes one’s own culture and values and that of their family and community. Next is the “popular level” which involves the media perspective, evidenced in movies, such as *Birth of a Nation,*
Dances with Wolves, and How the West was Won. Then the mainstream “academic level” which includes an awareness of how these issues have been taught in the past. Next is the “transformative academic” level. This level challenges mainstream academics. For instance, Dubois’s book, The Black Reconstruction and Woodson’s book, The Mis-Education of the Negro, challenge mainstream ideas of how the Black man was treated and what rights he should have been afforded. The final level is the “school level” which describes the institutional perspective, largely influenced by the popular and mainstream academic levels.

There are few people who can speak more authoritatively on the subject of multicultural education than Banks (2004), considered by many as the “founder” of the multicultural education field. The broad process areas, different aspects of multiculturalism in the classroom, and the levels of knowledge all point to Banks’ assertion that multicultural education is to help students balance their various cultural, regional, national, and global identities and give students the knowledge, skills, and values to challenge inequality throughout the world and to create just and democratic multicultural societies (Gay, 1996).

Banks’ (2004) model is typical of many current multicultural models and typologies which share significant features. They include similar recommended curriculum changes, an institutionalized mission, the need for faculty “buy in”, students’ respect and tolerance, and a call for social action (Gay, 1994).

Sleeter and Grant (2003) take a slightly different approach in their model for multicultural education. Their model has a strong emphasis on human rights. It includes teaching the exceptional and culturally different in a way which builds a bridge for them
to become part of the group and feel acceptance. This model emphasizes single-group studies which study one culture at a time, providing a multicultural education as a reform program for the institution to build on. It supports social reconstructionism by going a step further in becoming active and making social change.

Merryfield (2005), in a National Council for the Social Studies publication, titled *Social Studies and the World: Teaching with Global Perspective*, refers to “worldmindedness.” Merryfield’s (2005) perspective is one of experience and immersion. She uses a Liberian proverb to explain her perspective: “An alligator can’t swim across the river without getting wet.” Her major premise is that immersion in a culture promotes acceptance and understanding of that culture. She differentiates between “surface culture” (i.e., customs, food, dance, etc.) which is easier to embrace, and “internal culture” (i.e., values perspectives and views) which is more challenging to embrace. Her ideas foster positive experiences with other cultures in order to develop “worldmindedness.”

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant pedagogy is one kind of multicultural curriculum that is central to this study. Gloria Ladson-Billings coined the phrase “culturally relevant” in her 1994 book, *The Dreamkeepers*. She defines culturally relevant instruction as a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture, they are an aspect of the curriculum in their own right. At the center of culturally relevant
instruction is the culture of the learner. Ladson-Billings (1994) asserts that culturally relevant teaching is designed not only to fit the school culture to the students’ cultures, but also to use students’ cultures as the basis for helping them understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge.

The primary goal of culturally relevant teaching is to empower students to examine critically the society in which they live and to work for social change. In order to do this, students must possess a variety of literacies: (a) language-based, (b) mathematical, (c) scientific, (d) artistic, (e) musical, (f) historical, (g) cultural, (h) economic, (i) social, and (j) political (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The curriculum is based on knowledge that is valued by the students’ community. Such knowledge includes the history and the culture of the group. Moreover, instructional styles are congruent with the group’s cognitive and learning styles (Shade, Kelly & Oberg, 1997).

Gay (1994) defines “culturally relevant pedagogy” by using a slightly different phrase, “culturally responsive teaching.” She describes it as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. Gay believes culturally relevant pedagogy teaches to and through the strengths of these students. She describes it as pedagogy that is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. Gay adds that there are many definitions for multicultural education, and experts are explaining multicultural education in many ways.

Although this instructional approach is identified by a variety of labels, including culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive, the rationale and practices that seek to align classroom
instruction with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students are virtually identical. Some call it a philosophy or a process (Grant, 1978). Others say it is an education reform (Banks and Banks, 2001). It has also been called a process of teaching and of learning (Sleeter and Grant, 1999).

Gay (2000) argues that individual definitions are more semantic than substantive. She believes the biggest differences come from those who have studied the field for many years as opposed to those who are new to the study of multicultural education. According to Gay, one should expect people who have been involved in a discipline or educational movement for a long time to understand and talk about it differently from those who are new to it. Similarly, educators who look at schooling from the vantage point of sociology, psychology, or economics will have differing views of the key concerns of schooling. Yet, these disparate analysts may agree on which issues are the most critical ones. Such differences over means coupled with widespread agreement on substance are naturally found in discussions of multicultural education. But this diversity should not be a problem, especially when we consider that multicultural education is all about plurality (Gay, 2000).

By involving them in a culturally responsive classroom, students learn different ways of knowing, understanding, and presenting information. Because multiple views are allowed, students are introduced to new and diverse interpretations and perspectives. The different views challenge and broaden the students’ boundaries. In the classrooms, students are allowed to use their strengths which in turn facilitates the development of new skills. Moreover, associations are made between the school culture and home culture.
Gay (2000) actually prefers the term culturally responsive to relevant, and one will find the terms used interchangeably. She asserts that, “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 and effective for them” (p. 29). Gay additionally notes that improving academic achievement is far from the only goal, as a culturally responsive approach to teaching helps students of color “maintain identity and connection with their ethnic groups and communities; develop a sense of community, camaraderie, and shared responsibility; and acquire an ethic of success” (p. 30).

Furthermore, culturally responsive/relevant teaching can be described as multidimensional. While it does address curriculum content, culturally relevant teaching also includes “learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments” (p. 31). An important understanding of this multidimensionality is to realize that teachers who undertake this kind of teaching must tap into a wide range of cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives. Emotions, beliefs, values, ethos, opinions, and feelings must be scrutinized along with factual information to make curriculum and instruction more reflective of and responsive to ethnic diversity. However, every conceivable aspect of an ethnic group’s culture is not replicated in the classroom. Nor are the cultures included in the curriculum used only with students from that ethnic group.

Ultimately, culturally responsive pedagogy focuses on those elements of cultural socialization that most directly affect learning (Gay, 2000, pp. 31-32). Consequently, culturally responsive teaching can be considered transformative, as “it recognizes the
existing strengths and accomplishments of these students and then enhances them further in the instructional process” (Gay, 2000, p. 33). It is also emancipatory, “in that it releases the intellect of students of color from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing” (Gay, 2000, p. 35). Finally, “cooperation, community, and connectedness are also central features of culturally responsive teaching. Students are expected to work together and are held accountable for one another’s success” (Gay, 2000, p. 36).

Opposing Views of Multicultural Education

Such models are not, however, universally accepted. In fact, they face the twin challenges of vigorous political resistance and a paucity of knowledge about many ethnic groups (Banks, 2002). Western traditionalists, for example, believe that people coming to the United States must adopt the American way of thinking and give up their own cultures and thinking. Some who espouse this view initiated a national effort to defend the dominance of Western civilization in the school and university curriculum (Gray, 1991; Howe, 1991; Woodward; 1991). Some of them believe that Western history, literature and culture are endangered in the school and university curriculum because of the push by feminists, ethnic minority scholars, and other multiculturalists for curriculum reform and transformation (Banks, 1993).

Similarly, multicultural programs are repudiated by Afro-centrists (Woodson, 1933) who believe that the curriculum should be based on African American interests. Afro-centrists’ primary educational goal is to motivate African American students while also teaching others about of the contributions made by African Americans in the history
of our country. Moreover, some people believe multicultural programs are entitlement programs, designed for others, not for themselves. They have also hindered progress in multicultural education (Banks, 2002).

Furthermore, multiculturalism has been questioned and criticized by a number of respected scholars. Schlesinger (1991), for example, defended the old-fashioned American melting pot against proponents of multiculturalism, rejecting the idea that ethnicities should retain separate identities and even celebrate them. He elicited tides of criticism by comparing Afro-centrism to the Ku Klux Klan (Schlesinger, 1998).

Although Ravitch (2000) avidly supports the pluralistic perspective, she fears national division. Stressing the importance of national unity, she promotes the development of multiculturalism based on a strategy of adding on by keeping mainstream Anglo-American history but expanding it to include information on racism as well as minority contributions to America’s music, art, literature, food, clothing, sports, and holidays. She stresses that this form of pluralism would encourage students of all racial and ethnic groups to believe they are part of American society and should therefore develop their talents and minds to the fullest. She also argues that students taught from the traditional Anglo-centric approach would be inspired by the stories of others from diverse backgrounds who overcame socioeconomic and discriminatory obstacles to achieve success in a variety of fields. Ravitch, driven by a desire for universalism which affirms our common humanity by discouraging our specific group identities, especially ones based on racial experiences is, ironically, a self-avowed proponent of pluralism, who actually wants us to abandon our group ties and become individuals (Takaki, 1993).
Some Christian conservatives challenge multiculturalism on a different front. Religious leaders such as James Dobson of *Focus on the Family*, have questioned multiculturalism. They believe immigrants must shed their ethnic heritage in order to be accepted as Americans. Whether it be mainstream liberals such as Schlesinger and Ravitch or religious conservatives such as Dobson, the two movements share one crucial attribute: both reject the need to build a common national identity with which Americans of different backgrounds and belief systems can personally and culturally identify. In short, they reject the central concept of American pluralism. (Reifowitz, 2005).

After the burning of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2000, Bennett (2003) rethought her definition of multicultural education. She concluded that it is essential to use multicultural awareness as the foundation for building the ideals of human dignity, respect, and acceptance. She has developed a model to help bring this about. Her model includes “equity pedagogy” to ensure fairness and equality; “curriculum reform” to incorporate systems that will make needed changes; “multicultural competence” that focuses on problem-solving and looking at things through the eyes of others and their different perspectives; and “teaching for social action” which involves people taking action to stamp out antiracist, anticlassist, and antitsexist behaviors.

In addition, Bennett (2003) writes of the need to incorporate the following values into multicultural education: acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, respect for human dignity and universal human rights, responsibility to the world community, and reverence for the Earth. Bennett’s model is undergirded by her view of assimilation and pluralism. She believes that assimilationist ideology means integration will have been
achieved only when the minority group can no longer be differentiated from the white majority in terms of economic status, education, or access to social institutions and their benefits. Bennett continues by explaining that this can be accomplished by fostering a “color-blind” attitude where prejudice once reigned.

Bennett (2003) describes pluralism as a way of bringing groups together with mutual respect and acceptance. She uses the images of a stained glass window, a tapestry, or a mosaic to show that all are in harmony, but still keep their own beautiful characteristics.

Multicultural Education and Teacher Preparation

There is no doubt that the student population in our schools has become increasingly diverse and that this trend will continue for some time. It is predicted that about 40 percent of the nation’s school-age youth will be students of color by the year 2020 (Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989). Already, students of diverse backgrounds comprise about 30 percent of our public school students, are the majority in 25 of the nation’s 50 largest school districts, and are the majority in some states such as New Mexico, Texas, and California (Banks, 1991).

Demographic changes have led to an increasing gap in the sociocultural backgrounds of teachers and students. In light of these dramatic demographic shifts, the preparation of teachers who will educate these students has been given increasing attention. Moreover, many beginning teachers are reluctant to work in urban and other schools that serve ethnically and linguistically diverse students (Banks, 2004). Educating
teachers for diversity must include attention to the quality of instruction that will be offered by these teachers (Zeichner, 1992).

Sleeter (1993) reviewed approximately eighty studies of effects of various pre-service teacher education strategies, including recruiting and selecting students, multicultural immersion experiences, multicultural education coursework, and program restructuring. She found that data-based research studies on pre-service teacher preparation for multicultural schools, particularly schools that serve historically underserved communities, provide little evidence of which strategies really prepare strong teachers.

In the first issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* under the editorship of Cochran-Smith, Nieto (2000), and Ladson-Billings (2000), leading scholars on diversity issues, argued for continued exploration of diversity issues in teacher education. They found that a central challenge faced by teacher educators was how to continue helping pre-service and in-service teachers understand and address the issue of equal access. In the realm of traditional literacy, access to print materials has been associated with successful literacy acquisition and overall academic success; however, students from diverse backgrounds have traditionally not enjoyed the same level of access as have their European American peers. The concept of multiple literacies has made equal access an even more complicated issue, since it now includes access both to texts (print and non-print) and technology. While most students in the United States do have access to a television set, greater variability exists in diverse students’ ability to access more advanced technology (e.g., computers, ipods). Certainly financial conditions also play a critical role in maintaining the disparity in accessibility since a significant number of
families from diverse backgrounds live in poverty and are unable to afford such equipment (US Census Bureau, 1999).

Another challenge for teacher educators is to help pre-service and in-service teachers acknowledge, value, and support the rich literacy knowledge that diverse students bring into the classroom. Research indicates that while diverse students may not possess the print literacy that seems to be positively associated with school success they do possess a rich body of literacy knowledge that is uniquely embedded in their lives and communities (Gee, 2000).

An additional challenge for teacher educators is to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with opportunities to become knowledgeable about, respect, and value their students’ linguistic and cultural diversity. Research informs us that teachers in the United States, most of whom are European-American and middle-class, have little or no life experience with diverse populations, and they have scant understanding of their students’ backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In many ways, teachers and their diverse students live in two separate worlds, with sometimes differing sets of values, beliefs, and experiences. Being in the same classroom does not automatically bring teachers closer to their students; it does not necessarily make them more knowledgeable about their students’ academic, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000).

Although Ladson-Billings (1994, 2000) found a large quantity of research, very little of it actually examined which strategies best prepared teachers. Most of the research focused on addressing the attitudes and lack of knowledge of pre-service students. Sleeter (2001) argues that while this is an important problem that does need to be addressed, it is
equally important to figure out how to populate the teaching profession with excellent multicultural and culturally responsive teachers.

Haberman (1987, 1991) does not place much faith in the power of conventional pre-service education programs to prepare white, monolingual teacher education students to teach diverse learners. Haberman argues that most typical majority education students are not capable developmentally of dealing with the complexities associated with intercultural teaching and that teacher education programs are not capable of producing the kind of fundamental changes in values, attitudes, and dispositions needed for the successful teaching of ethnic and linguistic minority students.

Some empirical data support Haberman’s (1991) position, indicating how various strategies of teacher education for diversity often legitimate and strengthen the very attitudes, values, and dispositions they were designed to correct. Efforts to help culturally diverse students develop a clearer sense of their own identities, and to reexamine their attitudes toward and beliefs about different ethnocultural groups, aim at the same kind of fundamental changes in mainstream students. So too do many of the community field experiences and immersion experiences described in the teacher preparation literature.

Some research, however, conflicts with findings about the impotence of teacher education experiences. Gomez and Tabachnick (1991), Beyer (1991), and Ladson-Billings (1991) have presented the stories and journal writings of their students which demonstrate the powerful impact of some of these experiences. In The Dreamkeepers, one of Ladson-Billings’ students, for example, talked about how a soup kitchen and shelter for the homeless affected her in a very powerful way. The student added that it
showed her a completely new perspective on life in this society, one to which she had never been previously exposed. She went on to indicate that she realized her life could have taken a very different path. It taught her to empathize with, be aware of, and be open to a world different than her own. (Ladson-Billings, 1991).

Villegas and Lucas (2002) offer a view of culturally responsive teachers that can serve as the starting point for conversations among teacher educators in this process. In their view, culturally responsive teachers (a) are socioculturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar.

Regarding the curriculum of teacher preparation, there is a strong research base in some areas related to culturally appropriate education and the importance of integrating knowledge about diversity, democracy, and social justice throughout urban teacher preparation programs (Grant, 1994). According to studies at The Institute for Urban Research (2005), teacher preparation must recognize and address problems that arise when there is a marked difference between the student’s culture and the school culture. Their research cautions against misreading of students’ aptitudes, intents, or abilities as a result of differences in cultural styles of language use and interactional patterns. It further cautions against encouraging styles of interaction and/or discipline that are at odds with a community’s cultural norms.
In addition, teacher educators should be alerted to stereotyping that may occur when their students engage with those from diverse populations. It is not appropriate to label all African American girls as “nurturing” or Native American children as “quiet” or Asian children as having “perfect behavior” (Delpit, 1992). Since differentiating instruction for each individual learner is critical, these stereotypes are particularly unsuitable in the classroom.

According to Delpit, one cannot assume that the failure of the child to thrive intellectually is due to a deficit in the child rather than a deficit in the teaching. Nor can one view the schools as the place to “save” the children. Instead, educators must work with parents and communities to move toward excellence, and to increase visibility of the histories and realities of children and communities of diverse cultures in the curriculum (Delpit, 1992).

However, according to Cochran-Smith (2000), much of the current research which provides insight in the area of teacher preparation is not being implemented. Findings of this research are perhaps being undermined or overwhelmed by the political agendas that require focusing teaching and teacher education on students’ and teachers’ test scores (Cochran-Smith, 2000).

Culturally Relevant Teaching

There is a consensus among some researchers about the characteristics of culturally relevant teachers (Banks, 2002). According to Ladson-Billings (1994, 2000) culturally relevant teachers understand that diverse and minority students learn and master instructional material when there is a match between their present achievement
levels and the tasks to be completed. The task or assignment should not be so complicated that the student consistently fails or so easy that the student sees the work as unchallenging or meaningless. Successful teachers of these students can be identified by their levels of energy and exuberance. These teachers move around the classroom and use their bodies, voices, and facial gestures as teaching instruments. These teachers are interactive and often give pats on the back or hugs for jobs well done. This active involvement on the part of the teacher involves acceptance of students’ ideas, frequent feedback, demonstrations, questions, reviews, drills, rephrasing, explanations, recitations, monitoring, summarizing, individualizing, and reinforcing (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2000).

In culturally relevant teaching there is much differentiation and variety and the pace is brisk. These classrooms are pleasant, friendly, and open. They are not hostile or repressive. The atmosphere is amicable, enthusiastic, and responsive, without sacrificing orderliness. Effective teachers of culturally diverse students have high expectations; optimize academic learning time; organize, manage, and plan well; and maintain a pleasant and respectful classroom atmosphere. (Brophy, 1998, Hawley, 1990, Cruickshank, 1995).

Villegas (2002) developed a framework for assessing the cultural competence of teachers and subsequently argued that teachers in a multicultural society need the following: (a) an attitude of respect for cultural differences, knowledge of the cultural resources their students possess, and skills in tapping these resources in the teaching-learning process; (b) a belief that all students are capable of learning evidenced in an enriched curriculum for all students; and (c) a strong sense of professional efficacy when evaluating students (Villegas, 2002).
Teachers who effectively implement teaching strategies for the culturally diverse classroom draw upon a sophisticated knowledge base of multicultural knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and subject-area knowledge (Banks, 1994), and have a keen understanding of their own cultural experiences, values, and attitudes toward people who are culturally, racially, and ethnically different from themselves (McGee-Banks, 1997). Multicultural knowledge includes understanding key concepts such as culture, immigration, racism, sexism, cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, ethnic groups, stereotypes, prejudice, and instructional racism (Banks, 1994).

The attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to implement cultural relevant pedagogy effectively are the product of study, practical experience, and reflective self-analysis (McGee-Banks, 1997). Reflective self-analysis requires educators to identify, examine, and reflect upon their attitudes toward different cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, and social-class groups. It requires educators to disassemble myths that perpetuate social class, racial and gender privilege, and a commitment to multicultural awareness and action (McGee-Banks, 1997). The effective implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy requires teachers to have a deep understanding of the histories, characteristics, and differences of the racial and ethnic groups with which they work. This knowledge can provide a foundation to help teachers design and select appropriate instructional materials for their students, make informed decisions, and decide where to place the focus of the instruction for individual needs of students (Banks, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1997).

Sonia Nieto (1996) advises educators to listen carefully to students because their voices sometimes reveal the great challenges and obstacles they face and even the deep
pain young people feel when schools are unresponsive, cold places. Often the student, as a cultural resource, is overlooked in the search for answers about how to improve educational effectiveness. She cites many school practices and policies, such as tracking and ability grouping, as discriminatory, and most commonly found in large, racially diverse, and poor communities. In other words, policies most likely to jeopardize students at risk of educational failure are most common in the institutions in which those students are found. According to a report issued by the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (1990), African American children are three times more likely than European American children to be placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded and only one-half as likely to be in classes for the gifted. In another minority group, Latino students drop out of school at a higher rate than any other major ethnic group, sometimes as high as 80 percent (Nieto, 1996).

While studying interactions between Native American students and their white and Native American teachers, Mohatt and Erickson (1981) found that those who were more effective in communicating used an interactional style they coined, “culturally congruent” (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981, p. 110). Cultural congruence is meant to signify the ways in which teachers altered their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structure to resemble more closely those of the students’ own cultures.

Au and Jordon (1981) learned through research with native Hawaiian students that improved reading performance was related to students’ ability to discuss what they read in a style similar to their at-home communication style. This style, an overlapping interactional style, resembles what is known in native Hawaiian culture as “talk story.” Au and Jordon (1981) used the term “cultural appropriateness” to describe the teaching
technique. In addition, Au (1993) argued for the inclusion of multicultural literature in the classroom to affirm the cultural identity of students from different backgrounds, and to develop all students’ understanding and appreciation of the cultures.

Irvine (1990) coined “cultural synchronization” which describes what occurs when African American students and their teachers enjoy powerful connections with one another. This synchronization refers to the correlation between two people in terms of the unspoken rules and subtleties of their common or unique cultures. Ladson-Billings’ notion of “cultural relevance” moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. She argues that a student needs to see his or her history, culture, or background represented in the text and classroom without distortion. “Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17-18).

Through her research, Ladson-Billings (1994) established characteristics of culturally relevant teachers that give distinctive “voice” to her beliefs. Culturally relevant teachers can be identified by the way they see themselves and others as a part of the community, and by helping students connect with local, national and global identities. They have “ownership” in the success of their students and, ultimately, their community. Culturally relevant teachers believe all students can succeed. They know that they need to meet each child where he/she is and build from that point. Culturally relevant teachers make connections locally, nationally, and globally. They are aware of their world and share it daily with students so they, too, develop an interest (Ladson-Billings, 1994).
Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Research in the area of effective teaching has been extensive. For many years, educators and researchers have debated which school variables most influence student achievement. Evidence suggests that factors such as class size (Glass & Smith, 1978; Mosteller, 1995), teacher qualifications (Ferguson, 1991), school size (Haller, 1993), and other school factors may play important roles in what students learn. However, with the new standards for student learning, greater attention has been given to the role that teacher quality plays in students achievement (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996; National Education Goals Panel, 1998).

Darling-Hammond (1997) studied legislation in more than 25 states that resulted in improved teacher recruitment, education, certification, and professional development and believes that the growing body of research suggests that a substantial portion of the differences in student success can be attributed to teachers. Variables presumed to be indicative of teachers’ competence which have been examined for their relationship to student learning include measures of academic ability, years of education, years of teaching experience, measure of subject matter and teaching knowledge, certification status, and teaching behaviors in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Substantial evidence from prior reform efforts indicates that changes in course taking, curriculum content, testing, or textbooks make little difference if teachers do not know how to use these tools well and how to diagnose their students’ learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Therefore, teachers who are more knowledgeable in their field and are skillful at teaching it to others enhance student learning.
Specifically for the diverse learner, Darling-Hammond (1997) suggests a need for approaches that strengthen teachers’ abilities to teach diverse learners with a keen diagnostic eye and a wide repertoire of strategies supporting mastery of challenging content (Darling-Hammond, 1997). She advocates more thoughtful licensing systems, more productive teacher education programs, and more effective professional development strategies. Such initiatives are evidence of the strong impact of the teacher’s expertise on the student’s learning.

In contrast to the approach used by Darling-Hammond, which equates teacher quality with specific qualifications, Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (1998) identify teacher quality in terms of student performance outcomes. Their research identifies teacher quality as the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. They conclude from their analysis of 400,000 students in 3,000 schools that, while school quality is an important determinant of student achievement, the most important predictor is teacher quality. In comparison, class size, teacher education, and teacher experience play small roles. The most important role in terms of teacher quality is what teachers know, subject matter knowledge, and can do, pedagogical competence (Rivkin, Hanusheck & Kain, 1998).

Hanushek (1992) estimates that the difference between having a good teacher and having a bad teacher can exceed one grade-level equivalent in annual achievement growth. Likewise, Sanders (1998) and Sanders and Rivers (1996) argue that the single most important factor affecting student achievement is teachers themselves, and that effects on student achievement are both additive and cumulative. Further, they contend that lower-achieving students are the most likely to benefit from increases in teacher
effectiveness. Taken together, these multiple sources of evidence—however different in nature—all conclude that quality teachers are a critical determinant of student achievement.

Haberman (1995, 2004) coined the term star teachers which designate teachers who are so effective that the adverse conditions of working in failing schools or school districts do not prevent them from being successful teachers. They make up approximately eight percent of the teachers who work with seven million diverse, low-income students in the United States. Several characteristics set them apart: persistence, physical and emotional stamina, caring relationships with students, commitment to acknowledging and appreciating student effort, willingness to admit mistakes, focus on deep learning, commitment to inclusion, and organizational skills. They also protect student learning, translate theory and research into practice, cope with the bureaucracy, create student ownership, engage parents and caregivers as partners in student learning, and support accountability for at-risk students. These attributes predict the effectiveness and staying power of teachers serving diverse students in low-income, urban schools (Haberman, 2004).

Ruddell’s (2002) research on effective reading instructors has identified characteristics of effective teachers that appear frequently in studies that examine this construct in various educational contexts. Ruddell identified extensive grounding in professional knowledge as a significant factor. In addition, Ruddell found that effective teachers are caring teachers who organize instruction to meet the varying needs of all their students. Such teachers know their students well, use multiple instructional methods, and reflect on student progress and their own teaching practices in order to make changes
to meet the needs of their students. These characteristics of effective teachers are significant in this study (Ruddell, 2002).

Authors in the multicultural field frequently attribute the poor educational outcomes of minority and cultural diverse students to a cultural mismatch between these students and their teachers. In particular, few teachers have received formal preparation to work with culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students (Banks, 1995). In two seminal books, Ladson-Billings (1994) and Foster (1998) describe the characteristics of exemplary teachers of African American students. Essentially, exemplary teachers strive to develop interpersonal relationships with their students; they feel responsible for the successes and failures of students; they seek opportunities to increase their cultural awareness and competence; and they endeavor to infuse multicultural education into the traditional curriculum. These teachers are sensitive to the culture of each student.

In addition, some researchers believe that teaching for social justice is an important characteristic of an effective teacher in a diverse setting (Cooper, 2006). The concept of social justice is understood in a range of ways by teachers, teacher educators, activists, and researchers (Salas, Tenorio, Walters & Weiss, 2004). Recent literature reveals definitions of teaching for social justice that include elements of improving schooling for racially, culturally, and linguistically different students (Cooper, 2006); teachers who are committed to improving social inequity (Poplin & Rivera, 2005); taking an anti-racist, pro-justice stance in the classroom (Mitchie, 2003); and a commitment to helping students to change the world in which they live (Salas, Tenorio, Walters & Weiss, 2004).
The diversity of perspectives about this issue reinforces the argument that a flexible approach to supporting teaching for social justice has the power to transform work in schools. To effectively educate students about social justice the teacher must have a dualistic approach (Cooper, 2006). One eye should be fixed on the student; his or her hopes, dreams, aspirations, skills, abilities and capacities while the other eye simultaneously focuses on the context, historical flow, cultural surround and economic reality (Ayers, 1998).

Teacher Beliefs

A large body of research suggests that teachers’ beliefs have a significant impact on their classroom practice (Thompson, 1992; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992). According to Brophy and Good (1974) cited in Fang (1996), a better understanding of teachers’ belief systems or conceptual bases can significantly contribute to enhancing educational effectiveness. Belief systems are described as dynamic in nature, undergoing change and restructuring as individuals evaluate their beliefs against their experiences. (Thompson, 1992).

To understand teaching from teachers’ perspectives, it is necessary to identify the beliefs through which they define their work (Nespor, 1987). Pajares (1992) pointed out that few would argue that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom. Shuck (1997) reported that teacher educators do not realize the power and the tenacity of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes and the influence of these beliefs on their teaching.
The word “belief” is described in a variety of ways. According to Pajares (1992):

“…Defining beliefs are at best a game of player’s choice. They travel in disguise and often under alias—attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertories of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature.”

Beliefs can also be defined as judgments and evaluations made about one’s self, about others, and about the broader world. Beliefs are generalizations about things such as causality or the meaning of specific actions (Dilts, 1999).

The idea that teachers' beliefs act as screens through which behavior is enacted is not new. In 1975, Lortie (2002) observed that teachers form beliefs during their own schooling that create filters through which they process subsequent educational and teaching experiences. Teachers have formed impressions about themselves and their abilities, about the nature of knowledge, and about how learning takes place. According to Lortie, many disagreements in education occur because people fail to distinguish between facts and beliefs. Much of the conventional wisdom in education is, in effect, a collection of outdated beliefs that retain the power to drive the behavior of the institution. Beliefs not only affect how people behave but what they perceive or pay attention to in their environments. Beliefs alter expectations. People perceive what they expect to perceive. It is imperative to recognize that teachers interpret the same events in different ways. They unconsciously assign different meanings to the event in order to support their prior beliefs. One's personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher (Lortie, 2002).
Goodman (1988) concurs and calls these pre-professionally formed beliefs “intuitive screens.” He suggests that intuitive screens can be thought of as schemata that teachers bring with them to the task of teaching. Scholars have asserted that such screens create a context for acquiring new information, and they are resistant to change in the absence of a dissonance-producing experience (Goodman, 1988; Raths, 2001). Dissonance-producing experiences can be operationalized as apprenticeships, reflective practice, or educational experiences. These can be instrumental as catalysts for raising awareness of personal beliefs and how they impact a teacher’s instructional practices.

Kennedy (1997) claims that teachers bring beliefs to their teacher education programs that are a product of their upbringing, a reflection of their life experiences, or a result of socialization processes in schools. Teachers and teacher candidates have strong beliefs about the role that education can play, about explanations for individual variation in academic performance, about right and wrong in a classroom, and many other areas. Kennedy asserts that these beliefs are used to evaluate the new ideas about teaching that teachers and teacher candidates confront in their methods classes. Teachings that square with their beliefs are recognized; those that challenge their beliefs are dismissed as theoretical, unworkable, or even simply wrong (Kennedy, 1997).

Bruner (1996) argues that most people have acquired a "folk pedagogy" that reflects certain innate human tendencies and some deeply ingrained beliefs. Folk pedagogy is the accumulated set of beliefs, conceptions, and assumptions that teachers personally hold about the practice of teaching. When these beliefs and conceptions are enacted as a teaching practice, they are conceivably undertaken on behalf of students as the means to a good end. Teachers, in the course of enacting their folk pedagogies, make
educational decisions about what they believe to be in the best interests of their students (Bruner, 1996).

Noted researcher, Cochran-Smith (1995), specifically refers to teachers who work with children of diverse cultures. To enhance an appreciation of other cultures, teachers should know about their own cultural roots. Cochran-Smith asserts that teaching for equity, social justice, and inclusion need to become part of the essential outcomes of teacher education. To achieve these outcomes, Cochran-Smith suggests collaborations among universities, schools, and communities, in order to provide teacher candidates the opportunity to examine some of their deeply held beliefs and expectations about children.

The general orientation of the "new" approach to professional development that incorporates the need for diversity education is more constructivist than transmission oriented. Fosnot (1996) believes learners are always making meaning, no matter what level of understanding they are on. Constructivism is not a theory to explain only complex, ill-structured domains; it is a theory of how learners make meaning. It is based on the recognition that both prospective and experienced teachers, like all learners, bring prior knowledge and experience which are social and specific, to all new learning situations. In addition, it is now generally understood that teacher learning takes place over time rather than in isolated moments in time, and that active learning requires opportunities to link previous knowledge with new understandings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). This previous knowledge is rooted in prior knowledge and beliefs. This kind of examination inevitably begins with teachers’ own histories as human beings and as educators exploring their own experiences as members of particular races, classes and genders; and as children, parents, and teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995).
As it has been suggested by researchers Bruner (1996), Cochran-Smith (1995), and Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) teacher beliefs rooted in “folk pedagogies” that reflect cultural background, prior knowledge, and experience is often apparent in classroom practice which is significant for this study.

Hilliard (1991) uses the analogy of an iceberg to explain an individual's understanding of his or her cultural identity beliefs. While the tip of the iceberg represents the individual's conscious understanding of his or her culture, the submerged part symbolizes the larger, more subconscious influence of culture in one's life. Coming to an understanding of this subconscious influence requires some inner exploration of one’s beliefs.

Summary

In summary, this chapter contains the following areas related to this study:

1) multicultural education,
2) culturally relevant teaching,
3) characteristics of effective teaching, and
4) teacher beliefs.

Multicultural education has been a topic of discussion for many years. Although there are differing perspectives, the majority of the scholars seem to agree that there is a high level of consensus about its aims and goals (Banks, 2002).

Culturally relevant teaching uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective.
for them. It is most effectively delivered by caring teachers who recognize and maximize the strengths of their diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Research in the area of effective teaching has been extensive. In recent years, greater attention has been given to the role that teacher quality plays in student achievement. (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

The most significant contributions of research in education as it relates to teacher beliefs indicate that teachers’ beliefs do relate to their classroom practice. Teachers bring their beliefs to the classroom (Lortie, 2002). Those beliefs might be the product of upbringing, the reflection of life experiences, the result of socialization processes in schools, or some combination of these factors. These personal predispositions are not only relevant, but central to becoming teachers.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed using a descriptive, case study approach (Yin, 1994). Yin defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1984, p. 23). The intent of the study was to document the beliefs and practices of highly effective teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. By drawing on the wisdom of practice of experienced and respected teachers, a profile of effective practice across culturally diverse classrooms was developed.

Qualitative case research is one approach to study teaching and teachers in their natural settings. Qualitative research assumes that reality is varied and numerous and that it is best understood through interpretation of people’s perceptions and interactions (Merriam, 1988). It focuses on “local meaning” and examines events or phenomena in their natural setting (Erickson, 1990; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Focusing on “local meaning” fits with the study of teachers and their teaching in the local classroom.
Merriam (1988) defines qualitative case study as “an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomena, or social unit” (p. 16). A case can be a person, an event, a program, a time period, a critical incident, or a community (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990). Case study research is holistic in nature as the researcher attempts to “construct descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions the complex interrelationships of causes and sequences that affect human behavior toward, and belief about, phenomena” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.3). The main task of qualitative research is to “explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 7). The researcher gathers data on multiple aspects of the setting in order to create a comprehensive picture of the social dynamic of the phenomena under investigation (Patton, 1990). Thus, the main concern of case study is “interpretation in context” as the researcher seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of different interactions in relation to their contexts (Merriam, 1988). “Contexts not only extend the background but alter the meanings of teaching” (Stake & Mabry, 1995, p. 300). Qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning of an experience from the perspective of the people involved (Erickson, 1990). These researchers agree that qualitative case study is holistic, constructs descriptions of the total phenomena, and looks at these events in a comprehensive way to understand and interpret their meanings.

Case study research has the potential to bring us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend understanding or add clarity to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a
limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines (Yin, 1994). Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide groundwork on which to build and apply ideas and extend methods.

Case studies have been used in a variety of investigations, particularly in sociological studies, but increasingly, in education. Yin (1994), Stake (1995), and others who have wide experience in this methodology have developed strong procedures for using case studies in research. When case study procedures are followed, the researcher utilizes well-developed and tested methods as reputable as in any other practice within the scientific field. Case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data. Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed as it brings out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991).

A key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data-gathering process. The researcher determines in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research questions. Data gathered is normally largely qualitative, but it may also be quantitative (Merriam, 1988). Tools to collect data can include surveys, interviews, documentation review, observation, and even the collection of physical artifacts which document information through the use of primary sources.
Research Design

This study developed one case study of culturally relevant practice that uses six embedded examples to exemplify the case. The embedded cases focused on practicing teachers who work in culturally diverse classrooms or work with heterogeneous groups and use culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom settings. The study examined how teachers describe their personal and/or professional experiences, what has influenced their practices, and the impact of their beliefs on their classroom practices. The researcher examined what instructional patterns, if any, occur in the classroom practices of educators who choose to use culturally relevant instructional methods. Similarities and differences in practices were explored in order to better understand culturally relevant practice as utilized by these teachers.

Sample, Setting, and Population

Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people nested in their context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sampling strategy must be selected to fit the purpose of the study, the questions being asked, and the resources available (Patton, 1990). Merriam (1988) identified purposeful sampling as one appropriate sampling strategy in case-study design. Patton (1990) believes the goal of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose data will illuminate the question under study. Merriam (1988) adds that purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most.
Teachers were selected for this study through careful consideration based on the following criteria:

1) proven success as educators (indicated by colleague recognition and/or supervisor recommendation),

2) teaches and/or works in a culturally diverse setting or in a setting in which cultural awareness is infused into a heterogeneous setting,

3) self-appointed involvement in national and international workshops or seminars on cultural diversity, and,

4) willingness to participate in the study.

The sample group consisted of six educators from six different states. Three of the six have each had more than 20 years teaching experience, while the other three have each had less than 10 years each. There are five women and one man represented in the group. Three of the teachers work at the secondary level, while the other three work primarily at the elementary level.

Following are brief profiles of each teacher and the communities in which they work. A pseudonym has been used to disguise individual identities.

Ms. Fawn

Ms. Fawn has been teaching five years in her present school. She holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology and a master’s degree in multicultural education from universities in the area where she teaches. She spent two years working as an English teacher with the Peace Corps in Armenia.
Ms. Fawn teaches in the greater metropolitan area of a large eastern city. It serves the instructional needs of a community comprised of nine neighborhoods, representing 34 nations, over 24 languages, and a variety of cultures from throughout the United States and the world. The ethnicity listed on the school’s website for the 2006-07 school year had a breakdown which included 33.33% blacks, 32.97% Hispanic, 14% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 13.81% white. Of this population, 58.01% are English proficient while 41.99% have a limited English proficiency. In addition, 60.04% of the school population is eligible for free or reduced lunch while 39.96% are not. The school district website boasts, “It (the school) enjoys a rich history in which teachers and support staff members are dedicated to assuring each student a challenging learning environment that promotes high academic expectations.”

Mr. Maize

Mr. Maize is teaching in the same school where he attended as a student. Mr. Maize, who is of Hispanic background spoke only Spanish until he was twelve years old. He holds a bachelor’s degree in communication and a master’s degree in education. Before teaching, he worked briefly in New York City’s television and film industry. Currently, Mr. Maize is in his ninth year of teaching at a culturally diverse high school. His teaching responsibilities include different subjects; however, all of his students are categorized as ESL (English as a second language) in his school. The community in which Mr. Maize works is a beachside tourist town. About one fourth of the residents of the community live under the poverty line, and many of the parents of the students work in the tourist industry as hotel, restaurant, or retail service workers. In the 2000 Census,
the city population was 5,436 during off season, but could swell to 250,000 during the summer months.

The middle school/high school building houses approximately 300 students, 47% of white are on discounted or free lunch. The present breakdown of race included 53% White, 26% Hispanic, 20% Black, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander (NCES, 2000).

Ms. Olive

Ms. Olive, like Ms. Fawn and Mr. Maize, is a younger educator who has had a limited number of years in teaching. She has had nine years of experience working in her certified areas of (Grades 7-12) English and (Grades K-12) TESOL (Teacher of English to Students of Other Languages). Her degrees include a bachelors in English Education and a masters in Curriculum & Instruction with an emphasis in TESOL.

Currently, Ms. Olive works in her county’s Educational Service Center as the ELL (English Language Learner) consultant for the 15 school districts in the county. She offers professional development for teachers and administrators in the areas of developing LEP (Limited English proficiency) programs, developing individual plans for LEP students, best practices and strategies for classroom teachers and tutors, culturally responsive behavior, interpretation of laws, and requirements for language acquisition. In addition, she meets individually with LEP students and families for testing and placement purposes.

Mrs. Sable

Mrs. Sable is a veteran teacher with 27 years of teaching experience. Certified to teach grades 1-8, Mrs. Sable received her bachelors, masters and educational specialist
degrees from the same institution located in the “deep south”. Although Mrs. Sable has taught in every grade from K to 8, (with the exception of grade 3), most of her years in the classroom were in first and/or second grade. She currently is working as a School Improvement Specialist but has daily encounters with students in her school.

The community in which she works is a small southern town with a population of 3,640. It is a working-class community about 15 miles outside of a large southern city. Many of the homes in this little community have been abandoned, and a few have even burned to the ground. The downtown consists of a furniture store, liquor store, barbershop, arcades, and a place for relaxation called the Peacock Lounge. The school sits atop a hill across the street from a graveyard. Since 2003, almost 150 students have transferred from her school to better performing schools in the district, an option allowed under federal law.

Mrs. Sable’s present school is made up of 97% minority students. Of those 97%, all but 15% are black; the remaining 15% are Hispanic students. The entire student body qualifies for free or reduced lunches. When Mrs. Sable came to the school four years ago, it was one of the lowest achieving schools in the state.

Mrs. Coral

Mrs. Coral, like Mrs. Sable, is a veteran teacher. She has taught for 31 years. Having received both her bachelors and masters degrees from institutions in her home state, Ms. Coral currently teaches high school English.

Her high school has 1700 students, with little diversity in the make-up of the student body. The white students make up 89% of the total student body with only 6%
Hispanic, 2% black, 2% multiracial, and 1% Asian. It is a relatively prosperous area, with only 13% of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. In fact, many of the remaining 89% are quite affluent. They school is at or above state averages in testing scores. It offers many advanced placement classes with a great variety and number of extracurricular offerings for the students. The district is located on the fringe of a mid-size urban city quite near a college town with many academic and cultural opportunities for the community.

Mrs. Chestnut

Mrs. Chestnut, like Mrs. Sable and Mrs. Coral, is a veteran teacher with thirty-seven years of teaching experience to her credit. All of her years have been spent in a large urban city in the northeast part of the United States. Ms. Chestnut is certified to teach regular education K-8 and special education and holds degrees from universities in New York and Massachusetts, including Harvard University.

Her present school is small with a total of 215 students this academic year. Of those students 53% are white, 20% are Hispanic, 19% are Black, 5% are Asian and 3% are Native American. Of this population 69% are in regular education while 31% are in special education. Her present position is that of Special Needs Resource Teacher which includes the teaching of reading, writing, mathematics, and humanities.

Building Trust and Rapport and Access

Building trust and rapport is important to lay a foundation for beginning research. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) refer to commitment acts that can foster rapport. Commitment acts are those activities in which the researcher offers time or energy to the
community in which the research is taking place by providing an opportunity to create a stronger web of trust, openness, and rapport between the researcher and the informants (Glesne, 2006). Since this study included six different communities, it was important for the researcher to show an interest in the community and school and to engage in commitment acts when possible. Access was gained by first asking the school superintendent and then the principal for permission for the teacher to participate in the study. After approval was given by the superintendent and principal, then the teacher was invited to participate. By receiving permission from administrative levels in the school district and being granted permission for the study by the University of Akron IRB, reassurance was given to the teacher that appropriate approval had been granted before soliciting his/her interest.

Data Collection

Data refers to ”the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that form the basis for analysis” (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992, p. 73). Qualitative data take the form of words or language that are generated from observations, interviewing, or documents (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Patton (1980) describes qualitative data as detailed descriptions of situations, people, and interactions; direct quotations from people about their thoughts or experiences; and excerpts or passages from documents or records (Merriam, 1988). In addition, data collection is informed by ongoing analysis that guides further data collection in which “emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection” (Merriam, 1988, p. 119).
Yin (1994) suggests three principles of data collection for case studies: 1) using multiple sources of data, 2) creating a case study database, and 3) maintaining a chain of evidence. Yin (1994) suggests that the researcher must possess or acquire skills. The ability to ask good questions and to interpret the responses is imperative to good research as well as being a good listener. Yin suggests being adaptive and flexible in reacting to various situations, having a firm grasp of issues being studied, and being unbiased by preconceived notions.

Yin (1994) identifies six primary sources of evidence for case study research. The use of each of these might require different skills from the researcher. Not all sources are essential in every case study, but the importance of multiple sources of data to the reliability of the study is well established (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). The six sources identified by Yin (1994) are 1) documentation, 2) archival records, 3) interviews, 4) direct observation, 5) participant observation, and 6) physical artifacts. No single source has a complete advantage over the others; rather, they might be complementary and could be used in tandem. Thus a case study should use as many sources as are relevant to the study. This study incorporated teacher interviews, classroom observation, and documents and artifacts.

Teacher Interviews

Interviews are used when the researcher wants to elicit information that is not able to be observed or replicated (Merriam, 1988). The purpose of interviewing is “to access the perspective of the person being interviewed” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Interviews are
one of the most important sources of case study information. It is a primary source of information that comes from the person at the center of the research.

The interview could take one of three forms: open-ended, focused, or structured. This case study used an open-ended approach. The open-ended approach allows some structure, but also, gives room for flexibility. Using this form also allows the interviewer to ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents’ opinions about events. In some situations, the interviewer may even ask the respondent to offer his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry (Yin, 1994). This method allows for follow-up interview questions to be asked during the interview for clarity or further investigation. In this case study each educator was asked to participate in interviews. An interview protocol was developed based on theory and literature which guided the interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed within 24 hours of the interview.

Throughout the interview process in this study, dialogue was fostered and valued. The interviewer wanted the interview dialogue to be explanatory and liberating, to flow naturally and to glean information about what the teacher believes and practices. Effort was made to establish a relaxing, non-threatening, nor judgmental environment to allow the interviewee to reflect openly on his/her practice.

Classroom Observations

Direct observation in a case study occurs when the investigator has the opportunity to gather data through observation and participation to become a part of the culture and better understand it. The observations could be formal or casual activities, but
the reliability of the observation is the main concern (Yin, 1994). Classroom observations for this study took place in the elementary and secondary classrooms of six teachers in six different states across the country. Observations were conducted two to three times for at least a period of two hours each visit. These visits were within the time frame of one week. The purpose of these observations was to document the use of culturally relevant practice, the interactions which occur when it is used and the students’ reactions to it. The interviews took place prior to the classroom observations. Data collected through interviews on teachers’ beliefs was referred to, determining if statements made about beliefs are evident in the teachers’ classroom practice. Interview content and classroom observations were carefully compared to determine the level of congruence.

Written field notes were taken during the classroom visits and these notes were expanded and transcribed within twenty-four hours of the visit. Chronological, analytic, and personal notes were included. Chronological notes should strive for accuracy in detailing the events observed. Analytic notes record ideas that emerge during the observations referred to as observer comments. Analytic noting is a type of data analysis conducted throughout the research process. The contributions range from problem identification, to question development, to understanding the patterns and themes in the work. Personal notes create a record of the researcher’s behavior and emotions and reactions throughout the research process. These notes provide the researcher with the opportunity to vent or express frustration and then, through continued writing, to better understand the emotions and derive more questions or devise new strategies. They can also help express emotions in general, likes/dislikes, and reactions. They can become a
part of the final text, the researcher’s story woven into the stories of others (Glesne, 2006).

The researcher’s role was as a non-participant observer in the classroom in order to avoid creating distraction or deviation from the regular routine and activities in the class. In addition, the researcher did not want to be distracted in the observation of the classroom practice. To help in eliminating this, the researcher explained to the classroom teacher that the intent was not to distract nor be distracted and asked her to introduce the researcher as a classroom observer and not a classroom aide or assistant. If students did ask the researcher questions, it was handled in a professional way on an individual basis.

Observations represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest. The researcher carefully observed, systematically experienced, and consciously analyzed observations for meaning and for evidence of personal bias (Glesne, 2006). Through the documentation of observing the classroom setting, appearance, actions, events, processes, the researcher was able to make connections between interview data and classroom practices and existing patterns within each teacher’s own teaching situation and among all the teachers observed.

Documents and Artifacts

Documents can be letters, memoranda, agendas, study reports, or any items that can provide the researcher with greater understanding of the context and participants. Physical artifacts could be any physical evidence that might be gathered during a site visit. These might include tools, art works, notebooks, and other such physical evidence. The validity of the documents and physical artifacts should be carefully reviewed to
avoid the inclusion of incorrect data. One of the most important uses of documents is to corroborate evidence gathered from other sources. The potential for over-reliance on documents as evidence in case studies has been criticized (Yin, 1994).

Physical artifacts for this study included teacher lesson plans, study guides, teacher-designed student work assignments, projects, teacher reflections, and classroom evaluations. Literature, items hanging on the walls, the physical environment, bulletin boards, artifacts from home cultures also contributed to the overall understanding of the classroom ethos. Items were not collected from students. Prior lesson plans served as a way to determine how current lessons were structured. These artifacts served as documentation that the teacher was consciously using culturally relevant practice in classroom planning, facilitation, assessments, and evaluations and in what ways the teacher was demonstrating the use of culturally relevant instruction. Teachers used written assignments to assist with vocabulary, word study, and language development. In addition, they used simulations to make concepts easier to comprehend. Completed assignments were evidence that these artifacts contributed to understanding and learning (see Table 1).

Data Management

All types of relevant documents should be added to the database, as well as tabular materials, narratives, and other notes (Yin, 1994). The databases from this study contain field notes from observations, transcripts from interviews, lists of documents and field notes on them, demographic information on participants, and physical artifacts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Data Collection Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) How did teachers who have been identified as using a culturally relevant pedagogy develop their cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education?</td>
<td>To describe conditions that created and nurtured educators’ beliefs. To discover possible similarities in teachers’ backgrounds (especially educational and professional) that have influenced the development of beliefs.</td>
<td>Teachers’ beliefs and understanding are socially constructed and are developed through experience.</td>
<td>Data from multiple interviews and observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) What beliefs, if any, do these teachers share about culturally relevant instruction and how do they implement those beliefs in their classroom practice?</td>
<td>To realize patterns among educators in the classrooms and their beliefs.</td>
<td>With differences in personal and professional experiences, patterns of similar influences will surface.</td>
<td>Data from Multiple interviews and observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To recognize implicit theories of teaching and learning</td>
<td>Educators hold implicit theories of teaching and learning and evidence of these theories will appear in their instruction.</td>
<td>Data from interviews, observations and artifacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To realize interactions among different beliefs (beliefs about students, teaching, learning) and how they influence multicultural education.</td>
<td>Educators will be able to articulate their beliefs during interviews.</td>
<td>Data from interviews with educators, non-participant observations, and artifacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To recognize what educators believe about cultural awareness in their classroom decisions and possibly identify common sets of beliefs that might support effective practices.</td>
<td>While each educator will have her/his unique understanding of cultural awareness in the classroom, patterns of similar beliefs will be present.</td>
<td>Data from interviews with educators, non-participant observations, and artifacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To describe events and activities in the classroom that effective “culturally relevant” educators use.</td>
<td>Educators who choose to use culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms do so to aid in the success of their students.</td>
<td>Data from interviews with educators, non-participant observations, and artifacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To examine patterns of effective strategies and techniques used in these classrooms.</td>
<td>Although activities in different classes will differ, patterns of similar practices will emerge.</td>
<td>Data from interviews with educators, non-participant observations, and artifacts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative research is all about access. It is critical to make accessible records of the data to explore for searching and seeing synthesis or patterns (Richards, 2005). Data management for this study was organized systematically to enable efficient retrieval of the needed information. A routine was established for storing copies of the original files and ensuring the safety of the growing project in locked cabinets. A back-up plan was developed to insure a safety net. At the end of work sessions, the data was saved on a disk and placed in a locked desk drawer.

By the very nature of qualitative research the data base changes every time a reflection on an interview is added, so backing up and saving frequently is a must (Yin, 1994). As the researcher collects data, accessible records of those data must be made. For this study, the researcher used system of notebooks as a better way to keep field notes in chronological order and easy to access needed information. In addition, a file system was developed for adding data both chronologically and by topic. These files were divided under headings that identify the parts of the record. All documents included the identifying information of name, place, date, and time on each page. This identification was an integral part of all of the collection and was used throughout the entire data collection process.

The audit trail is a method suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1981). Just as an auditor authenticates the accounts of a business, independent readers can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of a researcher. Researchers must try to explain how results were determined. An audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry. It is dependent upon the researcher keeping a journal or
recording memos throughout the conduct of the study. Questions, reflections, decisions on problems, ideas encountered, and issues are what go into the journal. A running record of the interaction with the data during analysis and interpretation is also an important part of this auditing (Merriam, 2002).

Some of the issues recorded in the journal were unforeseen interruptions in the teachers’ schedules. One teacher found out that she had to administer tests one of the days we had scheduled the observation. However, being flexible helped to work around it. Another teacher had to be out of class for personal reasons at the last minute which caused us to reschedule. In addition, personal observations and reflections were noted when, for example, I saw a teacher get emotional when answering interviews questions or when I witnessed the compassion of the teacher toward a student who seemed lost and was not comprehending due to language barriers.

Interpretation and Analysis

Qualitative researchers use many techniques and programs to help organize, classify, and find themes in the data. Examples of these techniques and programs include coding and data displays. However, whatever method is used, meaningful connections must be made both for the researcher and the reader. Wolcott (1994) discusses description, analysis, and interpretation as three means of data transformation, or of moving from organization to meaning. Furney (1997) uses a narrative method which includes carefully choosing details to place the reader in the context of the setting she is observing. Furney moves beyond description and analysis to probe into the framework of caring which she uses to interpret her findings. Holliday (2002) presents a descriptive
diagram labeled from data to text demonstrating data transformation. In this description the data moves from rationalized sections of messy reality to thematic organization of data to text of data analysis section or chapter. Since there can be reams of raw data, it is an important job of the researcher to make it sensible and accessible (Glesne, 2006).

Wolcott, Furney, Holliday and Glesne may have slightly different approaches to interpreting and analyzing the data; however, they all emphasize the need to find meaning and sense in their interpretations. . . . moving from organizing the data to finding meaning in the data.

Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to data collected and analysis essentially means taking something apart. There is no particular moment when data analysis begins and can give meaning to first impressions and to final compilations. The search for meaning often is a search for patterns and consistency. We can look for patterns while we are reviewing documents, observations and interviews or we can code the records by logging frequencies and patterns. Or sometimes the patterns will emerge unexpectedly from the data analysis (Stake, 1995).

By deploying a cross-case analytical framework, cases can be compared by looking for patterns and themes in the data that are common across cases. This approach also allows for the analysis of discrepancies of notable outcomes or attributes and their contributing factors. In addition, this methodology allows for examining, identifying, and highlighting similarities and differences across cases that share a comparable profile within a related focus area. By analyzing within and across cases the identification of distinguishing features of the educators and their classrooms can be made. Also linkages are developed, in terms of lessons learned.
For the analysis of this study, I first used information from my literature review and my research questions to create codes. From the literature review the research points to teachers bringing their beliefs to the classroom. Those beliefs might be the product of upbringing, the reflection of life experiences, the result of socialization processes in schools, or some combination of these factors. Out of the research came codes of family background, parental influences, school experience, and cultural influences. The research questions added codes of how these beliefs affected cultural awareness and beliefs about multiculturalism which included codes of travel experiences, exposure to other cultures, personal experiences, and books and other resources.

Then I read and reread the data to apply this initial code list. References to beliefs from the initial code list were identified and labeled. Then I studied the code list and matched not only the initial code list but added new codes for other ideas that emerged from the data. I began to see that some of the initial codes were neither strong nor prevalent. Other ideas came up that I had not expected. One of those ideas was references to experiences with social injustice, either directly or indirectly experienced by the teacher. This became a new code. In addition some of the initial codes like early childhood experiences were rarely mentioned and didn’t seem to impact the beliefs of the teachers as a group. In addition, college experience was not coded as often as post graduate work. One surprise was the little influence in-service and professional development had on the beliefs of the teachers.

After working with the data at length and adding new codes as they emerged from the data, I began to see if there were similarities and differences. I grouped the codes and looked for holes and inconsistencies in the data. I saw great similarities in the ways that
the six teachers implemented their beliefs in the classroom with the variety of teaching methods they used to reach all learners, the inclusive environments they worked to create, and the active and experiential learning they strove to generate. In addition, all teachers had great expectations for their students and encouraged self expression and choice. Differences were seen in some of the ways the teachers came to their beliefs, however, in the ways that there their greatest influences they were similar.

In reading all the data carefully, as patterns emerged, each was labeled, coded, and frequency tabulations were made. All like examples were then grouped and the ones that had a significant numbers began to show patterns across the cases. Once I found similarities and differences in the data, I used them to determine patterns in the data and the codes. These patterns were sought, first within the practices of individual teachers, and then among the teachers as a group.

After the themes were identified, cross-case analysis was conducted to use these patterns which emerged to analysis where the teachers’ beliefs came from and how they implemented those beliefs in the classroom. Common themes did emerge across cases during the analysis. In the area of teacher beliefs, teachers believed they were influenced by 1) their parents’ attitudes, values, and behaviors; 2) culturally sensitive experiences that affected them personally; and, 3) firsthand exposure to social injustice that raised their awareness. In addition, data analysis revealed three significant themes as patterns emerged about culturally relevant instruction that teachers demonstrated in their classrooms. Specifically, they cited the importance of 1) using a variety of instructional techniques; 2) designing student-centered instruction that promoted active learning and; 3) fostering a sense of personal empowerment in their students.
Cross examination of the cases with similar profiles, but different settings, provides insights into diverse ways of conceptualizing initiatives. When a pattern from one data type is corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding is stronger. When evidence conflicts, deeper probing of the differences is necessary to identify the cause or source of conflict. In all cases, the researcher treats the evidence fairly to produce analytic conclusions answering the original "how" and "why" research questions. This analysis will help create an effective knowledge base for working toward the goal to determine how beliefs and instructional practices of culturally relevant educators compare (Yin, 2003). Working with the data, one describes, creates explanations, poses hypotheses, develops theories, and links the story to other stories (Glesne, 2006).

In using cross-case analysis, one analyzes data across all of the cases in order to identify similarities and differences. By identifying similarities and differences we seek to provide insight into the issues. Studying multiple cases make it possible to build a logical chain of evidence. We use the cross case analysis to seek a chain of evidence for the relationships studied form the case data (Yin, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Building Credibility and Trustworthiness

Ensuring quality and authenticity of research findings follow procedures compatible with a qualitative research paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested different conceptualizations that correspond to conventional standards of validity and reliability and yet are more consistent with procedures of naturalistic inquiry. These are 1) credibility (for internal validity), which deals with the question of how the findings make sense, or if they are credible to the people involved; 2) dependability (for
reliability) which deals with the issue of how the study process is consistent over time and across researchers and methods; and 3) transformability (for external validity and generalizability) which questions whether the findings fit or are transferable to other contexts or situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Member checking was utilized in the study. Member checking includes sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to ensure accurate representation of the ideas (Glesne, 2006). Member checks occurred as the researcher intentionally allowed teachers to offer their feedback and insight throughout the process. The teachers in the study were offered the opportunity to see the study analysis, the patterns which were identified, and the data collected to support it at the end of the study. The study will be made available to the participants for the purpose of learning how their contribution, as well as the contributions of other participants in the study, aided in this project. In addition, expert reviews may be a tool used to gain expertise from scholars and best practice. The process was consistent by using the same methods of data collection for each teacher. Due to time limitations in observing the teachers in the study from different areas of the country, rapport was established and developed which continued throughout the gathering and analyzing of the data.

Patton (1990) affirms “the credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytic process” (p. 461). He conceptualizes the researcher as one who has “intellectual rigor and professional integrity” and whose task is “to do one’s best to make sense out of things….A qualitative researcher returns to the
data over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense, if they really reflect the nature of the phenomena” (p. 477). To become established as a credible researcher, one must document the processes and procedures well, so the reader deems the interpretation, thoughts, and findings to be convincing and worthwhile.

Procedures to insure accuracy in the study were

1) triangulation,
2) checking researcher’s biases,
3) searching for disconfirming or negative evidence,
4) member checks, and
5) thick descriptions.

Although the idea of gaining thick descriptions may be debatable, the researcher used multiple interviews and observations to acquire much background to support these descriptions.

Triangulation, as Merriam (1988) describes, uses multiple sources of data. Triangulation is not the simple combination of different kinds of data, but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats of validity identified in each (Berg, 1995).

In this study, the use of different sources to collect data (semi-structured interviews, observations, documents) provided a means to gather information obtained about teachers’ beliefs and practices. The open-ended interview technique was used because the topics were clear and some questions were predetermined, while maintaining space for probing beyond given answers (Berg, 2004). The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by the interviewees to ensure accuracy.
To check for researcher bias, the researcher kept track of all ideas, reactions, confusions, and feelings occurring during the collection of data. In addition, the researcher wrote down perceptions and summarized feelings after spending time with teachers and/or time in the classroom. Writing these in a journal format helped to identify subjectivity and brought personal biases to a conscious level. Monitoring subjectivity is not synonymous with controlling subjectivity, in the sense of trying to keep it out of the work. When monitoring subjectivity, there is an increase in understanding the ways it might be distorted, but could also increase the awareness of its worthy capacity. One learns more about his/her own values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs. One’s subjectivity is the basis for the story that he/she will be able to tell and it becomes the strength on which he/she can build. It makes the researcher the person they are, equipping them with the perspectives and insights that shape all they do as a researcher. Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than to exercise (Glesne, 2006). The researcher needs to monitor biases and adjust as they arise. Because the goal of qualitative research is to learn from the data and researchers are likely to have strong values and commitment to the topic, precautions must be taken.

Since the study dealt with teachers’ beliefs, it was important to watch for any discrepancy between what the teachers said and what they actually did in the classroom setting. It was important to get clarification and further information in those situations that show a difference in what was said and done. This was done by matching interview notes and observations notes in specific areas that may contradict what the teacher has indicated that he/she believes and/or practices.
Detailed description of teachers, their beliefs, their practices and their working environments will enable the reader to make judgments about the relevance of the case to their own situations. Since a case study focuses on a single unit, or a single instance, the issue of generalizability looms larger than with other types of qualitative research. As Merriam (1999) points out, much can be learned from a particular case. The reader can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case through the researcher’s narrative description (Stake, 2000). The colorful description in a case study can create an image which can become a prototype that can be used in educating other teachers or for the appraisal of teaching (Eisner, 1991). Erickson (1986) argues that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. It is not the researcher, but the reader, who determines what can apply to his or her context. As these researchers suggest, the ideal would be for readers to learn vicariously through the narrator’s colorful, rich description and transfer what he/she read to their own situation. This is the goal as a researcher. An excellent example which parallels this study is the research done by Ladson-Billings (1994). Her use of rich descriptions and familiar situations helps the readers place themselves in the environment which she describes.

Stake (2000) says this knowledge transfer passes along from researcher to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships and does not pass along others. In addition, the readers will invent and shape, add and subtract to reconstruct the information to make it meaningful to them.
Triangulation of Evidence

The rationale for using multiple sources of data is the triangulation of evidence. Triangulation increases the reliability of the data and the process of analyzing (Yin, 1994). In the context of data collection, triangulation serves to corroborate the data gathered from other sources. In this study, interviewing the teachers, then observing their classroom practice and having physical artifacts support the classroom practice provided multiple sources of data.

Summary

Research on culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant educators recognizes the role of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs in understanding and improving instructional practices in the culturally diverse classroom. Exploring patterns which emerge from educators’ beliefs and practices across different culturally relevant classrooms adds to the depth of this study. For this reason cross case analysis is utilized in the study.

This study seeks to describe beliefs and practices of educators who use “culturally relevant pedagogy” in their classrooms with success and to clarify what these educators believe to be important in their “culturally aware” classroom. In addition, the study explores how personal and professional experiences may have shaped the teachers’ beliefs which have had an impact on their practice. This study strives to look “from the inside” (Ornstein, 1995, p. 277) and within the constructed realities of the classroom life to gain information about beliefs and practices. It requires a methodology that describes teachers’ backgrounds, experiences, thoughts, and perceptions, so case study
methodology and cross case analysis was used. It is hoped that this study will deepen the understanding of effective educators in all classrooms whether culturally diverse or homogenous.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter the results of a cross case analysis will be presented. The analysis is between the six in-depth cases. While Yin (1984) suggests that a descriptive framework helps organize the case study analysis, the idea is extended to the cross-case analysis and using the same basic framework used in the case studies will be used in cross-case analysis. The teachers’ backgrounds, beliefs, instructional practices and working definitions of culturally relevant pedagogy have been compared. In looking for evidence and examples within the educator’s individual cases, similar patterns and themes emerged and became meaningful with frequency and intensity. The six educators in this study typify good practices and reinforce what is already known to contribute to effective teaching in culturally diverse classroom settings. Using examples and evidence of the data collected from the six classroom teachers through interviews, observations and documentation, key similarities and differences across the cases will be highlighted and conclusions will be drawn. The purpose of this study was to investigate the beliefs and practices of teachers who use a culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. The results of this study are drawn from data that addresses the research questions that guided the study:
1) How did teachers who have been identified as using a culturally relevant pedagogy develop their cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education?

2) What beliefs, if any, do these teachers hold about culturally relevant instruction and how do they implement those beliefs in the classroom?

Data for this study included observations, interviews, researcher journal, field notes, and various documents and artifacts. Analysis of data identified themes that reflected these teachers’ beliefs and practices in their classrooms. It also characterized teachers’ perceptions of factors that influenced their beliefs and guided their classroom instruction and practice.

Frequent commonalities across the cases in relationship to the teachers’ cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education were their parents’ attitudes, values and behaviors, culturally sensitive experiences that affected them personally, and firsthand exposure to social injustice that raised their awareness. Data analysis revealed these three central influences in the development of the teachers’ cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education. Pertinent examples drawn from the data of the six educators will describe the commonalities.

Parental Influences

Cross case analysis revealed that the six educators studied had diverse sociocultural backgrounds which set a foundation for their thinking and practice. Although they all mentioned their heritage and extended families, it was their parents who they implied exerted a strong influence on their beliefs. Mr. Maize spoke of his mother’s work ethic, the value she placed on education and the high standard she set for him and his siblings (M: 11: 3). Ms. Fawn described her parents as liberal, progressive-
thinking educators, who steered her toward service learning and gave her a heightened awareness of political issues (F: 15:2-3). Mrs. Coral described her parents as community activists and her family as a family of readers. Her father stressed the importance of having her own career, being an independent thinker, and relying on herself financially (C: 1:2-3). Mrs. Sable’s strong southern parents gave her a love for education (S: 13:2).

Ms. Olive’s mother was a teacher and her parents valued education and travel (O: 2:1).

Mrs. Chestnut’s father was a laborer. As an immigrant fleeing the Russian pogroms against the Jews, he worked many jobs to provide for his family including retail and factory work. He apprenticed in the upholstery industry and for a time ran a Chinese laundry with his brothers in New York City. Since her parents did not have the luxury of an education they placed a high value on their children attending college (Ch: 15:2).

Of note is that these sets of parents represent very different sociocultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. As a group, they are regionally, educationally, professionally, and politically diverse. Two teachers’ parents worked for hourly wages and were manual or industrial laborers and they possessed ethics of hard work with the long hours and little compensation characteristic of the “working class”. These parents also had little education. One set of parents were northeastern university professors with progressive political views while another set of parents were southerners who had conservative political views. Due to the Depression, this southern man and wife did not have the opportunity to complete college; he attended a technical school and she had only one year of college. One set of parents were divorced and the children were raised only by their mother. The sixth set of parents was made up of a father who was a New
England Republican and mother who was a Southern Democrat but both parents shared a common belief in community involvement and education goals for their children.

Even though these parents represented very different socioeconomic, cultural, and educational strata of American society, they all shared four characteristics: 1) they were independent-minded and encouraged their children to be so as well; 2) they had high expectations for their children; 3) they were either involved in community projects themselves or supported the community activity efforts of others; 4) they believed deeply in the importance of education.

Cultural Immersion Experiences

Immersion experiences in other cultures were another recurring theme that emerged from the data when a cross case analysis was compared. Teachers had few examples of school-based education experiences or learning opportunities that heightened their cultural awareness. Similarly, they did not identify learning experiences in their elementary, secondary, or tertiary education that helped them build relational skills to promote awareness of and sensitivity towards diverse cultures. Each educator seemed to discover his or her multicultural “voice” through personal exploration.

For most, their own personal travel around the world was a catalyst of cultural awareness. Ms. Fawn spent two years in Armenia teaching English with the Peace Corps. She said that this time spent learning about people and culture has been invaluable to her and a foundation for her beliefs and for what she is doing now (F: 15:3-4).
Ms. Coral had international experiences that included working in Russia and Rwanda. In fact, her belief in the importance of firsthand exposure to other cultures led her to organize an exchange program to Russia for her own students.

The people I’ve met from all over the world have shown me that, fundamentally, people from “other places” are more like me than they are different. That is my goal in international education—to have students come to this realization through contact with at least one other country or culture and to generalize from that experience to the entire world. That was certainly my most important goal for the Russian exchange program. I wanted kids to fall in love with their Russian families and then to realize that Russians are no different than they are—and then to generalize that concept to people all over the world. (C: 1: 8)

Ms. Coral had the opportunity to travel to Africa to study the genocide of 1994. What she discovered on that trip was that there is a pattern to genocide. It is her conviction that the most important social concept she can communicate to students is to avoid stereotyping, because it is the first step in the genocidal pattern. Ms. Coral teaches the Holocaust in conjunction with teaching this pattern (C: 1:7-8).

Ms. Olive cited her travels to Europe and South America as particularly valuable in understanding multiculturalism. Although, she also credits her graduate school work for helping her reflect on her beliefs.

For the first time, I began to think of why I thought my thoughts, where my behaviors and idiosyncrasies came from, why I did things I did, how these characteristics might differ from someone with different experiences, background, and culture than myself, and how these characteristics affect how I view others. I now think it is critical for teachers to understand their own cultural selves in order to be a culturally responsive teacher. By having a better understanding of myself, I began to have a better understanding of how I viewed my students and, in effect, how I taught my students, which in turn allowed me to better meet their needs (O: 2:3-4).

Ms. Olive shared that both her travels and her graduate work gave her a better understanding of the cultures and differences of the students with which she worked.
Visiting the Asian countries of Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, and China helped Mrs. Chestnut better understand the growing Asian population in her school. Through these travels, she started relationships that she nurtured and expanded after returning. While traveling in Vietnam and Thailand to learn about the schools systems in those countries, Mrs. Chestnut contacted a former student whose family had moved back to Bangkok, Thailand. She invited the family out to dinner to share with the student what his friends and colleagues were studying at his old school in the United States and to bring their greetings. As a reading specialist Mrs. Chestnut often taught bilingual students. She found that having knowledge about their cultures made it easier for her to relate to them and for them to understand her concern and interest in them (Ch: 15:3-4).

For Mr. Maize, his beliefs and attitudes were shaped more from exposure to other cultures in his own communities and teaching experiences than from world travel. Mr. Maize teaches in a beach resort tourist community. The city population is approximately 5,500 during the off-season, but it can swell to 250,000 during the summer months. The students whom he teaches and their families are mostly Mexican and Puerto Rican migrants who have come to work in the tourist industry as custodians, hotel or restaurant workers, and city employees throughout the year.

Mr. Maize was born in the United States but his parents were from Mexico. His parents became United States citizens when he was very young. Mr. Maize notes that even though people are identified as Hispanics because they speak Spanish as a first language, there are diverse and distinct cultures within that group. He describes the differences between his Puerto Rican and Mexican students:
They stay out of the mainstream and keep to themselves at first. The two groups don’t even mix with each other. They later become friends and start to mix more. They are accepted by the mainstream group but choose not to mix with them; they want to stay apart. But when they do find a comfort level as individuals and with the English language, they begin to take part and join in (M: 11: 7).

Because Mr. Maize speaks Spanish, he is a resource to the students who lack skills in English. His continual engagement with the local Mexican and Puerto Rican communities deepened his cultural sensitivity (M: 11:7-8).

Mrs. Sable’s travels to New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China, and Egypt have taught her about other cultures and ways of thinking. When in Australia she spent a day at an Aborigines school and found similarities among those students and the students whom she teaches in the southern United States. Her comment was “This could be my school and my children; their needs are so similar.”

Mrs. Sable experienced a cultural “revelation” by choice when she moved from her middle-class school which was mostly white to her present assignment. Her present school is made up of 97% minority students. Of those 97%, 85% are African American and 15% are Hispanic. Moreover, it is in an economically depressed region in which the entire student body qualifies for free or reduced lunches. When Mrs. Sable came to the school four years ago, it was one of the lowest achieving schools in the state. As well as learning to work with African American and Hispanic cultures, she also works with the culture of poverty and failure. She embraces the challenge with the belief that all children do learn and can be successful when equipped with the right tools (S: 13:1).

Mrs. Chestnut believes that her district has not provided culturally rich experiences for her or other staff. Because of this, she has sought out programs, especially during her summers off, that have expanded her understanding of cultural
diversity. Mrs. Chestnut has traveled to China, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam through educational and cultural programs for educators. Those experiences have given her the background, insight, and compassion for the students with whom she works (Ch: 15:5).

Each of these six teachers had firsthand experiences with very different ethnic cultures. These experiences included firsthand travel to Asian, European, and Slavic countries. The countries they visited were diverse culturally and economically, such as a prosperous Japan and a marginalized, indigenous Aborigines community in Australia. There experiences also included in-depth interaction with African-American and Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States. In addition, these teachers experienced each culture in different ways, from long-term residence through a Peace Corps experience to short, conventional sight-seeing travel, study, and/or teaching in foreign lands. They also participated in community festivals and events. The experiences of physically being in the different countries or interacting with the cultures here at home heightened their cultural sensitivity and impacted their awareness and understanding.

Witnessing Social Injustice

The impact of encountering social injustice firsthand, either as a witness or a victim, was another theme that emerged from the data as an analysis across cases emerged. Each of the teachers had at least one experience that resulted in a personal discovery or epiphany about the unequal treatment of ethnic groups living as minorities in America. This experience raised their consciousness about the existence of social injustice in the world. Moreover, it led them to believe that respect and understanding of
other cultures was central to creating a socially just world. They also recognized the importance of multicultural education in furthering those goals.

Mr. Maize described his English as a Second Language (ESL) students’ very difficult adjustment when coming to America. They came from schools that were unstructured and where few expectations were placed on them. If the teachers were absent, the students would just go home. The students would leave for lunch and many would not come back. Coming to the United States, they found a very different life and different set of rules and expectations in the schools. In addition, Mr. Maize thought they were perceived by others as “outsiders” and often treated as unimportant or insignificant. His students told him they would come to this country very guarded because of feared discrimination. He explained, “They don't open to anyone unless they look, speak, or act like them.” (M:10:7) Because the guidance counselors in his school neither speak Spanish nor understand what these students have experienced, students find that turning to them is often intimidating and frightening. Mr. Maize feels that social injustice is experienced by the ESL students in a place where they should feel accepted and cared about - their school.

There is a lot of miscommunication in the school between the students and staff. There are teachers who don’t allow Spanish in their classroom because they don’t understand it. At the same time, if a student's only language is Spanish, they can’t communicate and are marginalized. The student and teacher end up frustrated and helpless. ESL students don't have an IEP (Individual Educational Plan), so teachers tend not to modify their work. Students become very frustrated and tend to believe that their teachers don't care about them. This is when they begin to shut down in the classroom. No participation, no work. Teachers take this as being lazy and defiant. The opinion of these teachers is that immigrants in the past didn't have ESL and that they were forced to learn English in the regular education classroom. (M: 11:8)
When Mr. Maize hears such excuses, he realizes that these students are not being treated justly. Mr. Maize added that there is still discrimination around the community, especially now with immigration being a huge issue in politics. Students tell him stories about going to the store with their parents and people saying things to them not knowing that at least one of them can understand. (e.g. “Go home Mexicans. I want my Taco Bell.”) The students and their families begin to develop a distrust and dislike of Americans. They also begin to stereotype. They start to believe that all white Americans think those racist remarks. They become more guarded and distrustful (M: 11: 6-8).

Ms. Fawn recalled several specific events in which she witnessed social injustice, in the form of prejudice and discrimination, firsthand. The first incidence occurred when she was twelve years old and an enthusiastic supporter and campaigner for Presidential hopeful, Michael Dukakis. Ms. Fawn was startled and shocked by insensitive and prejudicial remarks made in front of her science class by her science teacher. The teacher made derogatory comments about Dukakis by making fun of his name and saying his name sounded like a “disease.” While the teacher thought he had made a joke, Ms. Fawn saw it as a slur against her own Greek heritage.

In high school, Ms. Fawn witnessed discrimination. As a strong student in most academic subjects, she had been tracked in Advanced Preparation (AP) classes. Her mornings were spent with other academically successful peers in learning Language Arts, Social Studies and Science with supportive, respectful teachers. However she spent the afternoon in a remedial pre-algebra class. Ms. Fawn observed that the advanced classes occurred in the same wing and all the classes were smaller. Students had more support and individual attention. The mathematics class occurred in a wing that was almost
physically segregated from the other wing. The classes were big, the atmosphere, chaotic. Teachers were frustrated, frequently, yelling at the students. Ms. Fawn recalled it as a negative, non-supportive environment where students were "expected" to be unruly, to get into trouble and be low achievers. There was no goal for these students to attend college. They were expected to go to technical schools, at best, and seek jobs such as gas station attendants (F: 11:9-10).

Mrs. Coral recalls being “bothered” by social injustice “from an early age.” She first took action over civil rights issues she encountered as a college student.

From an early age, I was bothered by social injustice. My parents supported my thinking, and my actions related to issues of equality and discrimination. In college I left my sorority over a civil rights issue – the national sorority would not allow an exchange student from a historically black college to live in our house—and in 1965, I marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Chicago, where I was working for the summer as a VISTA volunteer.

As a teacher, Mrs. Coral is passionate about exposing her students to the “real world” of her own experiences (C: 1:3).

Mrs. Sable described herself as growing up in a Christian home where tolerance of others was emphasized. However, growing up in the 50’s and 60’s in a city in the deep south, she was exposed to much racism, even some from family members. She explained that she really only began to understand about social injustice as an adult and as a Title I Coordinator in her school district. After receiving state wide recognition for her teaching, she was removed from her classroom position to a coordinator position, so that she would not be absent from her class for anticipated speaking engagements and events for a year. She moved from a middle-class school with a mostly white student body to a position of oversight for several schools in poor, African American
neighborhoods. Mrs. Sable was incensed by the inequality she witnessed at some of these schools. One school in particular had a kindergarten classroom which was found to be infested with non-poisonous reptiles. No one in the school system seemed to care. The superintendent dismissed the school, the children, and their needs. Mrs. Sable had never before witnessed such a blatant social injustice which would never have been tolerated at the more affluent white schools. That experience made such an impact on her beliefs about what was equitable and fair that she took a stand for those children, their teachers, and their community and vowed to make a difference for them (S: 13:10).

Mrs. Chestnut learned about social injustice as a child through stories of the family experience as refugees. Her father fled the Russian pogroms against the Jews and his family arrived in the United States several siblings at a time. They had nothing when they arrived. Her mother’s father was a soldier in World War II who returned from the war penniless. After the War, he moved to America but it took seven years to bring his wife and child to the United States. Mrs. Chestnut explained that when her parents told her stories of how they were disrespected and mistreated for being Jewish she understood how discrimination affects individual lives. Moreover, she grew up with friends whose parents survived the Holocaust in Europe, but lost almost every other family member. Mrs. Chestnut believes that because of the oppression and injustice Jews have historically experienced, Jewish education and values honor helping others and helping to restore the world (Ch: 15:2).

Mrs. Chestnut also witnessed social injustice during her first teaching experience. After college, she moved to a large, northeastern city to begin teaching at the age of twenty-two. The school system was economically poor and racially divided. Mrs.
Chestnut believes she was most fortunate to start her career in the school district’s “Model Subsystem” which was its first voluntary, racially integrated school. Parents chose to send their children there and the faculty was supported as they implemented cutting-edge instructional strategies. Mrs. Chestnut quickly learned that the rest of the school district did not enjoy the same freedom because of a belief that “those” children would not benefit. That experience made her aware of the inequity and injustice in the American educational system that was a significant influence in the social upheaval of the turbulent 1960s (Ch: 16:3).

All six of the educators believe that social injustice is pervasive and for students to truly be able to learn and succeed, it must be encountered and addressed intentionally. While some of the older teachers recalled firsthand experiences of racial inequality during the 1960s when the United States was undergoing great social upheaval, all noted their awareness had deepened through their professional experiences.

All the teachers had experienced and/or witnessed cultural and racial inequality at some point in their own lives, even if vicariously through family experiences they had been told. Mr. Maize talked of the close relationship he had with his Hispanic single mother who had worked two jobs. He knew she had experienced discrimination and prejudice in areas that did not always welcome Hispanics. Ms. Olive talked of the adversity faced by her Native American grandmother. Moreover, a cross was burned in her grandparent’s neighborhood because theirs was a minority ethnicity and religion in the community. Ms. Fawn recalled hearing about her Greek great-grandparents and other family members fleeing Turkey as their houses were burned. They had become refugees who had dispersed across the globe.
In addition, the younger teachers seemed to share a common belief that we, as a society, have not “learned from our history”. These teachers, Ms. Fawn, Mr. Maize, and Ms. Olive agree that social injustices still do remain dominant in our educational system today.

Furthermore, all six educators believe that social injustices still pervades our education system. Each of them, for example, cited federal legislation, such as “No Child Let Behind” as actually doing the opposite of what it was intended to do. They noted that inadequate funding, failure to address the inequalities across school systems or to account for cultural differences in the classrooms has left teachers struggling for answers to the injustices they witness for their students. However, all six of these teachers showed a strong sense of what was needed in the classroom to be equitable and fair for their students and their students’ families. Moreover, all felt they had become crusaders for their students because they had seen the consequences of social injustice firsthand.

Additional Influences

While these did not emerge as primary themes from the cross case analysis, there were other influences on the beliefs of these teachers that are worthy of note. These influences are academic in nature and include quality in-service training, graduate school coursework, and professional books they had read.

Mrs. Coral cited a professional development grant (discussed earlier) that gave her the opportunity to travel to Africa. Ms. Olive recalled attending a National Association of Bilingual Education conference and hearing experts in the field such as Stephen Krashen, James Crawford, and Lilly Wong Filmore. More recently, she
attended a two-day conference with Dr. Geneva Gay. Ms. Olive said, “She ‘wowed’ me with her insight and intelligence. Yet her message was simple and made common sense: “recognize and celebrate differences.” (O: 2-3)

In addition to professional development, Ms. Olive also emphasized the impact of her university graduate experience. She believes that her multicultural classes better equipped her with the knowledge needed to effectively teach students from different cultures. She noted she had learned how to turn such questions as, “Is it true, white people rally be stinkin’ when it rains?” into cultural learning opportunities. The experience of her first teaching assignment made her doubt her career choice, but her graduate work opened her eyes to what she could do and how she could make a difference (O: 2:3-4). One person whom Mrs. Coral describes, who was influential in her graduate school success, was a college professor who taught multiculturalism.

When I was going to school for my masters, (she) really made me think about myself. She made the class think about our traditions, customs, behaviors, thinking patterns, and how it all stems from our culture. I had never thought about myself like that before. Before that class, I viewed myself as the norm and compared everyone else to me – differences and similarities, but always compared to me (C: 1:6-7).

Similarly, teachers cited authors and their work that had made an impact more than others. Ms. Fawn mentioned Jonathan Kozol. Likewise, Mrs. Coral said she read a steady diet of Kozol. She also read Herbert Kohl, and John Holt in the 1960s.

When asked if any books or authors had influenced her teaching and her culturally relevant practice, Mrs. Sable mentioned Ruby Payne, Mike Schmoker, and Maria Montessori. Ms. Sable became a certified trainer for the poverty training of Dr. Payne. With her population of almost 100% poverty in her school, she finds the
information pertinent and useful for the teachers and other professionals who interact with the students and families of her community. Ms. Olive was reading *Three Cups of Tea* (Mortenson & Relin, 2006), a true story about a man building schools in Pakistan. She believes that all her readings influence her understanding of cultures.

The additional influences sited by teachers through in-service training, graduate studies and books read were noteworthy because they provide additional insight about how these teachers’ cultural sensitivity evolved. These patterns were not, however, as consistent or as strong as the three predominant influences shared by all: parental influences, cultural immersion experiences and witnessing social injustices.

Cross case analysis revealed three broad beliefs about culturally relevant instruction that teachers demonstrated in their classrooms. Specifically, they cited the importance of 1) using a variety of instructional techniques; 2) designing student-centered instruction that promoted active learning and; 3) fostering a sense of personal empowerment in their students. Each of these instructional beliefs is discussed with pertinent examples drawn from the data to describe the influence.

**Using a Variety of Instructional Techniques**

Teachers expressed a belief in using a variety of instructional techniques in order to reach all students. These included incorporating media and visual aids, designing activities that included all cultures, and differentiating instruction according to cultural background and experience.

Multicultural artifacts and visuals were immediately evident in each classroom. Although this practice can be a very superficial display of multiculturalism, it was
obvious that in these classrooms the artifacts were pertinent, authentic, and actually used in teaching. Ms. Coral used globes and primary source photos that decorated her classroom in her teaching (C: 1: 12). Each teacher expressed the belief that it was important to have items in the classroom from students’ home cultures so that students could “relate” to them. Mr. Maize said, “This is their home environment and we are family, so I want them to be comfortable.” The teachers had items labeled in each student’s first language. They had flags and pictures from students’ home countries as well as other countries around the world. All the rooms were bright and colorful, with interesting international artifacts such as African masks, Aztec calendars, and travel posters. Each classroom had a globe of the world (M: 11:7-8).

Mrs. Coral’s classroom included Russian pictures from her own travels, Civil Rights posters, family photographs, a peace dove, a Native American dream catcher, and a Navajo blanket print to name a few. In addition, hung along the top trim of the chalkboard was a colorful display of hats from around the world.

Messages on the posters and wall made it clear that all students would be respected and welcome: “We all SMILE in the same language,” “Diversity….Imagine being unique and still fitting in,” and “Acceptance is seeing with your heart and not with your eyes.” Another poster, hanging on the door in Mr. Maize’s room, had the large letters in DIVERSITY, constructing the acrostic, “Different Individuals Valuing Each other Regardless of Skin, Intellect, Talent, or Year.” (C: 1:12-13)

In Ms. Fawn’s classroom a poster of class rules composed by the students with positive statements was prominently displayed for easy reference. These rules were not merely displayed on the walls but were written as a contract. All the students and the
teacher had signed below them to show their agreement and commitment to the classroom rules.

Ms. Fawn says a culturally relevant classroom should have books, globes, pictures, and artifacts that signal there is a world out there beyond the classroom, the community, and the boundaries of the United States of America. In addition, she believes the classroom is not only the physical things, but practices and policies which also reflect a world view. To demonstrate this belief, Ms. Fawn would begin the day with the class gathering on the floor in the back of the classroom in a special group area. Ms. Fawn asks a student to select a language for the morning greeting. If Chinese was chosen each child greeted both neighbors to the right and to the left with “nehow” and their names (F: 7: 4-5). Ms. Coral also uses the physical classroom setup to encourage community. Her classroom is set up with desks in a circular formation so students are facing each other and there is a feel of community for their interaction (C: 1:12).

In addition to creating a classroom environment that features diverse cultures, the teachers used other instructional techniques to call attention to diversity. Recognizing the need to differentiate instructional methods to accommodate individual backgrounds and experiences was important for all the teachers. In one class, for example, Mr. Maize was assisting a reading teacher as she reviewed the book, *Maniac Magee*. One student could not speak English yet and felt completely isolated from the group. Mr. Maize had found some activities with basic vocabulary that he could work on independently. He would check on this student regularly and carefully made him feel a part of the class group even though he was working on something completely different than the rest of the students (M: 7:2-3).
Because Mrs. Sable knows that all children learn differently and at a different pace, she believes it is her job as a teacher to find the best methods and materials for each child to master needed skills as well as aid them in social and emotional development. She describes her philosophy as a combination of realism and existentialism. The essence of her philosophy and the climate of her classroom are best explained by the poem that is on her door, "You are entering the world of a child…" She believes that children need to learn in a safe, caring, and intellectually engaging environment with a teacher who is responsive to their needs. Mrs. Sable believes the teacher must embrace the whole child in a caring and positive manner for learning to occur. She also believes that the teacher must acknowledge the unique pace of each child's development (S: 13:4-5).

Ms. Olive said she used to think culturally relevant teaching meant being open to differences and teaching about different cultures. Her teaching has evolved into looking at the individual students sitting in the classroom, considering how their strengths, unique cultural backgrounds, ethnic customs, styles of learning, and ways of interacting can be validated through instructional activities. She seeks to deliver lessons that not only provide multicultural content, but also address the communicative styles and learning experiences of each student. This realization, she says, was learned from teaching diverse students in her classroom.

Mrs. Olive added that her purpose is also to give all children an equal opportunity to learn. She believes that equal opportunity does not mean teaching the same material in the same way to all students, but teaching with a variety of materials in a variety of ways.
from a variety of perspectives to reach the variety of learners in the classroom. This is the only way all students have an equal chance at success (O: 2: 3-4).

Ms. Fawn, who places a high priority on reading and literacy in her second-grade classroom, has books of all reading levels and all cultures for her students to read. She knew which cultures were under-represented and worked to find books to which they could relate in a positive way (F: 15: 1).

Since Mrs. Chestnut has traveled extensively throughout the world, her classroom is full of books, photos, and artifacts from different countries. Her student writing activities have included using these materials to write informative travel brochures and engage in correspondence with international pen pals (Ch: 15: 7).

All the teachers used a variety of standard educational techniques to vary instruction. They all delivered instruction in both large and small groups settings. They frequently used cooperative learning methods, including paired and team activities. They lectured and guided student discussion in a variety of formats. Each of the teachers also employed technology. All of the classrooms had at least a classroom computer for whole-class use and some had Smart Boards. At the high-school level, two of the teachers were able to take their students to labs equipped with computers for all students to work on projects simultaneously. Mr. Maize also incorporated the Smart Board and uses many visuals and examples. Assorted high-interest, educational games using formats such as “Jeopardy” and “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” were particularly well suited to the reluctant learners and students needing much review. Mr. Maize has found that matching and ESL Jeopardy are good ways to review for these students who need repetition and constant practice (M: 11:7-8). Mrs. Coral used an interactive game to test
the knowledge of character attributes in a novel the class was reading. The classroom energy and engagement fostered whole-group participation and met the learning styles of all the students (C: 1:13).

Designing Student-Centered Instruction

One common theme in all these classrooms drawn from the cross case analysis was the emphasis on student-centered instruction. At times, this was through planning activities that activated students’ backgrounds, raised their curiosity, or asked them to complete an activity in which they could discover and integrate new knowledge. At other times, this was by seizing on “teachable moments.” One day in Mr. Maize’s classroom, for example, a student was struggling with English vocabulary and mistakenly talked about her “younger” brother, who was actually three years older than she was. Mr. Maize talked about the words “younger” and “older.” He then went around the room asking each student how many siblings they had and the ages of their brothers and sisters. He would then ask if they were younger or older. He was able to reinforce the concept by making the discussion relevant and interesting to the students. They also moved into a discussion of the words, “step” and “half” to be sure they understood the meaning of those words in relation to their siblings (M: 11:3).

Another way that Mr. Maize designs student-centered instruction is by giving the ESL students tools to survive. He began to incorporate lessons with a content area focus in his language arts classroom so that students could go into other classes with some knowledge of the topic of instruction. He explained that ESL class instruction typically
focuses on “Survival English” (e.g., “Hello, my name is...” or “May I go to the bathroom?”). He added the academic vocabulary of science, history, and geography (M: 11:2-3).

Ms. Fawn allows her students to take ownership in their learning. As mentioned earlier, she uses study of the Civil Rights movement and of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech to help her students understand about social injustice while they are learning how to think critically. Through their written responses to high-quality literature from different periods and genres, her students begin to make these important personal connections. Since so many of her students are not yet proficient in English, Ms. Fawn often encourages students to make written response connections by drawing first. She also encourages her students to use their imaginations and think about the events and what America must have been like during that period of history (F: 12:2).

The students in Mrs. Coral’s senior classes complete many activities under her guidance that are specifically designed to give them ownership. One specific assignment required students to write their own resume. At first, they balked at the idea, saying they had nothing to tell about themselves, nothing to write down on a resume. Giving them a jobs skills rubric (C: 1: 15) to follow, Mrs. Coral insisted they use subheadings and instructed them to place several items under each one. As the students began to delve into their experiences they started to pull things out on their own. A student who worked at a restaurant listed only a line about his employment. She insisted that he think about his responsibilities there and break down his duties and describe each one. As he was forced to list the individual duties he realized that his experiences included cooking, clean-up, hosting, making change and meeting the public. He had not stopped to realize
what a variety of experiences his job had afforded him. With pride he began to develop more fully the other items that he had listed to see a much richer, more impressive representation of himself (C: 1: 13).

As a staple guide in her instructional planning, Ms. Olive tries to determine what her students already know, what they don’t know, and what they want to know. By learning about the students, she can motivate them and make the content comprehensible by building on their background knowledge and interests. For example, to learn about them and allow them to share information with other classmates, she asked them to write “All About Me” poems. These poems were written on the students’ silhouettes and hung in the classroom. She allows interaction and uses different teaching methods so that all the types of learners are provided opportunities. On a shelf in her classroom, she allowed students to bring in trinkets and artifacts from their backgrounds that were important to them. At various times in the instruction, the artifacts would relate to a subject or concept and the student could share their items by offering personal experiences with the class. Ms. Olive demands that students use their analytical and critical thinking skills. She encourages discussions on controversial topics such as injustice or prejudice, thus allowing her students to share their own experiences and biases. She urges them to consider all sides of these issues through classroom debates, discussions, and presentations. By doing this, she establishes a foundation for success that they will experience immediately. Then they will be able to continue with successes (O: 2: 4-5).

Mrs. Sable believes that many of the children with whom she works need the kinds of cultural experiences that lay a foundation for success in school. She prioritizes learning opportunities that provide such experiences. Although field trips were not a
regular part of curricula in her school district, Mrs. Sable organized a trip to an area zoo. She raised the money so that every child could participate, some teachers were not interested and some parents failed to return permission slips. Mrs. Sable and the school secretary called every child’s parent or visited their home (if they did not have a phone) to get verbal and or written permission. As a result of their efforts, all of the students at the school were able to participate and have a learning experience which enriched their academic background knowledge. Moreover, many of these students had never been out of their own community, so the event broadened their awareness (S: 13:5-6).

Mrs. Chestnut challenges her students to find out new things, learn about new people, and explore the world beyond their immediate community. Moreover, she carefully encourages student-centered problem solving. In her literacy classes, she selects books that have challenging situations and then asks the students to write potential solutions. Part of her student-centered approach involves bringing parents into the classroom on a regular basis. Recognizing the important contribution parents make to students’ learning, Mrs. Chestnut deliberately asks parents to visit school, get involved in the student’s learning experience, question what is going on in school, and explore the curriculum. Often parents who are foreign-born or may not have completed their own education are not comfortable in the school setting. Even though an American classroom might be very different from what they knew as young children, Mrs. Chestnut believes that parents’ involvement is very important for classroom success (Ch: 15:5).

Ms. Olive also believes a relationship with the parent is critical. When a student first enrolls, Ms. Olive tries to meet with the parents and show them the classroom as a
place they would always be welcome. She invites parents on field trips and into the classroom when something exciting is taking place (O: 2: 9).

As is apparent in some of the earlier examples, active and experiential learning are also the norm for this group of six educators and another way to strengthen teacher-student interaction. Because Mr. Maize had training in film and television before becoming a teacher, he feels quite comfortable using it with his students. “I incorporate cameras and film in the classroom so the students can see what they do and have conversations about their work,” he explained (M: 11:3-4).

Ms. Fawn uses a simple, yet active response for her students which kept them focused and involved. When having classroom discussions or when having a book read to them, they attentively listen and then they indicate their enjoyment or approval with a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” signal. This technique is also used for assessing their understanding of a concept (F: 11: 5).

Mrs. Coral uses techniques of simulations and role playing in the classroom. In addition, she gives her students choices to allow them to direct their own learning. They may choose to participate in a reading group or to do an independent research paper, or to make a class presentation about the content of a particular unit. Another significant activity is a PowerPoint assignment that the seniors in her General English or World Literature classes produce as a culminating project. It is a presentation on a current event, historical topic, or country of the student’s choice (C: 1:9).

Participatory learning extends beyond the classroom for Mrs. Coral’s students. Mrs. Coral and a colleague lead the school’s International Club. The goals for the International Club are Service, Learning, and Fun and were documented with club by-
laws and membership requirements (C: 2: 3). The International Club supports a Rwandan student’s education with a six-year commitment. Last year, funds were raised to bring electricity to a rural school in Kenya and to send books to Kenya, Rwanda, and the Philippines. Students organized and carried out the fundraisers including the surprisingly successful selling of garbage bags, baking and selling cookies at sporting events, and selling “singing candy-grams” on Valentine’s Day. They also collected books, sorted them by the age level, packed, sealed and labeled the boxes that were shipped to Kenya, Rwanda and the Philippines (C: 1:8-10).

Explicit Student Empowerment

Cross case analysis revealed that a driving belief of these teachers is the importance of ongoing and explicit ways to help their students feel “empowered” both in and outside the classroom. To do this, each of them encouraged students’ self expression, articulated high expectations for them, and worked steadily to build their self-confidence. Moreover, the teachers indicated that as the school year progressed, they gradually gave students more responsibility by giving them the authority to make decisions through a variety of learning choices.

When asked the purpose of culturally relevant practice in the classroom, Mr. Maize answered, “Giving students choices. Giving students hope. Giving students confidence in themselves and to make all students believe they can be successful.” He added that teachers need to be there for their students. He begins the school year with a strong commitment, “Be happy! Feel comfortable with what you do. Enjoy your work and the students, and be there for them. (M: 11:6)”
Mr. Maize has found that for his ESL students it takes careful scaffolding and time for them to gain confidence in themselves.

I believe in helping the students move forward when they are ready. Students often first come with a defiant attitude. They are going through culture shock and don’t talk. The “silent period” lasts for a while. They slowly begin to open up and talk. It is good to let them write in their journals. I let them write in Spanish because if they are forced to write in English, which is hard for them; they won’t, and it won’t help them. They need to express themselves. They need to take steps…tiny steps at first.

(M: 11:5)

Gradually they rely less on the teacher and become more reliant on themselves and take ownership of their own learning.

Mr. Maize also explained that one way he gets the best out of his students is by using “pep talks.” He asks them what they want to be and what they want to do. He recognizes that they have to go through a lot to get here. They do not understand a lot of things, and that the beginning of motivation for them is to feel comfortable in asking questions.

In addition, Mr. Maize explained:

I try to empower my students and give them a sense of pride by giving them examples of very successful immigrants in this country. Sometimes high school is a temporary stop to learn just enough English to get by, especially for the Mexican and South American students. They are expected to go to work in construction, landscaping, or restaurants. I try to tell them that with education, they can be more than a laborer or dishwasher. Many students do understand, but the pressure of helping to support a family is too great. The drop-out rate for many of these students is still too high. My role here is to help my kids make the right decisions. I give them the best advice I can and I try to support them. Again, I am very fortunate of being born in this great country. I just wish many of my students had that same opportunity I did. It kills me when some of the brightest kids I've ever known graduate high school, then end up being a bus boy or dishwasher. I tell the kids to save their money and apply for citizenship. It may take a year or maybe even ten years, but they shouldn't give up on that American dream (M: 11: 6-8).
Ms. Fawn strives to create a soothing environment which is bright and cheerful, yet safe and stable. Many students in her classroom lack stable home environments, but their school attendance is good because they want to be at school where they feel safe and valued. Ms. Fawn stresses the importance of student “buy in” to what they are learning by making a big deal out of it.

She says;

I love writing and read alouds and teaching points that are meaningful to me. I give them control. I tell them they can be any kind of writer they want to be. I tell them they control what they do. They are running the show. I want them to do the right thing (F: 15: 5).

Mrs. Coral believes at the high-school level, students must take responsibility for their learning.

My responsibility is to engage kids in learning content—by motivating them, by presenting information/ideas in as compelling and as clear a way as I can, by breaking information down into clear and concise chunks, by structuring the business of the classroom in ways that facilitate learning. The students’ responsibility is to come to the classroom ready to learn and to leave with the determination to do what it takes to learn the content—read, review, write, do homework, etc. …..That is why it is important to see each student as an individual—to cut through the obstacles and connect individually with kids. When they know the teacher cares, they care (C: 1:8).

To get the best out of her students and motivate them, Ms. Coral adds, “it is important to relate to students as individuals – to let them see that you care about them and their progress on a personal level – this has been a far greater motivator over the years than grades, incentives, contracts, standards, standardized tests, or anything else.”

Ms. Coral described how activities in her classroom change during the school year due to the high expectations she has for her students and the gradual release of power she relinquishes to them.
Some years ago I noticed that by the end of April/beginning of May, I was hardly “teaching” any more, especially in the year-long Honors 9 class. That is, the kids are pursuing projects independently by then, and I am the guide, facilitator, organizer, nudge, etc. But I am not, by then, making out lesson plans that have point-by-point listings of what I will be presenting. By then, the students are ordering their learning (C: 1:6-7).

In addition, Ms. Coral, herself, is energized by the self empowerment she witnesses in her students. In an article she wrote for a national education publication about why she teaches:

…..and it’s the light in their eyes and the lift in their voices when they learn how to read, or covert fractions, or understand covalence, or give a speech, or shoot a basket, or play the clarinet or fix a car transmission…..

This documentation, through the article, is coupled with the evidence of student success displayed on her classroom walls. (C: 1:9)

In working with students, Ms. Olive believes it is imperative to encourage and empower them. She believes that culturally and linguistically diverse students can feel invalidated in their school careers. It is important to validate who they are, how they learn, and what is important to them. In order to empower them she believes that different cultures need to be represented in the content and that educators need to have knowledge of the various thinking and learning processes of culturally diverse students. She explains how she achieves this:

My purpose is to give all students in the classroom an equal opportunity to learn. Equal opportunity does not mean teaching the same material in the same way to all students, but teaching with a variety of materials in a variety of perspectives and with materials which represent their cultures. This is the only way all students have an equal chance at success. The teacher must empower all students with the opportunity and tools to lead successful lives (O: 2: 5-6).

Mrs. Chestnut believes that teachers have a great influence on their students and empowering them is essential to their success. It is more than teaching the basic skills and
rote learning. Teachers open up the world for their students. They are responsible to teach attitudes toward learning, toward other people, and toward themselves. Teachers must show their students that they have much to live for and strive for.

I establish a trusting relationship with my students. I encourage them to try their best and to always continue to do their best. I encourage them to use different avenues to solve problems and to find out new things, learn about new people, and explore the world beyond their immediate community (Ch: 15: 5-6).

Because of Mrs. Chestnut’s sharing of her own stories and enthusiasm of her love for travel and cultures, she hopes that they, too, will establish strong interests in things they want to know more about (Ch: 15: 7).

Mrs. Sable believes in explicitly empowering her students but to do so she believes that some things have to be in place. In a National Education Association speech she gave, these words were documented.

…out children need the “light” education can bring to them. Our children are our hope. They are a promise for a better day and I want to live in a country where our children are so valued that there would never be any need for legislation concerning no child left behind, or there would never be an issue of equity in education. (S: 6:7)

Witnessing Mrs. Sable in the school and classroom, she practices what she preaches. By devoting her time and energy to one of the poorest, lowest achieving schools in her state, it is obvious she is there to empower her students (S: 6:7)

These teachers all encourage self expression, confidence building, and high level expectations of their students. The teachers foster empowerment in their students by encouraging them to think for themselves and to be respectful of people from all cultures and to learn from them. Their belief in student empowerment runs so deep that all six
teachers actually used the term “empowerment” in their descriptions when talking about the cultural relevant practice.

Summary

Cross-case analysis confirmed themes that evolved from the data. The teachers studied had diverse sociocultural backgrounds which set a foundation for their beliefs and practice. Although they all mentioned their heritage and extended families, it was their parents who they felt exerted the strongest influences on their beliefs. Their parents all valued education and wanted their children to have an education whether they had benefited from the opportunity themselves. In addition, the parents were advocates of community involvement either as involved citizens or by supporting activities and events which would better the community.

Across the cases were strong examples of culturally sensitive experiences and firsthand exposure to social injustice which affected each teacher and which had a profound impact on their beliefs and practices. In some cases they, themselves, had been the affected personally; in other situations they had witnessed occurrences and events. The theme or thread which ran through all of these cases was that having seen or experienced cultural insensitivity and/or social injustice made each of them acutely aware of their role as a teacher and what they needed to communicate to their students.

In addition, cross case data analysis revealed three broad beliefs about culturally relevant instruction that teachers demonstrated in their classrooms. Specifically, they cited the importance of 1) using a variety of instructional techniques 2) designing
student-centered instruction that promoted active learning and 3) fostering a sense of personal empowerment in their students.

Cross-case analysis revealed the use of a variety of instructional techniques used by all six teachers. Many examples of media, visual aids, and activities designed to include all cultures, and techniques to differentiate instruction were shared by all. In addition, student-centered instructions to stimulate students’ backgrounds, raise their curiosity, and move them to discover and integrate new knowledge were central in all the classrooms of the cases. However, it went beyond using a variety of instructional methods and conducting the classes in a student-centered way by fostering a sense of personal empowerment in the students. The six teachers took it further than embedding it in the class lessons and activities by actually giving the students pep talks, using a vocabulary of choices, hope and confidence, and by being sure that the students knew how proud they were of each accomplishment.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

By the year 2050 African-American, Asian-American and Latino students will constitute close to 57% of all United States students (Department of Commerce, 1996). United States schools will continue to become places of homogeneous (i.e., white, female, middle class) teachers and linguistically, culturally, racially and economically diverse students. Thus, classroom teachers must face the reality that they will increasingly continue to come into contact with students whose cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial and social class backgrounds differ from their own (Gay & Howard, 2001). Consequently, in order to deliver effective instruction to all students, the American educational system must accommodate the widening gap between the backgrounds of the educators and the students in the United States school systems.

Multicultural education addresses the academic and cultural changes that have resulted from the shifting demographics in American classrooms (Gay, 1994). It seeks to transform education by holistically critiquing and addressing current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices. Multicultural education is grounded in ideals of educational equity, social justice and the facilitation of educational experiences in which
all students can reach their full potential as learners. In addition, it aids in them becoming socially aware and challenges them to become active locally, nationally and globally (Gorski, 2001). One goal of multicultural education is to identify ways to improve the academic performance of students who are culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is one form of multicultural education. Culturally relevant pedagogy is instruction that empowers students by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Banks, 2002). Furthermore, these cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture, they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right (Ladson-Billings, 1994). There is a respected research base which indicates that culturally relevant pedagogy makes a difference in the academic achievement of students whose sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds are different from those of the mainstream population (Banks, 2002).

This qualitative study explores the practices and strategies of teachers who have had success teaching in the culturally diverse classroom. The purpose of this study was to identify the beliefs of six teachers who have successfully adopted a “culturally relevant pedagogy” in their classrooms. The study further sought to uncover how these teachers came to those beliefs and what instructional practices they use to support their pedagogical beliefs.

The following research questions guided data collection and analysis:

1) How did teachers who have been identified as using a culturally relevant pedagogy develop their cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education?
2) What beliefs, if any, do these teachers share about culturally relevant instruction and how do they implement those beliefs in their classroom practice?

This study used a descriptive, case study approach. Data included teacher interviews, classroom observations and documents and artifacts. Coding was utilized in the analysis of the data and patterns evolved from the coding (Zin, 1984).

For the first research question, data analysis revealed three central influences in the development of the teachers’ cultural awareness and beliefs about multicultural education. Specifically, teachers were influenced by 1) their parents’ attitudes, values, and behaviors; 2) culturally sensitive experiences that affected them personally; 3) firsthand exposure to social injustice that raised their awareness.

For the second research question, data analysis revealed three broad beliefs about culturally relevant instruction that teachers demonstrated in their classrooms. Specifically, they cited the importance of 1) using a variety of instructional techniques; 2) designing student-centered instruction that promoted active learning and; 3) fostering a sense of personal empowerment in their students. In this chapter, conclusions and implications of the findings will be discussed.

Data analysis identified themes that reflected the teachers’ beliefs and practices in their classrooms. Findings also characterized teachers’ perceptions of factors that influenced their beliefs and guided their classroom instruction and practice. Three distinctive conclusions surfaced from the data analysis: 1) Parent’s self-initiated valuing of community involvement and education and firsthand experiences outside the classroom were the most significant influence on the teachers’ cultural sensitivity and
believes; 2) All the teachers had adopted a student-centered constructivist approach to teaching that included incorporating the students’ home cultures as part of the learning environment; and 3) although not part of their official curriculum, all of these teachers identified moving their students toward independence and personal empowerment as an explicit instructional goal. Following is a detailed discussion of these conclusions and their implications for educators.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions were reached in the analysis of the data from this research project. The main conclusions include the influence of parents and firsthand experiences on the beliefs of the teachers. The constructivist teaching methods used in the classroom with the inclusion of home cultures and the central goal of the teachers moving their students toward independence and personal empowerment.

Influence of Parents and Firsthand Experiences on Beliefs

The first conclusion examines the influence their parents and personal experience had on the teachers’ beliefs. In responding to in-depth questions about their lives, backgrounds and experiences the teachers noted many influences but their parents and personal experiences of other cultures were the most prominent. In addition, each teacher noted the impact on their cultural awareness of at least one significant personal experience in which he or she witnessed social injustice.

Because a large body of research suggests that teachers’ beliefs have a significant impact on their classroom practice (Thompson, 1992; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992), this
study focused on the teachers’ beliefs and how those beliefs were developed. According to Brophy and Good (1974), a better understanding of teachers’ belief systems or conceptual bases can significantly contribute to enhancing educational effectiveness. Belief systems are described as dynamic in nature, undergoing change and restructuring as individuals evaluate their beliefs against their experiences. (Thompson, 1992).

The parents in this study exert perhaps the strongest influences on teacher beliefs about culturally awareness and involvement for their children. The parents of participants in this study came from different parts of the country, had different ethnic heritages, had different levels of education and different political views, yet, they all shared a conviction about the importance of community involvement. According to study participants, their parents were either themselves active in church or civic communities or they valued, encouraged and supported others to be active. In addition, all participants recalled that their parents valued education. Perhaps, since the parents valued education so highly and encouraged and supported their children, these teachers turned to education as a career, not only for cultural sensitivity, but for a way to make a difference in the world, or to give all students tools to be successful. According to Lortie (2002), personal predispositions, such as one’s beliefs developed through one’s upbringing, life experiences, socialization or some combination of these factors are central to becoming educators. Results of this study support Lortie’s theory.

In addition to the influence of the parents, personal experiences outside of the classroom made an impact on participants’ beliefs. These six teachers had a variety of cultural experiences from teaching overseas to personal travel. Each of the participants
had sought out these opportunities and the experiences had both broadened and deepened their understanding of other cultures. Earlier studies have indicated that immersion in a culture promotes acceptance and understanding of that culture. Merryfield’s (2005) perspective is one of experience and immersion. She differentiates between “surface culture” and “internal culture” explaining the later is more challenging to embrace but fosters positive experiences with other cultures in order to develop “worldmindedness” (Merryfield, 2005). The data supports that through the participant’s experiences of actually living and teaching in different cultures, i.e. Miss Fawn working with Peace Corp and Mrs. Coral teaching students in Rwanda and Russia, they went beyond the “surface” to the “internal” which gave them an in-depth experiences which helped them develop “worldmindedness”. The implication is that it is not enough to just physically go to another country, but it is the nature of the experience. In addition, the argument can be made that this type of “internal” experience can happen in one’s own country as well, if the nature of the experience is of quality and depth.

In addition, Goodman (1988) asserts that pre-professionally formed beliefs can be thought of as schemata that teachers bring with them to their teaching. Apprenticeships, reflective practice and educational experiences, such as travel and immersion into a culture, can be instrumental as catalysts for raising awareness of personal beliefs and how they impact a teacher’s instructional practice (Goodman, 1988; Raths, 2001). Results of this study highlight the significance of these studies.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the teachers’ school experiences did not emerge as a significant influence in their beliefs about multiculturalism or cultural
sensitivity. Rather it was the participants’ home and personal experiences that had the greatest impact on their cultural sensitivity and awareness. When school-based examples were cited, they were always experiences that had occurred after the teacher was already motivated or conscious of cultural understanding. Their college and post graduate studies gave them additional information and more insight to add to what they already knew and felt, but the awareness and motivation to teach using “culturally relevant pedagogy” did not come from their academic experiences.

There is research to support the thinking that teachers’ experiences play a significant role in their education and practice. Kennedy (1997) claims that teachers bring beliefs to their teacher education programs that are a product of their upbringing, a reflection of their life experiences, or a result of socialization processes in schools. Because parental influences and personal life experiences had far more impact on these teachers than did their school experiences, results of this study confirm Kennedy’s theory. Kennedy further asserts that these beliefs are used to evaluate the new ideas about teaching that teachers and teacher candidates confront in their methods classes. Teachings that square with their beliefs are recognized; those that challenge their beliefs are dismissed as theoretical, unworkable, or even simply wrong (Kennedy, 1997). This study also shows that these strong influences from parents and personal life experiences brought to the teacher training influence new learning as it builds on what is already believed.
Constructivist Teaching Methods with the Incorporation of Home Cultures

Each of the teachers used a constructivist instructional approach that recognizes the importance of helping students incorporate background knowledge, multimodal experiences and student-center assignments (Fosnot, 1996). As a central part of their student-centered constructivist approach, the teachers carefully brought the home cultures of the students into the classroom through a variety of means. Moreover, they encouraged students to draw on these home cultures to support their learning in the classroom. This is significant because it suggests that a constructivist teaching paradigm is effective for both mainstream and diverse student populations.

Currently, most teacher education programs endorse instructional models that are compatible with a constructivist theory of learning that sees knowledge generation as individual and influenced by a student’s sociocultural background experiences (Fosnot, 1996). Constructivism is based on the recognition that all learners bring prior knowledge and experiences to all new learning situations.

Results of this study indicate that this instructional model can be used to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy. Findings further suggest the importance of incorporating students’ unique home cultures in the classroom through the use of artifacts and instructional activities. To do this, teachers who use a culturally relevant pedagogy must possess an awareness of the need to provide multicultural educational opportunities in the classroom.
Teachers in this study brought rich multicultural background experiences to the classroom, and actively used them to enhance the classroom experience. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2000) observed that teacher learning takes place over time rather than in isolated moments in time, and that active learning requires opportunities to link previous knowledge with new understandings. This previous knowledge is rooted in prior knowledge and beliefs. This kind of examination inevitably begins with teachers’ own histories as human beings and as educators exploring their own experiences as members of particular races, classes and genders; and as children, parents, and teachers. (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Results of this study confirm their observations.

In addition, Ruddell’s (2002) research found that in addition to extensive grounding in professional knowledge, effective teachers organize instruction to meet the varying needs of all their students. Such teachers know their students well, use multiple instructional methods and reflect on student progress and their own teaching practice in order to make changes to meet the needs of their students (Ruddell, 2002). Results of this study provide further evidence of the validity of Ruddell’s research. The caring teachers in this study recognized the need for students to have their home heritage and culture become an integral part of their classroom learning.

Moving Students to Independence

A third major conclusion was that a central goal of the teachers was to move their students to independence and personal empowerment. While this is not a traditional academic goal articulated in a district course of study, these teachers articulated this goal
as critical for their students. To bring this about, the teacher not only used a variety of student-centered teaching techniques, they also encouraged students to direct their own learning by offering them instructional choices and alternatives.

Results of this study corroborate research by Panitz and Panitz (2004) which finds that empowering students by offering them choices produces an environment which fosters maturity and responsibility in students for their own learning. Through this instructional approach the teacher becomes a facilitator instead of a director and the student becomes a willing participant instead of a passive follower (Panitz and Panitz, 2004).

Furthermore, this approach is particularly important for the culturally diverse student who often needs extra encouragement and confidence. Data in this study indicated that the teachers frequently gave students choices, allowing them to direct their own learning. As the year progressed students were increasingly encouraged to take ownership of their own learning.

Teachers in this study incorporated important factors of empowerment in their classrooms. Students were encouraged and motivated by their teachers. Confidence was built in the students by the teachers allowing them to take responsibility for their learning. The incorporation of these factors of empowerment supports the research by Ruddell (2002) who identifies characteristics of effective teachers. Ruddell found that effective teachers are caring and meet the varying needs of all their students by knowing their students well and reflecting on their progress and making changes in their instruction and instructional methods as needed (Ruddell, 2002).
Implications for the Study

Results of this study offer several implications for teacher recruitment, teacher preparation, professional development, school administrators and classroom teachers.

Implications for Teacher Recruitment

Recent research on teacher recruitment and preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy, 2002; Zeichner & Conkin, 2005) indicate there is a need for more systematic study linking teacher candidates’ personal backgrounds and preparation experiences to their practices in the classroom, especially when teachers enter into schools with diverse populations. Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) recommend that researchers be more explicit about the environment in which teachers work. Definitions of teaching effectiveness and student learning must include the many students of color and living in poverty who are currently underserved by the public schools. In addition, the definition of high quality teachers must include the development of a diverse teaching force that more adequately reflects the diversity of our population (Villegas & Lucas, 2004).

Research in teacher recruitment needs to make the reduction of the achievement gap a priority concern by documenting how the status quo in the pre-service preparation of teachers has fallen short of recruiting a diverse teaching force and preparing teachers to teach diverse learners. It should also play a greater role in enlightening how we can do a better job of preparing candidates who will choose to teach in a school where they are most needed, will be successful once they arrive, and will stay there, and in documenting
ways to recruit a more diverse teaching force. Research interest should focus on where and how teachers develop the specific knowledge and skills that enable them to teach effectively with particular student populations in particular school settings and build on that knowledge (Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

Implications for Teacher Preparation

Villegas (2002) advocates embedding “culturally relevant pedagogy” into teacher education. Regardless of background, it has become imperative that teachers are prepared to teach racially, ethnically, economically and linguistically diverse groups of students. Villegas proposes approaches to create culturally responsive teachers as she believes teachers teach how they are taught. Often pre-service teachers have one semester in the classroom and usually with only one teacher. Colleges and universities, she continues, need to expose pre-service teachers to culturally responsive teachers. In addition, they need to rethink general education courses and electives to give teacher education a more diverse multicultural perspective. The six teachers in this study shared numerous examples of the positive impact their firsthand experiences of cultures that were new to them had had on their teachers’ beliefs about the importance of incorporating students’ home cultures in the classroom. If there was a void of these experiences in their teacher preparation, they had found it through their experiences. Findings of this study indicate a need to revisit the teacher preparation curriculum and make sure that those preparing to teach, particularly in culturally diverse setting, have firsthand experiences of other cultures. A couple of the ways this can be done would be
by witnessing culturally relevant educators with diverse populations in the classroom and being exposed to diverse multicultural perspectives in general education and elective course in teacher preparation.

Along with the need for pre-service students to have more exposure to culturally relevant teachers and coursework, the teacher preparation curriculum needs to embed opportunities for students to explore their own sociocultural backgrounds as a way of probing the genesis of their own perspective on issues of diversity. Hilliard (1991) uses the analogy of an iceberg to explain an individual's understanding of his or her cultural identity beliefs. While the tip of the iceberg represents the individual's conscious understanding of his or her culture, the submerged part symbolizes the larger, more subconscious influence of culture in one's life. Coming to an understanding of this subconscious influence requires some inner exploration of one’s beliefs. The implication that teacher preparation should include more in-depth exploration of one’s beliefs would encourage a better foundation from which to understand the cultures of the students.

Furthermore, Cochran-Smith (1995) believes that in order to enhance an appreciation of other cultures, teachers should know about their own cultural roots. The teachers in the study had knowledge of their family heritages and backgrounds. Cochran-Smith asserts that teaching for equity, social justice, and inclusion need to become part of the essential outcomes of teacher education. Findings of this study suggest that experiencing or witnessing episodes of social injustice firsthand can provide insights that positively impact someone’s awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences. The
teachers in this study each witnessed firsthand examples of inequity, or social injustice. As a result they had developed strong beliefs to take to the classroom practice.

Proponents of culturally diverse pedagogical practices emphasize the need to understand one’s own heritage in order to become conscious of the cultures of others. In addition, they recognize the importance of immersing teacher candidates in new cultural experiences. Ladson-Billings (1994) advocates systematically requiring teacher candidates to have prolonged immersion in different cultures. She believes that the teacher should experience an immersion in the community culture to learn things such as who the leaders are, which people command respect, what matters to the children of the culture and needed information to learn how to work with the people of the culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

As noted earlier, findings of this study suggest that teacher preparation programs should provide opportunities for examination of home cultures and immersion in new cultural experiences. Cochran-Smith (1995) suggests collaborations among universities, school, and communities, in order to provide teacher candidates the opportunity to examine some of their deeply held beliefs and expectations about children. One implication of this study is a recommendation that teacher preparation programs seek such opportunities for collaboration with high education and community programs in diverse settings. Ultimately, results of this study indicate that parental influence and personal experiences have more impact on beliefs about cultural diversity than formal education. Consequently, an important implication of this study is that colleges and universities need to accelerate their commitment to multicultural education, embed
“culturally relevant pedagogy” into the curriculum offering more effectively. As noted earlier, findings of this study suggest that additional opportunities for probing personal beliefs about diversity and for immersion in new sociocultural experiences must be systematically implemented and monitored in teacher preparation programs.

This need appears to be urgent and critical given that three of the six teachers are young educators with between five and ten years of teaching experience whose college and university teacher education programs deliberately addressed issues of multicultural education. Although as undergraduates these young teachers had studied “culturally relevant pedagogy” as an effective instructional approach for diverse student populations, their family and personal experiences had influenced their beliefs and practices more than their multicultural education.

Gay (1995) believes to successfully move the field of teacher education beyond the disjointed and superficial treatment of diversity that currently prevails, teacher education must articulate a vision of teaching and learning in a diverse society. Furthermore, they must use that vision to methodically guide the infusion of multicultural issues into the teacher preparation curriculum. Result of this study support Gay’s belief.

Implications for Staff Development

Another implication of this study’s findings is the need for quality staff development of culturally relevant instructional practices. For professional development to be meaningful, district and school policies must support coherent and integrated professional development experiences.
Moreover, the teachers in the study did not believe that their professional development had much impact on their beliefs and practices in the area of culturally relevant pedagogy because of the lack of training in the field or the way it was addressed. Findings of this study underscore the notion that professional development be guided by teacher input with a view of teacher learning as continual and transformative (Clair & Adger, 1999).

Since multicultural education is on its way to becoming a mature curriculum theory in its own right, educational equity and excellence for all children cannot be obtained without the incorporation of cultural pluralism. This must happen in all aspects of the educational process, and it will require more exploration of the connections between curricular innovations and elements of multicultural education. (Gay, 1995).

Implications for School District Administrators

An implication directed at district administrators would be the recommendation to incorporate a strong mentor program within the school district. Research has long demonstrated that teachers are deeply influenced by colleagues who have proven to be successful educators and are respected by their peers (Kagan, 1992). Ladson-Billings (1994) believes that to truly motivate and effectively educate diverse student populations successfully, the school districts should provide opportunities for observation of culturally relevant teaching. By recognizing the effectiveness of teachers who demonstrate culturally relevant practices by allowing them to serve as master teachers
and mentors, districts might improve delivery of culturally sensitive instruction that would enhance the learning experiences of all students in the district.

Implications for Classroom Teachers

One implication of this study for classroom teachers is the value of intentionally integrating opportunities to study diverse cultures as well as examples of acceptance, tolerance and social justice into their teaching curriculum. Teachers who effectively implement teaching strategies for the culturally diverse classroom draw upon a knowledge base of multicultural knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and subject-area knowledge (Banks, 1994), and have a keen understanding of their own cultural experiences, values, and attitudes toward people who are culturally, racially, and ethnically different from themselves (McGee-Banks, 1997). This knowledge can provide a foundation to help teachers design and select appropriate instructional materials for their students, make informed decisions, and decide where to place the focus of the instruction for individual needs of students (Banks, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1997).

Directions for Future Research

The present study provided information on the beliefs and practices of six teachers who incorporated culturally relevant pedagogical practices in their classrooms. It adds to the research base on culturally relevant pedagogy, particularly on how effective teachers of diverse student populations develop their beliefs and instructional practices.
Researchers indicate that more studies of teachers’ beliefs and the relationship between beliefs and practices are still needed. Pajares (1992) states that the investigation of teachers’ beliefs is one of the promising areas of teacher thinking research, while Fenstermacher (1986) predicted beliefs to be the single most important construct in educational research. Consequently, this study provides direction for future research in this area.

This study examined the influences on teacher beliefs. The findings indicated the most notable influence was that of the teacher’s parents, personal experiences and encounters with social justice. Future studies might examine other effective teachers who use a culturally relevant pedagogical approach in different educational contexts to see if the findings are similar.

Comparative studies of teachers who use different instructional models to address diverse student populations might also be valuable. Such studies might include the examination of teachers from a range of cultures and geographic locations. In addition, comparisons could be made of teachers across grade levels (e.g., elementary, middle school and high school) and subject areas (e.g., history, mathematics, science, language arts). Moreover, such studies might reveal patterns of effective practices that hold true across different groups of teachers.

This study also examined how teacher beliefs affect classroom practice. The findings indicated that effective teachers of diverse populations use constructivist instructional strategies that are effective with all student populations. Future studies could
provide in-depth data by comparing the instructional strategies of teachers of diverse populations who use other models of instruction (e.g., transmission).

Summary

Six effective teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms were interviewed and observed to examine the genesis of their beliefs about diversity and how those beliefs guided the instructional practices in their classrooms. This study found a strong connection between beliefs and practices. It also identified contributing factors and experiences that influenced the development of these teachers’ beliefs and practices.

These teachers were greatly influenced by their parents who were all socially active in their communities and who placed a high regard on education. Their beliefs were also influenced by their own firsthand experiences of immersion in new cultural experiences, either for travel, study or service. In addition, witnessing or learning about social injustice had deeply affected these teachers’ awareness of diversity. The study found that the instructional practices of these teachers were constructivist in approach. Moreover, they were strategies consistent with good instruction for all student populations. These teachers had a strong interest in learning about their students’ home culture. They also carefully incorporated those cultures into classroom life in a variety of ways. Finally, the teachers sought to empower the students, encouraging them to become responsible for their learning and preparing them not only academically, but for the world beyond school.
Implications of this study suggest intentional firsthand experiences for student teacher education and professional development. In addition, it suggests that administrators build in effective mentoring programs to allow teachers to observe culturally relevant educators. Classroom teachers should learn all they can about the cultures and backgrounds of their students to make meaningful connections to the classroom study.

Future research is needed to continue to examine effective teachers and their beliefs and practices. More studies of the influences of teacher beliefs and how those influences impact classroom practice are needed. Furthermore, continuing to explore how more teachers can become culturally relevant educators by using culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms is also critical for all students.
REFERENCES


Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittock (Ed.) *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). NY: Collier-Macmillan.


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Information

How many years have you been teaching?

In what areas are you certified to teach?

What degree/s do you hold?

What was your area of specialization?

From what institution did you receive your degree?

How many years have you been in your current school?

What grade level/s have you taught in the past?

For how long have you been teaching at your current grade level?

What subject areas are you currently teaching?

What, if any, are your professional associations/memberships?

Biographical Information/Educational Background

How did you decide to become a teacher?

How would you describe your family and the community in which you were raised?

Is there anything in your family, education, or teaching experience/s that influenced your culturally relevant teaching?

What would stand out to you as the most important factors that influenced your teaching?
How would you describe yourself as a student?

How did your professional preparation influence your current teaching? Please explain.

Teacher beliefs

What is your philosophy of teaching? (i.e. teacher role, learning, learning goals, knowledge)?

Can you describe your philosophy of culturally relevant practice?

Have your beliefs about culturally relevant practice changed over the years? If yes, how and why?

In your opinion, what is the purpose of culturally relevant practice in the classroom?

What do you see as the most important components of culturally relevant practice?

How would you define an “effective culturally relevant teacher”? What should be her/his role? Why? How do you fit in that definition?

How do you think a successful culturally relevant classroom looks like?

What do you think a teacher should do to get the best out of students? What do you do to motivate them?

How do you make decisions about what you teach and how to teach it?

Professional Experiences/Teaching Context

Where do parents fit in your program?

In what ways does your school administration and parents influence your teaching?

Are there any books or authors that influenced your teaching?

Describe a typical day in your classroom.

How are activities at the beginning of the year different from the rest/end of the year?

What other information about your teaching experience would you like to share?
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONSENT - SCHOOL DISTRICT

Date
Address

Dear ________________________.

I am conducting research on the beliefs and practices of teachers who use cultural relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. I am investigating this topic because today there are so many culturally diverse classrooms consisting of students from many different cultures, races and backgrounds. There is a need to find ways to meet the educational needs of these students and examining teachers who take into account the student’ culture and background may serve as a way to find answers. I am asking permission for a teacher in your school to be a participant in my study. If you grant me permission I would like to interview and observe the teacher in his/her classroom. I could interview the teacher at the school before or after school hours in the building or a mutually agreed upon public place. I would, ideally, like to visit the class for 2 hour intervals 2 to 3 times over a week.

This study will protect the identity of the participant by using a pseudonym and confidentiality will be maintained with the careful storing and use of data collected. If your teacher takes part in this project she/he will receive the findings at the study’s conclusion. If your teacher takes part in the study, she/he may stop at any time without penalty. In addition, they may ask to have their data withdrawn from the study after the research has been conducted.

If you want to know more about this research project, please contact me at Nancy Varian, Malone College, 515 25th Street NW, Canton, Ohio 44709, nvarian@malone.edu or by phone 330-471-8593.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio on (date)………….. Information on the University of Akron
policy and procedure for research involving humans can be obtained from ____________
Chair of the Institutional Review Board, telephone 330-

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

[Name, title]

----------------------------------------
Signature                                      Date

Consent Statement(s)

I agree to let my teacher take part in this project. I know that he or she will participate in interviews which will be audio recorded. I know that the researcher will be taking notes of observation in the teacher’s classroom. I know what he or she will have to do and that he or she can stop at any time.

----------------------------------------
Signature                                      Date
LETTER OF CONSENT - PARTICIPANT

Date

Address

Dear __________________________,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled, *Beliefs and Instructional Practices of Culturally Relevant Educators: A Qualitative Case Study*, being conducted by me, Nancy Varian, a student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Akron.

I am conducting research on the beliefs and practices of teachers who use cultural relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. I am investigating the use, applicability and need in classrooms of both homogeneous populations and culturally diverse classrooms. There is a need to find ways to meet the educational needs of all students and examining teachers who take into account the student’ culture and background may serve as a way to find answers. If you grant me permission I would like to interview you outside of the classroom day and observe you in your classroom. The interviews could take place at the school before or after school hours in the building or a mutually agreed upon public place. I would predict they will be one to two hours in length. I would, ideally, like to visit the class for 2 hour intervals 2 to 3 times over a week. I will include six teachers in my study.

Participation in this project is voluntary and involves no unusual risks to you. You may rescind your involvement at any time with no negative consequences.

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants and schools in order to maintain confidentiality. Any identifying information collected will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. Participants will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. You signed consent form will be kept separate from your data.

If you take part in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty. In addition, you may ask to have their data withdrawn from the study after the research has been conducted.

If you take part in this project you will receive a debriefing which will include the sharing of coding and theme analysis at the study’s conclusion. This should help you better reflect on your own practice and that of other practitioners.
If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Nancy Varian (researcher) at 330-471-8593 or email nvarian@malone.edu or contact Dr. Evangeline Newton (advisor) at 330-972-6916 or enewton@uakron.edu

This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at 330-972-7666 or 1-888-232-8790.

Sincerely,

Nancy Varian
Director, Center for Professional Development
School of Education
Malone College
515 - 25th Street N.W.
Canton, OH  44709-3897
Phone: 330-471-8593
Fax: 330-471-8343
Email: nvarian@malone.edu

---

**Consent Statement(s)**

I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature                                          Date
APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

August 24, 2007

Nancy Allan Varian
6344 Orchard View Drive SE
East Canton, Ohio 44709

Ms. Varian:

Your protocol entitled "Beliefs and Instructional Practices of Culturally Relevant Educators: A Qualitative Study" was determined to be exempt from IRB review on August 24, 2007. The IRB application number assigned to this project is 20070804. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact the IRB to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Alicia McWherter
Associate Director

Cc: Evangeline Newton, Advisor
    Rosalie Hall, IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7660 • 330-972-6281 Fax

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution

☑ Approved consent form attached